

***Bloody Disgusting!* Abjection, Excess & Absurdity: The Carnavalesque
Cohesion Between Horror & Comedy in Film & Television**

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Abstract

Horror and comedy. Screaming and laughing. Two genres and the visceral responses which they provoke, broadly considered to be polarised, apparently juxtaposed. This thesis argues that horror and comedy can be significantly more cohesive in their thematic traits, visual presentation and narrative events, than might initially be considered. Expanding a relatively underexplored academic field and building on the work of Paul (1994), the doctorate explores gross-out cinema and television in both theory and praxis. Part One opens with scholarly exploration of core theories of genre, horror and comedy. Semiotic and historical analysis and close reading of key texts in the horror, comedy, and hybrid horror comedy genre identifies and considers shared representation across the genres. Analysed texts include *The Evil Dead* series (1981-1992), *Grimsby* (2016), *Nighty Night* (2004-2005) and *Braindead* (1992). The core shared themes and representations across the genres are posited as abjection, excess and absurdity. Each of these elements is then explored in context of the tension of horror and humour co-present in the grotesque (Thomson, 1972). The paradoxical pleasure in reception (often in the disgust response) is found to align to the transgressions of the carnivalesque, and moreover, the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Bakhtin, 1974 et al.). These findings are then uniquely applied in praxis in Part Two in the original feature length film script *Knitters!* in which the women of the Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild must face an indestructible supernatural foe in an isolated Lake District resort. In the Lake District no-one can hear you scream! The Part Three exegesis reflects rigorously on the application of thesis findings in praxis, alongside detailed gnosis of the practical construction of a feature length script including close consideration of plotting, narrative pacing and characterisation.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: Sarah Crowther (candidate)

Date: 15/03/2021

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed: Sarah Crowther (candidate)

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STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Introduction

'I once made a movie, rather tongue-in-cheek, called *Psycho*. The content was, I felt, rather amusing and it was a big joke. I was horrified to find some people took it seriously. It was intended to make people scream and yell and so forth – but no more than screaming and yelling of a switchback railway (rollercoaster)' (Hitchcock on Monitor, BBC, 1974).

Horror and comedy. Screaming and laughing. Two genres and the visceral responses which they provoke, broadly considered to be polarised, apparently juxtaposed. This doctorate will argue that horror and comedy can be significantly more cohesive in their thematic traits, visual presentation and narrative events, than might initially be considered. The work is uniquely structured to blend theory and practice in significant contribution of knowledge to the surprisingly under-represented academic field which explores the porosity between filmic and televisual horror and comedy. To demonstrate rigour in composition, interrogation and application of original findings, the doctorate is formed of three parts. Part One is a thesis which first academically interrogates theories of genre itself alongside the artistic mediums of horror and comedy. Direct case study analysis follows and a number of key scenes from horror, comedy and horror comedy films and television programmes are explored through close reading, semiotic and historical analysis. The Part One thesis closes with the presentation of original and significant conclusions on the porosity of filmic and televisual horror and comedy, drawn from the findings of this theoretical and direct analysis. Part Two follows with the original feature-length horror comedy film script *Knitters!*, wherein those conclusions are directly and uniquely applied in script writing praxis. Part Three then presents a rigorous and detailed exegesis of that praxis, of applying and testing those conclusions in practice, and of closely considered, meaningful screenplay construction.

The thesis which forms Part One of the doctorate opens with an academic exploration of genre theory (Selbo, 2015, Neale, 2000, Lacey, 2000, Gledhill & Williams, 2000, Altman, 1999, Todorov, 1990 et al.) in order to comprehend the systematic categorisation and labelling of narrative types of cinema, what this connotes and why. Having established the meaning, structure, purpose and context of genre, academic definitions of what signifies the artistic mediums of 'horror' (Kawin, 2012, Hills, 2005, Freeland, 2000, Gelder, 2000, Carroll, 1990, Wood, 2018,

1978, 1977 et al.) and 'comedy' (Hokenson, 2006, King, 2002, Neale & Krutnick, 1990, Bergson, 1911, Freud, 1905 et al.) are then explored, in order to academically establish what constitutes both genre categories. Key narrative, semiotic, thematic and receptive elements of cohesion between horror and comedy will be identified and the relationship between the filmmaker intent and audience response examined, focusing on the physical audience responsive cohesion between the genres.

Direct case study analysis will then build on contextualisation and exploration of theory. Relevant texts will be semiotically and historically analysed in order to identify and interrogate examples of narrative and semiotic cohesion/porosity in comedy, horror and the horror comedy genres. Each of the case study texts have been selected due to their alignment to the gross-out style of horror and comedy which, 'push(es) the boundaries to provoke a cry of, 'oh gross!' as a sign of approval, an expression of disgust that is pleasurable to call out' (Sipos on Paul, 2010, 25). Gross-out horror and comedy is targeted for analysis herein as cohesive traits between the genres can be argued to be most identifiable and (appropriately) explicit within this narrative and visual filmmaking style. As Paul states:

'Gross-out, whether comedy or horror, is based on ambivalence because gross-out explicitly acknowledges the attractive in the repellent, the beautiful in the ugly. As it is a mode moving in two directions at once, the horror films may invoke comedy, while the comedies may take on suddenly nightmarish imagery' (1994, 419).

The praxis at the centre of the doctorate is written in the gross-out tradition (while the slasher narrative construct of horror cinema (Dika, 1990, Clover, 1993, Rockoff, 2002, Kerswell, 2011 et al.) will also prove significant in screenplay construction). Practice is closely informed by academic analysis and conclusion, to be closely reflected upon in gnosis.

Texts which have been closely analysed in the horror (comedy) genre include *The Evil Dead* series of films (Sam Raimi, 1981-1992) and *Braindead* (Peter Jackson, 1992). These films align semiotically, thematically and in narrative style, to the intention of the praxis script in connotation of horror and comedy. Analysis of primary texts within the comedy genre includes interrogation of *Grimsby* (Louis Letterier, 2016), *There's Something About Mary* (Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly, 1998), *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (Terry Jones, 1983) and the television

work of Julia Davis, focusing on her BBC sitcom *Nighty Night* (Tony Dow, Dewi Humphreys, 2004-2005). Each of the forementioned texts contain material aligned to either the more horrific or comedic style of the gross-out medium which will be argued, can be demonstrated to transcend polarising genre categorisation. Indeed, key visual representations and narrative events in the materials defined-as solely comedic, will prove to be cohesive with those in the material more aligned to the horror genre. As Paul argues: 'Gross-out vacillates between extremes within which each individual work, much as these two allied genres of horror and comedy, travel in seemingly opposite directions' (1994, 419).

The construction, and crucially interpretation of the filmic signs in these texts ('a movie is a matrix of interrelated signs erected by the film-maker to guide the audience on their journey' (Edgar, Hunt, Marland and Rawle, 2010, 19)), incorporating intertextuality, will offer direct evidence of thematic and visual porosity between horror and comedy film and television. Evidence of this porosity will be presented through the close reading, semiotic and historical analysis of these 'interrelated signs' (ibid) in apparently oppositional genres. In alignment, Selbo (2015) et al.'s theories of genre hybridity will be explored to challenge a rigid approach to genre categorisation and expectation, reflected in the numerous challenges of strict genre delineation (Staiger, 2000, Altman, 1999, Chandler, 1997, Bordwell, 1989 et al.).

The Part One thesis will cumulatively employ this direct and theoretical analysis to posit the original conclusion that *abjection, excess and absurdity* are the three cohesive elements between gross-out horror and comedy film and television. Evidence of cohesive visual representation, thematic traits and narrative actions will be shown to demonstrate that porosity. The thesis' closing chapter will academically expand on and interrogate each of the identified shared elements of abjection, excess and absurdity in single and mixed genre texts. Academic exploration and contextualisation will apply the works of theorists such as Kristeva (1982) and Douglas (1966) on the abject:

'For Kristeva, horror is fundamentally about boundaries – about the threat of transgressing them and about the need to do so. Hence, she emphasises the duality of our attraction/repulsion to the horrific' (Freeland, 2000, 19).

Such perspectives on Kristeva's work reflect both the hybridity of horror and comedy in representations of abjection, excess and absurdity, and the transgression of genre expectation in boundaries and categorisation, a useful position for expansion within the context of the thesis.

Further key theory from Thomson (1972), Clayborough (1965) and Bakhtin (1984) will be explored and applied in consideration of the grotesque, 'a clash between incompatible reactions – laughter on one hand and horror or disgust on the other' (Thomson, 1972, 2). Moreover, the grotesque-aligned carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984, Danow, 1995) abjection, excesses and absurdity of gross-out cinematic material in both horror and comedy will be interrogated in relation to the potentially visceral reaction of disgust:

'A gleeful uninhibitedness is certainly the most striking feature of these films – of both the comedies and the horror films – and it also represents their greatest appeal. At their best these films offer a real sensed exhilaration, not without its disturbing quality, in testing how far they can go, how much they can show off without making us turn away' (Sipos on Paul, 2010, 25).

Moreover, disgust will be explored as a key intersectional point of alignment in transgressive content between the genres, reflected in the presence of the abject, excessive and absurd. Miller argues: 'Disgust helps mark the boundaries of culture and the boundaries of the self' (1998, 50). When those boundaries are breached, the contents blended and combined, the relationship between abjection, excess and absurdity and the grotesque offers much interest. In the content of the films of the horror comedy genre, and in the porosity of the hybridity of the genre, much can be uncovered about the cohesion between the two apparently oppositional genres.

The original findings and conclusions of the Part One thesis will then be directly and uniquely applied in the praxis of script writing in the original feature length horror comedy film script *Knitters!*, which forms Part Two of the doctorate. The Part Two script is, however, preceded by a relatively brief Intermission which signals a change of tone from academic analysis, interrogation and conclusion to the divergent tone of the horror comedy script. The Intermission is intended to emulate the historical experience of cinema-going, with shorter cinematic content preceding the content of the 'feature attraction'. Emulating the 'public spectacle' and 'spectacle in ritual' of the shared experience of cinema-going is significant in preceding a script in the gross-

out style which actively seeks to recreate ‘an art of festivity’ or ‘a festive communal atmosphere’ (Paul, 1994, 64-65), to be expanded upon further in exegesis.

The Intermission is formed of a series of highlighted comments from original interviews with film and television makers, experts and fans, firstly on genre and secondly on the relationship between filmic horror and comedy. Interviewees include directors Gary Sherman (*Death Line*, 1972, *Dead & Buried*, 1981, & *Poltergeist 3*, 1988), Sean S. Cunningham (*Friday the 13th*, 1980, producer of *House*, 1985) and director/producer Dominic Burns (co-producer of *Jay & Silent Bob Reboot*, 2019). Their illuminating, entertaining and expert responses have not only informed screenplay praxis but are also applied directly in the analysis and interrogations in both thesis and exegesis, furthering both rigour and significance in original contribution to knowledge.

As heretofore established, the doctorate is uniquely structured to both apply and explore original findings and conclusions directly in praxis. Part Two’s original feature film script *Knitters!* employs abjection, excess and absurdity in narrative events, visual representation and lexical constructs, to blend gross-out horror and comedy. The script embeds absurdity at its core in the original central narrative construct of pitting the refined women of the Potter’s Bluff Townswomen’s Guild against an intertextual masked supernatural slasher killer in the horror genre iconography-referential setting of an isolated Lake District resort (Dika, 1990, Clover, 1993, Rockoff, 2002, Kerswell, 2011 et al.). As Snyder states: ‘When it feels like a cliché, give it a twist!’ (2005, 42). The women, including feisty Social Secretary Beryl, uppity Chair Marjorie, and put-upon Secretary, Gladys, must survive their weekend knitting retreat-turned festival of carnage armed only with the knitting and crafting materials they have brought with them. In the Lake District no-one can hear you scream! The intent in praxis is to somewhat literalise Paul’s claim that, ‘the value of grossness lies in its inversion of accepted values’ (1994, 76) and to, ‘stir up the pleasure (and) pandemonium’ (ibid, 65) released accordingly. Excess and abjection is employed throughout the script (while frequently sprinkled with more than a pinch of absurdity), primarily in how the characters meet their violently explicit demises – and the unusual and often absurd weapons employed to deliver those deaths.

This practical application of original academic conclusion enables a rigorous and significant contribution to both theory and praxis in the field. The research-informed

process of demonstrating that application is delineated in the detailed Part Three exegesis which reflectively analyses the rigorous approach to testing theory practically throughout the script's creation. Praxis and analysis also draws closely on theory and expert instruction surrounding screenplay planning, development and construction (Snyder, 2005, Field, 2005, McKee, 1999, Goldman, 1991 et al.) in order to delineate a researched, informed and closely-considered approach to novice script writing. According to Snyder: 'The craftsmanship it takes, the patient work, the magic of storytelling in film, all come together in how you execute and realise structure' (2005, 69). Demonstrated in the exegesis is the detailed, considered and closely-plotted road map of screen play creation, including the inevitable obstructions facing the novice script writer, which required careful navigation.

The close consideration given to *Knitters!* from concept to final version follows Snyder's recommendation: 'You need a road map, a direction – a line of development leading from beginning to end' (ibid, 142). Every systematic element of planning, from concept, title, treatment, plotting, story structure, mapping to the 'beat sheet' (ibid, 2005) and detailed character construction, is outlined and interrogated in the Part Three exegesis. The drafting, writing and editing process is also rigorously delineated and interrogated and the thesis' findings demonstrated in direct application, while tested through script creation. *Knitters!* underwent a total of eight drafts in careful, research-informed crafting, editing and expansion. Two of the early to mid-process drafts, alongside detailed character notes, interviews and bibliographies, full treatment and story, and narrative framework planning documentation, can be found in the extensive Appendices in further demonstration of rigour in script writing praxis and application of theory.

This doctorate which uniquely and originally blends theory and practice, is further significant in contributing original knowledge to an underexplored academic field. It not only proffers contemporary case study analysis and original conclusions, but also contributes original material which provides evidence of cohesion between the genres:

'Rarely addressed in film scholarship as a genre unto itself, horror-comedy is often placed within the broader categories of horror film, cult film, exploitation, "trash" film, or, less often, comedy....while some sources will be devoted solely to horror-comedy as a generic hybrid, a subgenre, or an aesthetic mode, many may

discuss horror-comedy only in a brief section of a larger argument, or in terms of a specific filmmaker or film' (Oxford Bibliographies, 2020).

The thesis primarily builds on the work of Paul, whose *Laughing Screaming* (1994) is one of only two full-length academic texts dedicated to analysis of the history and societal and cultural context of horror and comedy. The research findings herein expand on Paul's theories of aggressiveness and exaggeration as a cohesive trait between the genres in gross-out texts. He argues: 'Aggression is the keynote of gross-out as these films assaulted us with images of outrageously violent or sexual behaviour' (ibid, 5). The updated and original conclusions herein build upon Paul's theories of 'aggression' to expand to evidenced delineation of abjection, excess and absurdity as the three cohesive factors between the genres. While Paul's 'playfulness' of gross-out, 'spectacle in ritual' (ibid, 64) and festive art will be further explored within the context of the 'carnavalesque grotesque' (Brottman, 2012, Danow, 1995, Bakhtin, 1984 et al.) in more contemporary case study materials. Paul will be challenged in his view that gross-out texts in both or hybrid genres, 'have clearly become historical...if the aim of the gross-out is to test boundaries, then the period in which art like this flourishes must necessarily be limited because, eventually, in its decadent phase, all boundaries will be overstepped' (1994, 423). The visual explicitness in the case study material stands in defiance of Paul's claim: rather than receding, gross-out film and television has gone on to flourish and leave many of those 'boundaries' (ibid) in its wake.

The academic landscape surrounding and following Paul's seminal work remains somewhat disappointingly barren. While Miller and Van Riper's *The Laughing Dead* (2016) exists as the sole accompanying academic text dedicated to horror and comedy, its collection of essays posit perspectives on a broader field of the hybrid genres with essays on specific films/filmmakers, eras and related themes. The research focus herein seeks more in-depth interrogation of the points of cohesion aligned to gross-out material. Hallenbeck's non-academic text *Comedy-Horror Films: A Chronological History 1914-2008* (2009) is a highly useful source of historical and chronological reference on the development of the hybrid genre. The text is accompanied by some reflection on 'gallows humour' (ibid) but predominantly offers historical context, without in-depth (academic) exploration of the co-aligned genres. Gehring's *Dark Comedy* (1996) and Pomerance's *Last Laugh: Strange Humours of Cinema* (2013) analyse single genre comedic excursions into darker territory. While King's *Film Comedy* (2002) offers areas of reflection of darker

comedic material through transgression, and Weitz and Krutnick & Neale offer limited reference to similarities between the genres in *Cambridge Introduction to Comedy* (2009) and *Popular Film & Television Comedy* (1990). In horror academia, Kawin proffers a chapter on horror comedy (a limited six pages) (2012), while Sipos (2010), Skal (1993) and Tudor (1989) among others also offer limited reflection on the cohesion of humour and horror in larger narrative structures/cinematic aesthetics.

The academic field cries out for extended, contemporary and targeted exploration and expansion of the interrogation of cohesion between filmic and televisual horror and comedy. Indeed: 'Minimal scholarship and few trade publications are dedicated to horror-comedy alone' (Oxford Bibliographies, 2020). This thesis offers significance in addressing this research void, providing much-required contribution to original knowledge and challenging Hallenbeck's view that, 'film scholars love to get lofty about subtext, but the idea of humour combined with horror...well, it seems to frighten them' (2009, 1). Moreover, originality in academic conclusion is demonstrated directly in praxis and gnosis, in the feature length script and exegesis which rigorously present and explore the application of significant original conclusions in original practice.

In interrogation of this cohesion between filmic and televisual horror and comedy, and in order to guide and inform praxis, the research questions which the following Part One thesis seeks to answer are:

1. Are the apparently paradoxical genres of horror and comedy more porous than genre expectation/categorisation may suggest?
2. How are film & television horror and comedy semiotically, thematically and narratively porous in gross-out material?
3. How can this porosity be applied in the creation of a horror comedy film script?

The answers to these questions and findings of this significant research can then be directly applied in the original praxis of scriptwriting, rigorously demonstrated in the gnosis of exegesis.

Chapter One: *Genre, Horror & Comedy*

Defining Genre

'Genre exists in the conceptions of its audience as much as the artefacts of which it is apparently composed. It is a distinctive reservoir of cultural resources, drawn upon by both filmmakers and audience, but transcending them individually' (Tudor, 1989, 5).

In establishing evidence of cohesion between two seemingly juxtaposed-by-definition genres, it is imperative to first explore academic definitions of genre itself, its system of categorisation and purpose. Key fields for interrogation herein are characterisation of genre, the visual product itself and its iconography, the relationship between audience and filmmaker i.e. the consumer and producer of the visual product, and moreover, the arguments against rigid genre definition and problematic aspects of strict delineation. This thesis supports the view that, 'genre is a very fluid concept' (Lacey, 2005, 47) as will be evidenced in expansion of argument. Key academic exploration in this chapter includes the developing definition of genre and its sub categories, the relationship between consumer and producer in defining expectation, and the rigidity versus porosity of genre (Selbo, 2015, Neale, 2000, Lacey, 2000, Gledhill & Williams, 2000, Altman, 1999, Todorov, 1990 et al.).

Through establishing the definition and application of genre itself, and debating its purpose and practicalities, genre hybridity and porosity can be analysed, significant in exploring cohesion between apparently paradoxical genres. Gledhill argues: 'Genre is first and foremost a boundary phenomenon...not surprisingly the process of establishing territories leads to border disputes' (in Gledhill & Williams, 2000, 221). This thesis suggests that 'dispute' can instead be considered cohesion/porosity where shared narrative and semiotic traits can be identified and successfully represented, leading to genre hybridity and a more porous 'boundary'/'territory' (ibid) between representations of horror and comedy. Stam will be applied in challenging rigid genre boundaries on the grounds of, 'extension, normativism, monolithic definition and biologism' (2000, 128-9). As Todorov posits, 'genre, whether literary or not, is nothing more than the codification of discursive properties' (1990, 18).

Definition must begin with the question: what *is* genre? Selbo posits genre as: 'A way of viewing film genres, in simplistic terms...as *types of stories* told in the film medium' (2015: x). Berger argues that the term genre means "kind" in classifying texts' (1996, 36), furthered by Chandler (1997) and Neale, who indicate that the word itself comes from the French (originally Latin) word for 'kind' or 'class' (2000, 1). The semantic link is to the process of genre classification as a system of categorisation. Genre then, has been agreed by multiple theorists, to define a type or kind of film (Neale, 2000, Altman, 1999 et al.)

However, what criteria delineate which genre a film is assigned to, and moreover what are the defining factors in classification? Sobchack argues that categories contain films which have shared traits and definitions: 'Any particular film of any definable group is only recognisable as part of that group if it is, in fact, an imitation of that which came before' (in Grant, 2003, 103-104). Olney elaborates, 'the most typical members of a category have the most features in common with other members in the category and the least features in common with contrasting categories' (2013, 1). Herein genres are defined by shared characteristics including narrative and semiotic representation. Chandler suggests: 'One pleasure may simply be the recognition of the features of a particular genre because of our familiarity with it' (1997, 8). (Self-reflexivity is a genre characteristic which will be applied in praxis and further discussed in thesis and exegesis.) However, this thesis will posit the requirement for some degree of flexibility in terms of interpretation of categorisation of shared representation between differing genres.

Sobchack furthers that in genre categorisation there is little room for ambiguity in terms of 'characters, plots or iconography' (in Grant, 2003, 104). This claim could be considered problematic in exploring characterisation; certainly masked serial killers, monsters, ghosts, werewolves and vampires, are most frequently assigned characters which position a film within the horror genre, but consider *The Mask* (Charles Russell, 1994) and its sequel, *Son of the Mask* (Lawrence Guterman, 2005). The premise of the original film sees a mild-mannered, ridiculed bank clerk transform into a prosthetically enhanced, overbearing, violent, green-faced trickster, after donning a mysterious wooden mask. Firmly categorised as a film in the comedy genre by producers and audience alike (and cartoonish in its violence, narrative and visual representation), the green-faced image of Jim Carrey as The Mask character, is frankly monstrous, as are many of the character's actions. (See

horror author Darrell Buxton's comments in *Interviews with Filmmakers & Fans on Genre, Horror & Comedy*).

Moreover, Carrey portrayed another monster in Christmas family film, *The Grinch* (Ron Howard, 2000). It is unclear quite what The Grinch is, and indeed the character is referred to by his adoptive parents as a 'What' rather than a 'Who' (Howard, 2000). However, The Grinch is a green-haired, glass-eating, hate- and vengeful creature which lives in an eerie green-lit cave and attempts to terrify children, or anyone who crosses its path. Yet the inclusion of this 'monster' does not render *The Grinch* a horror film according to audience response, marketing campaign or censorship board (it is rated PG). Indeed, quite the opposite, *The Grinch* is a much-loved family Christmas film.

Concurrently, the frequent representation of the assembly of teenage victims in peril (reflected in the title of Kerswell's *Teenage Wasteland*) in the 'slasher' (2011) genre, can draw close parallels to several other genres. Many of this horror sub genre's characters align to character representations of teenagers in films across genres, based on their romantic entanglements, sporting prowess, comedic personalities et cetera, which often mirror characters also found in comedy, drama, romance... Paul describes *Carrie* (Brian DePalma, 1976) as, 'a teen comedy that alternates and eventually merges with the horror film' (1994, 416). Although, not the central point of argument of genre cohesion in this thesis, flexibility must be posited in response to Sobchack's theory of characterisation aligned to categorisation. Aligning certain types of character to certain genres should be open to a degree of flexibility, and consideration should be given to the evidence that several combined factors inform genre identity. However, this is a useful consideration in relation to praxis. Are the script's central characters, the Townswomen's Guild, considered typical horror characters in genre convention? Can this subversion derive humour? Does this characterisation facilitate horror comedy porosity? Such questions will be answered, and conclusions drawn, in the Part Three exegesis.

'Plots and iconography' (ibid) as symbols of genre identity should be further explored here, and it is perhaps most useful to do so within the framework of Lacey et al.'s theories of 'iconography' (2005) and Grant's theories of 'conventions' (2003). Lacey identifies the following repertoire of genre elements: iconography, narrative, setting & characters (2005, 48). Tudor posits a 'set of conventions' which he describes as, 'certain themes, typical actions, certain characteristic mannerisms' (in

Grant, 2003, 4). Similarly, Buscombe posits that genres share 'history, themes, archetypes and icons' (in Grant, 2003, 18). Narrative, themes, and actions will be explored further in the next chapter in correlation to exploration of each genre. It is most useful to consider iconography at this juncture as this could be regarded as a key point of departure between genres, and one which is arguably the most common shorthand in deciphering genre.

To utilise Lacey's definition of iconography as 'significant objects or sounds' (2005, 48), we are able to decipher this as a visual/aural measurement. Lacey identifies, for example, the symbol of a crucifix, or the sound of screaming as defining iconography in the horror genre. One of the key semiotic signifiers of horror could be argued to be the excessive, graphic spilling of blood or bodily fluids as referenced in the works of Gordon-Lewis (1926-2016) et al., to be further explored in the next chapter. In balance, however, many horror films are blood/gore-less, relying instead on dread and cognitive terror as another signifier of horror cinema (consider *The Haunting* (Robert Wise, 1963) or *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007), for example). As we have already established, a monstrous character alone need not automatically delineate a horror film, but a combination of a monstrous character, the aural accompaniment of agonised and often prolonged screaming, and a crimson-stained screen from excessive and violent blood-letting, do provide the combined iconography of a horror film. According to Neale: 'Particular features which are characteristic of a genre are not normally unique to it; it is their relative prominence, combination and functions which are distinctive' (1980, 22-3). Yet, it should not be overlooked, that each of these elements alone, or in lesser combination, could belong to more than one genre. Moreover, this thesis will go on to interrogate the often-excessive spilling of bodily fluid, and agonised screaming as a comedic iconography. The findings aligned to this interrogation will be applied in praxis.

Genre as a 'type' or 'kind' of film is evident, and iconography aligned to narrative does offer potential visual and aural suggestion as to what 'type' or 'kind' the film is (Neale, 2000, Altman, 1999 et al.). However, who defines 'type' or 'kind' and why? According to Altman, the combined elements which define genre are:

'Blueprint, as a formula that precedes, programmes and patterns industry production. Structure, as the formal framework on which individual films are founded. Label, as the name of a category central to the decisions and

communications of distributors & exhibitors. Contract, as the viewing position required by each genre film for its audience' (1999, 14).

Altman echoes theories of patterns and shared representation in genre categorisation, while also positing labelling of genres in terms of the intended audience impact/response, an interesting shared factor of horror and comedy for further exploration in the next chapter. This triple-sided relationship between filmmaker, film marketer and audience aligned to reception/expectation, is core to genre theory. Moreover, a much-debated element of genre theory, and one, as it mirrors a broad society, which is potentially most open to debate and a position of flux. Stam asks: 'Are genres timeless Platonic essences or ephemeral time-bound entities? Are genres culture bound or transcultural?' (2000, 14). Tudor offers a simple response: 'Genre is collectively what we believe it to be' (in Grant, 2003, 7). Who are 'we'? According to Tom Ryall, 'the master image for genre criticism is a triangle composed of artist/film/audience' (1975, 27-28) as found in **Figure 1**.

Genre, then is a product of definition aligned to the interconnected relationship between filmmaker/producer and audience expectation (Lacey, 2005, Chandler, 2000, Neale, 2000, Gledhill, 1985, Sobchack, 1986 et al.) Todorov describes the institution of genre categorisation as, 'horizons of expectation' for audiences, mirrored as models of production for content producers (1990, 18). Neale posits, 'systems of expectation and hypotheses that spectators bring with them to the cinema' (in Grant, 2003, 160). Sobchack simplifies: 'What we expect...and what we get' (1986, 104). Lacey (2005) highlights the significance of both audience targeting through filmic content, but also marketing in selling the product to the audience. The author of this thesis has experienced first-hand the wrath of an audience attending a film festival marketed as horror, who have deemed the programmed content not horrific enough to meet genre expectation. Cherry confirms: 'Fans may feel exploited at being sold a film as horror when it does not match their core concept of the genre' (in Jancovich, 2000, 211).

Expenditure on cinema attendance and purchase of filmic/television content is often driven by the audience's expectation, based on marketing approaches such as trailer, poster artwork, DVD/Blu-ray cover and often, the use of the genre category such as 'horror', 'slasher' et cetera, in that marketing material. Moreover, critical reviews and journalistic writing can also further expectation, as audiences seek information about the film prior to investment, and producers incorporate favorable

reviews on posters and DVD/Blu-ray covers (Neale, 2000). Consider, for example, Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs*, the US DVD cover of which decries: 'One of the most ferocious horror movies ever made', a direct quote from a review on Fearnert.com (2008). An instant attraction to some, while deeply unfavorable to many others:

'A genre classification can also double as precise commercial study because it evokes certain audience expectations and therefore allows one to establish classifications, comparisons, balance-sheets, valuations for the future and so on' (Donati, 2010, 1).

The alignment of a film to a genre proves a tool of measurement of potential market rewards for producers, and a tool of measurement of whether to invest in that film for potential viewers/consumers. The review used on the cover of *Martyrs* (2008) could be regarded as a warning to the wary, but more likely as a huge incitement to a horror audience eager to seek out new levels of thrill. As Grant argues, 'descriptive labels came to signal information to prospective customers about the story and kind of pleasure it was likely to offer' (2003, xvi). He furthers: 'The conventions of genre are known and recognised by the audience, and such recognition is in itself a pleasure' (ibid, 21).

This interconnectivity between producer and audience in genre delineation and maintenance reflects one of the more potentially flexible aspects of genre. Lacey reflects this focus on society: 'Individual genre texts are the product of society – as expressed by the institution and audience expectation, and the history of the genre' (2000, 143). As society is an ever-evolving, expanding unit, arguably, so too is genre as reflected in the field of 'reception studies' (Hunter in Leggot & Sexton, 2013, Staiger, 2005, 2000 & Klinger, 1995 et al.) which explores genre in a broader cultural and historical context. Moreover, society is a massed unit of individual membership, which leaves interpretation open to much potential fluctuation. Cherry (in Jancovich, 2000)'s attempts to define the horror genre through direct audience interview resulted in a conclusion which highlighted individual interpretation as core to definition, heavily influenced by early experience of genre consumption. Correlation to the history of the genre, is arguably, then, a more reliable tool in the praxis of horror comedy script creation. It is intended that audience 'pleasure' and 'expectation' (Grant, 2003, xvi) are met, through intertextuality in evidence of historical influence and recognition.

What further of that potential genre flexibility? Can or should genres be rigidly categorised, defined as islands which sit alone and distinct, and which defend borders rigorously? According to Tudor, it is 'hardly surprising' that disagreement exists over which genre a certain film belongs to: 'A genre is, after all, a social construction, and as such it is subject to constant negotiation and reformulation' (1989, 5). This thesis argues that genre hybridity is a more realistic approach to genre categorisation, as will be supported by direct evidence of genre porosity and fluidity. Indeed, 'genres often overlap' (Neale, 2000, 51). In support of a more fluid, societal-reflective approach to categorisation, Gledhill argues that, 'there are no rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion' (1985, 60). Bordwell claims, 'no single definition of a single genre has won widespread acceptance' (1989, 177).

Moreover, Stam identifies four fundamental problems with rigid genre classification: extension, normativism, monolithic definitions, biologism (2000, 128-9). Extension reflects challenges in defining the extent of a genre definition (whether too extensive or too restrictive). The challenges of normativism are reflected in the debate reproduced above: if genre is defined by pre-conception, whose pre-conception is that based upon, and does this not potentially substantially vary from individual to individual (Olney, 2013, Cherry, 2000, Altman 1999 et al.)? Biologism pertinently reflects that genres evolve, and that rigid definition may restrict the life cycle of the genre, and the artistic expansion of the medium (Donati, 2010, Staiger, 2000). Central to the argument of this thesis, monolithic definitions challenge assignment of a text to just one genre (Selbo, 2015, Stam, 2000, Chandler, 2000, Bordwell, 1989 et al.).

Lacey posits: 'Any film (like in any text, utterance or instance of representation) can participate in several genres at once. In fact, it is more common than not for a film to do so' (2000, 25). Selbo lists a series of decade-spanning texts all containing thematic content/visual signifiers, which are aligned to a number of genres. Her examples include *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) 'war/drama/romance', *Tootsie* (Sydney Pollack, 1982) 'comedy/romance/coming-of-age', and *Django Unchained* (Quentin Tarantino, 2012) 'western/drama/action/adventure/buddy' (2015, 66-68). Indeed, Selbo argues that most films are hybrid genre, advising to, 'remember that most movies are a combination of two or more genres' (ibid, 68). The praxis informed by this Part One thesis will be a horror comedy script, a practical experiment in cross genre hybridity, showcasing porous themes and visual representation shared across genres.

Chandler (1997) conducted an experiment to map the generic labels employed by film reviewers in the television listings magazine *What's on TV*. From this he constructed the genre map **Figure 2** (in Lacey, 2000). This experiment clearly indicates the interconnectivity, porosity, and hybridity of genre. Through this map, Chandler demonstrated a significant preponderance for hybrid and sub genres, negating genre existence in strictly regulated isolation (ibid, 70). Neale agrees with Chandler that, 'many Hollywood films – and many Hollywood genres – are hybrid and multi-generic' (2000, 51). He posits: 'Individual genres not only form part of a generic regime, but also themselves change and develop and vary by borrowing from and overlapping with one another' (in Grant, 2003, 171).

This fluidity extends beyond hybridity to reflection of porosity and reflects Stam's concern surrounding biologism. Can a genre simply remain static, without some form of growth, or do genres expand, build, and adapt (2000):

'Thus genres provide fictional worlds as sites for symbolic actions, but the combination of generic and cultural verisimilitude ensures a fluidity not only between the boundaries that divide one genre from another, but also between fictional and social imagery' (Gledhill in Gledhill & Williams, 2000, 240).

Again, in the inter-connected relationship between the society which produces, comments on, and consumes the visual product, generic definition is in flux – as are the boundaries of those 'blurred' and 'flexible' (Cherry in Jancovich, 2000, 202) genre categorisations themselves.

Moreover, debate into genre, its place within society and concurrent porosity has extended to question whether genre actually exists at all. Buscombe poses the direct question, 'do genres in the cinema really exist?' (in Grant, 2003, 12), concluding that the existence of genres is predicated on the 'syntactic expectation' established by the 'semantic signal' (ibid, 38) of the filmic text. Crucially he posits the key identificatory element of 'spectator response' (ibid, 38). Donati, in response, argued: 'Genres do not really exist in cinema, but it is useful and necessary – for critics and audiences – that they do' (2010, 4). Moreover, Donati supports hybridity and porosity of genre:

'But if we accept their existence, we should not define them with utter precision. Which in the end is welcome because a rigidly radical classification, one which could theoretically or practically (industry and audience pressure) influence a director's thought process, would condemn the cinema (or whatever form of art) to a mortal sterility' (ibid, 4).

This perspective reflects Stam's concern surrounding biologism (2000), in the crucial growth of the filmic product and the artistic practice aligned to genre. And again, crucially, the consumer or producer-influenced-by-consumer response provides the focal point for argument.

Olney conducted research into the prediction of filmic genres 'with implicit ideals' (2013, 1) on the streaming platform Netflix. Resultingly he posited a new approach to defining genre based on viewers rating the likeability of a film on the platform based on their explicitly expressed, 'ideal of what a film should be' (ibid). His findings reflect much of the debate explored herein, from variance of perception between audience members, to the influence of audience 'enjoyment' and 'pleasure' in perceiving genre:

'Rather than being a taxonomic set of categories determined by our family-resemblance, film genre appears to be based in our ideals of enjoyment. These ideals, which vary from person to person, are consistent enough across hundreds of thousands of people for traditional genres to emerge from likeability ratings' (ibid, 14).

Olney did find that genres exist, in line with Donati (2010) and Buscombe (1986), but that again, key to existence of genre, is audience perception. He concluded that:

'Film genres are structured more around ideals than around features of film. This finding leads experimental support to the notion that film genres are set of shifting, fuzzy, and highly contextualised psychological categories' (2013, 2).

Thus, evidencing the argument that genres are not rigid, not clearly defined, and that their boundaries are changeable and porous. While it is clear that genre definition is key in film categorisation meeting audience expectation, and therefore it is useful to categorise and define film types, rigidly defined, isolated genres are not practicable (Selbo, 2015, Olney, 2013, Donati, 2010, Stam, 2000, et al). Genres are

fundamentally porous; they share key traits, narrative themes and semiotic representation. They are expansive, fertile, breed sub genres, and most texts contain material which renders them a hybrid of two or more genres (Selbo, 2015). The experimental praxis of this research will be a script which intends to blend horror and comedy, combining the audience-anticipated iconography of horror in representation of blood, gore, threat and supernatural-induced screams, with the effects of comedy through laughter, aligned to the gross-out genre-cohesive elements of abjection, excess and absurdity to be further explored herein. The praxis will seek to reflect genre porosity and hybridity, while delivering audience pleasure through the historically informed recognition of the 'cultural capital' (Hills, 2005, 170) of intertextuality.

To further situate and inform praxis, it is first crucial to academically explore 'horror' and 'comedy' in turn, to establish what is considered to define each genre and offer academic evidence to challenge aspects of perceived juxtaposition. Interrogation can then centre on case study analysis to uncover direct evidence of those points of cohesion in gross-out representation in single and mixed genre texts.

What is Horror?

Multiple academic perspectives have been offered in definition of what constitutes horror as a visual medium. Numerous theorists notably including Wood (1977, 1978, 2018), Todorov (1975, 1990), Carroll (1990), Gelder (2000), Freeland (2000), Hills (2005), Kawin (2102) et al., have offered perspectives on what constitutes the horrific, both in concept and art form. Academic debate has centred most prominently on two distinct elements of the horror art form. Firstly, what thematic and narrative elements constitute horror and what repeated semiotic traits constitute the iconography of horror. Secondly, and perhaps most interesting in relation to this thesis in arguing for cohesion between horror and comedy, theorists have repeatedly focused on audience response to filmic and televisual representations of the genre.

It is widely posited that horror is one of the genres which is defined by both its physical and cognitive effect on the audience (Hantke in Sexton and Mathijs, 2019, Bantinaki, 2012, Gelder, 2000, Altman, 1999, Carroll, 1999, Shaviro, 1989, Brophy, 1986 et al.). One need only consider the genre's title itself to assume an expectation of the intended effect on the audience. Horror is a genre which seeks to provoke an

emotional, disruptive cognitive and visible physical effect on its audience. This position offers cohesion in the intent of both the horror and comedy art forms, while also provoking a question of paradox which has long-perplexed cinemagoers, critics and academics: what is the pleasure in watching horror (Bantinaki, 2012, Hills, 2005, Cherry in Jancovich, 2000, Carroll, 1999, Tudor, 1997 et al.)? Why seek 'distress' (Krutnick & Neale, 2000) in entertainment? In contrast to cursory perceptions of comedy as light-relief, evidence will be presented herein which evidences 'distress' (ibid) inducing visual and aural cohesion in materials in both genres. Such evidence challenges Bartsch's polarising question: 'How can anyone prefer horror-related emotions like fear and disgust to comedy-related emotions like fun and merriment?' (in Anderson and Anderson, 2007, 123). Disgust will be proven to form a bridge between the two genres – a directly cohesive factor, and the conclusion of this finding will be directly applied in original horror comedy screen writing praxis.

Carroll focuses analysis of the genre in relation to emotion:

'I will offer an account of horror in virtue of the emotional effects it is designed to cause in audiences. This will involve both the characterisation of that emotional effect and a review and analysis of the recurring figures and plot structures employed by the genre to raise the emotional effect' (1990, 8).

Herein let us first explore horror as an 'emotional' medium (Bantinaki, 2012). In application of the noun 'horror', defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'an intense feeling of fear, shock, disgust' (2020), to label the genre itself, emotional response is blended into its very categorisation. Genres such as 'drama', 'musical', 'western', may very well offer illustrations of the type of content featured within in their labels, but these nouns do not outline a specific audience response in the same way as horror. According to Altman: 'It is instructive that the two genres most noted for their incremental logic – the horror film and the thriller – should be designated by terms describing the spectator's reaction rather than the filmic content, for it is precisely on heightening viewer sensation that generic logic depends' (1999, 153). Indeed, the 'thriller' genre, with its close narrative relationship and semiotic similarities, is also title-inclusive of its intended emotional response.

According to Shaviro:

'Horror shares with pornography the frankly avowed goal of physically arousing the audience. They focus obsessively upon the physical reactions of bodies on the screen, the better to assault and agitate the bodies of the audience' (1989, 100).

Williams posits that both horror and porn are mediums of 'excess' (in Grant, 2003, 142), a term which will be proved significant in the argument of this thesis. While pornography does not dictate audience response in its title, this offers an illuminating relationship in relation to the visceral aspects of viewing horror. A bodily, as well as emotional, response forms a core element of the genre's intent: 'Horror's affective aesthetic would plant it firmly within the small group, together with melodrama and pornography, of what Linda Williams has so aptly name 'body genres' (Hantke in Sexton and Mathijs, 2019, 50). Engagement with this genre is intended as a 'visceral experience' (ibid).

Horror audiences are expected to jump, scream, cringe and occasionally, if studio marketing is to be believed, faint, and perhaps even die of the shock of the cinematic excess. According to Williams: 'The success of these genres often seems to be measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen' (in Grant, 2003, 143). Certainly much journalism has been produced concerning the audience response to *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin) on its release in 1973, with reports of audience members fainting, vomiting and becoming hysterical, not unlike characters portrayed onscreen (Kermode, BBC, 1998). This approach is much imitated in contemporary horror tropes, where jump scares are frequently employed to emulate the roller coaster horror experience posited by Hitchcock (1974), reflecting the experiential aspects of horror film viewing and character mimicry. Media reports circulated that an audience member died of horror while attending a screening of *The Conjuring 2* (2016, James Wan) (Boult, Telegraph, 2016). Attempts to verify the story that the film was the direct cause of death and that the body subsequently went missing, have proved fruitless and it seems appropriate to speculate that circulation of the story benefited the film's marketing in creating mystique and intrigue-alongside valuable column inches (Hills, 2005). Much like the notorious tales of 'The Exorcist curse' (Crowther, inews, 2018) which speculated upon the mysterious accidents and deaths of members and family members of the film's cast and crew, gathering media coverage and profiting from intrigue.

That such reports might be employed to encourage attendance – *the viewer might literally die of horror watching the film* – speaks much of the intent of cinematic horror, and of its relationship with the audience. Why engage in an activity which is reported to have killed one of its viewers in its sheer extremity and outright horror? While much has been written of the scopophilic, sadistic aspects of horror viewership (primarily Mulvey, 1989), it is the masochistic aspects of engagement with visual horror, which are brought to the forefront herein. Horror is a genre of extremity, of extreme imagery and reaction, and extreme reactions to extreme imagery (and aural content) form a key point of argument for cohesion between comedy and horror through abjection, excess and absurdity:

'Horror...fictions are generally designed to control and guide our emotional responses in such a way that, ideally, horror audiences are supposed to react emotionally to the monsters featured in horror fictions in the same manner that characters in horror fictions react emotionally to the monsters they meet there' (Carroll, 1999, 5).

And what emotions does horror seek to arouse? What is the intended emotional response of the viewer? Brophy posits:

'The gratification of the contemporary horror film is based upon tension, fear, anxiety, sadism and masochism – a disposition that is overall both tasteless and morbid. The pleasure in the text is, in fact, getting the shit scared out of you, and loving it: an exchange mediated by adrenaline' (in Gelder, 2000, 279).

Again, Carroll's 'Paradoxes of the Heart' (1990) are reflected in this viewing position. As a form of entertainment, why would a viewer seek 'anxiety', 'tension', 'masochism' (ibid), aligned to the fore-mentioned position of distress? According to Gelder: 'The effect of its function is not unlike a death-defying carnival ride: the subject is a willing target that both constructs the terror and is terrorised by its construction' (2000, 279). Take note of the use of 'carnival' in this academic perspective for this type of engagement, particularly in its relation to the grotesque, offers key cohesive evidence of porosity between horror and comedy. Cooper points to the, 'fun to be frightened for a moment. An unsettling instance is a magnificent, electric jolt from the predictable present' (1997, 1). Bartsch suggests emotions, 'can satisfy a need for novel, intense and sensational kinds of experience' (2007, 127), pointing to the 'sensation seeking' (ibid, 129) aspects of horror consumption. Carroll

further this experience as an 'endurance test' aligned to 'disgust and revulsion' (in Hills, 2005, 17), an argument to which this thesis will return.

Such academic positions align the potentially negative emotional and bodily responses experienced through horror as adrenaline rush, with the same exhilarative, death-defying emotions sought by theme park aficionados or extreme sport enthusiasts. Whatever, the cause for the pleasure in discomfort, the debate reflects agreement in the effects of horror as fear/aversion/tension; the standard response being the scream, or the jolt of surprise which can lift the cinemagoer from a seat following a sustained period of tension. Crucially the expected or sought response is a physical, visceral one. Sipos concludes of that tension:

'Although horror has its own conventions, horror is an emotive genre, defined by its intent to scare. Horror presupposes a threat, building the tension with its promise that something hideous will occur and there is no escape' (2010, 5).

Moreover, though, and often following this release of tension, comes one of the initially overlooked shared responses between horror and comedy. Lest one forget, comedy also seeks a physical response, through laughter, and in the most successful examples, convulsion. Paul argues of viewing scenes of horror:

'It denotes a special kind of pleasure that derives from disruption, an abrupt challenge to the nervous system. There is a jolt of surprise, followed by giddy laughter, and then the desire for the whole thing to happen again...in both cases the response is equally vocal, as the response to a horror film can be as raucous and audible as the response to comedy' (1994, 6).

Horror cinemagoers will be familiar with the joint audience response of laughing alongside screaming, which can also be at the 'tasteless' and 'morbid' (Brophy in Gelder, 2000, 279) sights unfolding to entertained audiences. In the selection of 'tasteless' (ibid) texts for analysis, the thesis will present examples of these representations in comedy as well as horror. Paul (1994) posits the point of laughter as a release, an excited enthusiastic manifestation of the rollercoaster-esque experience of the pacing of horror. Tension builds to breaking point, releases with a significant scare event, and then resets to repeat the pattern, much as a rollercoaster track climbs and falls at multiple points, scaring and delighting audiences in equal measure (Hitchcock, 1974). Bantinaki furthers: 'The enjoyment

that audiences derive from horror seems to be bound up with the emotional responses that it elicits, as audiences' own reports indicate' (2012, 2).

This rhythmic pattern will be reflected in the experiment of the praxis, in part fulfilment of evoking laughter and screaming and reflecting porosity of the responses to horror and comedy. However, while the sense of measured relief evoked through narrative patterns and pacing is indeed a key element of both laughing and screaming, it is not the primary point of this thesis' interrogation into the cohesive visual and aural aspects of horror and comedy, and does warrant further exploration, building on the work of Hills (2005), Staiger (2000) et al.

The alignment between physical, visceral audience response and the horror genre should herein be explored in terms of its iconography and semiotic representation. These conclusions can then be applied directly in praxis. Progressing from narrative pacing to evoke tension, surprise, fear and relief in the audience, how does horror evoke fear, and crucially, disgust, in the audience through visual and aural representation, narrative, themes and characterisation? According to Bantinaki:

'The aim of generating fear and disgust in the audience, is the response to a supernatural or abnormal being that is perceived as threatening, such as a monster, a psychopath, a zombie, a freak. The formal features of horror – such as narrative structure, camera viewpoint, editing, and musical score – are conducive to serve and heighten this emotional effect' (2012, 1).

And it is here where, in combination of elements, the observer may witness a point of divergence between horror and comedy, in the blend of characterisation, iconography and other aspects of filmic convention. 'Monsters' and 'zombies' (ibid) are the firm territory of the horror genre – as are other iconic fictional characterisations such as vampires, werewolves and ghosts. Although Hills (2005) does rightly argue that these representations do not provide sole evidence of alignment to the horror genre. This thesis has already offered balance in arguing for potential cross genre characterisation, but it is in the explicit demonstration and outcome of threat through a combination of factors, that horror can be most successfully connoted. The seasonally appropriate rehabilitation of The Grinch, for example, removes all threat posed, undermining the fear factor of the character through narrative development (Carroll, 1990, 197). Moreover, while The Grinch

may also engage in many acts of, 'naughty not niceness' (Howard, 2000), none are life-threatening or meaningfully violent in causing actual physical harm.

In the iconography of horror cinema aligned to its fictional monsters, one must, of course, consider the violence, blood, and genre-favoured gore, that horror texts so frequently, violently and explicitly showcase. Carroll describes this requirement of horror as, 'perceived danger to human life and limb' (1990, 200). These visceral, visual (and aural) elements of horror cinema can also lead us to the visceral audience response of disgust aligned to the abject (McRoy in Conrich, 2010, Kristeva, 1982, Douglas, 1966 et al). While, as earlier established, horror cinema does not always rely on such representations of viscosity, instead favouring tension and insidious threat, disgust is significant in probing the porosity of horror and comedy.

According to Hantke:

'Gore...includes the explicitly filmic representation of bloodshed or its direct result. The onscreen defacement or mutilation of and or penetration of objects into a body, as well as the exposure to blood, sinew, organs and or viscera resulting from such actions' (2010, 62).

This visceral excess as a key semiotic identifier of horror cinema and a core element of the genre's iconography, is often a factor in audience expectation of texts within horror's 'flesh and blood genre communities' (Altman, 1999, 160). Argument herein will, however, also position this visual excess as a crucial factor in exploration of similarities between gross-out horror and comedy through abjection, excess and absurdity. Visceral in its active verb-reflective title, 'splatter' is a term coined in reference to the visceral bodily aspects of horror, and to define a particularly explicit subcategory of the genre. McCarty claims, 'splatter intends to invoke in us a feeling of revulsion, disgust' (in Sipos, 2010, 34). Sipos adds:

'Carroll considers impurity necessary for horror, adding that 'nausea, shuddering, revulsion, disgust...are characteristically the product of perceiving something to be noxious or impure. The unnatural is often revolting' (ibid).

'Revolting' (ibid), explicit imagery of spilled bodily fluid is one of the key iconographies of horror cinema, particularly in the post-*Saw* (2004) and *Hostel*

(2006) era of the sub genre of torture porn. However, occurrent throughout horror's history, particularly in the works of key early filmmaker, the Godfather of Gore himself, Herschel Gordon Lewis (1926-2016). His films including the notorious *Blood Feast* (1963), certainly proved provocative to audiences new to extreme bodily denigration and cinema screens veritably dripping in blood and viscera. McRoy argues: 'Extreme close-ups of bodily trauma, medium shots of mutilated or reconfigured corpses, and the application of disorientating editing effects add to a cinema of fragmentation in that the body of the viewer (re)enacts that horror on the screen' (in Conrich, 2010, 179).

Even relatively tame fare (unlike Gordon Lewis whose films still have the potential to shock), such as the Hammer Horror films of the 1950's & 1960's were previously regarded as overtly visceral, violent and gore filled. Hill (1958) wrote of Hammer: 'The imaginative treatment of physical horror is one thing; but most of those new films merely attempt to outdo each other in the flat presentation of revolting details which are clearly regarded as their principal box office assets' (in Silver & Ursini 2000, 57). He describes the content of the Hammer films as having, 'an obsessive concentration on violence' (ibid, 58). Hill was correct in his assertion that filmmakers would go on to attempt to outdo each other in terms of excessive content, and one can only imagine what he might have written on the excessive assaults of Jackson's *Braindead* (1992) or Raimi's *Evil Dead* trilogy (1981-1992). Escalating violatory bodily excess has become one of the primary tools employed by horror filmmakers to evoke disgust and aversion, to provoke outrage and visceral, physical response, moreover, to gain a physical reaction from audiences (Williams in Grant, 2003).

Amzen furthers the 'splatter film' as, 'a filmic text that promotes itself in the marketplace as one of 'horror' and self-consciously revels in the special effects of gore as an art form' (1994, 178). It is an art form which, with the development of digital and practical special effects capabilities, and an increasingly more liberal approach to film censorship, is continuing to stretch the boundaries of excess and outrage, grotesquery and disgust (contrary to Paul's 1994 prediction on gross-out cinema). It will feature heavily in the praxis screenplay through revelry in excess, abjection and absurdity, to be explored further in both thesis and exegesis.

The question must be, then, can the comedic be reflected in such extreme content? If so, how? And can comedy texts use extreme imagery to provoke humour, and moreover disgust? 'The release of distressing effects is the greatest obstacle to the

emergence of the comic' (Freud, 1991, 293). Comedy, with its intent to evoke humour and light relief, should not employ the same horrific imagery as horror, should it? Any cinemagoer who has viewed Baron Cohen's *Grimsby* (2016) might immediately seek dispute with this claim, for its excessive use of bodily fluid and penetrative violence are clearly employed to evoke convulsions of laughter – yet crucially, simultaneous convulsions of horror, both in disgust. It is, however, clearly not a horror text, as will be discussed in Chapter Two.

However, first, having established relevant theoretical perspectives of what signifies horror as an art form (Carroll, 1990) in particular exploration of its intended audience impact and visual excesses, this chapter should first establish what 'comedy' is, in order to expand on points of potential difference and alignment between the genres. According to Paul: 'In both cases, the response is equally vocal, as the response to a horror film can be as raucous and audible as the response to a comedy' (1994, 67). Defining comedy will, moreover, present a challenge, given that it is a subject which appears to have historically troubled academics in provision of a linear definition. 'The critical literature of comedy is slight in comparison with that of tragedy, but it presents an equally bewildering variety of views', claims Olson (1968, 5). Perhaps that challenge in definition hints to the genre's potential for porosity in itself?

What is Comedy?

'The fact is that we have no completely unexceptionable theory of laughter, and this fact is very generally accepted' (Olson, 1968, 7).

'There is no single adequate theory of comedy, despite various efforts to produce an all-embracing account' (King, 2002, 5).

As an entry point into the bewildering and undefined theory of comedy (Hokenson, 2006), it is perhaps most useful to first identify and explore academic definitions of aspects of the comedic. Moreover, it is crucial to extract those aspects, as in the above treatment of horror, which are most relevant to the central argument of this thesis. As Hokenson argues: 'Our understanding of comedy seems less a linear history of successive views than an ever-expanding constellation of concepts circling comedy itself as the sun or the source of their separate orbits' (2006, 15). In constructing his approach to the comedic, early twentieth century theorist, Bergson

entered the debate from the perspective of 'laughter' in *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1911). This position was echoed by Greig in 1923, with *The Psychology of Laughter and Comedy*. Centring the debate on 'laughter' offers an interesting perspective in the context of the thesis, in correlating the genre to the physical, visceral response to the comedic, aligning exploration of horror as a visceral, physically responsive medium. King posits: 'Comedy...has something in common with forms such as horror and the 'weepee', defined to a significant extent according to the emotional reaction it is intended to evoke' (2002, 2). This emotional reaction frequently has a physical accompaniment.

In attempts to define the comedic, preceding Greig, however, was Freud with *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), first published in English in 1960. Greig and Freud align in exploration of the psychology of humour and its cognitive aspects, but Freud extracts the 'joke' from the broader medium of comedy, or 'meaning of the comic' (Hokenson, 2006, 15). In 1957 Northrop Frye explored the narrative structures of comedy, the recurrent patterns, characters and events, with discussion of the tribulations of its comedic characters in their plight towards resolution. According to Frye: 'In ironic comedy we begin to see that art has a lower limit in actual life; this is the condition of savagery, the world in which comedy consists of inflicting pain on a helpless victim, and tragedy in enduring it' (1957, 45). A useful perspective in aligning comedy and horror narratives. Progressing towards more contemporary theorists, Olson, perhaps bravely, attempts to identify *The Theory of Comedy* (1968), and more contemporaneously, Hokenson opts to explore *The Idea of Comedy* (2006). These theorists primarily approach the subject from an historical analytical perspective, gathering and presenting the views of their forebears. According to Hokenson:

'The theory of comedy has received surprisingly little critical attention...the critical study of comic theories has largely been perceived, exploring a single theorist, such as Freud or a comic generation, such as Augustan humourists' (2006, 13).

Between and beyond these key periods and perspectives, comedy is approached from multiple academic standpoints including analysis which distinguishes comedy by its medium i.e. filmic/televisual comedy. In *Popular Film & Television Comedy* Neale & Krutnick argue that comic forms', 'principal function is to be funny and thus occasion laughter' (1990, 44). In *Film Comedy* (2002), King posits that filmic humour

is, 'intended to make us laugh or amuse us' (8). Further, central to this thesis, different sub genres of the comedic are also academically explored, most relevantly in analyses of 'dark comedy' specifically in Gehring's *American Dark Comedy: Beyond Satire* (1996) and *Last Laugh: Strange Humours of Cinema* (Pomerance, 2013).

While academic consensus may be illusive, what key theoretical perspectives *can* be gathered on comedy, laughter and what constitutes the comedic? Elements of theory can be interrogated to first establish what defines comedy, and further, what relates the comedic to the intent of this thesis in establishing correlation between the comedic and horrific. To begin, it is useful to explore laughter, the physical, relief response to the comedic, primarily through the theories of Freud and Bergson. According to Freud:

'In laughter...the conditions are present under which a sum of psychical energy which has hitherto been used for cathexis is allowed free discharge...laughter at a joke is an indication of pleasure, we shall be inclined to relate this pleasure to the lifting of this cathexis which has previously been present' (1905, 200).

Freud posits laughter as a relief from repression, indicating the associated pleasure therein. He furthers in positioning humour as a defence, 'by finding a means of withdrawing the energy from the release of unpleasure that is already in preparation and of transforming it, by discharge, into pleasure' (ibid, 299). Aristotle similarly states: 'The spectator's pleasure in the theatre results from...feeling the alleviation of the painful emotions aroused during the performance' (in Hokenson, 2006, 26). These perspectives draw comparison to theories of enjoyment of horror as a release of tension and indeed Wood has written much on horror in relation to repression and the 'Return of the Repressed' (1978). Freud's theories build this argument in attributing the ability of jokes to liberate and rebel against authority and associated pressures (1905, 149). This is furthered by Frye who defines comedy as a movement from 'one kind of society to another' which resolves with 'usurpers in charge of the play's society' (1957, 163). Concurrently, Bartsch would later describe horror as 'protest' against 'norms of society' (in Anderson and Anderson, 2007, 129).

To experience the visceral, physical experience of the laugh or the scream, is to experience release, regardless of whether the material which releases that emotion

is in paradox. Paul describes laughter at horror as, 'recognition of the pleasure of screaming itself' (1994, 67). Weitz posits that humour is just one of the stimuli which can provoke laughter. He adds: 'Although laughter may be considered one of the most extravagant physical effects one person can have on another without touching them, it can also be brought about by discomfort' (2009, 3). A relevant element of Freud's analysis of the joke is his exploration of the disgusting in comedy and 'gallows humour' (1905, 294). Already established as a key meeting point for horror and comedy, disgust aligned to darker forms of humour will be explored further herein.

Bergson echoes Freud's theories of laughter as a release of repression, positing the 'rigidity' on the surface of society clashing with the 'suppleness' of inner life: 'The ceremonial side of social life must, therefore, always include a latent comic effect, which is only waiting for an opportunity to burst into full view' (1911, 44). The active verb 'burst' could also be considered to reflect the physical response of the burst of laughter, which accompanies the joke and the release of laughter. Weitz writes of the laughter response as a, 'sort of bodied earthquake, often brought about by humour's successful attempt to topple, at least momentarily, our petrified psychic patterns' (2009, 64). Notably, it is also possible to burst into a scream, a pressure gauge releasing a jet of tension whether through laughter or screaming. Weitz further explores an inner versus exterior, societally dictated life, the comedic juxtaposition of the two positions and the associated rebellious transgression/pressure release (ibid).

In relation to the narrative structure of comedy, Bergson defines, "methods of light comedy", as patterns of repetition, inversion and reciprocal interference of series' (1911, 89). He furthers that exaggeration, 'is always comic when prolonged and especially when systematic, then, indeed, it appears as one method of transposition' (ibid, 126). King agrees here that incongruity and exaggeration are key modes of representation in comedy (2002, 5). (As does *Friday the 13th* (1980) director Sean Cunningham in *Interviews with Filmmakers & Fans on Genre, Horror & Comedy*). Exaggeration through repetition is a repeated narrative element of the comedic.

Consider, for example, Michael Frayn's 1982 comedy play *Noises Off*, filmed in 1992 by Peter Bogdanovich. The play, in three acts, repeats the same situation three times. Firstly, in the relatively amicable, yet slightly chaotic rehearsal of the first act of fictional sex farce *Nothing On*. Secondly, one month later in a live

performance of that same first act, presented from the backstage perspective, where seething rivalries simmer between cast members and threaten to spill onto the stage. By the third act, reverted to front of house perspective, both the company's relationships and their attempts at professional presentation, have descended into chaos, and the performance descends into farce. That farce derives from the repetition of dialogue and its declining accuracy, blundered and eventually non-existent, now familiar stage direction, and marked diversion from established characterisation. All achieved through repetition, exaggeration and a form of absurd excess.

Repetition and exaggeration similarly play a key role in the horror genre. Although a role which must be adjusted to avoid stagnancy: 'A good horror movie is in many ways like a good joke. Revisit the punchline too many times and it wears out' (King, 2012, xiii). If one considers the slasher genre (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2002, Clover, 1993, Dika, 1990 et al.), repetition and the build to a crescendo of exaggeration are key factors in creating the horrific and, in cohesion with comedy, excessive. Slashers offer a narrative repetition which, 'respected genre critic Alan Jones once described...as 'comfort horror', part of its charm being its lethal predictability' (Kerswell, 2011, 12). From *Black Christmas* (Bob Clarke, 1974) (and its giallo predecessors which could be argued to be proto slashers), through the boon decade of the slasher film, the 1980s, to *Happy Death Day 2U* (Christopher Landon, 2019), slashers operate on the repetition of murder set pieces (Snyder, 2008, 80). These essential 'numbers' (Freeland, 2000, 255) showcase the killer murdering the cast, 'in a range of increasingly gruesome and inventive ways' (Kerswell, 2011, 12).

Indeed this repetition, invention and increase in gratuity of violence can be the source of humour in itself. The building to a crescendo of the murderous rampage can almost be absurd in its exaggeration and increasing levels of semiotic and aural excess. This cohesive link in patterns of escalation between comedy and horror will be crucial in praxis, aligning the script to slasher texts through its narrative tropes and characterisations, and in escalating murder 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26). Comedy, 'is indicative of an excessive degree of some emotion' (Olson, 1968, 11). Comedy is aligned with the exaggerated, excessive, and so, indeed, is horror, while both showcase narratives of escalation.

Excess can be intrinsically linked to absurdity, and absurdity is traditionally aligned to the comedic. Olson states: 'Comedy is the imitation of a worthless action, complete and of a certain magnitude in language, with pleasing accessories differing from part to part, enacted, not narrated, effecting a kata stasis of concern through the absurd' (1968, 46). Bergson's theory of inversion can also provide a key position in relating the absurd to the comedic: 'Picture to yourself certain characters in a certain situation; if you reverse the situation and invert the roles, you obtain a comic scene' (1911, 94). Indeed, many comedic films have taken this absurd inversion approach as their very premise, from mother-daughter body swap comedy *Freaky Friday* (Gary Nelson, 1976, Mark Waters, 2003) to overworked father-slacker single man body-switch *The Change Up* (David Dobkin, 2011). Body-swap is in itself absurd, and notably, also potentially horrific. Consider *The Fly* (Kurt Neumann, 1958, David Cronenberg, 1986) for example, where the genes of the human body are swapped with those of the aforementioned insect with horrific and disgusting result.

This subversive approach is explored by Neale & Krutnick who label comedy 'inherently subversive' and argue:

'Comedy necessarily trades upon the surprising, the improper, the unlikely and the transgressive in order to make us laugh. It plays on deviations both from socio-cultural norms and from the rules that govern other genres and aesthetic regimes' (1990, 3).

A relevant perspective in identifying cohesion between comedy and horror, often regarded the place of the 'improper' (ibid), and one which will be further explored in Chapter Three. They add that the notion of, 'unlike, or a departure from a norm, underlies a great deal of comic theory that stresses incongruity...and surprise' (1990, 69). Neale and Krutnick themselves further theories of repression, and more appropriately, comedy as the point at which repression is overturned, and perhaps turned into expression in the form of the 'burst' (ibid) of the laugh. They describe 'gags and jokes' as, 'the appropriate site for the inappropriate, the proper place for indecorum, the field in which the unlikely is likely to occur' (1990, 91). A description which could equally be applied to the siting of horror content.

King similarly addresses the transgressive, and indeed, subversive aspects of the comedic 'mode' (a term which he favours over 'genre' in relation to the slippery

definition of comedy) (2002, 2). He posits: 'Comedy is often disruptive, it messes things up and undermines 'normal' and conventions...absurd behaviour is permitted, expected even' (ibid, 20). As comedy and horror overturn repression they share subversive and transgressive qualities which are key elements in their narrative and thematic cohesion. Paul describes this as, 'a discourse of inversion, one that constantly changes its parameters' (1994, 421). In selecting the Townswomen's Guild as the counterfoil to the supernatural killer in the praxis script, transgression, subversion, and the absurd are intended to be brought to the forefront of the script's narrative and semiotic implication. As King suggests of comedy narrative, it, 'tends to involve departures of a particular kind...from what are considered to be the 'normal' routines of the social group in question' (2002, 5). The horrific events which the Townswomen will endure in praxis, and the increasingly gruesome methods of their murders, will aim to connote the comedic and absurd within the overarching context of the horrific.

King, and indeed Weitz's theories will recur in Chapter Three in exploration of the excessive, grotesque and carnivalesque. Moreover, analysis will return to those theorists, including Paul (1994), Gehring (1996) and Pomerance (2013), who have attempted to delineate and analyse gross-out, dark and disturbing humour, and indeed, to varying degrees, comedy horror, as their focus point in exploring comedy. Their theories will be applied to the findings of case study analysis in exploration of abjection, excess and absurdity in horror and comedy. According to Weitz: 'Black comedy is a genre that respects nothing, including the values of its audience' (2009, 49). Paul writes of the 'oppositional stance' of gross-out material:

'Gross is an adjective appropriate to an elitist view of popular culture....gross should come to connote something good and that gross-out (which seemingly has the aim of making the audience feel the grossness in themselves) should transform disgust to pleasure' (1994, 35).

It is this claim that tantalises further exploration of the 'improper' (ibid) aspects of both comedy and horror. One of the values of its audience, which horror comedy or dark comedy can fail to respect is genre expectation itself. If comedy is to be positioned as 'light relief' (King, 2002, 2), how can it be aligned with the disturbing imagery and connotation of horror, those signifiers of the intent to scare and horrify? Preliminary points of cohesion have already been identified in analysis of definition of 'horror' and 'comedy' in this chapter. Given these, and further to be presented

findings of cohesion through direct analysis, can the two defined genres fully sit distinct from each other? Moreover, on a financial level, how can so many films combining both horror and comedy have been so successful with audiences? *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004), for example, celebrated a box office return of \$30 million (Desta, 2019). Paul points to the success of La Theatre du Grand-Guignol (1897-1962) in establishing that, 'the alliance between the grossest horror and farcical comedy is far from new' (1994, 67). Audiences are clearly highly favourable to combining laughs and scares, and aspects of cohesion between those two responses can clearly already be witnessed in exploring relevant core elements of their narrative and visual representations.

Chapter 2: *It's Alive! Horror & Comedy Case Study Analysis*

Introduction

'While sometimes accomplishing similar goals, horror and comedy appear to occur at opposite ends of the dramatic spectrum, with a vast unbridgeable gulf between' (Miller & Van Riper, 2016, xiv).

'Ironically, both comedy and horror can feel 'safest' to us when they are at their most extreme, and the chaos besieging the characters is at its most complete...' (ibid, xv).

Having established relevant thematic, narrative and iconographic traits which define horror (Hantke, 2019, Sipos, 2010, Paul, 1994, Carroll, 1990, Wood, 1979 et al.), and comedy (Hokenson, 2006, King, 2002, Neale & Krutnick, 1990, Bergson, 1911, Freud, 1905 et al.), and exploring their definition, categorisation, characterisation and problematic aspects (Selbo, 2015, Lacey, 2001, Stam, 2000, Altman, 1999, Chandler, 1977 et al.), it is now crucial to build evidence of cohesion between the two genres through direct case study analysis. Key texts in the gross-out style have been identified for analysis, relevant sequences, scenes and shots identified, and arguments will be constructed around direct findings to further evidence of narrative, thematic and semiotic cohesion between horror and comedy.

The key texts selected for direct qualitative analysis are the horror (comedy) films *Braindead* (1992), *Evil Dead* (1981) and *Evil Dead 2* (1987), comedy films *There's Something About Mary* (1998), *Grimsby* (2016) and *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (1983), and the television programme *Nighty Night* (2004-2005). These texts span five decades of film and television production and have been marketed and defined by their producers and creators, audiences and critics, as horror, comedy, or a hybrid of horror and comedy. Yet all contain 'gross-out' (Paul, 1994) content and connote an explicit intent to provoke disgust – that already established point of potential cohesion between horror and comedy. Research methods employed to explore and interpret the texts and their meaning in order to provide critical analysis, are semiotic analysis (Saussure, 2011, Chandler, 2007, Hodge & Kress, 1988 et al.) within an overall research framework of close reading (Brummet, 2019, Edgar-Hunt, 2010, Marland & Rawle, 2010 et al.). Historical analysis (Berger, 2016, Hansen & Machin, 2013, Wollen, 1998 et al.) is employed to interrogate the intertextual

historical development of the horror comedy genre and direct examples of intertextuality incorporated into case study material. The findings of this direct research can then inform praxis in the creation of an original horror and comedy blended script incorporating gross-out content.

Methodology

'Film, like any 'language' is composed of signs...Filmmakers and audience share an understanding of the sign systems (codes and conventions) that allow film to communicate meanings' (Edgar-Hunt, Marland & Rawle, 2010, 11).

The semiotic research method has been employed to enable visual and aural analysis of case study material for, 'most semioticians emphasise that...film and television involve both visual and aural codes' (Chandler, 2007, 164). Aural presentation, and the intended excesses of absurd and abject visual and aural material, will prove a significant cohesive trait of both comedy and horror. Edgar-Hunt, Marland and Rawle posit that 'film has its own language' constructed of 'signs' (2010, 12-13). They further:

'In the specific context of cinema, a 'sign' is anything large or small, which we find ourselves responding to...a movie is a matrix of interrelated signs erected by the filmmaker to guide the audience through their journey' (ibid, 18-19).

Semiotic interrogation of filmmaker intent and anticipated audience response, is particularly useful in exploration of the earlier presented evidence of horror and comedy as markedly audience-responsive genres. Edgar-Hunt, Marland and Rawle add: 'A movie is a highly complex act of communication and no act of communication is effective unless it takes into account how the recipient will receive it' (ibid, 18). It is therefore crucial to consider the anticipated audience response in relation to the connotation of the visual/aural evidence in the case study material. The analysis will be interwoven with theories of genre specifically in relation to iconography, the visual elements which can be employed to inform genre construction and audience expectation (Lacey, 2001, Neale, 2000, Altman, 1990 et al.). Deconstruction of mise-en-scene will aid exploration of visual and aural evidence, reflecting both filmmaker construction and intended audience consumption of the text.

According to Berger: 'The conventions of codes represent a social dimension in semiotics: a code is a set of practices familiar to users of the medium operating within a broad cultural framework' (2016, 148). Semiotic analysis will form the key analytical element in providing a close reading of the material as, 'an attempt to understand the socially shared meanings that are supported by words, images, objects, actions and messages,' (Brummett, 2019, 6). These cohesive research methods enable a 'critical analysis' and 'deeper understanding' (ibid, 8) of the case study material, and a, 'mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its messages' (ibid, 2). However, there exists, 'no escaping the historical dimension, whether it is establishing a sense of context to give your research grounding' (Berger, 2016, 227), and thus interrogation of historical context and significance is crucial to interpretation. Moreover, as Berger furthers, it is, 'natural to use the past to interpret the present because we believe the past has influenced the present' (ibid, 220). Intertextuality will offer much evidence of connoted intent of reception, in close reading. As Allen notes, meaning, 'becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates' (2011, 7). Intertextuality will provide a key tool in praxis in horror comedy script writing, thus thesis analysis will inform praxis, to be reflected upon in gnosis.

However it is also crucial to recognise the limitations of the semiotic research method. The semiotic researcher analysing film, must recognise these limitations, and be cautious to account for the level of subjectivity involved in visual and aural interpretation. Wollen posits on interpreting symbolism, that, 'there is no objective code, therefore there can only be subjective impressions' (1998, 105), furthering, 'the world lives in the mind of those who use it' (ibid, 83). Treadwell argues, 'the possibility of multiple interpretations' (2014, 234). Ryan and Lenos recommend that: 'It is important in doing film analysis that you remain flexible and open to multiple semantic possibilities of film technique' (2012, 11). This critical balance should be recognised and reflected in semiotically deconstructing case study material. Deconstruction of mise-en-scene and application of genre theory relating to iconography will be applied to support interpretation and argument in relation to the interpretation of semiotic meaning in visual and aural content.

Moreover, as Wollen argues: 'In the cinema it is quite clear, indexical and iconic aspects are by far the most powerful...the symbolic is limited and secondary' (1998, 97). The scenes selected for analysis have been chosen in correlation to their literally explicit visual representations or signs. To consider Peirce, a 'sign is either

an icon, an index or a symbol' (ibid, 83). In the case of the 'icon', 'the relationship between signifier and signified is not arbitrary but is one of resemblance or likeness'. Index, 'is a sign by virtue of its existential bond between itself and its object.' Symbol, 'corresponds to Saussure's arbitrary sign...Peirce speaks of a 'contract' by virtue of which the symbol is a sign' (ibid). Primary analysis herein will centre on the indexical and iconic, thereby reducing interpretive subjectivity. Moreover, through semiotic analysis, the argument will be formed that explicit and graphic content is a key element, in more than one sense, in exploring the case study material, and a key point of identification in constructing the argument for horror and comedy cohesion and porosity.

Analysis of *Braindead* (1992)

'Horrific imagery and humour are often interlaced' (Carroll, 2015, 202).

In commencing analysis of explicit, graphic and disgusting cinematic and televisual content, Peter Jackson's *Braindead* (1992), provides a justifiably explicit point of entry. *Braindead*, also known as *Dead Alive*, is rated 18 in the UK by the British Board of Film Classification, with apparently explicit justification (BBFC, 2019). Reports in the BBFC archive, however, indicate that the film's extravagant gross-out blend of abject and excessive horror with absurd comedy, led to the classification panel initially debating a 15 certificate:

'There is some discussion in the reports about a possible 15 certificate but experience of the opinions of young people, along with an awareness of the level of horror that audiences in 1992 would expect from a 15 film, led to the decision that an 18 certificate - uncut - was most appropriate for the 'astonishing amount of gore' and "excesses (comic as they are) of the delirious final reel" (BBFC, 2019).

The Board itself recognised the 'excesses', 'astonishing amount of gore' and 'comic' implications of the film, and it is noteworthy that it is the 'comic' (ibid) aspects of the excessive horror which almost led to a reduced classification of one of the singularly most explicit, gore and blood-drenched films widely released. Evidence which embeds justification of the choice of *Braindead* for close analysis in the context of the thesis in exploring the porosity of horror and comedy. It should be noted that in countries such as Finland, Germany, Singapore, and the U.S, *Braindead* was either

banned, or heavily cut (NZ Onscreen, 2008), those 'excesses' (BBFC, 2019), whether comedic or not, proving too much for film boards in other regions.

Braindead relates the story of a maternally bullying yet societally demurer mother, who is bitten by an infected Sumatran rat monkey and transforms into a flesh-craving, undead creature. Jackson employs multiple comedic techniques, including slapstick and satire, yet it is arguably one of the most blood, viscera and gore-drenched horror films to have ever been released, incorporating key moments of tension and fear through horrific characterisation and framing, aligned with horror genre iconography. Indeed *Braindead*, 'sets the record for the most fake blood ever used in a movie' (Hallenbeck, 2009, 188). Although the consistent comedic elements of *Braindead* combine to such a degree to enable marketers, journalists, the BBFC and audiences to label the film a horror comedy, the sheer excesses of violence, viscera, and reservoirs of blood, ensure that the film showcases an abundance of horror over comedy. Moreover the trailer, the studio-produced product of marketing and management of audience expectation, boasted: 'Trimark Pictures presents a modern masterpiece of horror' (Trimark, Pictures, 1992).

In 2018, *Braindead* was listed as one of the most violent films ever made by UK film magazine *Total Film*. It kept company on the list with *Irreversible* (Gaspar Noe, 2002), *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (John McNaughton, 1986) and *Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975), among others, none of which aligns to the comedic, and moreover, could be argued as the antithesis (Total Film, 2018). In this context, the BBFC's discussion around a 15 rating on release, is put into sharp focus: a focus which begs the question of the relationship between horror, comedy and excess. Crucially, in *Braindead's* excess, abjection and absurdity, lie the crucial points of cohesion between comedy and horror in gross-out material.

Multiple scenes in *Braindead* present case study material valuable to the argument of this thesis. In exploring excess, it is however, most useful to analyse the sequence of the BBFC-recognised frenzied finale, in which the lead character Lionel finds himself and his girlfriend trapped in a house full of undead monstrosities. Moreover, the sequence connotes intertextuality in a scene reminiscent of Jackson's previous film *Bad Taste* (1987) in which the unlikely lead character played by Jackson himself, used a chainsaw to literally tear straight through the villain, from the head down, gorily emerging from the monster's dissected anus. This sequence was

in itself a suitably iconic moment in furthering the abject excesses of horror (comedy) cinema, more so given the director's remarkable cameo.

In *Braindead*'s cumulative finale, facing certain bloody defeat, another unlikely hero must also employ garden tools to overcome his monstrous foe. The film employs the juxtaposition of mundanity with the abject and excessive, to create the horror and comedy aligned absurd: the unlikely weapon here is a lawnmower. (This juxtaposition also forms a central conative element of the praxis script). In a key scene of the finale, Lionel faces the monstrous undead melee wielding the oversized lawnmower, the sharply rotating blades of which he thrusts towards the assembled creatures, camera, and audience, connoting bloody murderous intent to all. Close reading of these key crescendo-building scenes of lawnmower massacre will provide the first direct case study evidence of cohesion between horror and comedy through abjection, excess and absurdity.

In his frenetic finale, Jackson choreographs the sequence as almost dance-like ('like a song and dance number in a musical', Paul, 1994, 307), as Lionel ploughs lawnmower-first into the throng of monstrous creatures. As the rotary blades frame the shot, gallons of bright red blood cover the characters and set, limbs fly randomly, and a pink putty-like substance, the gore of the dismembered creatures, graphically and excessively engulfs the frame. Hands and other body parts are thrust into the blades and detached from their owners, and as Lionel slips and slides into the melee atop blood and gore, he kicks a dismembered, yet still alive, head across the throng into the kitchen. The depiction of the speed of the head's journey and its facial expression, blend the horrific and comedic in the combination of the abject and absurd.

Hiding in the kitchen is his girlfriend Paquita, who lifts the still watching and comedically responsive head into the blender, the innocuous kitchen item which is the source of many excessive and absurdly gory sequences in cinema. 'Household objects are turned into arms' (Bakhtin, 1984, 43), as they will be in this thesis' praxis. Notably this blender is covered in a lumpy yellow substance suggestive of vomit, enhancing the disgusting semiotic representation of the abject. She switches the blender on, producing an excessive splatter of bright red blood, which covers the formerly middle-class connoted suburban kitchen. Little wonder, then, that Hallenbeck describes Jackson as a 'splatstick auteur' (2009, 187).

See Figure 3. The following scene cuts back to Lionel, framed within the context of the formerly genteel decoration of his family home. He approaches a framed picture of the queen, hanging surprisingly untouched on the wall to semiotically remind the viewer of the humour of the paradox of gentility within the context of outrageous gory excess (again to be reflected in praxis.) He turns it, averting her Majesty's view of the further abject excess which is to follow. In the subsequent sequence he continues his graphic mission in one of the bloodiest sequences in cinema history. Indexical and iconographical imagery is key here, little decoding of connotation is required when a man, drenched in blood and gore, cuts directly into a creature's face and splits it asunder, while all manner of bodily parts are shredded in close-up in the blades of a lawnmower. The camera is positioned so that gore and blood assaults the viewer directly as it flies into the lens. Meanwhile, in the now gore-drenched kitchen setting, Paquita jabs a detached arm into the blender, blending (pun intended) the excesses of the abject with the absurd, and the horrific and comedic.

Aurally, the accompanying score is that of a waltz, a musical cue which almost guides Lionel's macabre lawnmower-partnered dance (not unlike that of Leatherface at the end of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974)), as he slides and glances over body parts and blood to decimate his attackers. As close-up shots reveal putty-drenched limbs piling up on the floor, and Lionel is showered with outrageous amounts of grue, he screams and laughs hysterically, overcome by the sheer absurdity and abjection of the scene in which he is the unlikely hero. This scene is mirrored in *Evil Dead 2* (1987) which will be analysed further in this chapter. These characters themselves reflect on the porosity of horror and comedy, of screaming and laughing simultaneously.

Back in the kitchen, an abject creature with an absurd and disgustingly disengaged spine, blunders towards Paquita while she battles the half-blended hand, which is now absurdly fighting back. In a close-shot sequence, which ensures that the scenes truly are graphic, she pulls the creature's head and spinal column free, spits in its face (another societally connoted abject fluid added to the melee), swings it round her head and smashes it into the kitchen counter. Blood and the putty-like gore explode all over the already abject kitchen. The sequence finally closes with Lionel in the hallway, he spins around, the lawnmower still hanging from his neck and a mountain of body parts at his feet. He has mowed all of his foes to death. Or so it seems. In cohesion, with horror narrative tropes, Jackson has yet more

escalating abjection and absurdity for Lionel and Paquita to contend with before the closing credits. Such material supports analysis of *Braindead* as a film which explicitly, with the intention of double meaning, combines excess, abjection and the absurd for horrific but also comedic purpose. To memorable effect. According to Hallenbeck, to Jackson comedy and horror are 'two sides of the same coin' (2009, 189).

To offer a rounded analysis of horror and comedy as genres which seek a physical response in their audiences, one must enquire what response *Braindead* invokes in its audience? In a notable review on the *Internet Movie Data Base*, user El gato 2 commented: 'Overall I give this cinematic masterpiece the highest review, me throwing up in the bathroom afterwards from absolute disgust' (IMDB, 1999). Mission accomplished? This visceral, disgusted, in itself abject, response which this gross-out film provokes, is what this audience member at least, considers the criteria to declare it a 'masterpiece' (ibid).

Gelder claims that there are three ways in which a horror film is work of 'abjection': The first, he argues, is that:

'Horror film abounds in images of abjection, foremost of which is the corpse, whole and mutilated, followed by an array of bodily wastes such as blood, vomit, saliva, sweat, tears and putrefying flesh. In terms of Kristeva's notion of the border, when we say...a horror film 'made me sick' or 'scared the shit out of me' we are actually foregrounding that specific horror film as a 'work of abjection' (2000, 66).

Shaviro argues that horror films, 'focus obsessively upon the physical reactions of bodies onscreen, the better to assault and agitate the bodies of the audience' (1993, 100). He confesses to being, 'fixated upon the terrifying instant of transmogrification: the moment of tearing apart of limb from limb, the twitching extremities, and the bloody, slippery oozing of the internal organs' (ibid, 99). The physical assault, this implies, is a paradoxically a pleasurable one. And is delivered in spades in this frenzied finale sequence. *Braindead's* director, Peter Jackson himself agrees that his film is 'disgusting', and in a recent interview threatened a return to that disgust in his more mainstream contemporary filmmaking:

'Oh I'm happy to be disgusting again if the right project comes along...It would be interesting to see how disgusting (co-writer Fran Walsh and I) could be in

our older age compared to our younger years because we've learned a few things since then' (Bloody Disgusting, 2018).

What might Paul (1994) have made of that threat of escalation? As Miller argues: 'Even as the disgusting repels, it rarely does so without capturing our attention. It imposes itself on us' (1997, x). It would appear that that imposition is sought by filmmakers and received as a welcome one by audiences, no matter how abject. Noteworthy in itself, is the response to this 'masterpiece' (IMDB, 1999) is the production of a potentially abject bodily fluid from an audience member themselves. This visceral, disgusted, disgusting, and in itself, societally categorised as abject, response is offered as the highest form of praise to the abject, visceral excess represented onscreen. Part of the absurdity of disgusting cinematic material could be that such a potentially negative and physically unpleasant reaction would be both sought and celebrated, let alone deemed the reasoning in declaring the film a 'masterpiece' (ibid).

Abject, excessive and absurd representations of the spilling of bodily fluids and matter have been identified as signs capable of aligning horror and comedy, and in the paradoxical pleasure/pain responses which they are capable of provoking. In order to further this examination of bodily assault and representation of abject bodily matter as a point of semiotic genre hybridity, analysis must shift temporarily away from the horror genre, and direct towards gross-out comedy. *Grimsby* (2016) is a film which contains no genre-aligned, iconographical elements of traditional horror, yet which is highly likely to provoke audiences to look away in disgust and/or potentially gag/vomit through the invocation of disgust and outrage. Furthermore, in *Grimsby*, that disgust is frequently invoked through the absurd portrayal of an excess of body fluids or abject bodily matter – although, and in congruence with the Farrelly Brother's *There's Something About Mary* (1998), this bodily fluid is not blood. Analysis will first consider *There's Something About Mary* as a key text in relation to absurd portrayal of that potentially abject fluid, before moving to consideration of *Grimsby's* most notoriously excessive scene.

Analysis of *There's Something About Mary*, *Grimsby*, *Nighty Night* & *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*

'I am of the view that semen is of all the sex-linked disgust substances the most revolting to men: not because it shares a pathway with urine, not even

because it has other proven disgust features (it is slimy, sticky and viscous), but because it appears under conditions that are dignity-destroying' (Miller, 1997, 103).

There's Something About Mary (1998) is a film which is intrinsically aligned with the absurd and abject portrayal of semen. As King notes: 'The major frissons and talking point moments in *There's Something About Mary* and *American Pie*, concern the insufficiently controlled or inappropriate emission of semen' (2002, 65). Writer-directors The Farrelly Brothers continue to shock and amuse mainstream audiences most famously through one key sequence in which comedy derives from the potentially abject and absurd application of that bodily fluid. According to Brottman:

'That kind of comedy is abject in the way Kristeva (1982) uses the term....an attempt to rid oneself (of those aspects) that seem frightening or alien – things like blood, urine, semen, faeces...and other kinds of bodily detritus. One of the ways to react to abjection; according to Kristeva, is with horror. Another is with laughter' (2004, 144).

In the infamous sequence in the box office-dominating comedy which established the brothers as leading purveyors of gross-out comedy, lead character Mary, unwittingly uses potential suitor, Ted's, semen as unwanted and overly effective replacement for hair gel. The sequence begins with an establishing scene in which Ted is connoted to be masturbating in the bathroom before his date with Mary. The character thrusts his arm frantically and gurns into the bathroom mirror, reaching a grunting and eye squeezing crescendo, and guiding viewers to decode the semiotic meaning of his rhythmic action, while offering no actual explicit representation. Semiotic analysis of the character's frantic searching and lexical analysis of the dialogue informs us that upon ejaculation, Ted is unable to find the ejaculate. 'Where the hell did it go?' he asks, his eyes surveying the room. The aural cue of the doorbell sounds, implying Mary's arrival, and he must cut short his search to greet his guest.

In the next scene he opens the door to Mary, the camera angle framed so that the left-hand side of Ted cannot be seen by the viewer. After exchanged pleasantries Mary asks, 'what is that?' and the camera shot moves full frontal on Ted to reveal a large white dangling effluence on his ear – clearly the semiotic interpretation in audience reception and filmmaker intent, is that this is the errant semen from the previous masturbatory session. 'Is that...' she asks, tempting the audience to the

assumption that she shares the knowledge that it is semen. 'Is that hair gel?' she finishes. Mary reaches out, takes the substance and runs her hand through her hair. 'Great, I could use some, I just ran out.'

The scene cuts to a restaurant setting in which the camera, which follows a friendly waitress to the table, reminding the viewer of the inappropriate context for the potentially exposed bodily fluid, then rests on a distracted Ted. The audience is able to decode through his awkward expression and gaze diverted in the region of her hairline, that something is amiss with an out-of-shot Mary's appearance. Interpretation of the earlier connoted activity suggests that this relates to the use of the unconventional hair product. When the scene cuts to a shot of Mary, it is dominated by her hair, the fringe of which stands upright in a rigid, absurdly enlarged semen-induced quiff. She carries on talking, oblivious, while Ted stumbles to maintain conversation. **See Figure 4**

Rated 15 by the BBFC 'for strong language and sexual references' (BBFC, 2019), *There's Something About Mary* was however rated R, 'for strong comic sexual content and language' in the US on cinematic release (Motion Pictures Association of America, 2019). It was the fourth highest grossing (an appropriate word) film globally of 1998 (Box Office Mojo, 2019), perhaps embodying Bakhtin's theories that, 'the comic, in general, is based upon the contrast between the feeling of pleasure and displeasure' (1965, 301), in 'the inappropriate' (ibid, 305). The scene became iconic and much discussed among audiences, primarily due its combination of abjection and absurdity in 'the inappropriate' (ibid).

The comedy derived from the abject and disgusting in the comedic use of bodily fluid, however in this instance, the use was relatively in excessive. Although King (2002) described *Mary* as, 'transgressive of representational norms for anything other than explicit sex films' (66), the absurdly excessive use of semen (animal in this instance), would arrive in truly abject form two decades later in the Sacha Baron Cohen scripted comedy *Grimsby* (2016). Although other comedies which flaunt outrage alongside humour, such as the *American Pie* series (1999-2012) and *Freddy Got Fingered* (Tom Green, 2001) would also incorporate this particular bodily fluid as a source of humour through disgust. *Grimsby*, however, furthered the level of excess and abjection to a crescendo of abjection and absurdity, which veered more explicitly toward the horrific.

Grimsby

Actor and writer Sacha Baron Cohen is noted for his provocative material and challenges towards societal constructs of decency and decorum (Blouke, 2015, Lewis, 2015). In *Borat* (Larry Charles, 2006), for example, his self-portrayed, culturally naive, title character defecates into a bag at a refined dinner party; or at least the audience is semiotically guided to interpret the sign of the bag and its contents as the product of defecation. He then brings the bag and its abject contents to the dinner table enquiring politely what he should do with the faecal by-product. Again, the abject and disgusting in the form of bodily waste is employed to provoke absurd humour, furthered in the juxtaposition of the demure and abject. In the documentary-style filmmaking, neither the hosts or other party guests shared that sense of comedy, nor were they in on the joke.

In the same film, the titular character nakedly wrestled his excessively hirsute and overweight manager through a well-maintained hotel building with an audience of fellow guests, again furthering that juxtaposition. His face is in one particularly abject and absurd scene, thrust into the older man's anus. It is not mere bodily functions, but societally constructed abject bodies that are used in both comedy, and indeed, horror, to provoke a similar audience reaction. Paul argues: 'The sense of the body as an object of revulsion...had become one of the most distinctive features of gross-out horror' (1994, 350). Bodies can be equally as revulsive in comedy. In *Grimsby*, a non-documentary style film co-written by Baron Cohen, abject bodily functions and actions being self delivered or externally delivered on bodies, was furthered to a notably absurd and abject level of excess, and thus worthy of interrogation herein.

Grimsby is a film which can be interpreted to have the intent to offend and disgust at its gross-out core – yet crucially, to also amuse through its own absurdity. The primarily horror-aligned iconographic bodily function of blood does make an appearance in *Grimsby*, not in excess, but in one single drop, a drop of blood from a young boy with HIV for whom a charity fundraiser is being held. The fundraiser is attended by *Harry Potter's* Daniel Radcliffe, played by an obvious look-alike to further the intertextual humour. When the boy is accidentally shot the drop of blood is filmed in slow motion, a deliberate use of *mise-en-scene* which parodies thriller conventions of a bullet in slow motion approaching its victim, and into the mouth of 'Radcliffe' himself. However, the sequence of scenes which offer the most provocative level of excess in the liberal dispersal of bodily fluid, are situated in the

unique and immediately absurd and abject location of the inside of an elephant's vagina. Where *Something About Mary* may have offered a relatively subdued portrayal of that fluid, *Grimsby* proved itself a firmer 'testing of cultural boundaries and restrictions' (King, 2002, 67).

In a sequence of establishing shots, the slovenly Nobby (Baron Cohen) and his suave spy brother Sebastian, are under military attack in the African desert. The sequence is framed in an exposed and barren desert landscape, connoting that the film's central characters have no option for cover. Standing atop a hillside Sebastian declares 'There's nowhere to hide'. Nobby claims to have an idea and they jump down, the subsequent scene implying both urgency and threat as a large number of armed militants rush across the landscape towards the camera. A travelling herd of elephants can be viewed behind them. The following shot reveals a slippered foot (Nobby's) disappearing into the rear quarters of one of the elephants: the only available hiding place was to take refuge inside the vagina (although at the initial connotation it could also be the anus), of one of the elephants. Obviously. The shot of Nobby's foot disappearing into the animal, wiggling as it is engulfed, is an almost reverse-birth symbolism; the semiotic representation is of both abjection and absurdity.

See Figure 5. Moreover, in a later shot, Nobby will poke his head from the gaping vagina to check whether the enemy has retreated. This scene is utterly grotesque, reflecting Bakhtin's theory that grotesque images represent an unclesing of the act of birth: 'They are contrary to the classic image of the finished, completed man' (1984, 25). The physical entry of a human being into an animal is, in itself, a horrific image and concept, and aligns to the aspect of Douglas' (1966) portrayal of the abject as transgressing in/external spaces and the boundaries of propriety aligned to them. Douglas, 'draws attention to cultural fears about 'pollution', where forms that are ordinarily distinct from one another, now inhabit the same space' (Gelder, 2000, 81). Which can be read literally in this scene.

Although *Grimsby* contains no traditional horror iconography, and crucially the character responses guide the audience response of laughter, the very concept in itself hints at the porosity of the horrific and the comedic through the grotesque. As noted in dialogue by Sebastian. 'Oh God, this is disgusting,' he decries in a scene visually framed in darkness, fleshy walls and moisture, to be the inside of the animal's vagina. It should be noted that non-sexual insertion of humans into living

animals has its place in horror/horrific history. Elizabeth Bathory, the real-life ruler, and influencer of much horror literature and film, stitched her enemies into the stomachs of live, dying horses, in one of history's most abject acts of horror-inducing violence (McNally, 1983).

The abjection of human beings climbing into the genitals of a live animal clearly subverts decency in provocation of disgust. Yet this connotation is furthered to extremes of excess and absurdity through the introduction of shot of an approaching aroused male elephant, replete with oversized dangling penis. 'Brace yourself, Seb!' cries Nobby as the representation of a giant erect elephant penis thrusts into their hiding place, rhythmically thrusting backwards and forwards. Externally, a shot depicts the graphic entering of the elephant penis into the vagina. Lexically indicating that the sooner the elephant ejaculates, the sooner the bruising, disgusting encounter will be over, Nobby shouts, 'We have to make it come, you work the shaft and I'll cradle the balls!' The following sequence depicts the brothers attempting to masturbate the giant, violent appendage, from both in and outside the vagina. Lexical content is as graphic as visual: 'Put your tongue in the pee hole,' suggests Nobby. 'Don't be stupid,' retorts Sebastian, perhaps echoing the collective perspective of the audience on the absurd events unfolding. In a graphic indexical sequence, when the elephant finally does ejaculate, litres of thick white liquid cover Sebastian, who wipes it from his face and, most disgustingly in relation to the disgusting abjection of consumption, his mouth. 'I think I'm going to be sick,' he cries, again perhaps aligning with and indeed guiding, audience response. 'It's a trickle of pre-ejaculate at most,' retorts Nobby, again lexically explicit.

The gross-out sequence closes with a shot of Nobby emerging from the vagina to the sight of a queue of male elephants waiting to penetrate his 'host'. 'It's an elephant bukkake party,' he cries, before the next giant phallus assaults him. The amount of disgusting ejaculate covering the men increases substantially, extending the abjection in covering Nobby's naked backside, and offering the connotation that he has engaged in interspecies anal sex. The abject fluid could have been absorbed into him through another open bodily passage. The sequence closes on a shot of queue of elephants, signposting that the absurdity, excess and abjection has not yet finished, and echoing *Braindead's* (1992) narrative pattern in which, covered in disgusting bodily fluids, and seemingly having won their 'battle', the heroes have more escalating excess yet to encounter.

According to Paul:

'At their best these films offer a real sense of exhilaration...in testing how far they can go, how much they can show without making us turn away, how far they can push the boundaries to provoke a reaction...an expression of disgust that is pleasurable to call out' (1994, 20)

It is crucial to analysis to consider audience response to *Grimsby's* abject, excessive and absurd provocations. A number of reaction videos have been uploaded to YouTube, in which viewers respond to this notorious scene. They contain a mixture of laughter, gasping, shrieking, head shaking, and looking away in disgust (shared traits with horror audiences). Perhaps most notable is the video created by vloggers *Frankenstein's Lab*, in which one of the two hosts closes his disgusted and occasionally horrified viewing of the sequence with the cry: 'Oh man, this is too far!' (YouTube, 2019). This is a phrase often used to challenge excess in horror, recently notably in the body horror of films such as *The Human Centipede* trilogy (Tom Six, 2010-2015) in which living human beings are attached mouth to anus with co-joined digestive systems. Many believed this concept to cross boundaries, go 'too far' (YouTube, 2019). Gelder assigns the second criteria for the categorisation of a horror film as a 'work of abjection' (2000, 66), as being aligned to its relationship to borders. He argues that the, 'concept of the border is central to the construction of the monstrous in the horror film: that which crosses or threatens to cross the 'border' is abject' (ibid). That the term can also be associated with provocative comedy points explicitly to the cohesion between this form of comedy and its porosity with the horror genre.

Whether 'too far' (YouTube, 2019) or not, the makers of *Grimsby* certainly combine the abject and arguably horrific, provoking audiences to look away, and the comedic through boundary-challenging levels of excess, absurdity and abjection. Shaviro writes on horror, but illuminatingly applicable here, that filmmakers, 'blithely dispense with the cannons of realistic convention...what counts is not the believability of the events depicted, but only the immediate response they elicit from the spectator' (1993, 100). He, somewhat appropriately, references a point of 'overload...to the point of explosion' in representations of 'ludicrous exaggeration' (ibid). The sequence is certainly absurd and excessive in its challenges to realistic feasibility.

Bakhtin suggests that the grotesque demonstrates, 'a tendency to transgress all limits' (1965, 306). The sequence certainly also aligns to Thomson's theory of the grotesque, in which he characterises a grotesque scene as conveying, 'the notion of simultaneously laughable and horrifying or disgusting...the co-presence of the laughable and something which is incompatible with laughter' (1972, 3). Shaviro might describe this scene as, 'ludicrously grotesque...it puts the spectator in direct contact with intensive, unrepresentable fluxes of corporeal sensation', such as 'flesh tingle, laughter, disgust' (1993, 101). The experience of viewing *Grimsby's* excesses could illuminatingly be argued to, 'involve a kind of satisfaction in the fact that one is capable of withstanding a heavy dose of disgust and shock' or a 'macho rites of passage' (Carroll, 1990, 193). This aligns to Paul's theory of gross-out cinema, as, 'not only does it embrace bad taste, it transforms revulsion into a sought-after goal' (1994, 10). The argument is especially illuminating in that it was written in relation to Carroll's 'paradox of horror' (1990) in seeking enjoyment through the disturbing and horrific.

Nighty Night

In *Nighty Night* (2004-2005), creator and dark humourist, Julia Davis, absurdly combines the spectrum of abject bodily functions (both human and animal) across the provocative BBC programme's two series. Moreover, her writing and performance flirts with a horror subtext, and while not containing enough iconographic elements to be considered a horror comedy, semiotic analysis reveals an interesting framing of her monstrous lead character, Jill Tyrell. Davis also invokes the horrific through the darkness of her content, situations and characters. The second series builds on a pitch black first, in which Jill has already faked her husband's terminal cancer and killed him, and encouraged her sexually deviant lover to poison the local vicar and then himself. She has also ruined the life and marriage of her kindly MS suffering neighbour, Cath, and her family, through sexual obsession with her husband, Dom. The first series does not contain blood, but it does proffer a carrier bag full of decaying dog faeces emptied at an abject dinner party, a string of condoms containing fake semen strung about a family home, and many further gross-out representations of abject behaviour and imagery, some of which are toilet-based.

The Guardian described *Nighty Night* as 'frequently painful to watch' (The Guardian, 2014), an interesting lexical construct which again reflects the physical, visceral

response elicited by comedy and horror in their audience members, but more aligned towards the traditional response to horror. The second series, which was released to a more mixed reception and 'criticised by some as being too ridiculous' (ibid), offered much more explicit, excessive, absurd and abject visual and aural content. It is noteworthy here to consider Neale and Krutnik's exploration of Olsen's 1968 theory of comedy in which he posits that while the comedic often involves 'a departure from the norm', that approach must be tempered (1990, 67). They write: 'There must be in other words, a degree of normality in the abnormal, a degree of the appropriate in the inappropriate, a degree of logical in the illogical, and a degree of sense in the otherwise non-sensical' (ibid). This argument suggests that an overbalance leads towards the 'monstrous' (ibid), and therefore too far from the comedic – and this is perhaps what provoked criticism of that second series. This balancing act of genre porosity will be explored further in thesis and gnosis and will inform the praxis of horror comedy script writing.

Analysis of mise-en-scene in *Nighty Night's* second series reveals examples of the framing of Jill's character as aligned to the conventional iconography of the horror villain. Many areas of Davis' work toy with horror iconography in the creation of dark humour. Consider the sinister owner of the campsite in *Camping* (Julia Davis, 2016), his almost Norman Bates-esque relationship with his mother (with added abjection in scenes of the cleansing of heavily stained underwear), and their insidious, almost *Frightmare*-ish (Pete Walker, 1974) farmhouse. The character, mise-en-scene, and dialogue deliberately connote horror iconography and intertextual reference, guiding the audience along a tightrope of comedy, from which they might question whether they will overbalance into horror. It is also interesting to note that *The Guardian* referred to *Camping's* 'squirming excruciatingness' (2016), again in reflection of the visceral, physical impact on the audience of the darkly comedic, excessive and sometimes abject content. Remove the comedy context, and this quotation could be easily have been made in reference to a horror text.

Krutnick and Neale argue that, for Ben Johnson, laughter was, 'potentially unseemly because it was a sign of disturbed bodily control' (1990, 63), an implication aligned to the squirming laughter of uncomfortable humour. Carroll posits of horror:

'Some of the more recurring sensations, or felt physical agitations, or automatic responses, or feelings are muscular contractions, tension, cringing, shrinking, shuddering, recoiling, tingling...nausea, a reflex of apprehension or,

physically heightened alertness, perhaps involuntary screaming and so on' (1990, 24).

In juxtaposition, on comedy, Neale & Krutnik argue:

'The release of distressing effects is the greatest obstacle to the emergence of the comic. As soon as the aimless movement does damage or the stupidity leads to mischief, or the disappointment causes pain, the possibility of the comic effect is at an end' (1990, 293).

These two counter perspectives apparently outline the causing of 'distress' perhaps physical, as the juxtaposing factor between the genres. Yet 'cringing' and 'recoiling' (Carroll, 1990, 24) have already been proven to occur in direct response to certain types of comedy, while 'distressing effects' (1990, 293) can certainly play part in both genres – and demonstrably so in Davis' work.

Two key scenes in episode two of *Nighty Night's* second series offer evidence of the iconographic representation of Jill Tyrell as a horror villain. The first scene echoes a horror trope witnessed frequently in horror iconography - that of the villain appearing suddenly behind a slowly opened door. Analysis of the frame construction reveals the iconographic connotation through the use of shadow and the sudden figure in shot. The second scene could be argued to employ that key ingredient of horror iconography, the jump scare, echoing the intertextual opening scene of *Urban Legend* (Jamie Blanks, 1998) in which the killer appears suddenly from the back seat of a car to kill the driver with an axe. Gentle and much-tormented character, Cath's, worst nightmares are realised with the sudden return of Tyrell, the monstrous nemesis from whom she and her family have fled. The scene begins as she climbs into the front seat of her car, and as she settles, her apparently unstoppable tormentor appears suddenly behind her in the back seat. Her infamous cry 'Hiya Cath!' is supported by a sinister rictus grin. Cath recoils in horror, as potentially does the audience. **See Figure 6**

Moreover *Nighty Night* edges closer to explicit horror in episode three of its second series, in a blood-splattered DIY surgery scene, the content of which would fit within the iconography of a horror text. This scene aligns explicitly with the argument for the porosity of the genres through the combination of the abject/disgusting and the absurd. In the scene, Jill persuades the girlfriend of her amorous target, Dom, that

she would be more beautiful if she completed reconstructive nose surgery. She then inexpertly sets to work. The sequence opens with a pan shot of plastic sheets lining the walls of her tent as Jill dons surgical dress including goggles and mask, while horrific surgical implements lie on a table nearby, connoting a violent and potentially bloody encounter. Although scenes of surgery are not actually portrayed in the direct gaze of the camera/viewer, the indexical representation of spurting blood is, and the aural accompaniment of hammering and cracking adds to the horrific connotation. This would be the closest *Nighty Night* came to explicitly crossing into the horror genre through use of horror iconography (notable again, is that blood is the key distinguishing factor); and it is noteworthy that the scene is somewhat jarring in position to the more implicit horrors of the rest of the series'.

The question is again posed as to whether scenes such as this led to accusations of the second series as being 'too ridiculous' (The Guardian, 2014). As Lacey argues: 'If a text breaks too many generic conventions, it runs the risk of alienating anyone in the audience who is reading the text because they expect it to be generic' (2000, 136). This offers evidence of genre as a construct highly informed by audience response and expectation. In this instance had the pendulum of the horrific embedded in 'real-life' scenario of situation comedy, swung too far towards the abjection of explicit horror iconography, surpassing the established boundaries of the first series? As Thomson writes of the grotesque: 'The simultaneous perception of the other side of the grotesque – its horrifying, disgusting or frightening aspect – confuses the (laughter) reaction' (1972, 54). This reflection is useful in application of praxis in balance of combining genres reflecting porosity, while balancing the needs of the individual scene in visual and narrative practice.

The most notoriously excessive and abject gross-out scene of the second series of *Nighty Night*, however, features the previously identified comedic iconic sign of semen. Crucially this scene from episode four, is also absurd. While potentially horrific through visual and narrative abjection, this sequence of scenes, unlike the surgery scenes, do not incorporate iconographical horror content, and balance towards the comedic, certainly absurd, arguably 'ridiculous' (The Guardian, 2014), and definitely disgusting.

The sequence is accompanied aurally by a stirring, dramatic string soundtrack to enhance the comedic value of its urgency. Depravity is again enhanced through the potential contrast of the classical aural and abject/absurd visual, depicting Tyrell and

her downtrodden employee Linda's attempts at an abject and absurd artificial insemination. Dom, sedated in hospital about to have a vasectomy, falls prey to Jill who must seize her chance to gather his semen and fertilise herself before the opportunity to mother his child is literally cut off. As in *Something About Mary* (1996), masturbation is connoted but not indexically represented, although the means of achieving orgasm are far more excessive:

'The enormous amount of humour that surrounds the subject of sex is symptomatic of the unconscious fear and anxiety provoked by any manifestation, however light-hearted, of the human body distorted, truncated, and out of control, thereby made abject' (Brottman, 2012, 78).

In a montage sequence, as an unconscious Dom lies on a hospital bed, Jill frantically pumps her hands, then mouth, above his crotch, finally apparently mounting him in numerous positions. Her efforts, framed only above an audience view-impeding blue screen, are to no avail. Eventually Linda mounts him, carrying a ladle, connoting expectation of excess. The scene then cuts to a shot of Jill and Linda running down a corridor with a bowl, ladle, turkey baster, and for Linda, hairstyle, full of a thick white substance (we assume semen). The scene cuts again, to reveal an upside-down Jill's spread legs hanging over a metal railing (below her legs is beyond the perspective of the camera). Linda stands in front of her with the turkey baster. 'Do I put it in the front bottom or the back bottom?' Linda asks and squirts the baster sending an arc of thick, gloopy semen out of the room, into the corridor and onto the plate of pie and mash being consumed by an elderly female patient. The shot cuts to the woman lifting her fork and eating, her glasses covered in the same abject fluid. Similar to *Grimsby* (2016), the disgust is furthered by the literal consumption of the abject.

Jill demands that Linda fetch the remnants of the meal and, before enjoying a mouthful herself, Linda begins to fork the pie, mash and eventually all of the contents of the plate into the area off screen, Jill's vagina. 'Oh for God's sake just tip the bloody plate up there,' she frustratedly cries. Paul argues of Old Comedy, which he marks as physical and animal, that, 'more striking is its sense of license, an almost total lack of inhibition in its view of both sexual and social relations' (1994, 87). *Nighty Night* employs this tool to excess; both the elements of absurdity and abjection are exaggerated to heighten disgust in the gross-out material. As Bergson states: 'Exaggeration is always comic when prolonged, and especially when

systematic; then, indeed, it appears as a method of transposition' (1911,126). The abject and grotesque combine to offer the provocative combination of excessive amounts of semen, genitals, food, and even a semen-assaulted elderly lady. Moreover, the forceful application of the traditional cuisine of pie and mash into the vagina is societally coded as absurd. And, of course, disgusting, while simultaneously horrific in relation to Douglas' (1966) already-explored theories of pollution of the human body. Pollution of that body, in combination of horror and comedy to provoke disgust, will be core in praxis.

Monty Python's The Meaning of Life

Semen and blood are not the only abject bodily fluids in gross-out comedy and horror cinema/television which can be employed to connote excess, absurdity and abjection, offering evidence of the porosity of disgust in the grotesque. *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (1983) is notorious for representing a further bodily function in the production of excessive quantities of vomit. This abject substance became inherently aligned to the iconography of horror through *The Exorcist* (1973) which, 'had become famous for its green vomit' (Paul, 1994, 292). Python's vomit, moreover, is combined with bodily explosion, flying viscera which lands on upper-class diners, and exposed viscera-covered inner organs. So far, so horrific. Arguably, the most notorious section of the film, *Part VI: The Autumn Years*, concerns Mr Creosote and a 'wa-fer thin mint' (Jones, 1983).

Director and Python team member, Terry Jones spoke of his first encountered audience response to this notorious sequence, and that response clearly echoes that explored in response to *Braindead*:

'We showed the 'Mr Creosote' scene to John Du Prez who was our composer, and I said, 'John have a look at this'. John looked at it, then he went outside and was sick, and we thought, 'Fucking hell! This is the first person to actually see the sequence cut and he's sick, he throws up' (in *The Pythons*, 2003, 404).

Du Prez's response was elevated by a hangover, but it did cause Jones to briefly consider issuing sick bags to cinema-goers, a marketing activity associated with horror filmmakers such as William Castle, John Waters, and the grindhouse cinemas of the 1970's.

Interestingly, fellow Python, Michael Palin recognised the more horror-aligned elements of the gothic, alongside the abject when he said: 'Creosote, I think, was one of the best things that Python has ever done in terms of elevating some tiny idea to be a sort of great gothic extravaganza' (2003, 405). Biographer Perry furthers that Python's critics labelled them 'bad taste', another term associated with horror and gross-out, embraced by Jackson, and notably with the work of the genre-bending, but often horrific John Waters among others. He writes: 'Detractors of Python, and unarguably there are many who have never been able to stomach them, complain that they use humour deliberately to offend, to assault the public with ostentatious displays of bad taste' (1983, 181). It is interesting to note the use of the word 'stomach' (ibid) in the context of analysis of Mr Creosote, and also in relation to previous analysis of the porous elements of disgust and abjection between comedy and horror, both genres which are frequently accused of 'bad taste' (ibid), and again both genres which often seek to provoke a stomach-churning, physical audience response. According to Paul: 'Translated into aesthetics, bad taste endows the object with an aggressiveness that must be defended against' (1994, 10). And the aggression of disgust is certainly evident in the Python's notorious Creosote sequence.

The entrance into scene of Mr Creosote is accompanied aurally and intertextually by an almost *Jaws*-esque (Steven Spielberg, 1975) rousing string score, connoting that this character is in some way a threat/monster (and a signifier of horror iconography?) When the unfeasibly obese Creosote (director Jones himself) emerges through the refined restaurant's velvet curtains (again we encounter the juxtaposition of the genteel and the absurd/abject), the fish in the tank cry 'shit, it's Mr Creosote!' and swim out of shot. The audience expectation of a disturbing and potentially threatening character is guided lexically, aurally by absurdly talking fish, and semiotically. Creosote is greeted by a simpering French waiter (Cleese) who enquires after his wellbeing. Creosote responds, 'Better...better get a bucket I'm going to throw up.' A waiter fetches a bucket for Creosote, carrying it in a manner which connotes the same level of pomp as though it were a silver platter, and no sooner has he placed it than a forceful stream of liquid (vomit), surges from Creosote's mouth and covers the plush carpet. The perspective of shot cuts to suited and gowned dinners who look on aghast. From his opening dialogue and action, Creosote is framed as abject and disgusting. The liquid flies in a powerful arc from his mouth, apparently from a powerful special effects pipe hidden behind

Jones' sizeable frame. He projectile vomits twice more, once directly onto the carpeted floor.

With chunky brown abject vomit covering his shoulder, Creosote goes on to discuss the menu with the waiter, which he further proceeds to vomit all over. The waiter uses his naked hand to wipe the vomit away, the contact with the abject fluid and porosity of skin furthers disgust aligned to Douglas' theory of *Purity and Danger* (1966). The waiter then demonstrates to his guest what he can choose to further gorge upon, despite his existing excessive stomach distress. Creosote decides he'll 'have the lot'. 'How would you like it served? All mixed up in a bucket?' 'Yeah, with eggs on top,' retorts the obnoxious guest. He accompanies the meal with six bottles of a wine a double jeroboam of champagne and a number of crates of brown ale...and then vomits directly and repeatedly onto the cleaning woman beneath the table.

Connoting the absurdity in the excessive politeness of the British, the guests at the next table rise to leave with covert looks of disgust. 'I'm having a rather heavy period,' claims the female guest, too polite to name Creosote as their reason for leaving, 'I don't want to bleed all over the seats.' (A potentially absurd and abject reference to blood – yet not a horrific one). The waiter accidentally treads in the vomit-soaked bucket. Creosote then vomits down his leg, prompting the ever-polite waiter to ask, 'perhaps a hose?' Genteel diners at neighbouring tables gag and suffer their own stomach distress, again perhaps echoed in the audience as in the film's composer. The semiotic abjection and excess represented in these scenes, reflects Thomson's theory of the reaction to the grotesque in which he posits: 'The reaction to the grotesque, the experience of amusement and disgust, laughter and horror, mirth and revulsion simultaneously, is partly, at least, a reaction to the highly abnormal' (1972, 24).

Kayser claims the grotesque, 'is experienced only in the act of reception' (1933, 181), aligning it closely to the audience responsive genres of comedy and horror. Clayborough almost predicts Creosote in positing: 'The grotesque may appear in anything which is found to be in sufficiently grave conflict with accepted standards to arouse emotion' (1967, 109). The representation of Creosote is transgressive from multiple perspectives, and in the act of reception (as guided by the characters onscreen) is likely to arouse strong emotion and perhaps physicality/viscerality.

The sequence flashes forward to a *mise-en-scène* which indicates that Creosote has finished his outrageous meal. Thick, lumpy remnants of food spill down his chin and shirt, a pineapple emerges from his mouth and stained plates tower above him on the filthy table. The waiter approaches to deliver the film's most notorious line, 'And finally sir, a wa-fer thin mint.' 'No, fuck off I'm full,' Creosote retorts, but he is persuaded to consume the relatively miniscule confection, fed to him with tongs, which are then used to scoop the chunks of vomit on his chin. 'Bon appetit', the waiter offers and runs comedically in both speed and style, out of shot, leaping behind a row of plants. The absurd comedy is, of course, furthered by the fact that it is this sliver of chocolate which causes the absurd, abject and excessive ensuing sequence.

The *Jaws*-esque score of rising and falling violins connoting danger returns, as Creosote literally begins to blow up, his chest and stomach ballooning and knocking over the table. Unable to expand any further, eventually he explodes producing gallons of disgusting, lumpy brown effluence: 'Creosote literally explodes, issuing forth a tidal wave of vomit that splashes on every corner of the dining room' (Carroll, 2013, 196). He is left abject, disgusting and absurd, a head on an exposed rib cage, his heart and inner organs still pumping blood, and his pocket watch hanging from one of his bones. Such imagery reflects Thomson's claim that: 'The direct and often radical manner in which this abnormality is presented, is responsible for the not infrequent condemnation of the grotesque as offensive and uncivilised, as an affront to decency' (1972, 26). **See Figure 7.**

The exploded Creosote is a truly horrific and absurd image which could easily be positioned within the iconography of the horror film: 'This scene has few peers in the annals of motion picture comedy, save perhaps the pie-eating sequence in *Stand By Me*' (Carroll, 2013, 196). Of note beyond the horrors of abject and excessive bodily functions/fluid, Carroll also argues that Creosote reflects horror as a form of filmic monster who invokes 'disgust' (ibid, 197) – a theory supported by close reading. Monster or not (and the film's aural signs certainly connote monster), Creosote and his actions are not only disgusting, but indecorous. Neale and Krutnick argue that comedy is, 'the appropriate site for the inappropriate, the proper place for indecorum, the field in which the unlikely is likely to occur' (1990, 91). But is that not also true of horror and its abject, excessive and absurd representations? And, as Gelder notes: 'Images of blood, vomit, pus, shit etc. are central to our culturally/socially constructed notions of the horrific' (2000, 68). Horror is one of the

central artistic sites of what society defines inappropriate. Yet, this particular gross-out representation sits firmly within a comedy film. As Bakhtin posits: 'The grotesque image displays not only the outward, but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs' (1984, 318).

Again, horror and humour are present in tension in this sequence, the offending content sharing meaning across the genres. The horrific aspects of the grotesque, however, are diminished, and the comedic balance enhanced, by action and dialogue. Cleese's waiter arrives to present Creosote with the cheque, the scene's absurd punchline, which serves to remind the audience of the film's context within the comedy rather than the horror genre. According to Gelder: 'The representation of bodily wastes may invoke pleasure in breaking the taboo on filth – sometimes described as pleasure in perversity' (2000, 69). Creosote represents one of the artistic heights of gross-out comedic (and horrific) perversity and the sequence is carnivalesque in its taboo-busting revelry in that perversity.

Excesses of vomit have, of course, appeared frequently in horror. Notably from (and before) the iconic *The Exorcist's* (1973) abject demonic green fountain of possessed child vomit which projects into the face of a catholic priest, to comedy horror television series *What We Do in the Shadows* (Jackie Van Beek, 2019). Leeder posits: 'The gross-out moments of *The Exorcist*, notably the vomiting scenes, disclose a connection between horror and comedy through excess and viscosity' (in Miller & Van Riper, 2016, 88). Paul argues the scene is the, 'horror equivalent of the pie in the face' (1994, 72). Vomit is an abject bodily substance which features in the iconography (and occasionally audience responses) of both the genres of comedy and horror. Indeed, in the aforementioned *Bad Taste*, one of the key elements employed to provoke disgust through horror, is the alien creatures' consumption of their own vomit, followed by forced human engagement in the same abject activity.

Yet vomit is not the only bodily fluid presented in excess in *The Meaning of Life*. In *Part V: Live Organ Transplants*, excesses of squirting blood, knives, saws and oversized pliers, viciously and graphically extracted innards, and to add to the horror, a screaming victim (played by Terry Gilliam with agonised aplomb), are indexical symbols of abjection which could have been extracted directly from the iconography of horror. Although it should be noted that the actual acts of outrageous violence are carried out just below the camera's gaze, the resulting abject

bloodshed and graphically removed innards are centre stage. As Python, Idle himself stated: 'It's gross, it's nasty, it's violent, it's unnecessarily grotesque' (2003, 410). One of the Pythons explicitly aligns their own work with the grotesque, a key signifier of the intent of horror in unresolved conflict with humour (Thomson, 1972). Moreover, the sequence certainly aligns to Thomson's theory of the grotesque as 'more radical' and 'more aggressive' than the bizarre for example (1972, 29). The grotesque is frequently violent, and that violence bridges comedy and horror in Paul's identified co-present 'aggression' (1994).

Lexical analysis of this 'surgery' sequence offers evidence of the interwoven absurdity and comedy in the dialogue between the violent surgeon's assistant and the dying man's wife and son. The youngster appears in the doorway of the scene permeated by blood and internal organs, to announce to his mother, and increasingly mutilated father that he's going out and will be back at seven. He ignores the fact that his father's innards are being ripped out. The wife initially blames her husband's donor card for the violent intrusion into their otherwise peaceful home, then debates whether 'it's good for the country', and eventually begins to flirt with one of her husband's tormentors, taking him to the kitchen for the polite British tradition of a cup of tea. Meanwhile, her husband's screams ring in the background. 'I thought she'd never ask!' whispers her the tormentor, covered in her husband's blood, which she is British enough to overlook in the interest of upholding societal decorum. While this visual and aural content is arguably the material which has brought the Pythons closest to horror through the use of genre aligned iconography, the lexical content, and sheer absurdity of semiotic meaning, ensure that the scene remains comedic. Further evidence that the scale of porosity can be adjusted in balance of horror or comedy, to be reflected in praxis.

Neale and Krutnick argue: 'The comic is characterised by the predominance of the implausible, so in semiotic terms it is marked by a preponderance of anomaly and impertinence' (1990, 71). The famous punchline of this filmic 'sketch' is Idle's game show host conative character emerging from the fridge to sing '*The Galaxy Song*' (Idle & DuPrez, 1983). The song famously concludes, after an intergalactic interlude, with the line 'And pray that there's intelligent life somewhere up in space 'cos there's bugger all down here on earth', which persuades the wife to donate her liver too, presumably in the same horrific manner. Impertinent, implausible and distinctly anomalous. As with Creosote, the balance reverts firmly to the comedic, clearly connoted by that, 'preponderance of anomaly and impertinence' (ibid).

Interestingly, the Python team had indeed parodied violence, and flirted with horror iconography previously on television (1969-1974) in sketches such as *Sam Peckinpah's Salad Days* (1972), in which a genteel upper-class picnic descends into a blood bath of amputated hands, tennis racket impalement, and ocular dismemberment. In *Scott of the Antarctic* (1970) Palin as Scott, absurdly fights a lion on a beach and the Idle's director calls for an excessive stream of blood at the lion's death, parodying Hollywood violence and excessive bloodshed. While, they had infamously toyed with darker content in the *Undertaker's Sketch* (1970) in which the undertaker suggest eating a man's dead mother, and *The Architect's Sketch* (1970) in which an architect proposes building an apartment block which is in reality a human abattoir.

Analysis of *The Evil Dead* series

The previous case studies are examples of material from film/television which veers significantly more towards the comedic gross-out and are classified as comedy by audience and creators, but which offer visual, aural, lexical and iconographic evidence of the horrific, mainly through excessive and absurd portrayals of the abject and disgusting. However, to return analysis to the more explicitly horrific, primarily through the horror iconography of excessive blood and visceral bodily dismemberment, it is crucial to explore further texts which offer porosity between horror and comedy, but which balance towards horror. The *Evil Dead* trilogy of films is one of the most iconic in horror cinema, recently spawning a television spin-off series in the form of *Ash vs the Evil Dead* (Sam Raimi et al., 2015-2018), and a remake in *The Evil Dead* (Fede Alvarez, 2013). The two sequels, *Evil Dead 2* (1987) and *Army of Darkness* (1992), and the television series, have been categorised as horror comedy by filmmakers, audiences and critics, while *Evil Dead* (1983) was intended, although not without a comedic undertone, to fall within the iconography of the horror genre, as will be proven through filmmaker testimony.

Moreover, *Evil Dead* was a horror film which went on to become one of the most infamous films banned under the 'Video Nasties' scandal in the UK in the 1980's. *Evil Dead* even had the dubious honour of being described as 'the number one nasty' by National Viewers & Listeners Association campaigner and driver of the 'Video Nasty' campaign, Mary Whitehouse (BBFC, 2019). Whitehouse and the NVLA coined the term, which has become iconic within the horror genre, not least

as a mark of desirability for many hardened horror fans, in contrast to the desired discouraging effect. In contrast to the sharp views of Whitehouse and her campaigners, and not unlike their reaction to the later *Braindead*, certain members of the BBFC censorship panel, again recognised the humour of the film in its levels of excess. Others, however, found that excess 'nauseating', a response which they apparently did not agree rendered a film a 'masterpiece' (IMDB, 1999), and a familiar point of porosity of response with case study material analysed from the gross-out comedy genre.

According to the BBFC:

'Reaction within the BBFC was divided between those who felt the film was so ridiculously 'over the top' that it could not be taken seriously, and those who found it 'nauseating'. Realising that there was likely to be an equal division of opinion amongst cinema audiences, the BBFC's Director at the time felt that the best course of action would be to tone down the most excessive moments of violence and gore' (BBFC, 2019).

Noteworthy to the argument for porosity of genres, filmic representations of excess, 'over the top' (ibid), absurd and disgusting (prompting the physical response of nausea) content have again caused discussion of the porosity of the comedic in horrific content. Again, this points to excess, abjection and the absurd as the points of porosity between horror and comedy. Semiotic, iconographic and lexical analysis of *Evil Dead*, does reveal a film which is less overtly comedic than the knowing slapstick, or 'splatstick' (Towlson, 2014, 180), elements of *Evil Dead 2*, but which veers most towards humour in its moments of gory, abject and disgusting excess.

Firstly, however, in support of the argument of *Evil Dead* as a horror film rather than the more explicit combination of horror and comedy in its sequels, analysis must turn to its writer/director Sam Raimi. Through consideration of Raimi's use of a particular piece of horror intertextuality, his horror genre intent can be exposed. Direct intertextuality appears in *Evil Dead* in the knowing placement of a half-torn poster for Wes Craven's iconic horror film *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977). Raimi recounted in interview why he placed a poster of his horror predecessor, in the basement of the film's iconic cabin. Having identified a half torn *Jaws* (1975) poster in Craven's seminal cannibal classic which he described as 'gut-wrenching' (again reflecting a physical response to horrific filmic content), he decided that Craven was

using semiotic intertextuality to undermine Spielberg's infamous feature as simply 'pop horror' (This Is Horror, 1989). The real horror, Craven was connoting, would be found in Craven's own film. Placing the half-torn *The Hills Have Eyes* poster in the basement, Raimi said was his retort to Craven: 'No Wes, your film is just pop horror, this is real horror!' (ibid).

Notably Craven responded with a scene in *Nightmare On Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984) in which final girl (Clover, 1992), Nancy, watches a clip of *Evil Dead*. Attempting to stay awake to evade the dream-centred torments of iconic villain Freddy Krueger, the film instead causes her to begin to fall asleep, and she promptly switches off. This sly tennis rally of intertextuality, and increasing filmic levels of horror, offers distinctive evidence that Raimi intended the first *Evil Dead* film to be a serious horror-raising premise. Raimi intended the outright horror of *Evil Dead* to surpass those extreme horror depictions which had gone before. It is apparent that Raimi achieved his horrific aim when *Evil Dead* became known as 'the number one video nasty' (BBFC, 2019). This title, unlike a number of tamer victims of the 1980's horror film witch hunt, was enforced by those who actually did manage to track down this Holy Grail of the banned list and reported its illicit excesses to other intrigued horror fans. Hallenbeck claims: 'Although there are elements of black humour it can hardly be called a comedy horror film (when) advertised as 'the ultimate in gruelling terror' (2009, 152).

And what lies within the content of *Evil Dead* to earn that chart-topping title? Just some of the abject actions portrayed in the film include multiple dismemberments, eye gouging, axe mutilation, combustion, gross demonic possession, and the infamous scene in which a female character is violently ensnared and penetrated by the branches of a tree. The film incorporates many elements of key horror iconography. The camera's perspective is used to connote the demonic presence swirling ominously through the woods and towards the cabin (perhaps most associated with the perspective of iconic horror villain Michael Myers in *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978)). The location of the cabin in the woods (now a highly intertextual horror comedy film in its own right in *Cabin in the Woods* (Drew Goddard, 2012)), the makeshift graveyard, and the basement, all align *Evil Dead* firmly to the location scale of iconography of the horror genre. As do many of the characterisations in the group of young people who form the cast, some related, some in couples, who become the victims of the *Evil Dead* after unwittingly reading from the demonic Necronomicon book. Kerswell's *Teenage Wasteland* (2011) again

stresses that young protagonists form the rich hunting ground for the majority of horror cinema's slasher maniacs (Rockoff, 2011, Conrich, 2010, Dika, 1990 et al.) *Evil Dead* could be considered a clear-cut example of employing iconography, character and location to connote genre, even without further exploring its horrific visual excesses.

Where the film does, however, demonstrate its aforementioned comedic undertones, is in its sequences of abject and absurd excess. Consider, for example, the sequence in which the demonically possessed Shelly is violently dispatched by hero Ash (horror icon Bruce Campbell), with an axe. In the scene Shelly is flung into the fire, has her hand chopped off and proceeds to tear into it with her own teeth, and is stabbed by a skull-headed knife spitting/pumping an abject white substance from her mouth/stump. She eventually dies in the abjection of the multiple assaults, but soon revives to have all of her limbs graphically detached by an axe-wielding Ash. The gross-out Shelly slaughter sequence showcases excessive amounts of bright red stage blood, which assaults the viewer by flying directly into the camera and literally turning the screen red. The viewer is also being covered in the excessive and abject substance (reflected in *Braindead*).

The violently dislocated remnants of the body then twitch and jitter in a shot which could veer towards comedy through absurdity (and would in the film's sequel). Ash's reaction, however, unlike the over-the-top gurning of *Evil Dead 2*, does not guide the audience to a reaction of humour. He is instead appalled and horrified, guiding a similar audience response – a useful tool in genre balance in praxis. Semiotic effect and character response is similar in scenes where the characters Scott and Shelly spit the same abject white substance (presumably considering the film's miniscule budget, milk) as their bodies begin to decay and rot. The sequence is one of the film's most disgusting, unfortunately lessened somewhat by the film's limited special effects budget, of plasticine stop-motion animation, complete with green plasticine worms.

Although the conatively straight delivery and response of the characters watching the abjection unfold, indicates that the scenes are apparently intended as serious and horrific, the excess and levels of abjection involved can lead to the interpretation of the absurd/ridiculous. (Unfortunately, the historical limits of special effects technology can also provoke a humour response in a contemporary audience, although that is beyond the research framework here.) Again, it is this combination

of the excessive, abject, and absurd, which could provoke differing responses in audiences, from comedy to horror, and indeed as historical research has revealed, in the board members of the BBFC themselves. As the disgusting, abject and excessive can be aligned with both horror and comedy, responses can vary between viewers, and filmmakers can use a combination to adjust balance in mixing genres:

'There really exists in nature no such thing as the ridiculous, or for that matter, the serious. That one and the same object, viewed in different lights, can cause quite different responses' (Olson, 1968, 7). (Reflected by horror expert Darrell Buxton in *Interviews with Filmmakers & Fans on Genre, Horror & Comedy*).

Interestingly, Raimi has expressed his understanding of horror as an audience responsive genre: 'You get this energy going where the audience collectively gets afraid and it spreads throughout the crowd like wildfire...and if there's a good scare and it's working, they'll shriek, they'll shriek their heads off in unison' (This Is Horror, 1989). The word 'shriek' in itself can be applied to both laughter and fear – both comedy and horror, the intent is in the response of the shrieker themselves, although the filmmaker can apply semiotic projection to guide response: a useful finding for application in original praxis.

Evil Dead series star, Campbell describes *Evil Dead 2* as a 'requel', both a remake and a sequel relating to the fact that New Line cinema own the rights to the first film, and that Dino DeLaurentis produced the second (Bloody Disgusting, 2017). *Evil Dead 2* serves as an apparent remake of the final, most excessive scenes of *Evil Dead*, yet in this volume of the series, the humour is now overt. This would also be reflected in the third instalment *Army of Darkness* and the television series *Ash vs Evil Dead*. Interestingly, the BBFC rating for the 'requel' was reduced to a 15 for DVD/Blu-Ray releases post 2008, although the 1987 cinematic and home video releases both received an 18 rating (BBFC, 2019). *Evil Dead 2* is arguably much more excessive and bloodier; it is, however, simultaneously much more explicitly comedic. *Evil Dead 2* is a gross-out horror comedy which pushes to the extreme those evidenced shared elements between horror and comedy, of the abject, excessive and absurd, with more overtly comedic effect than its predecessor.

Where a scene of bloodletting in *Evil Dead* might have lasted a then-controversial five seconds, in *Evil Dead 2* a sequence presents a gushing wound emitting blood

from a wall and blasting Ash for a full, excessive, twenty seconds. In the same sequence a further three wounds burst forth blood. Ash trips and prat falls, his legs swivelling in a slapstick-conative fashion, before the blood turns black and reverses back into the wall. Brandishing a gun at an inanimate object, he shouts 'I'll blast your butts to kingdom come!' as he stumbles backwards. With no response he nods and half laughs, launching himself backwards into a chair which comedically collapses under him. Again, Campbell swivels his legs in a style which connotes slapstick humour to the audience, and the semiotic representation of the pratfall would not be out of place (blood aside) in the works of Keaton or Chaplin. As King writes: 'Violence in film comedy is nothing new, of course. It was a major source of laughs in the era of silent slapstick and has remained so ever since' (2002, 187). Hunter identifies the 'slapstick elements' in Raimi's work, linked to 'absurdity': 'Director Sam Raimi, in particular, has regularly discussed his love of The Three Stooges and the impact they had (and continue to have) on the development of his film style' (in Leggot & Sexton, 2013, 219). Hallenbeck claims that *Evil Dead 2* is, 'inspired as much by The Three Stooges as H.P. Lovecraft' (2009, 152).

Furthering the explicit comedy of the sequence, the deceased moose head on the wall turns to look at Ash, and as the camera again takes the perspective of his tormentor, it swoops towards him, aurally accompanied by the moose laughing maniacally. A second, chortling laugh joins the soundtrack. Ash turns and the shot cuts to a table lamp bending and lifting as it chortles in almost human fashion, bent double with laughter. The inanimate objects of the room are laughing at Ash's pratfall. A blinking and confused Ash looks around to see every object in the room join the cacophony – books flap open and shut accompanied by a high-pitched laugh, doors swing open and closed, lamp shades spin and hoot with laughter. The scene is chaotic and absurd. Ash, the camera in extreme close-up on his face, turns, and laughs maniacally himself, connoting an unhinged madness (and mirroring Lionel in Jackson's *Braindead*). He steps back into the middle of the room and mirrors the flexing movement of the lamp, laughing and joining in with his own mockery. Inanimate objects quake and laugh until Ash's laughs eventually turn to screams of horror, a terrified look on his face, which is again framed in intense close-up.

Semiotic and aural analysis of this key sequence indicates that while it begins with excessive and abject bloodletting, the tone quickly escalates in absurdity and the intended comedic, with a rich vein of slapstick. Yet it closes with a visual connotation

of sheer horror. Through character portrayal and mise-en-scene, the director is able to guide audience interpretation of the balance of interpretation of genre, and again the character is laughing screaming (Paul, 1994), in this sequence the laughter exceeding the scream.

Semiotic and lexical analysis of further sequences in *Evil Dead 2* also provide evidence of comedic connotation to the audience in filmmaker intent. The lead character, Ash gains his trademark quip 'groovy' which Hallenbeck argues, 'pushes over the line into parody' (2009, 180). While comedic intertextuality is connoted in Ash's reluctance to enter the shed, a key setting in the first film in which he failed to use a chainsaw to dismember his demonically possessed girlfriend. The primary signifier of intent in *Evil Dead 2* is in the excessive and often slapstick-infused comedic (yet still abject) character actions. The sequence presenting Ash's battle with his own amputated hand is representative of the abject meeting the absurd – the absurd often overbalancing in this sequel.

The cacophony sequence is pre-empted by demonic possession of Ash's own hand, which he is forced to amputate to stop its fervent uncontrollable attacks. Post-severance it continues to fight back, all the time squeaking and squealing in an aural effect reminiscent of a cartoon mouse. He traps the detached, errant hand under a bucket and places a pile of books on top to secure it. A lingering shot enables the camera and audience a view of the book atop the pile, *A Farewell to Arms*, an intertextual literary gag, which again refocuses the comedy in the horror of the scene. Aural signs indicate that the hand has escaped – squeaks emit from the corners of the frame shot from Ash's frantic perspective. Finally revealing itself, the scene cuts to the hand scurrying across the floor of the cabin, squeaking and disappearing into a mousehole. This is an interesting semiotic connotation, as the use of brutal humour in *Evil Dead 2* could be argued to align to that of Hanna Barbera cartoon *Tom & Jerry* (1940-1958), and therefore the mousehole reference, so frequently used in that cartoon, could serve as a semiotic reminder of that style of humour and violence combined. Indeed, the score takes on a distinctly cartoonish musicality during the sequence, which reinforces this mode of interpretation/denotation.

Weitz describes the humour of cartoon violence, 'in which the violent effects are so exaggerated as to pass through the nauseating to the laughable' (2009, 148). He crucially linked this representation with 'the grotesque' (ibid, 147) as, 'the violence is

clearly coded as exaggerated, cartoon-like and not to be taken seriously' (King, 2002, 187). While Hallenbeck claims that it was the 1985 film *Re-Animator* (Stuart Gordon) which, 'virtually invented a whole new sub-genre of the comedy horror film, 'splatstick', *Evil Dead 2* certainly furthered that genre with, 'buckets of gore mixed with barrels of laughs...nothing was sacred and nothing was taboo' (2009, 145).

At the close of the sequence the rogue hand re-emerges through the hole and raises a middle finger (his own) to Ash. He shoots at it, creating the gaping wound through which the deluge of blood will shoot for a full excessive, abject and absurd 20 seconds of screen time. **See Figure 8.** Amzen summarises the scene:

'There is a disturbing feel about it – an uneasiness that is not caused by fear of demonic possession (only part of the hero is possessed which is hardly realistic), not terror from the gore of dismemberment (the camera focuses on the man's face, laughing as his own blood drenches him), nor the insanity of the soundtrack and dialogue (a cacophony of gangling chainsaw engines and Gremlin-like chattering) – but there exists in all this horror an unsettling and sublime hilarity about the scene that refuses to be ignored' (1994, 177).

Evil Dead 2 connotes the express purpose of furthering the excess of the first film, of the creature effects, of the violence, gore and blood spilled, and notably the comedic through the absurdity of excess and abjection. Semiotic, iconographic and lexical analysis of the content of the first and second *Evil Dead* films offer much evidence of the porosity between horror and comedy – and indeed the factors which define application of balance, and how a filmmaker might guide audience interpretation, even on a scene-by-scene basis. Analysis here informs the praxis of scriptwriting to apply balance of horror and comedy, while further reflecting the porous traits of excess, abjection and absurdity which align both, most notably in gross-out 'set pieces' (Snyder, 2005, 80) as witnessed in *Braindead* and *Evil Dead 2*.

Conclusion

'A movie is a marriage of technique and meaning. Whenever filmmakers lay out a set, direct actors to act in a certain way, place the camera in particular positions, and assemble the resulting mass of shots into a coherent narrative, they not only tell a story, they also make meaning' (Ryan & Lenos, 2012, 1).

Analysing mise-en-scene, 'the critical term concerning the organisation of objects within the camera's frame' (Edgar Hunt, Marland & Rawle, 2010, 128), and lexis has enabled analysis of the visual and aural construction of the filmmakers' meaning in relevant case study materials spanning gross-out horror and comedy, and a combination of both genres. According to Chandler, 'distinctively, we make meanings through our creation and interpretation of "signs" (2007, 13) and semiotic and aural devices are employed by filmmakers in both horror and comedy, and moreover horror comedy, to prompt a physical, visceral reaction in audiences: already established as a key defining factor of both genres. That response has frequently proven to be the revulsion of disgust which provokes looking away or covering the eyes, or through the production of their own bodily fluids in gagging – or even vomiting. Bodies can convulse with laughter or with fear. Shrieks can be either screams of laughter or screams of fear.

Moreover, through direct analysis of case study material, three key semiotic and narrative themes have continuously emerged as the core points of porosity between comedy and horror within the research framework of the thesis. These are **abjection, excess and absurdity**. Filmmakers can apply these visual, aural and thematic traits alongside other aspects of genre iconography, characterisation and location, to guide audiences to interpret texts as horror or comedy or a hybrid of horror and comedy, and balance can be manipulated towards one genre or the other, to scenic level.

The porosity of the horror, comedy and combined genre case study material provides direct evidence of the porous boundaries of the two seemingly opposed genres. Close analysis has proven that purely comedic texts, can share traits with texts which align solely to the horror genre. And again, those points of cohesion lie in the representation of abjection, excess and absurdity. The analysed material has revealed strong evidence of the filmic device of excess in all analysed material, whether horrific or comedic, and that excess is abject/disgusting, provoking the aforementioned visceral response in viewers. Excess and absurdity play an interesting role in the porous relationship: too absurd and a text will be regarded as potentially both comedic and horrific whether that is the intent of the filmmaker or not.

As witnessed through analysis of *Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead 2*, a filmmaker can control the balance through semiotic representation in character response to the excessive,

abject and absurd events unfolding in front of them or to them. Further, comedy tropes can be applied more directly. Slapstick forms a key difference between the first two *Evil Dead* films for example:

‘Slapstick violence is a mode of performance humour which, in its conventional guise, denies or distorts the real-life implications of physical aggression and bodily harm, featuring motivation, effervescence and resiliency, and...silly substitutions for biological accuracy’ (Weitz, 2009, 129).

Again, overbalance on absurdity can undermine threat, aligned to the thematics of horror. The porosity can be scaled for desired effect.

Having found evidence of each of these three core elements in direct analysis, the next chapter will progress to explore abjection, excess and absurdity in academic context, and reflect on their application in praxis. The responsive aspect of disgust will be interrogated, as will representation of the grotesque, which aligns both humour and horror. The carnivalesque, and the benefits of its celebratory participation will offer evidence of audience responsive alignment. Core theorists whose work will be applied will include Kristeva (1982) and Douglas (1966) on abjection, and Thomson (1972), Clayborough (1967) and Bakhtin (1984) on the grotesque. The concept of dark and gross-out comedy and horror will be further interrogated, supported with references to theorists including Paul (1994), Gehring (1996) and King (2002). These films, ‘seek to evoke a response based on transgression of what is usually allowed in ‘normal’ or ‘polite’ society. They test how far they can go’ (King, 2002, 67).

Indeed, this testing, transgressing and going ‘too far’ will be explored as a key shared trait between comedy and horror: ‘An element of offense is intended in the gross-out, as part of its transgression of the norm’ (ibid, 75). The associated alignment to the carnivalesque will be further interrogated in the next chapter. This academically informed analysis will then be applied to praxis in the creation of the script which forms the thesis’ Part Two; moreover a script which will hinge on the juxtaposition of ‘polite’ society and the transgression of aligned societally constructed expectation, in pitting the iconographic supernatural foe against the demure ladies of the Townswomen’s Guild. It is intended that the script be a hybrid genre blend of horror and comedy, aligned to Jackson’s *Braindead* and Raimi’s *Evil Dead 2* in its gross-out representations. Blood, gore, mutilation, deadly weaponry,

and the introduction of supernatural threat will ensure genre connotation of the horrific, while still retaining all the key shared factors of abjection, excess and absurdity, and concurrency of the comedic in visual and narrative representation. The original findings herein will then be discussed in application to praxis in the Part Three exegesis, outlining application of academic analysis and conclusion, in original scriptwriting practice.

Chapter 3: *Abjection, Excess & Absurdity*

Introduction

Abjection, excess and absurdity have been identified through semiotic analysis, close reading and contextual/historical analysis of relevant gross-out texts, as cohesive elements of the seemingly polemic genres of horror and comedy. This chapter will academically explore each of these key porous themes, interrogating and applying existing perspectives and building on the limited scholarly theory on the porosity of horror and comedy in film and television. This Part One scholarly research will then inform the original praxis of writing the Part Two horror comedy film script, rigorously interrogated in Part Three gnosis. Fields for consideration here include, 'black comedy...a genre that respects nothing, including the values of its audience...juxtaposing humour and horror' (Gehring, 1996, 49). Moreover 'gross-out' (Paul, 1994), will be further explored in probing the cross-genre porosity of abjection, excess and absurdity, primarily in relation to shared visceral/physical audience responses and content:

'Gross-out films are looking for a comparatively strong response from their audience. A gleeful uninhibitedness is certainly the most striking feature...both of the comedies and horror films, and it also represents their greatest appeal' (ibid, 20).

Further, that audience response to excessively abject material in the form of disgust and its relationship to 'bad taste' (Paul, 1994, 8), the proud moniker of Jackson's early career-defining horror comedy opus (*Bad Taste*, 1987), must also be interrogated to further unravel the two genres' cohesive traits:

'As their grossness implies, explicitness is part of their aesthetic...the aggressiveness with which they seem to abandon all standards of decorum...challenge the notion of 'taste' as an indication of an artwork's quality...bad taste endows an object with an aggressiveness that must be defended against' (ibid).

In interrogation of case study material which demonstrates evidence of the combination of these three cohering elements, it is also crucial to further explore theories of the grotesque. According to Thomson: 'A grotesque scene conveys the...simultaneously laughable and horrifying or disgusting...the co-presence of the

laughable and something which is incompatible with laughter' (1972, 3). The grotesque can be regarded as the meeting point between horror and comedy – significantly with both existing in tension. 'Uninhibitedness' (ibid) should also be explored in relation to reception and enjoyment of grotesque material and 'spirit of carnival' (Bakhtin, 1965). Danow describes carnival as: 'A spirited celebration of a world in travesty, where the commonly held views of a cultural milieu are reversed...the generally accepted views of polite behaviour are overruled in favour of the temporary reigning spirit of Carnival' (1995, 3). In 'carnival' (ibid), the horrific and comedic can co-exist in a spirit of celebration or play, and, significantly, transgression. The abject, excessive and absurd cohesion between horror and comedy must therefore be examined in relation to the pleasures ascribed to transgression through the (grotesque) carnivalesque.

Abjection

'Most modern dictionaries suggest that the word 'funny' has a double meaning: the first being 'comical, amusing, or entertaining, and the second being 'strange, odd or disturbing" (Brottman, 2004, 24).

Kristeva describes the abject as, 'the in-between, the ambiguous that disturbs identity, system and order' (1982, 4). The case study materials analysed in the previous chapter were each identified to contain representations of abjection, whether in horror or comedy or blended genre material, 'disturb'(ing) (ibid) pre-conceived notions of distinct genre identity. While numerous theorists have considered the abject, it is the work of Kristeva (1982) and Douglas (1966) which proves most relevant here. It is in their theories of the abject as a pollution of boundaries, as transgression of borders, that we can find an interesting relationship between the abject and the apparently juxtaposing relationship between horror and comedy. Douglas argues that 'all margins are dangerous'. She furthers: 'If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered...any structure is vulnerable at its margins' (1966, 121). Reflectively, *Purity and Danger* (1966) is the title of her seminal study of abjection. Moreover, Kristeva agrees that the 'abject 'disturbs identity, system and order' (in Weitz, 2009, 187). Both agree that abjection derives from the transgression of boundaries. In aligning the genres of comedy and horror, two boundaried, delineated, and cursorily oppositional genres, and finding key points which bind and blend the genres, there is already the disturbance of 'system and order' (ibid).

According to Douglas, 'pollution relates to 'rituals of separation' (1966, 41) and, 'any given system of classification must give rise to anomalies, and...confront events which seem to defy assumptions' (ibid, 38). In the first chapter, an exploration of genre was undertaken, and genre categorisation and delineation explored. Analysis indicated that genre is indeed a system of difference, of boundaries in categorisation of one genre in relation to its differences to/from others. Yet, the previous chapter identified the transgressive elements which can bind, and moreover blur comedy and horror material. Jenks argues: 'To transgress is to go beyond the bounds or limits set by commandment or law or convention, it is to violate or infringe' (2003, 2). King discusses Douglas', 'anti-rite...the opposite of social rituals that seek to reaffirm dominant cultural norms' (2002, 68). Douglas asserts:

'Holiness requires that individuals should conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused...it involves correct definition, discrimination and order' (ibid, 53).

She furthers: 'Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is indefinable' (ibid, 96), highlighting, 'lines which should not have been crossed' (ibid, 113). Shared themes, representations and meanings across horror and comedy, transgress and blur imposed boundaries of genre categorisation at a core level. Weitz argues that, 'comedy can often be seen to test the limits of accepted or acceptable cultural framing' (2009, 18). The question can be posed then whether gross-out material which combines abjection, excess and absurdity in comedy and horror is in itself abject, further that such, 'anomalous events may be labelled dangerous' (Douglas, 1966, 39)? This may in some way underline the derision applied to gross-out content and the cultural lowering of its filmic and televisual texts. While all genre hybrid/porous content might not immediately be regarded as abject in the sense of the profane, the transgression and consequent abjection of horror and comedy combined lies in the excess and absurdity of its content, and in the very juxtaposition and excessive representation of the horrific and comedic. Hantke might refer to this as, 'dislocation within clear classificatory frameworks...embrace of taboo subject matter...abandonment of the rules of polite representational restraint and its affective aesthetic' (in Sexton & Mathijs, 2019, 50).

In furthering this thesis we must, moreover, explore this abjection in relation to its filmic representations and apply those findings in praxis. Gross-out case study material has presented depictions of the entry of human beings into the semen-filled vaginal canal of an elephant; the violent explosion yet survival of a disgusting, unfeasibly overweight man; the choreographed carnivalesque lawnmower dismemberment of a multitude of converging undead. It is in the excess and absurdity of this content that horror meets comedy, and that both aspects of abjection – in genre blurring, and profundity of representation – meet. Writing on Kristeva's theory of abjection, King states:

'Cultural inscription constructs within us indelible responses towards the trapping of our bodied existence – genitalia, blood, faeces, urine and death, for example – as inescapable parts of bodied living. These sources of revulsion can never be placed 'outside' ourselves, so they also become strange sources of fascination that cannot be ignored' (2002, 187).

Douglas furthers in relation to the purity of the body and its violation: 'Our idea of dirt is compounded of two things, care for hygiene and respect for conventions' (1966, 7). She posits, 'contamination of that order...causes 'ambiguity'' (ibid, 35). This ambiguity could be aligned to the 'anomaly' (ibid) which she identifies as the transgression of boundaries and conventions – and this gross-out material transgresses the bodily boundaries of its characters simultaneous to genre boundaries and conventions, aligned to transgression of societal convention. 'The splattered body through its very fragmentation, rejects the idea of fixed borders and totalising systems,' argues McRoy, offering, 'psychic dislocation and the thrill of transgressing boundaries that were already illusory' (in Conrich, 2010, 199-202).

It is the 'splattered' (ibid) body and its penetration and graphic violation which is the focal point for the abject filmic transgressions explored in these gross-out materials. Douglas argues: 'The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened' (1996, 115). She furthers: 'We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise its especially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind' (ibid, 121). No coincidence, then, that the abjection in the case study texts all relates to products of the body and its unnatural penetration and production of 'marginal' (ibid) fluids and matter (human, animal and...zombie), whether aligned to the comedy or horror genre. Paul states: 'As the body in these films became more

permeable, as the inside moved more and more to the outside, there was an increasing sense of the body losing its boundaries' (1994, 387). The human body could be argued to be the ultimate boundary, the ultimate delineation of the individual, bounded state, and therefore risks to its 'purity' might provoke the ultimate 'danger' (Douglas, 1996), and offer the ultimate in abjection (ibid). In praxis, then, the body must be transgressed, mutilated, and its fluids and matter exposed and made visible

A number of the texts analysed herein blend horror and comedy in exploiting the subversion, transgression and attack upon those bodily boundaries, polluting the characters and those around them, and trading to varying degree, on that pollution as simultaneously comedic and horrific. The 'polluting matter' (Miller, 1998, 89) hair gel scene in *There's Something About Mary* (1998), for example, may be only mildly horrific. Alignment lies more in the revulsion of pollution and transgression of societal convention, concurrent to Douglas' theory that: 'Pollution is a matter of aesthetics, hygiene or etiquette, which only become grave in so far as it may create social embarrassment...social sanctions, contempt, criticism, gossip...' (1996, 73). King posits in reference to 'social sanctions' (ibid) that such examples, 'go straight to the worry, addressing the inescapable facts of existence that are aided by manners' (2002, 37). However, compare Mary's unconventional hair gel scene to the explosive demise of Mr Creosote in *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (1983). The character is violently rendered a head resting atop an exposed, gore-covered rib cage with a bloody, still-beating heart, while a restaurant of gentrified diners look on. Excess (alongside explicit viscerality) provides the escalating factor here – and application of excess can adjust the balance of the horrific to the comedic, aligned to absurdity. However, the abject must be co-present, although it can be demonstrated in varying degree.

Freeland addresses violent, bodily violent and bloody scenes of abjection in 'splatter' films as:

'...over the top, ever escalating graphic violence and gore...It is common to witness gross bodily dismemberments, piles of internal organs, numerous corpses in stages of decay, headless bodies, knives or chainsaws slashing away at flesh, and general orgies of mayhem...People die in a number of disgustingly creative ways' (2000, 242).

The transgression of the bounded body, the exposure of its internal contents, and the transgressing of the border between life and death are central to abjection here. According to Wells:

'In essence, then, the 'abject' and 'abjection' are terms used by Kristeva to describe the effects of destruction, decay, disease and effects of destruction, decay and disease and defilement, which expose the limits of human control in the onset of death' (2000, 17).

This description could certainly be applied to the early works of Jackson and Raimi, but Creosote's semi-death is also 'gross' and 'creative' (ibid), yet just one, not quite fatal mutilation, represents a de-escalation of excess of violence/gore/abjection in comparison. This style of excess proves a crucial factor in predicating the balance of the porosity of comedy and horror – with 'orgies of mayhem' (ibid, 24) tipping the balance of connotation more towards the horrific. Again, a finding to be applied in ensuring the horrific in balance with the comedic in praxis.

Aligned to those 'piles of internal organs' (Freeland, 2000, 242), Paul argues: 'In gross-out horror, the emphasis is very much on the body itself: we are all just slabs of meat, with only the faintest suggestion of a spiritual dimension or none' (1994, 386). Freeland furthers:

'Creed thinks that horror texts all serve to illustrate 'the work of abjection...Horror depicts images of abjection, such as corpses or bodily wastes...Horror is concerned with borders of things that threaten the stability of the symbolic order' (2000, 19).

Again, discussion of representation of viscerality in horror forms a key intersection with the abjection of gross-out comedy, which also threatens that symbolic order in its representations of 'corpses or bodily wastes' (ibid). Where horror can be signified more explicitly in the abject, however, is in the finality of the death which escaped the comedically-balanced Creosote. Corpse-like, yes. Dead, no (and still able to pay his bill). Gelder posits, somewhat finally, that for Creed, 'the ultimate in abjection is the corpse' (2000, 65). Kristeva states: 'Corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live...These bodily fluids...this defilement' (1982, 41). And corpses, some dead yet still living, all abject, are central to Raimi and Jackson's work, as they are in a high volume of horror texts. In praxis then, violently mutilated bloody

corpses should mount in order to escalate balance of horror aligned to bodily abjection – and the narrative signifier of horror in the threat of productive violence. An undead supernatural agitator, a reanimated corpse (the ultimate in abjection?) is also a key signifier of abjection through characterisation. Zombie films, 'literalise obscenity...the violation of the flesh allows me to regard, for an ephemeral instant, what is normally invisible: the hidden inside of bodies, their mysterious and impenetrable interiority' (Shaviro, 1993, 99).

It is evident, then, that the degree to which this abject pollution can signal more towards horror or comedy, can be adjusted. Douglas posits that the transgressive abject, 'is more tolerable in some areas than others...there is a whole gradient on which laughter, revulsion and shock belong at different points and intensities' (1966, 37). The contrast in the abjection of 'manners' (ibid) of what constitutes a societally-acceptable hair product to employ on a first date, represents the opposing end of the spectrum to human full-body entry into an elephant's vagina, and subsequent encounter with an oversized ejaculating elephant penis. Moreover, a close-up blended head and detailed lawnmower massacre, again raise the intensity of the representation of abjection in the finality of death. And this level of intensity can also be adjusted in levels of excess in abjection, of that key defining factor which has been found to align horror and comedy. In praxis, employing excesses of blood and viscera, alongside the aforementioned undead supernatural villain and meaningful violence producing multiple deaths, the balance of the intensity of abjection can connote toward the horrific while maintaining the comedic.

Before moving to interrogate excess and absurdity, it is useful to inform praxis, to further explore the pleasure in abjection, in transgression, and moreover, disgust. Discussion can then centre on the grotesque and the relationship to the carnivalesque in consumption of abject materials. According to King: 'To be disgusted is to reject, viscerally, often violently, that which transgresses against the ordering structure of a particular culture' (2000, 68). He argues that laughter at gross-out material makes the audience, 'complicit in the act of transgression' (ibid). Freeland asserts that:

'For Kristeva, horror is fundamentally about boundaries – about the threat of transgressing them and about the need to do so. Hence she emphasises the duality of our attraction/repulsion to the horrific' (2000, 19).

Similarly Carroll posits on horror that what, 'appears to be displeasure and figuratively speaking, pain, is really the road to pleasure, given the structure of repression' (1990, 171). He suggests, 'it explains how audiences can be attracted to horror despite the ostensible disgust it engages...it exacts a little discomfort in exchange for greater pleasure' (ibid, 174). Carroll also identifies the 'transgressive,' 'subversive,' 'pleasure in liberation' (ibid). This transgression, subversion and 'pleasure in liberation' (ibid) in overcoming potential disgust-aligned content, has been evidenced to exist in gross-out comedy materials alongside those in the horror genre. Consider the reactions of the horrified vlogger in relation to *Grimmsby's* (2016) elephant penetration scene, or the elated response of the IMDB reviewer to *Braindead* (1992), which paradoxically combined abject physical response, with the utmost enjoyment and praise. Herein we recognise the ambiguous response shared by content in both genres. The pleasure, it seems, arrives in the transgression, subversion and freedom from societal convention and restriction. 'It is not an unpleasant experience to confront ambiguity,' argues Douglas (1966, 37).

McRoy agrees:

'In the literal and figurative deconstruction of the discrete human form, these oft-vilified film genres can be understood as progressive in that their aesthetics of corporeal disassembly allows for the creation of an infinitely inclusive model of film spectatorship, while also providing important avenues for imagining social resistance' (in Conrich, 2010, 192).

Carroll identifies the physical responses to horror as, 'shuddering, nausea, shrinking, paralysis, screaming and revulsion' (1990, 19), which he describes as a form of 'visceral revulsion' (ibid, 22). That same 'visceral revulsion' (ibid) has been found to be shared by the viewers of gross-out comedic texts, which employ abjection in order to provoke audience response. Moreover, disgust is the bridging response:

'In many of its forms disgust is not simply aversive, and the content of the disgusting is complex and at times paradoxical. It is commonplace that the disgusting can attract as well as repel' (Miller, 1997, x).

Miller describes this as, 'an insistent feature of the lurid, the sensational, informed as these are by sex, violence, horror and the violation of norms of modesty and

decorum' (ibid). Again, overcoming decorum and societal convention form a bridge in the disgust reaction, between the comedic and horrific. This relates the disgust response to the pleasures of the grotesque, and its carnivalesque reception and celebration, which will be further explored in this chapter.

Theorists have also argued that disgust plays a key role in connoting the horror genre. Carroll aligns disgust with fear in identifying horror materials: 'Fear and disgust on the part of the heroes and heroines, according to Carroll, signify the genre and, moreover, cue the audience as to how to react to the stories and images' (Berenstein, 1996, 19). Carroll also argues that the combination of 'fear' and 'desire', 'disgust and fascination' signify, 'the conflation of divergent reactions to horror's fiends reinforces the notion that the genre is founded on the breaking of boundaries with the monster leading the way' (1990, 23). This equation could equally be applied to the abject representations in gross-out comedy, and certainly the responses of their horrified, disgusted and occasionally fascinated characters, suggest that certain types of comedy are equally concerned in 'breaking the boundaries' (ibid). It is, however, in relation to disgust in combination with fear and the threat which causes it, that abjection which is both comedic and horrific, can be adjusted to balance more towards the connotation of one genre over the other:

'Threat is compounded with revulsion, nausea and disgust...If the monster is only evaluated as potentially threatening, the emotion would be fear; if potentially impure, the emotion would be disgust. Art-horror requires evaluation both in terms of threat and disgust' (Carroll, 1996, 29).

In the comedic texts explored, which align to horror through abjection and excess in disgust, threat has been limited. Even the exploding Mr Creosote absurdly survived an apparently almost complete combustion and shows little sign of physically attacking his fellow diners, beyond with his disgusting vomit. And while the Python's victim of live organ transplants emitted agonised screams and arcs of blood, his death was not portrayed onscreen. This reinforces the conclusion that in applying abjection to the script in praxis, it must be ensured that real and maintained threat, and indeed the resulting brutal death is explicit – and crucially excessive – in order to balance the porous elements of horror and comedy. And it is to that excess which exploration must now turn.

Excess

'These films are works that want to address us in a raucous, rude or even repulsive voice, and what's more, they take their delight in the very objectionable qualities of this voice...just how far it can go' (Paul, 1994, 79).

Gelder claims: 'Horror as a form of cultural production is also routinely linked to excess, to a lack of restraint' (2000, 5). He furthers:

' (Horror) so often staked out its place in the broader field of cultural production in terms of its illegitimacy: as an often shocking spectacular, sensationalist and 'immoral' (or amoral) form which can seem to take pleasure from the fact that so many people find it disturbing, distasteful or even downright unacceptable' (ibid, 2).

Cohesively King argues that in, 'gross-out comedy...comedy based on crude and deliberate transgressions of the bounds of 'normal everyday taste'...bonds of social convention are transgressed' (2004, 64-5). The shared approach to excess, to transgression of social boundaries and perceived acceptability is again made prominent herein. Klinger states that horror films are, 'basically characterised by stylistic self-consciousness and formal excess' (in Grant, 2003, 83). She aligns this system of excess to subversion, which as already identified in analysis of the transgression of boundaries through abjection, can be a contradictorily pleasurable experience. This is especially relevant in alignment to Bakhtin's theories of carnival when, 'the usual hierarchies and restrictions were suspended' and there was an abundance of, 'obscene behaviour such as that permitted for the spirit of carnival' (1984, 68).

Prior to interrogating the grotesque and carnivalesque, we must first examine excess as a key element of porosity between horror and comedy. Analysed case study material, from the gross-out excesses of Python, the Farrellys and Baron Cohen, to Jackson and Raimi, has reflected a shared 'lack of restraint' (Gelder, 2000, 5), and moreover significant representation of the antithesis in intent to shock and potentially appal. A system of representation which Shaviro might describe (of horror) as: 'A base counter aesthetic grounded in shock, hilarity, relentless violence and delirious behaviour...(an) aimless hysterical frenzy' (1993, 102). The elephant sequence in *Grimmsby* and lawnmower sequence in *Braindead* both explicitly fit this description, and both clearly embed the intent to shock through excessive

visual/aural representation. King argues that: 'The gross-out comedy aims to achieve a balance between disgust and comic pleasure...rather than unalloyed disgust' (2002, 63). Yet analysed material from *Grimsby* might test that balance in its systems of excess.

Theorists return to excess as a visual/narrative filmic structure in itself. Williams posits: 'Excess may in itself be an organised system' (in Grant, 2003, 141). If this is true could 'excess' be regarded, as a genre in itself, avoiding more traditional genre coding? Or does it require key aligning and familiar iconography to satisfy audiences, marketers and critics? And where would the boundaries lie in defining the excessive? Melodrama, for example, can exploit an excess of emotion. 'Because so much attention goes to where we draw the line, discussions of the gross are often a highly confused hodgepodge of different categories of excess,' according to Williams (ibid, 140). It is, perhaps, more productive to the research boundaries of this thesis to regard excess as a shared system of semiotic representation and narrative escalation between horror and comedy. Moreover, that system is one which is continually stretched and expanded: a product of excess in itself. As King argues of gross-out comedy, 'a degree of upping the ante is built into the gross-out phenomenon' (2002, 76). Similarly, Prince describes horror as 'a cumulative experience' wherein, 'audiences become more accustomed to existing thresholds of violence and morbidity and filmmakers then find they have to go further to evoke some response' (in Dika, 2003, 84).

One must question what Hill, writing on the perceived excesses of the Hammer Horror films in 1958, might write on the more recent excesses of horror (and comedy) cinema: 'The imaginative treatment of physical horror is one thing; but most of these new films merely attempt to outdo each other in the flat presentation of revolting details which are clearly regarded as their principle box office assets' (Hill in Ursini, 2000, 57). Hill compounded this scathing analysis in describing Hammer films as, 'nothing but disgusting' (ibid, 59). Yet we have established the pleasure in excess through disgust – and in mixed genre content. How would Hills have responded if faced with the escalating excesses of Jackson or Raimi, or the more contemporary phenomena of 'torture porn' (David Edelstein, New York Times, 2006), or the allegedly medically accurate abjection and cumulative excesses of *The Human Centipede 2 & 3* (2011 & 2015). *Grimsby*, would no doubt have equally been scorned. Paul clearly failed to foresee the escalation of excess in gross-out horror and comedy in his claim that such visual representations were 'historical' (1994,

423). While the disgusted response from Hill is still reflected in those contemporary responses uncovered on YouTube and IMDB in response to gross-out materials such as *Grimsby* and *Braindead*, the pleasure in excess is concurrently present. These responses reflect Wells' claim that: 'The pleasure arose from the excess more than the narrative' (2010, 28). Contrary to Hill's dismissal, a key element of the pleasure in gross-out is the disgust itself, and the level of disgust sought in satisfaction of excess is ever-escalating.

Consideration, then, again returns to that paradoxical pleasure and desire to be viscerally disgusted, seeking ever increasing peaks (Hills, 2005, Brophy, 2000, Tudor, 1997 et al.). According to Brophy: 'The gratification of the contemporary horror film is based upon tension, fear, anxiety, sadism and masochism – a disposition that is overall tasteless and morbid' (in Gelder, 2000, 279). Carroll argues that, 'one could not deny that there may be certain audience members who seek horror fictions simply to be horrified' (1990, 193). He describes *Friday the 13th* (1980) as 'gross-out' (ibid), reflecting the momentum in increasing excess, as this seminal slasher might scarce merit such a description among modern cinematic excesses. He further questions the enjoyment in viewing such material: 'Perhaps it involves a kind of satisfaction in the fact that one is capable of withstanding a heavy dose of shock and disgust...macho rites of passage' (ibid). Yet, terms such as 'tasteless', 'shock and disgust' and 'horrified' (ibid) apply to both horror and comedy material, and both genres consistently seek escalating levels of excess.

The term 'tasteless' is moreover a loaded one, embedded within interpretation of abjection, excess and disgust. King argues:

'Attitudes towards forms of comedy defined as crude, grotesque, or gross involve judgements of 'taste' that are closely associated with the cultural politics through which different social groups mark their distinctions from one another' (2002, 72).

Neale & Krutnick state, 'all instances of the comic...are founded on transgressions of decorum and verisimilitude: on deviations from any social or aesthetic rule, norm, convention, model or law' (1990, 86). They further that this representation, 'can result in what a sector of society might regard as 'bad taste' but in the transgression of more general social taboos' (ibid, 91). Aligned to abjection, the excesses of these examples of comedy and horror offer pleasure in the transgression of pre-

constructed societal restrictions – and those restrictions are what these films, and their audiences, take great pleasure in exceeding.

Moreover, aligning excess in the abject porosity of the horrific and comedic, Gehring argues that, 'dark comedy is about confronting taboos' (1996, 13). This societally constructed restriction can equally apply to horror, which is often associated with, 'less culturally respectable forms...off beat or cult' (ibid). Excess is reflected in the bursting of taboo, of exceeding societal restraint, and respectability, and therein vulnerable to societal attack and derision. Williams claims that: 'Pornography and horror films are two such systems of excess. Pornography is the lowest in cultural systems, gross-out horror is next lowest' (in Grant, 2003, 142). Williams' view aligns to Hokenson's 'low and high forms' (2006, 15) which he applies to forms of comedy, and which will be explored further in relation to the grotesque and carnivalesque.

It is in direct response to this judgement that, 'excess is one of the ways in which genres embody counter-cultural expression' (Neale, 2000, 158). King explores that transgressive approach through John Water's genre-challenging gross-out classic *Pink Flamingos* (1975) in which Divine notoriously consumes fresh dog faeces. He asks:

'Does the climactic effect of *Pink Flamingos* cross the line by apparently depicting a real act of shit eating...It's hard to say...Some find it 'hysterical'...to others occupying a space close to the uncertain and variable boundary between the comic and non-comic' (2002, 75).

Herein lies further evidence of systems of excess displaying porosity, and on occasion prompting confusion, as to whether horrifying material breaches the comedic to become something non-comedic, potentially sinister, while both co-exist in the tension (Thomson, 1972) of the grotesque. What is clear, however, is that the material is transgressive, counter-cultural, and threatens to 'cross the line' (ibid) in its systems of excess (Williams in Grant, 2003) – and that excess blurs the horrific and comedic.

What is further evident in consideration of the porosity of comedy and horror, is that: 'An element of offense is intended in the gross-out, as part of the transgression of the norm' (King, 2002, 75). In transgression through abjection and excess in praxis in creation of the script, it is intended that this transgression reflects counter cultural

expression, regarded as excessive, 'tasteless' (Brophy, 2000), and offers the associated transgressive and subversive release and pleasure. Carroll believes: 'Connoisseurs of films such as *Pink Flamingos*...take pleasure in the flaunting of good taste in the same way that the avant-garde savours outraging the bourgeoisie' (1990, 70). While Williams states:

'My son and I agree that the fun of 'gross' movies is in their display of sensations that are often on the edge of respectable. Where we disagree...is in which movies are over the edge, too 'gross' (in Grant, 2003, 140).

Excess in abjection is subject to individual assessment and judgement within the broader societal framework. Excess is also a tool available to the scriptwriter in order to balance levels of transgressive expression, and to provoke that individual judgement.

Williams states of the 'gross', 'as a culture we most often invoke the term to designate excess that we wish to exclude' (ibid). Again, the pleasure in excessive comedy and horror lies in Wood's 'Return of the Repressed' (1978), in challenging and subverting societal boundaries and moreover celebrating that which society deems should be hidden. And in response to physically and viscerally responsive transgressive material, the body itself may be challenged, exceeded, its normal state transgressed: 'The agitated body multiplies its effects and expectations to the point of sensory overload, pushing itself to its limits: it desires its own extremity, its own transmutation' (Shaviro, 1993, 58). In experiencing the agitation of excessive abjection in horror and comedy, the pleasure might lie in a form of bodily transgression in itself in response, furthering the overturn of bodily repression. Where the boundaries of that pleasure may lie is subject to individual interpretation. 'Oh man, this is too far!' (*Frankenstein's Lab on Grimsby*, YouTube, 2019).

It has been established that gross-out horror and comedy can be considered what Williams might refer to as 'body genres' through the 'spectacle of body being caught in the grips of intense sensation or emotion' (in Grant, 2003, 142). These chapters have also identified transgressions of the body as a key point of cohesion between excesses of comedy and horror cinema and television. Both useful findings to be applied in Part Two praxis: the bodies onscreen should be assaulted in the same way that consumption may physically assault audiences concurrently. Williams furthers the excesses of body genres and their impact on audiences, although, she

identifies pornography, itself a medium of increasing excess, as horror's companion bodily genre: 'The body genres I am isolating here (porn and horror)...the success of these genres often seems to be measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen' (ibid, 143). This is also apparent in response to excessive abject comedy in which the abject excesses of the spilling of bodily fluids have been proven to be mirrored in audiences. Lest we forget: 'Overall I give this cinematic masterpiece the highest review, me throwing up in the bathroom afterwards from absolute disgust' (*El Gato One*, IMDB, 1999 on *Braindead*).

According to Williams: 'What seems to bracket (porn and horror) from others is an apparent lack of proper aesthetic distances, a sense of over-involvement in sensation and emotion' (2003, 144). She points to the Latin word 'horrere' as meaning to 'bristle' (ibid). This bristling, shrinking, shrieking and disgust in response to horrific and comedic representations of excess seems to indicate that the more excessive the onscreen content, the more excessive the response, and in turn, the pleasure in bodily and societal transgression/subversion. One should also consider the physical response of laughter in consuming excessive content of both genres:

'Laughter simulates a sort of bodied earthquake, often brought about by humour's successful attempt to topple, at least momentarily, our petrified psychic patterns.... (a) demonstration of the way humour is capable of relieving us, in the way Freud diagnosed of our troubling vulnerability to life's harsher experiences' (ibid 142).

This response has been earlier explored in relation to abjection, but it is significant to further explore the relationship between excess and laughter, in which both comedic and horrific texts seek to challenge boundaries, to constantly apply exceeding systems and modes of excessive representation and narrative. Freeland writes on *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (Tobe Hooper, 1986), itself interesting in relation to the juxtaposition of comedy and horror and shift in tone from its predecessor: 'Because the scenes of gore and violence are so extreme, they become ridiculous...the atmosphere is comedic not horrific' (2000, 251). Again, excess in itself is crucial in the porosity of the comedic and horrific as exemplified in the case study material. Adjusting the level of excess, can adjust that balance. Too excessive and the absurd can be connoted, leading towards the connotation of comedy: again, a useful finding to be applied in praxis. According to Wells: 'Horror texts were often seen in the light of black humour or the grotesque' (2012, 18). And

crucially it is within this point of meeting that we find the absurd, the third factor which has been identified as a cohesive element between horror and comedy, and which will ultimately guide discussion towards the grotesque: 'It is significant that the word (grotesque) is only used to reference extreme situations and events' (Thomson, 1972, 51).

The Absurd

'The grotesque is a play with the absurd' (Kayser, 1981, 187).

King suggests that, 'we seem to relish comedy best when it makes us participate to the point of hysteria' (2002, 10). Hysteria is a physical, bordering unpleasant experience which is also reflected in the visceral response to horror. The meaning of the word itself includes a paradoxical connotation. It is defined as: 'An uncontrollable outburst of emotion or fear, often characterised by irrationality, laughter, weeping etc.' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019). Hysteria in relation to the case study material of Chapter Two, is reflective of both excess in semiotic representation and narrative escalation, alongside physical audience response.

Palmer's 1987 structural and logical features of comedy reflect two modes in which horror and comedy align in this narrative structuring: 'These include a preparation stage and a culmination stage (often in the form of a verbal or visual punchline) (and) an instance or moment of shock or surprise (a peripeteia or reversal of fortune)' (in Neale, 2000, 66). The narrative rhythm of both horror and comedy rely on a system of escalation (itself aligned to excess), of building to a crescendo whether in an act of outrageous violence, or an act of outrageous comedy. (A structure reflected in filmmaker interviews in *Interviews with Filmmakers, Programmers & Fans on Genre, Horror and Comedy*). Both genres can present a system of logic which Palmer describes as:

'...the logic of the absurd' – in which the plausible and implausible always combine, but in unequal measure: while plausibility is always present, implausibility is always dominant, and it is this dominance that allows us to perceive events and utterances which we are presented in comedy as comic (rather than poetic or tragic)' (ibid).

Palmer's system endows narrative events with what Palmer calls 'comic insulation' (ibid). This implausibility is present in both the comedy and horror case study gross-out material. Can two men climb into a living elephant's vagina? Can an excessively obese man explode and continue to live (and pay his restaurant bill?) Horror is a genre, which in its portrayals of the supernatural, is often centred on the societally-constructed as implausible. Walls simply do not bleed. Lamps do not bend double and laugh at protagonists under demonic attack. This implausibility reaches an escalating crescendo through the portrayal of abjection to a point of excess wherein it becomes absurd – and this is a key tool of genre balance.

Hinchliffe defines the absurd as, 'mis harmonious...out of harmony with reason or propriety...plainly opposed to reason and hence ridiculous, silly' (1969,1). In 2006 Cornwell furthered the absurd as, 'incongruous, unreasonable, illogical' (3). The contrast to 'propriety' (1969, 1) reflects the transgressive aspects of the absurd, clearly delineated in the case study evidence. Palmer argues that 'logic of the absurd' reflects 'the subversion of inhibition...release' (in Cornwell, 2006, 19). Similarly, Esslin regarded the laughter provoked by Theatre of the Absurd, as 'liberation'. In Esslin's view, 'the Theatre of the Absurd does not provoke tears of despair but the laughter of liberation' (in Cornwell, 2006, 133). Noteworthy is the juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy within this liberation. Similarly in reference to the physically responsive cohesion between horror and comedy: 'Herbert Blau wrote in 1954 that if nausea, fear, angst and trembling are the stock in trade of absurd drama, that drama was fundamentally liberating' (Hinchliffe, 1969, 98). Those potentially bodily unpleasant and negative emotions which have been associated with abjection and the visceral spectacle of excess, can also align to the absurd, and the carnivalesque in transgression through experiencing, moreover, celebrating the grotesque.

Neale and Krutnick, 'argue that deviations from the norm are conventional in comedy and hence that 'subversion' is a licensed and integral aspect of comedy's social and institutionalised existence' (in Neale, 2000, 71). They also describe dominating elements of comedy as, 'transgressions and gaps of this kind whether they involve deviations from the norms of sense or departures from dominant cultural models of action, speech and behaviour' (ibid, 33). These transgressive and subversive approaches align horror and comedy and cohere to Olson's theory of, 'effecting a kata stasis of concern through the absurd' (in King, 2002, 46), to be explored further through relation to the carnivalesque. Neale states: 'An opinion is

absurd when it is contrary to the truth, an action when it is contrary to the correct action' (2000, 54). King claims in comedy, 'absurd behaviour is permitted, expected even' (2002, 20). Olson believes that comedy is generated, 'due to a manifest absurdity of the grounds for concern' (1968, 16, in King, 2002, 9). (Reflected by director Sean Cunningham in *Interviews with Filmmakers, Programmers & Fans on Genre, Horror and Comedy*).

This is certainly a semiotic and narrative connotation of the texts of both genres explored in this thesis. Consider for example *Nighty Night* (2004-2005)'s abject, excessive and absurd insemination scene, in which the grounds for concern in impregnating Jill escalate to the insertion of a plated dinner into the vagina. In *Braindead* the sheer persistence and explicitness of the violence and numbers of attackers lead to a manifestation of absurdity in relation to ground for concern, as does the apparent inability to finally defeat the foe, who instead of dying, morphs into an even more abject, excessive and absurd creature. Relation, then, is again to narrative patterns adhering to escalation, of increasingly excessive narrative peaks of concern. This will prove a key narrative construct for inclusion in praxis script creation. Absurdity (aligning horror and comedy) should be derived through escalation of 'grounds for concern' (ibid). Put simply, the odds against the protagonists should continue to escalate, and in doing so will connote both the horrific and comedic – with a consideration of caution in overbalancing connotation of absurdity and undermining implication of horror.

According to Neale and Krutnick, 'comedy may sometimes go 'too far'. But the latitude allowed it is generally – and necessarily – quite considerable' (1990, 3). The phrase 'too far' (ibid) has already been established in correlation to responses to horror and is one which implies the shared bonds of excess, abjection and absurdity between the horror and comedy genres. Perhaps horror's excesses are more easily definable aligned to the genre's iconography: too much bodily fluid, too much excessive violence, the breaking of a taboo, which has been coded societally as untouchable. However, such semiotic representations and narrative themes do also appear in comedy materials. King claims that absurdity is applied in comedy as: 'A situation is established that might in other circumstances, have more serious implications, but these are undermined in one or another' (2002, 8). He furthers: 'In order to be comic rather than disturbing, incongruities and other departures from the norm found in comedy do not usually go too far' (ibid, 15). However, in the intervening years, there appears to have been a filmic one-up-man-ship in comedy

(and indeed horror), which one could argue has culminated in the elephant penetration scene in *Grimmsby*. Perhaps that culmination has yet further to go – and in doing so comedy and horror may be brought closer together in abject, excessive and resultingly absurd content.

Palmer argues: 'The logic of the absurd is what guarantees the status of gags and jokes as comic (rather than anything else that involves surprise, like horror)' (in King, 2002, 69). Applying this perspective in praxis furthers the suggestion that absurdity is the tool which is used to gauge how far a text veers between the horrific and comedic. While both horror and comedy demonstrate absurdity (and indeed excess) as 'disruptions/departures of/from norm' (ibid, 8), the level of absurdity connoted in rendering a text comedically absurd, can control the degree to which it represents, 'the wholly unlike – that which departs radically from the norm – verges on the 'monstrous', in Olson's terminology, a territory closer to that of horror' (ibid).

It is the intent in the praxis of scriptwriting, that the material is suitably horrific in its excesses of abject iconography, but that absurdities such as the placement of the apparently demure women of the Townswomen's Guild into the traditional slasher narrative, are designed to ensure the comedic through characterisation and narrative subversion. In key gross-out 'set piece' (Snyder, 2005, 80) scenes, moreover, absurdity will be a useful tool in connoting balance of the horrific or comedic, while maintaining a co-presence of both. What may be more challenging in praxis is the balance of the excessive abject to ensure connotation of the suitably horrific without comedic overbalance – and again, a degree of this reception may hinge on individual audience interpretation (Cherry, 2000, Hills, 2005). Death, which will feature so prominently in the script in alignment with narrative patterns and iconography of horror cinema, can also in itself be absurd. According to Gehring: 'The first lesson is that death itself is a terrible absurdity. How can a once vital, passionate thinking human being suddenly be reduced to so much decaying garbage?' (1996, xvi) It appears that absurdity sits within one of the very core themes of horror itself-another of the core grotesque tensions in the balance of the horrific and potentially humorous?

The Grotesque

'The grotesque is a game with the absurd, in the sense that the grotesque artist plays, half-laughing, half-horrified with the deep absurdities of existence' (Thomson on Keyser, 1972, 18).

The absurd, excessive and abject can be viewed through the frame of the grotesque, as exemplified in case study analysis. Moreover, 'Michael O'Pray has argued that material which meshes horror and humour is more likely to be identified with the grotesque' (1989, 256, in Wells, 2000). Thomson defines the grotesque as, 'the gruesome or horrifying content and the comic manner in which it is presented' (1972, 2). He alludes to the grotesque's 'radical and extreme nature' (ibid, 11) and describes it as 'ridiculous and bizarre' (ibid, 13) with a 'marked element of exaggeration, of extremes about it' (ibid, 22). Terminology which clearly aligns to discussion of the porosity of excess and absurdity. Further, Thomson argues that content, 'only veers towards the grotesque if exaggeration is extreme and unsettling' (ibid, 38). He furthers that relationship of the abject and horrific to the pleasures of viewing the grotesque, which he describes as, 'delight in seeing taboos flouted, a sense of momentary release from inhibitions...a sadistic pleasure in the horrifying, the cruel, the disgusting' (ibid, 56). This structure is reflected in much of the excess and abjection of the gross-out case study material, both comedic and horrific, although one might posit from the responses of the viewers engaging in the viewing that material, that the pleasure is also masochistic in the visceral disgust response mechanism.

Bakhtin claims that: 'Exaggeration, hyperbolism and excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style' (1965, 301). Weitz similarly identifies that, 'it exhibits an element of excessiveness...it involves a conscious effort on the part of the producer to unsettle the reader or spectator' (2009, 148). Thomson foreshadows Paul (1994) with the claim that the, 'grotesque by its very nature is aggressive and aimed at discomforting in some way' (1972, 42). Yet Weitz balances: 'Importantly Thomson considers the comic a virtually indispensable component of the grotesque...the secret ingredient that raises the impact above the mere appalling or disgusting' (ibid, 148). Thomson frames this as the 'conflict' between horror and comedy, a factor which perhaps prompts the consideration of the two genres as polarising/ised and returns to Carroll's paradox (1990). He furthers: 'The unresolved nature of the grotesque conflict is important...the lack of resolution of the conflict is a distinguishing feature of the grotesque' (1972, 21).

In exploring the conflict in the horrific and comedic, Thomson is keen to focus on the response to the grotesque: 'Re-reading may serve only to reinforce what is essentially a clash between incompatible reactions – laughter on the one hand and horror and disgust on the other' (1972, 2). Noteworthy is the alignment of 'disgust' (ibid) with horror in this conclusion – yet it has also been proven to align to the 'laughter' (ibid) of the comedic. For Thomson that 'tension' in response is key to the tension in representation between the horrific and comedic which he claims must be co-present. He argues: 'The extreme incongruity associated with the grotesque, is itself ambivalent in that it is both comic and monstrous' (ibid, 5). The grotesque is at the core of analysis of these seemingly paradoxical genres, and central in that analysis is that the texts explored in Chapter Two move to some degree towards both the 'the comic and terrifying' at once (ibid, 20).

The grotesque, through its abjection, excess and absurdity, is a meeting point between horror and comedy, where both exist concurrently, although on an adjustable scale. Again, a key tool in application in praxis. As Weitz writes on the accidental car shooting scene in *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994):

'It is both laughable in its sudden, excessive misfortune and horrific (if not stomach churning) in its gratuitous, blood-soaked taking of a human life...we can refer to the effect of these co-present opposing motions as 'grotesque' (2009, 148).

In the field of horror, the analysed work of Jackson and Raimi can certainly be described in grotesque terms: both laughable and gratuitously violent concurrently. The intent in praxis aligns to their approaches in representation.

For Clayborough, early definition of the grotesque, 'derives from its association with a form of art characterised by its rejection of natural order not merely the sense of 'strange' but that of 'abidingly strange' (1967, 12). As identified herein, subversion of the natural order of the comedic in juxtaposition to the horrific, could in itself be defined as 'strange' (ibid). He furthers:

'In romantic usage, largely thought of as the 'gothic'...the word develops a nuance already latent in Johnson's definition: 'distorted figure, unnatural, wildly formed; the nuance of fearful, terrible'...Ruskin insists that a ludicrous and terrible element are almost invariably found together' (ibid, 14).

Herein lies a more direct application of the horrific, the abject, again in combination with the implication of excess and absurdity: the 'ludicrous' (ibid). Moreover, this further relates to the sensation of disgust, of the paradoxical response to consumption of the grotesque:

'Kayser is concerned to emphasise the revulsion of feeling...To compare the appeal of such art to that of the freak show is to some extent valid...we are not only repelled by it, we are also fascinated' (ibid, 73).

Moreover, we are reminded of the 'tension' (ibid) in response to grotesque material, the enjoyment in the visceral, physical, often negatively coded responses of YouTube and IMDB reviewers who regard the physical response of disgust as the highest praise. But why? For Clayborough, 'where the progressive attitude occurs the term is employed to indicate antagonism, a violation of the accepted standards' (ibid, 82). Santayana argues that, 'comic grotesque...shows deep awareness of the everyday circumstances with which it is in conflict' (ibid). The emphasis is laid on divergence from the conventional to create a form of shock value. Clayborough identifies this as 'regressive negative art' and a form of 'deliberate anarchy' (1965, 67). Anarchy aligns exploration of the grotesque to the carnivalesque, the display of the grotesque in play, and all that it means in terms of the enjoyment of the grotesque's apparently multiple paradoxes: Bakhtin's, 'progressive reading of that state of mind and body known as carnival' (Brottman, 2004, 176).

The Carnavalesque

'Gross-out films have a good deal in common with Bakhtin's idea of 'grotesque realism'...degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract...bodily lower stratum, laughter degrades...' (Paul, 1994, 45)

According to Paul, 'gross-out films take us back to the origins of spectacle in ritual' (ibid). He identifies the experience of watching a gross-out film as a 'celebratory frenzy' (ibid, 64) and argues: 'Horror films and comedies represent pre-eminently theatrical genres – movies that work best within the context of a crowded theatre because their aesthetic aim is rabble rousing' (ibid, 21). This creates a, 'festive communal atmosphere in the theatre' (ibid, 65). It is certainly the author's experience that horror film festival audiences are some of the most responsive to

the material onscreen. Laughter, screaming, clapping and the communal, and indeed carnivalesque celebration of spectacle is manifest. Hunter argues festivals, 'offer a communal space within which to explore, express and share aspects of their fandom' and, 'a very specifically communal experience, which Ruoff argues is typically based around cultural politics (Ruoff, 2012)' (in Sexton & Mathijs, 2019, 247). The shared festive atmosphere leads to conversion of 'sub cultural capital' into 'actual' or 'circulating' capital by, 'being observed in situ by other members of that subculture' (Hunter in Jenkins, 2018, 100).

Carroll, on the conventions of horror viewership, identifies, 'rituals of rebellion ...carnival...that provide a circumstanced 'space'...in which customary decorum, morality and taboos may be relaxed' (1990, 200). Further addressing the consumption of and response to the grotesque as subversion/transgression of convention and societally constructed standards of decorum. Moreover, the word 'carnival' (ibid) offers much in analysis of the paradoxical pleasures of engaging with the grotesque in the juxtaposition of comedy and horror. Danow writes that: 'A positive, life-affirming potential...will be shown to co-exist in uneasy alliance with a corresponding affinity for its fugitive negative realisation' (1995, 2). He situates this juxtaposition in the context of the 'carnavalesque' (ibid, 3):

'One laughs, the other cries. One gazes in joy and wonder, the other stares in fixed horror...aghast at a like potential for extreme cruelty and brutality' (ibid, 11).

Bakhtin addresses the question of borders and their transgression through the grotesque and carnivalesque:

'The carnivalesque is animated by a certain, perhaps periodic, human need to dissolve the borders and to eliminate boundaries, so there might be an element of carnival play with death and the boundaries of life and death' (1974, 295).

Moreover, Danow aligns the grotesque with excess through extremity, as established herein, often associated with gross-out material: 'The carnivalesque is designed to allow one extreme to flow into another, to provide for one polarity...to meet and intermingle with its opposite' (1995, 11). Clearly aligned to the tension in the grotesque, this theory also applies to the melding of genres, to the porosity of the apparently paradoxical genres of horror and comedy, and the concurrent tension. Danow describes the carnivalesque as, 'an irresolvable paradox' (ibid, 64),

like the grotesque, which, 'subverts an established value system...day and night appear interchangeable' (ibid, 87). Again, one might question whether, in blending factors such as excess, abjection and the absurdity in semiotic representation and narrative, do horror and comedy subvert the codes of the established value system of genre?

Danow furthers: 'But what if these two seeming ends of a continuum were shown to meet? What if this 'continuum' were melded in the form of a circle, with each of its two polarities then joined?' (ibid, 12) Jung argues that, 'between opposites there always exists a close bond...'les extremes se touchent" (1960, 206-7). It would appear that through those three key shared traits of horror and comedy identified in relevant case study materials, those extremes (an appropriate word in relation to the content), can indeed meet. 'The spectrum bends back on itself, bringing the two genres into unexpected close contact, even overlap,' claim Miller and Van Riper (2016, xiv). They add: 'The cumulative effect is to dissolve normalcy into chaos...outlandish' (ibid, xv).

Such perspectives support the argument that enjoyment of comedy and horror and the excess, abjection and subversion therein, can be interpreted as a transgressive, carnivalesque celebration of the overturn of repression and societal convention. Hokenson writes of the carnivalesque in relation to Freud and, 'comic pleasure as the release of psychic energy, now through the 'uninvited discovery' of repressed infantile behaviour' (2006, 84). Brottman explores the history of the carnival, where: 'In Europe, carnival antics generally drew attention to the animal aspects of the human body' (2004, 119). She identifies the Medieval Feast of Fools as, 'full of dark masquerading, indecent posturing, licentious behaviour, anal aggressions and dime-a-dozen obscenities' (ibid). Paul coins the term, 'animal comedy' to describe films such as *National Lampoon's Animal House* (John Landis, 1978) and *Porky's* (Bob Clark, 1982) in which the behaviour emulates that of 'Old Comedy' (1994, 88-86). The visual and narrative gross-out representations in the films of the Farrelly Brothers could feasibly be assessed in alignment with Brottman's description of the Feast of Fools, as could the anal aggressions (elephantal) and other obscenities of *Grimsby*.

Indeed, a key feature of the carnivalesque, and moreover, the gross-out texts which align comedy and horror, is the, 'the body revealed in all its glorious monstrosity' (ibid, 119). According to Danow: 'Bakhtin's formulation of the carnivalesque includes

the concept of 'grotesque realism' which centres on exaggerations of the body, its orifices, its functions and a lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract' (1995, 186) The body, and its effluences, are the site of the horror and moreover comedy in all of the analysed key scenes in the explored texts. Those films in which horror and comedy meld through abjection, excess and absurdity, meter out each of those factors in relation to the human (zombie or elephant) body. Representations of 'exaggerations of the body' (ibid) are key, as are its existing and newly created (often through violence) orifices. Jackson and Raimi both focus their cinematic gazes on the undead human body, and its mutilation, disintegration, and generally grotesque nature. Davis, in contrast, in a scene which connotes the start of life as oppose the end of it, sites abjection in the vagina which becomes polluted by a roast dinner, testing Douglas' (1996) concept of purity and danger somewhat literally.

Danow concludes that: 'The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation' (1995, 42) and, 'debasement is its fundamental principle' (ibid, 19). The literal, explosive degradation of Mr Creosote also acts as a satirical debasement of his semiotically implied status as entitled, superior. And of course, horror, which so often deals with death, destruction and defilement of the human body, is a key site for bodily degradation and debasement. Knopf argues:

'The carnivalesque is a mockery of a serious reality and Bakhtin's conception of carnivalesque humour is not unlike gallows humour...mockery of the serious, which often features bodily functions and the grotesque...often highlighting bodily failures and death, disease and disfigurement' (in Miller and Van Riper, 2016, 26).

Even in (un)death the body is still subject to grotesque realism, as in *Braindead*, wherein an undead head is thrust into a blender to dizzily view its own destruction. It is crucial to the creation of the praxis that the body, human, or undead, should be the site of the acts of excess, abjection and absurdity, and that the tension between humour and horror in grotesque realism, should be fundamental. Bodily fluids and bodily violence should abound in carnivalesque frenzy (Paul, 1994).

Danow posits: 'The potential for violence and death represents the dark side of carnivalesque' (1995, 16). He defines the darker aspects of the grotesque as: 'A periodic predisposition toward the bright side of the carnivalesque, matched by a potentially far darker predilection for what we must term...the carnivalesque grotesque' (ibid, 31). This dark-sided 'carnivalesque grotesque' (ibid) must be

present in praxis in ensuring the substantive connotation of horror in balance with comedy. Violence must have consequence; the threat and reality of death must be ever-present. The balance of the horror and comedy in the grotesque, while always in juxtaposition, can be adjusted in representation. Paul argues of horror and comedy, furthering his theory of 'animal comedy', that:

'The horror film generally follows what Bakhtin sees as the post-Renaissance tradition of viewing the grotesque as supernatural or demonic, while the comedies revert to earlier traditions...that view the grotesque as natural and animal' (1994, 67).

While horror can also offer animalistic representation, analysed case study material supports this supernatural/demonic summation, and by placing the supernatural/demonic at the praxis core, the connotation of the horrific, of 'art horror' (Carroll, 1990), can be balanced in script creation. A supernatural threat, combined with ever-present threat, violence and death connote the darker aspects of the grotesque carnivalesque.

Moreover, in alignment to consideration of excess, the grotesque, and in turn the genres which combine to form grotesque tension, can be subject to their own forms of societal degradation and defilement:

'Slapstick and gag-based comedy was deemed to be a 'lower' cultural form filled with 'crude' and violent behaviour (including a propensity for assault on the lower regions of the body, especially the backside): more suited to the lower classes' (King, 2002, 26).

The term low as judgement (lowbrow) is reflected in analysis of the preoccupations of grotesque and carnivalesque material:

'One of the key aspects of carnivalesque humour for Bakhtin is the representation of the human body as source of the grotesque....this involves a concern with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs: it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception' (King, 2002, 65).

Bakhtin alludes to the frequency of representation of the 'lower bodily stratum' (in Brottman, 2012, 312). Certainly, the lower bodily stratum, and its by-products feature explicitly in *Something About Mary*, *Grimsby*, *Nighty Night* and *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*. Williams historically relates the lower bodily function carnivalesque obsession to Aristophanes: 'Scatological references to penises, bums, flatulence and excrement abound in Aristophanes, as do unsubtle jokes about sex' (in Grant, 2003, 147). Hokenson describes 'exuberance in animal nature' and furthers, 'Schlegel suggests that this kind of inner incongruity flourished in the 'festival gladness' of old comedy...exuberant...the animal part of human nature' (2006, 74).

To further Paul's (1994) assessment of the balance of content in defining how far the grotesque leans towards the comedic or horrific, it is clear that while the horrific can represent animalistic defilement and debasement of the human body (and its lower stratum), it is the extent of the violence towards that body and the associated output which can define that balance. Put simply, violence resulting in excessive amounts of blood, detached limbs, gore and effluence, are more likely to connote the horror genre. Again, a useful finding for application of balance in praxis. Moreover, in relation to the concern of the lower bodily stratum, it is the intent that the script should contain a key carnivalesque grotesque scene which overbalances the comedic in tension with the horrific. The scene will portray the attempted removal of a mobile telephone from both ends of the digestive bodily orifices of a mutilated corpse...by the demure ladies of the Townswomen's Guild. Moreover, with only a fish slice and tongs as operative tools. Therein, 'exuberance in animal nature' (ibid) is demonstrated and finding applied in praxis.

In a broader cultural context, the work of filmmaker John Waters is perhaps most associated with the carnivalesque grotesque. Consider again, *Pink Flamingos*' stomach-churning finale in which Divine consumes freshly laid dog excrement. King describes director John Waters' work as 'marginal', 'extreme carnivalesque' and the products of the "underground' and counter-cultural milieu' (2002, 74). Interestingly Waters' work has traditionally proved problematic in genre categorisation, and while his films were initially considered as primary gross-out case study material for this thesis, this led to their rejection as clear examples of horror, comedy or horror comedy. (Moreover, exploration of genre in Waters' work is a fascinating thesis in its own right.)

King assess the Farrelly Brothers as 'mainstream' and Waters as 'marginal' (ibid, 69). He claims that Waters' is, 'a truly carnivalesque world of thoroughly inverted values' (ibid, 71). He describes the protagonists as, 'outcasts from 'normal' society, living by their own wilfully 'perverse' values' (ibid, 75). The real-life excrement eating, he claims, 'would be beyond the bounds of the permissible in a mass-audience comedy', describing it as a, 'grotesque transgression' of bodily functions which are 'repressed' (ibid, 71). Perhaps' Waters' work is regarded as so difficult to categorise as it is simply so transgressive, going so far beyond any realism of the transgressive comedic, that it is sometimes categorised with horror cinema. Although further content in *Pink Flamingos* such as violent murder and cannibalism may render that claim difficult to uphold – these are clearer narrative signifiers of the horror genre. While it is intended that the Part Two praxis will offer representation of the carnivalesque grotesque as exemplified above, it should be clear that is not the intent to extend the excesses, absurdities and abjections to the level of Waters' real-life transgressions!

As a closing reflection for the chapter, one might ponder whether the Abject, the Excessive, or the Absurd could exist as genres in their own right? As Williams has argued, 'excess may in itself be an organised system' (in Grant, 2003, 141). And in culmination, could the 'carnivalesque grotesque' exist as a genre in itself? While *Grimmsby* certainly contains horrific visual representation to challenge some of the body horror genre cannon, it cannot be described as belonging to the comedy horror genre as it does not contain enough aligned iconographical elements of horror. *Grimmsby* is therefore assigned to the genre of comedy, gross-out comedy, while that title alone connotes its links to horror. Could the shared traits of comedy and horror be used in categorisation, not relying on the 'super' category terms of horror and comedy to form a hybrid which requires fulfilment of certain key iconographic elements? Or would the invocation of a different type of categorisation provoke an insurmountable challenge in terms of traditional marketing and audience expectation? And who would decide?

Moreover, is gross-out, a category enough in itself, a sub-genre which can be applied within the 'super' categories of both comedy and horror, without demanding a hybridisation of both? Genres aligned to these key descriptive traits would certainly enable a clearer categorisation of works such as those of John Waters which do contain iconography aligned to both the horror and comedy genres, but do not sit comfortably under the hybrid moniker (although the lack of ability to

categorise his work is arguably partly central to its transgressions). Todorov asks: 'Are genres finite in number or infinite...every work alters the sum of possible works, each a new example to the species' (1975, 4-6). Perhaps expansion could include genres which are more aligned to their audience responsive element, reflecting contemporary research on Netflix categorisation more closely aligned to genre expectation (Olney, 2013)? The intent of the praxis is representation of porous narrative themes and visual representations within an overarching structure of genre hybridity. However, these research findings do also suggest the potential for broader expansion of genre categorisation, and the potential creation of further, less simplistic/rigid genre categories, descriptively aligned to audience consumption and response. The research limits of this thesis do not enable further expansion of this theme but pose a useful question in further consideration of genre theory.

Conclusion

'So stubbornly we seem to cling onto these oppositions: laughing or screaming, horror or comedy. Why not do both? Do we need a visit from *The Tingler* to remind that they do not need to be separate?' (Leeder in Miller and Van Riper, 2016, 97).

Chapter One explored theories of genre, encompassing the purpose of categorisation, the site of assignment of genre, the factors characterising genre, and the argument for the challenge to strict genre boundaries through hybridity and porosity of content. Theory was applied and explored which primarily identified genre as a tool of expectation, a device to market a product to an audience and to manage an audience's expectation (Selbo, 2015, Lacey, 2005, Neale, 2000, Gledhill, 2000, Sobchack, 1986 et al.). As Ryall (1975) concluded, genre is defined by the relationship between the audience, filmmaker, and the product which binds them, the film itself: 'The master image for genre criticism is a triangle composed of artist/film/audience' (ibid, 27-28). Iconography was considered as a key tool in genre characterisation in relationship with mise-en-scene, characterisation, cinematography and semiotic representation. Further, Lacey identifies the following repertoire of genre-identifying elements: iconography, narrative, setting & characters (2000, 48). In order to fulfil the marketed promise and align to audience expectation, key visual and aural tools can be employed by the filmmaker to connote genre, based on the shared knowledge of 'conventions' between the parties (Tudor in Grant, 2003, 4). Moreover, Kitses posits genres contain material with shared 'history, themes, archetypes and icons' (ibid, 18).

Yet, despite employment of tools to enable genre identification, and the genre expectations of audiences, analysis revealed that a large proportion of films cannot be restricted to one genre. Primarily through application of Selbo's (2015) argument, genre hybridity was identified as a frequently more realistic form of genre categorisation. She argues that, 'most movies are a combination of two or more genres' (ibid, 68). Gledhill furthers: 'Genre is first and foremost a boundary phenomenon...not surprisingly, the process of establishing territories leads to border disputes' (in Gledhill & Williams, 2000, 221). Stam's challenge to strict genre categorisation through monolithic definitions, provided particularly applicable in challenging assignment of content to just one genre (Stam, 2000, Chandler, 2000). Lacey argues: 'Any film (like in any text, utterance or instance of representation) can

participate in several genres at once. In fact, it is more common than not for a film to do so' (2000, 25). Therefore, analysis firmly led to the conclusion that strict, isolatory genre definition did not appropriately reflect the hybridity of genre, and that genre characteristics and content can be fluid/porous. Furthering this conclusion it was then crucial to research intent to identify the elements of porosity between the apparently juxtaposed genres of horror and comedy.

Chapter One interrogated academic definitions of 'horror' and 'comedy', what they constitute and signify in their narratives, themes and iconography, and how audiences engage with and respond to them. Cohesion was uncovered in existing academic perspectives of horror and comedy as genres which are frequently defined by their physical and cognitive effect on the audience (Bantikani, 2012, Gelder, 2000, Brophy, 2000, Carroll, 1990 et al.). Comedy and horror audiences can both shriek – whether in delight or horror; convulse – whether with laughter or fear; or, most relevant to the findings of this research, look away from the unpleasantness on the screen which is simply 'too far' (Williams in Grant, 2003, 141).

Freud (1905) positioned laughter as a relief from repression, indicating the associated pleasure therein. Wood (1978) famously approached horror as 'The Return of the Repressed'. Freud furthered humour as a defence, 'by finding a means of withdrawing the energy from the release of unpleasure that is already in preparation and of transforming it, by discharge, into pleasure' (1905, 299). Neale and Krutnick posit repression and release as the physical response to the comedic signifying the point at which repression is overturned and converted into expression of release in the form of the 'burst' (1990, 69) of the laugh. Both comedy and horror can provide a physical means of release, they are aligned in attempting to elicit a physical, visceral response from audiences, whether through the scream or the laugh, or a combination of both. Analysis revealed that in gross-out case study materials from both genres and moreover, the hybrid horror comedy genre, further physical responses such as disgust could be elicited, and that these responses proved cohesive traits of both. This response mechanism aligns both genres to the transgressive, subversive and crucially grotesque aspects of the 'spirit of carnival' (Danow, 1995) explored further in Chapter Three.

The second chapter consists of case study research which uncovers direct evidence of cohesion between horror and comedy in single and mixed genre texts, through gross-out film and television material. Texts for analysis included the horror

(comedy) films *Evil Dead* (1981), *Braindead* (1992) and *Evil Dead 2* (1987), and the comedy texts *There's Something About Mary* (1998), *Grimsby* (2016), *Nighty Night* (2004-2005) and *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (1983). Close reading, historical analysis (often reflected in intertextuality), and semiotic visual/aural analysis revealed points of porosity between the genres, with horror genre-coded themes and visual representations evident in films which had been marketed and created as purely comedic.

Analysis also revealed increased porosity in the darker visual representations in *Nighty Night*, exaggerated in the second series, which demonstrated that while a text may remain within the comedy genre, porosity of horror 'signs' (Edgar-Hunt, Marland & Rawle, 2010, 12-13) may be more explicitly connoted through iconography and narrative. Although notable in relation to genre as a tool of audience expectation management, an excess of representation of iconography towards a genre other than that expected by the audience, could prove problematic in reception. The balance of horror and horror comedy was further explored in the more explicit difference between *Evil Dead* and its 'requel' (*Bloody Disgusting*, 2017), *Evil Dead 2* which is more explicitly comedic. *Braindead* signalled evidence of the practical application of iconography, narrative, characterisation and mise-en-scene, which successfully blended horror and comedy as a hybrid genre, while establishing the key shared traits which form the cohesive bonds which can be found in both genres.

Through close reading, historical and semiotic analysis of each of the key scenes from these case study texts, the original conclusion was posited that the key shared traits of gross-out horror, comedy and horror comedy are **abjection, excess and absurdity**. The third chapter expanded this finding with academic interrogation of each of those key points of porosity between the genres and reflected on how they could be applied in praxis. Abjection was first explored, primarily through the theories of Douglas (1966) and Kristeva (1982) in assessing purity and danger in relation to extending beyond assigned boundaries, whether of the body, or indeed, in reflection of the thesis' central research intent, genre itself. Excess was then explored theoretically, and filmic contextual analysis related further to 'gross-out' (Paul, 1994), the sub-genre of film which has evidenced a clear cohesive link between the two genres. It was established that the cohesive elements in gross-out material often represented the transgressing of boundaries, going 'too far' (Williams in Grant, 2003, 141), and representation of the abject, which prizes visual and aural

excess as key. 'Horror as a form of cultural production is also routinely linked to excess, to a lack of restraint,' argues Gelder (2000, 5).

Gelder furthers that horror:

'...so often staked out its place in the broader field of cultural production in terms of its illegitimacy: as an often shocking spectacular, sensationalist and 'immoral' (or amoral) form which can seem to take pleasure from the fact that so many people find it disturbing, distasteful or even downright unacceptable' (ibid, 2).

In demonstration of porosity of this trait in comedy, King agrees: '(In) gross-out comedy...comedy based on crude and deliberate transgressions of the bounds of 'normal everyday taste'...bonds of social convention are transgressed' (2002, 64-5). Further, it was concluded that the combination of the abject and excessive aligned the material to the absurd, that third key cohesive factor between the genres. This absurdity, was evidenced in core scenes in case study materials such as physical entry into the vagina of a live elephant, the lawn-mowing to death of a horde of zombies in a genteel family home, and the delivery of a dinner bill to the still-breathing exploded Mr Creosote. 'Comedy may sometimes go 'too far', but the latitude allowed it is generally – and necessarily – quite considerable,' argue Neale & Krutnick (1990, 3). The same applies to horror – however too absurd and horror is undermined in favour of a comedy response. Both comedy and horror exist 'in tension' (Thomson, 1972, 21), but on an adjustable scale, a key finding for application in praxis. Absurdity was found to align to subversion of decorum, of unfeasible excesses of abjection, and crucially to the grotesque in which the co-existing tension of horror and comedy is central (ibid). According to Kayser, 'the grotesque is a play with the absurd' (1981, 187).

Thomson addresses the conflict inherent in the grotesque: 'Re-reading may serve only to reinforce what is essentially a clash between incompatible reactions – laughter on the one hand and horror and disgust on the other' (1972, 2). For Thomson that 'tension' in response to material which embodies both the comedic and horrific, is key to the tension which he claims must be co-present and remain in a state of tension for the grotesque to be present. 'The extreme incongruity associated with the grotesque, is itself ambivalent in that it is both comic and monstrous,' he furthers (ibid, 5). This juxtaposition offers evidence at the very heart of the cohesion between comedy and horror, which can be derived through the three

key aligned identified traits. Moreover, this relationship to the grotesque has enabled exploration of the enjoyment of those cohesive traits in the context of the carnivalesque (Danow, 1995, Bakhtin, 1984 et al.).

The carnivalesque embeds the transgression and subversion of convention, release of repression (aligned to the theories of Wood, 1978 and Freud, 1905), and the shared spirit of celebration. Carroll posits: 'What appears to be displeasure and figuratively speaking, pain, is really the road to pleasure, given the structure of repression' (1990, 171). He furthers, 'it explains how audiences can be attracted to horror despite the ostensible disgust it engages...it exacts a little discomfort in exchange for greater pleasure' (ibid, 174). The same was found to be true in response to the case study material explored within the comedic gross-out genre, thereby aligning audience responses to apparently polarised genres through the (grotesque) carnivalesque.

This significant theoretical and direct analysis has enabled a considered response to the thesis' Part One research questions, which can be directly applied in the original praxis experiment of Part Two and reflected upon rigorously in gnosis in Part Three:

1. Are the apparently paradoxical genres of horror and comedy more porous than genre expectation/categorisation may suggest?

'One quality that most, if not all, comedy, has in common and that helps to explain its widespread appeal is that it is usually considered to be relatively 'safe' and unthreatening...comedy is often taken to be the epitome of 'light relief' or 'just entertainment' on film' (King, 2002, 2).

'Both Freud and Bergson agreed that humour resembles mental disturbance in that a distressful or offensive idea leads to logical peculiarities' (Brottman, 2004, 104).

King's claim stands in some contrast to the results of the research findings presented herein. Part One of this thesis has clearly found that horror and comedy can be more closely aligned than standardised definitions of each genre might suggest. Weitz argues that, 'comedy is at the very least an unwieldy creature of radically changeable appearance' (2009, 24), supporting evidence for a broader perspective on both the representation and reception of different types of comedic

materials. Put simply, comedy cannot always be regarded as 'safe and unthreatening' (King, 2002, 2).

The intent of audience response is intrinsic in the cohesion between horror and comedy. These are aligned genres in that they are intended to provoke a physical, visceral reaction in the viewer, from laughter to screaming, which can be shared responses, as can disgust. Neale states: 'Definitions of the horror genre usually stress viewer experience' (2000, 86). Wells suggests in this respect, 'comedy is horror's aligned genre' (2000, 1), echoing the shared viewer experiential aspects of each. Moreover, Paul claims: 'Horror films and comedies represent pre-eminently theatrical genres, movies that work best within the context of a crowded theatre – because their aesthetic aim is rousing rabble' (1994, 21). This reinforces the experiential and carnivalesque aspects of consumption of each genre: vocal, physical, and in some cases physiological. Where both horror and comedy offer semiotic and aural representation of excess, abjection and absurdity, the effect on audiences can frequently be categorised by a physical, visceral response, culminating in a carnivalesque atmosphere in shared viewings.

It is also significant to note, aligned to aspects of excess and absurdity that, 'comedy is a prime site for all manner of unlikely actions – and all manner of unlikely justification for their occurrence' (Neale & Krutnick, 2000, 32). In the key texts explored herein, films of both genres have required the suspension of disbelief in their excessive semiotic representation and character actions. This aligns to Schlegel's interpretation of aspects of the comedic as 'a fanciful or fantastic world' (Schlegel, 1808, 339 in Hokenson, 1972, 77), a world which is often aligned with horror cinema.

Carroll argues that horror, 'is a concept with fuzzy and perhaps developing boundaries' which, 'supports myriad border cases that cannot be ruled in or out of the genre' (1990, 38). He adds: 'It may be true that a sharp line cannot be drawn between horror and its neighbours because its boundaries are somewhat fluid,' which may, 'enhance our grasp of horror itself, but also its contesting neighbours' (ibid). Carroll's perspective aligns to the thesis findings which uncover much evidence of the porosity of the boundaries between horror and comedy. Brophy furthers:

'It is humour that remains one of the major features of the contemporary horror film...The humour is...mostly perverse and tasteless, so much so that often the humour might be horrific, while the horror might be humorous' (in Gelder, 2000, 284).

These research findings indicate that a text does not need to be consigned to the comedy horror, or horror comedy genre, in order to demonstrate humour which might be deemed 'horrific' (ibid). Moreover, through the key traits of abjection, excess and absurdity, a text can belong to either the comedy, horror, comedy horror, or horror comedy genre, therefore proving that comedy and horror can be more closely aligned than juxtaposed perceptions of each may initially dictate. And, especially useful to praxis intent, in adjusting the levels of the cohesive traits between the genres, while horror and comedy can co-exist in tension (Thomson, 1972), the balance can be adjusted.

2. How are film & television horror and comedy semiotically, thematically and narratively porous in gross-out material?

'A gleeful uninhibitedness is certainly the most striking feature of these films – of both the comedic and the horror films...(They) offer a real sense of exhilaration, not without its disturbing quality, in testing how far they can go, how much they can show off without making us turn away, how far they can push the boundaries to provoke a cry of 'oh gross!' as a sign of approval, an expression of disgust that is pleasurable to call out.' (Sipos on Paul, 2010, 25)

Filmic and televisual horror and comedy demonstrate evidence of semiotic, thematic and narrative alignment through their depictions of abjection, excess and absurdity, aligned to their grotesque carnivalesque consumption. This is most notable in gross-out material. Close analysis has proven that all three traits are evident in examples of films which can be described as horror or comedy, and in films which hybridise the two genres. Horror comedy, or indeed comedy horror, is one hybrid genre which represents porosity of borders between two seemingly opposing genres, and the degrees to which the semiotic and thematic traits of each genre can be combined to adjust balance in hybridity. As Tudor argues: 'It is precisely because its 'edges' are diffuse that a genre is able to develop and change' (ibid, 5). While a text may be solely aligned to comedy, the comedic texts which have been explored herein, have

all offered visual and aural elements which correlate to horror – and indeed in the reaction which they provoke in the viewer, mainly through disgust and revulsion.

Carroll asks:

'If horror necessarily has something repulsive about it, how can audiences be attracted to it?...In the ordinary course of affairs people shun what disgusts them' (Carroll, 1990, 160).

This juxtaposition is Carroll's 'paradox of horror' (ibid), and it has been proven that this paradox is also present in certain types of comedic material, forming a point of cohesion/porosity between the two genres. Gross-out comedy clearly challenges categorisation of comedy as 'safe and unthreatening' (King, 2002, 2), with its intent to 'repulse' and 'shock' (Paul, 1994), evidenced in close analysis of key case study material. Paul argues that this juxtaposition/paradox, 'attracts and repels at the same time' (1994, 313), reflecting the grotesque. 'That the works of horror are in some sense both attractive and repulsive is essential to an understanding of the genre,' states Carroll (1990, 160). Yet comedy is also capable of presenting this juxtaposition, a tension present at the very core of the grotesque. According to Paul:

'In both the ambivalence of the image is key, we are drawn to gross-out at the same time we are repulsed by it, or rather, precisely because we are repulsed by it. Contradiction, then, is central to the mode of address in these films' (1994, 67).

What semiotic tools, visual representations and narrative themes are employed across both genres, and the hybrid genre, to illicit that 'repulsed' (ibid) response? Thomson posits: 'The grotesque is essentially physical, referring always to the body and bodily excesses, and celebrating these in an uninhibited, outrageous, but essentially joyous fashion' (1972, 56). Analysis has identified comedy and horror of the body (whether animal, human, or zombie), and its 'polluting' (Douglas, 1966) fluids, to be the central visual and narrative cohesion in case study material, employed to induce what Thomson might describe as 'shock effect' (1972, 56). Paul argues that, 'physicality is a key tribute of these films' (1994, 86). He furthers that they are frequently, 'working against meaning in favour of spectacle, the ascendancy of physical over conceptual (ibid, 294). It is in the intent to induce this 'shock' (Thomson, 1972, 56) through transgression in representations of (bodily

abjection, excess and absurdity, that much cohesion has been found between comedy and horror material.

According to Miller & Van Riper: 'The mechanisms by which they operate are strikingly similar...both depend on the shock of the unexpected, the subversion of audience's expectations' (2016, xiv). The carnivalesque pleasure in subverting and transgressing societally constructed decorum through visceral, physical representation, is core to the cohesion of the case study material which depicts gross-out content across genre. Ensuring representation and connotation of the abject, excessive and absurd will ensure that praxis represents the conflict and tension of the grotesque (Thomson, 1972). While disgusting physicality, bodily excesses and exposure of impure bodily fluids (Douglas, 1962), must be central in narrative and visual representation of the abject, excessive and absurd.

3. How can this porosity be applied in the creation of a horror comedy film script?

'Horror shares a special bond with comedy. These two emotive genres play off each other. Tension builds into fear. Fear is released through screams or laughter, often both in quick succession. Yet through the interplay they fight a tug of war' (Sipos, 2010, 24).

Part One research clearly identifies abjection, excess and absurdity as the key elements of porosity between gross-out horror and comedy. Semiotic, thematic and lexical evidence supports this hypothesis, aligned to filmmaker intent and audience reception of connoted and moreover, explicit, meaning. In the practical experiment of script praxis, these tools will be employed and evidence-reflective approaches taken to ensure that the balance of co-presence of horror and comedy will be achieved. It is intended that the script should contain excesses of blood, gore and viscera, (resulting from the violent wielding of extreme weaponry), over other abject bodily fluids. Therein the connotation balances semiotic and iconographical representation towards the horrific, while excess and absurdity can be employed to varying degrees to connote the comedic. Freeland's, 'gross bodily dismemberments, piles of internal organs, numerous corpses in stages of decay, headless bodies, knives or chainsaws slashing away at flesh, and general orgies of mayhem' (2000, 242) will be (in)appropriately employed. Moreover, the violent transgressions of the body and its boundaries, resulting in the production of potentially abject fluids and

viscera, will be central to the film's narrative and visual construction, blending the evidenced shared traits of the genres.

A supernatural, apparently undefeatable, and therefore explicitly threatening, villain will be a key characteristic in aligning the narrative to the key conventions of horror. As Todorov defines 'the fantastic', a signifier in categorisation of horror (but also in the situation of comedy): 'In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be experienced by the laws of the same familiar world' (1975, 25). Intertextuality will be applied throughout as a tool to identify horror genre alignment, from a supernatural villain who resembles an existing icon of the horror cannon, to the postmodernism of direct intertextual reference to other horror texts. This supports Hills' theory that: 'The pleasures of horror can be as much about recognising generic histories and lineages as about 'being scared'' (2005, 7). Location and isolation will also be employed as a tool of realistic threat and danger, aligned to the suspenseful iconography of horror cinema.

In the co-present combination of comedy and horror, it is also crucial that praxis reflect the findings of the carnivalesque aspects of the tensions in the grotesque (Thomson, 1972). Through the semiotic depiction of abjection to a point of excess, reflecting the absurd, it is intended that the film invoke a carnivalesque spirit. Carroll's, 'rituals of rebellion...carnival...that provide a circumstanced 'space'...in which customary decorum, morality and taboos may be relaxed' (1990, 200), will be sought in excessive, abject and absurd narrative events and imagery. The film will seek to invoke Paul's, 'celebratory frenzy' (1994, 64) and Shaviro's 'hysterical frenzy' (1993, 102) in its attempt to invoke the carnivalesque grotesque through escalation of abjection, excess and absurdity, while ensuring that threat and productive violence is maintained and escalated to ensure that horror remains present where intended. To be reflected in gnosis, it is intended that the script's escalating murder 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26) are those in which the carnivalesque is most explicitly connoted through the combination of those core three factors.

This Part One thesis offers further significance and contribution of original knowledge in building on the work of Paul on 'gross-out' (1994) in horror and comedy film and television, while addressing a relative lack of address in subsequent focused academic material. The thesis further interrogates the porosity between horror and comedy gross-out texts, updates case study material, and

posits the original conclusion that **abjection, excess and absurdity** are the cohesive traits between the genres. The thesis also argues that Paul's twenty-six-year-old prediction that gross-out is consigned to history has proved incorrect, as the sub genre has since transgressed multiple pre-defined boundaries, achieving great audience success. Conclusions have been posited through rigorous academic contextualisation and interrogation, and direct research in close reading, semiotic and historical analysis of relevant case study material. These research findings will now be uniquely applied and tested in the experiment of the original Part Two praxis in the creation of a horror comedy feature film script, and a Part Three exegesis which provides a rigorous gnosis of application of research in practice.

As this doctoral research is within the academic field of Creative Writing, there are restrictions in word count of this thesis in interrogation of genre porosity. These findings therefore offer potential of further expansion, interrogation, and direct case study analysis. The analytical eye herein has focused closely on gross-out horror and comedy, aligned to praxis intent, however, the porosity between the genres should be interrogated further from a number of merely touched-upon perspectives. These include different types of horror and comedy such as the expansion of exploration of the less explicitly visceral 'dark comedy' or 'gallows humour' (Hallenbeck, 2009, King, 2002, Berenstein, 1996, Freud, 1991, Carroll, 1990 et al.) A further shared feature of the genres which offers potential for exploration and expansion, is narrative structure i.e. 'set up set up joke' (Long, 2005) aligned to the structure of set up, set up, scare, and the escalation of odds/absurdity as a narrative function. (Filmmaker comments address this similarity in *Interviews with Filmmakers, Programmers & Fans on Genre, Horror and Comedy*).

Genre transgression and the work of John Waters through the lens of horror comedy hybridity and the grotesque carnivalesque, also offers much potential for academic expansion, especially in relation to 'taste' (Miller, 1998, Paul, 1994, McCarty, 1989 et al.) and disgust. Furthermore, the type of laughter which horror can elicit points to an intriguingly rich research vein, partially explored in existing texts such as Staiger (2000) and Hills (2005), but which could be expanded on in relation to the thesis' findings aligned to the abject, excessive and absurd and their shifting relationship to laughter. 'The operations of the economics of the comic and the joke particularly in the face of blood and gore, are quite complex,' argues Staiger (2000, 190). As established at the outset, the academic field surrounding the alignment of horror and comedy is one which offers much room for expansion, and this thesis begins this

expansion in the field of gross-out material, and the shared abject, excessive and absurd traits of horror and comedy therein. It is now crucial, however, that these findings be applied and tested in original praxis in the script of the feature film *Knitters!*

Intermission

Interviews With Filmmakers, Programmers & Fans on Genre

How do you feel about rigid definitions of genre? Can genres be so distinctive when there are so many areas of crossover & films of different genres with shared traits?

Dom Burns, producer of *Jay & Silent Bob Reboot* (2019), writer & producer of *Madness in the Method* (2019), director, writer & producer of *Airborne* (2012) & *Alien Uprising* (2012)

'I hate defined genres; I wish we didn't have them. It forces film makers to pigeon-hole their movies and if studios can't place your movie into a specific genre, you'll have a hell of a time getting green-lit. I love going to film festivals primarily because it's an opportunity to watch films before they are marketed, often before they even have a poster (in the case of the Marche Du Film at Cannes for example). Expectation is guilty of spoiling so many films and the less I know about a movie going in, the happier I am.'

Adam Marsh, writer of *Devil's Tower* (2014), film programmer, director of Paracinema film festival at Derby Quad

'As a horror fan, programmer and writer, branding something as a horror has many pros and cons. As an experienced horror fan, my tastes are quite broad, so I pay much less attention to what people are saying about a film, what genre it falls into etc. I will make my own mind up on what I believe the film is. However, as a film programmer, I am looking for those films that I can programme to a clearly defined audience...Finally, as a screenwriter you are thinking about two areas to please with the writing. The audience and the people who might want to buy and distribute the film. If you have a clearly defined audience in mind when you are writing it certainly helps the writing process. Similarly, the distributors are looking for a good film, but also one that they can sell easily too and is easier to communicate to the prospective audience.'

Rob Nevitt, Director of Celluloid Screams film festival at Sheffield Showroom & director of *M Is For Metamorphosis* (2013)

'I think notions of genre are interesting simply because a film like *The Guest* for example, it's not a horror film...arguably. But it's an action adventure film, thriller...'

Marketed to a horror audience though...

'Very much so, partly down to the writer/director team. But also tonally it plays to its audience. In terms of the bare bones of the plotting. It's not a million miles away from something like *Taken*, but you wouldn't play *Taken* in a horror fest. You would play *The Guest* because it's a genre film. It's almost beyond whether it's a horror film or sci-fi. Genre film plays to a specific type of audience.'

What do you think defines a horror film? This is hotly debated – so many films come out and people can't agree what genre they are.

Adam Marsh

'I think that a good horror movie can be a number of things. Most of them should contain a fair amount of claret though! Violence and characters in scary situations (even if you are not scared yourself) is a must. Then beyond that the same expectation apply for all films. An engaging plot, characters that are well defined and interesting and visually pleasing style.'

Darrell Buxton, author of *The Shrieking Sixties: British Horror Films 1960-1969*, film programmer & writer of *Ouijageist* (2018), & **Chris King**, horror film fan & collector

Chris King: 'Nowadays I don't think you can define it as any one particular thing. Is *Alien* horror or sci-fi? That's just the most simple example.'

Darrell Buxton: Look at Tarantino's films, *Kill Bill Vol 1 & 2*...There's a little mini remake of *City of the Living Dead* in there. There's a yakuza movie, there's an anime. There's an authentic Hong Kong kung-fu movie. What's *Kill Bill*, is it horror, a Western?

Christopher King: You can't define it can you? It's just a Tarantino movie.'

Why do we need genre definitions and what causes them to continually perpetuate?

Dom Burns

‘Genres exist primarily for the marketing of the film. I fully accept that film is a commercial entity and must be marketed in order to enable a film to become commercially viable...marketing is everything nowadays and marketers need to pigeon-hole films into genres in order to sell them. This is also a reason why horror is still thriving in many ways. Studios like Blumhouse are spending a small amount of money on films with a very marketable high concept and then taking what would normally have been the film’s budget and spending it all on advertising.’

Adam Marsh

‘For the most part we don’t need genre definitions. Particularly from a viewing standpoint. If a film is good, then it shouldn’t matter whether the film is a horror, sci-fi or nunsplotation! However, audiences have had a greater part in causing genre definitions to perpetuate, particularly in the horror, sci-fi and fantasy genres. You have people defining the genres because they are defining themselves through the types of films they love. Many people describe themselves as horror fans or fantasy fan or science-fiction fans. You don’t tend to get people defining themselves as biopic fans, or weepie drama fans or kitchen sink drama fans. This sense of tribalism makes the genre definitions strong. There are many benefits of clearly defining the genre a film is in. As I said earlier, mainly from a sales perspective. If a genre is clearly defined in the mind’s eye, it should be easier to sell the product to an audience who knows what they want.’

Rob Nevitt

‘Looking at the way that the industry is moving, genre has arguably never been bigger’.

Dom Burns

‘Sadly, genres are only becoming more and more important. In my opinion the principal reason for this is because of streaming sites like Netflix. I literally had a

conversation with someone a couple of days ago about how Netflix had passed on their film, not because they didn't like the script but because they couldn't define it within a specific genre. Netflix need to be able to be clear with their genres because that's how they structure their menus.'

Filmmakers, Programmers & Fans on Horror & Comedy

Gary Sherman, director of *Death Line* (1972), *Dead & Buried* (1981) & *Poltergeist 3* (1988) on studio interference in the comedy/horror balance in *Dead & Buried*

'(At the preview screening) Mark Damon said, 'wait until everyone leaves', takes me to a corner of the theatre and says, 'good film, but if I wanted Bergman to direct a horror film, I'd hire Bergman. Now let's make a horror film.' He said: 'What's with all this comedy shit? Where's all the blood, I wanna' see more blood, less comedy. Let's get rid of all that Jack shit.'

Why do you think comedy and horror are two genres that are so intertwined with each other (if indeed you do)?

Darrell Buxton, author of *The Shrieking Sixties: British Horror Films 1960-1969*, film programmer & writer of *Oujageist*, & Chris King, horror film fan & collector

Chris King: 'I think they're both very real emotions. I think that's basically what it is. They're both kind of different, but both kind of similar as well and can work very well together as a film, as a book, as whatever. I think it's the emotion.'

Darrell Buxton: There are lots of differences between comedy & horror I think, and that's perhaps the more interesting question, because the link between comedy seems very sort of intrinsic. So I think the more interesting question is what's different about comedy and horror...The points where they do sort of collide & coincide, & I suppose the main one is that they both often rely on peaks for their success. You know the jump scare or the shock moment.

Chris King: The punchline.

Darrell Buxton: The big laugh. The custard pie in the face. They're the same thing really.

Chris King: Yes, they are about peaks...you've got the horror pay off, the kill, the end to the suspense. In the comedy you've got the punchline.

Darrell Buxton: Taking the slasher movie as particular concept, that's got a lot in common with comedy in that often in a comedy film you'll have one outsider character who's actions are effecting a bunch of supposedly normal people, and that's the same approach in teen comedy and in a teen slasher movie.

Chris King: *Evil Dead's* a comedy in itself. It's slapstick...It's quite dark, but it's comedy.'

Adam Marsh, writer of *Devil's Tower* (2014), film programmer, Director of Paracinema film festival at Derby Quad

'I think they are very closely linked particularly from a writing perspective. The structural devices that a writer uses for comedy. Setting up the situation, placing the characters in the situation and playing off the clashes between the two is a strong device for comedy...Also, the very way you write comedy sequences correlates closely with horror sequences. With comedy you set up the situation, build the anticipation then deliver the punchline. Horror is very similar in that you set up the situation (granted a more deadly situation) build the anticipation/tension then deliver the scare.'

Gary Sherman

'When you're really heading towards a big...just before you get to the climax of the scare, get the audience to laugh, and then hit them! It gets them off guard because if you just build, build, build and it happens...And if you build, build, (horn sound) and then hit 'em...boom! Then the comedy can disarm people.'

Dom Burns, producer of *Jay & Silent Bob Reboot* (2019), writer & producer of *Madness in the Method* (2019) director, writer & producer of *Airborne* (2012) & *Alien Uprising* (2012)

'To be honest, I wouldn't necessarily say that comedy and horror link together any more than say, action and comedy, or comedy and drama. In fact, I think it's arguably more difficult to link comedy and horror together, it's an extremely tough balance to get right. If you have an audience in a certain mind space, to be able to successfully flick them into a juxta positional mind space and then back again, is a remarkable skill – it almost seems cliché to mention it, as it's such an obvious example, but *Shaun of the Dead* is a rare example of said success.'

Do you think there's something in extremity that's quite funny?

Darrell Buxton

'Yes, I do. We've got John Jarrett here this weekend (at Sheffield's Horror Con festival) & the *Wolf Creek* films I think epitomise what you're talking about there, because if you showed them to your granny she'd freak. You show them to a horror fan & they'll laugh all the way through. Even though they'll also admit to being terrified.

I choose to be shit scared by it...there is such a balance, because the viewer can choose which way they go...If I'm looking for a particular experience in good horror films such as *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* as an example...if there is a point or scene in that film that verges towards one side, whereas the film's skilful enough that the viewer who's looking for it can pull it back the other way.

And you can be scared by comedy. You think about traditional comedy that's not a horror film...a Jim Carrey film. Situations that he gets into in his movies, if someone was outside in Sheffield doing that, you'd probably be terrified. If someone was pulling faces and going manic... They can do stuff in ostensible comedy films that you'd be actually really frightened of if you saw it.'

Rob Nevitt, Director of Celluloid Screams film festival at Sheffield Showroom & director of *M Is For Metamorphosis* (2013)

'I think the notion of extremity has almost become an irrelevance with the likes of the BBFC and the powers being stepped up and saying we really need to make sure that these kinds of films are not rated and available in the UK, the consideration being audiences of teenagers many of whom are watching live beheadings online, which is real, you know.'

What makes a good film which combines horror & comedy?

Adam Marsh

'I think when you burrow down into the films themselves it is clear that one genre is more dominant than the other in most successful cases (Adam points to *Shaun of the Dead*). *Evil Dead 2* is a great blend of comedy within a horror setting. Funny but not overly ridiculous with some fun set pieces and an engaging lead character (one of the few horror heroes).'

Darrell Buxton

'Although comedy & horror are bed fellows it doesn't always work.'

Sean Cunningham, director *Friday the 13th* (1980), producer of *House* (1985)

(Question answered during a public event at Abertoir Film Festival at Aberystwyth Arts Centre)

'I'm not sure that they do always work together'. (Sean named parody as an example of a bad mixture.) *He asked me why I thought they mix so well and I responded that I thought extremity/outrageousness were a bridge.* He agreed and said that in comedy there was often more at stake i.e. 'Dinner's cancelled, oh no.....!!' He suggested that ironically, in horror, often the stakes were comically low in relation to the situation i.e. 'another one's dead...next!'

Gary Sherman on balancing horror and comedy in *Death Line*

'When Ceri (Jones) and I decided to make the part for Donald (Pleasance) and make it comedy, we got talking about how everything upstairs was comedy and everything underground was horror, that both of them would increase the levels because the funnier the stuff upstairs was gonna' be, the more horrible the stuff

downstairs would be, and vice versa. The more the audience would be looking for the relief of the comedy upstairs and we thought let's play one against the other.'

Rob Nevitt

'I think it being done well is the key phrase because I think sometimes you can have filmmakers who perhaps have a background in comedy and think, oh, we'll throw some horror in there, or vice versa. I think it works better the other way. A horror filmmaker that tries to add aspects of comedy works better than a comedy director or writer trying to add horror...quite often you've got a comedy filmmaker who will perhaps think well clearly the horror is what we're going to be taking the piss out of. That's where the humour is coming from, rather than an example of a film that does it expertly such as *Housebound*.'

Interviews conducted and approved in accordance with Swansea University's Research Ethics Committee procedures. Full interview transcripts and signed Research Ethics forms enabling permission to reproduce herein, are available on request. NB. Sean Cunningham responded to the author's question at a public event & his answer is reprinted herein.

Part Two

Knitters!

By Sarah Crowther

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EXT - NATIONAL TRUST CAR PARK - DAYTIME

A car pulls up at the front of a grand National Trust castle. A smartly dressed male HISTORIAN with an unfortunately obvious toupee is stood upright in the open doorway. He strides to the car to greet the unseen driver who opens the door. HISTORIAN

I'm so glad you made it what with that awful bypass at Delbury.

(outraged)

The bottle necks at the roundabout...
5 cars in front of me this morning!

He pauses awaiting a non-forthcoming response.

HISTORIAN

Strictly speaking we're closed of course, and the paperwork! But for you...

(adopts grand tone)

Let the tour commence!

He spreads his arm to present the immense castle facade. The VISITOR remains in the car unseen.

INT - NATIONAL TRUST CASTLE - GROUND FLOOR STATE ROOM

VISITOR'S POV. The unseen VISITOR follows the striding expert through a downstairs state room, glancing side-to-side at grand antique furniture and elaborate wall-length painted portraits.

HISTORIAN

This is where Sir Melvyn conducted much of his business. Land planning, agricultural documentation, sewer regulation. Thrilling!

The VISITOR'S POV. remains fixed on the HISTORIAN. After an awkward silence the enthused guide continues.

HISTORIAN

And of course in the gift shop we have my pamphlet 'Revolting Peasants! Sanitary Upheaval at the Turn of the Century'.

(awaiting an acknowledgement of the pun-there is none)

Sadly, there seems to be very little interest in the sanitary arrangements of our forebears. Why people aren't interested in the 19th century thunderbox I've no idea.

(making a second attempt at a joke)

But, as I said to my former assistant Gladys, we don't want to flood the effluence market, do we?

He snorts. There is an awkward further silence. The VISITOR walks on.

HISTORIAN

(aside)

No, she wasn't intelligent enough to appreciate my humour either.

He quickly rushes ahead and stops to extend his arm theatrically to the hallway beyond the state room doorway.

HISTORIAN

Shall we?

The VISITOR looks pointedly at the clock on the mantle and walks on. The HISTORIAN follows in quiet contempt.

INT - CASTLE - GROUND FLOOR HALLWAY - DOORWAY TO LARGE ARCHIVE ROOM

VISITOR'S POV. The pompous HISTORIAN stands proud outside two imposingly large wooden doors. He thrusts them open.

HISTORIAN

May I introduce you to the single largest archive in the East Midlands. Every birth and death from Sir Melvyn onwards.

A huge archive of wooden shelving stretches in front of them. Rows of shelves span the cathedral-like room. Each shelf is packed with boxes of files, some yellowing with age.

HISTORIAN

With my own additional archive of course. A complete survey of every Derbyshire household's sanitary arrangements from 1880 to 1920. Let's delve...

He strides forward. The VISITOR's perspective swings sharply into the hallway behind, to a sign leading up the staircase 'Ramparts & Castle Roof'. The VISITOR's gloved hand reaches out. He looks at the gloved hand on his arm, surprised. The VISITOR points to the sign.

HISTORIAN

(disappointed)

Well, I suppose we could get that out of the way while the weather holds.

He reluctantly leads them out of the room towards the expansive ascending stone staircase.

EXT - CASTLE - ROOF/RAMPARTS

VISITOR POV. The huffing, now slightly disheveled HISTORIAN reaches the top of the staircase with his companion following. They walk to the edge of the ramparts and look out over the spacious, secluded grounds.

HISTORIAN

Glorious, isn't it? Takes a lot of tombolas and tea dances to raise enough to keep it in this condition. Still, keeps the old dears busy...

He looks at his VISITOR and stops. The VISITOR looks away. Beneath them is a chapel wing. On it sit smaller turrets with a tall, sharp spire rising from the centre.

HISTORIAN

The old chapel. Site of Sir Melvyn's pioneering second dry earth water closet...A real cause for worship. No wonder it was in a church.

The awkward silence returns as the HISTORIAN's attempt at humour again fails to elicit a response. Undeterred, he makes his final misjudged pun.

HISTORIAN

But I suppose...

(pointing at the spire with a)

(snort)
 ...with a spire like that, we're
 absolutely getting to the point of our
 tour now, aren't we?
 (allows himself a small chuckle)

Another awkward silence. Followed by a sudden, violent push by the VISITOR's gloved hand. The HISTORIAN is knocked from the rampart and plummets down, backside first onto the lethal chapel spire. The spire pierces his anus, travelling through his stomach and chest and out of his mouth. Blood and gore bubble and splutter from the torn, gaping cavity which once was his mouth. As he slides backwards down the spire his toupee slips from his head, hanging behind him from one piece of tape. He raises a blood-soaked arm and points at the VISITOR, wide-eyed. He emits a mangled gurgle.

HISTORIAN

You!

CUT TO CREDITS

INT - GLADYS' SEMI-DETACHED FORMER COUNCIL HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAYTIME

GLADYS is Assistant to the Chair of the Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild. She is a short, plump, artificially blonde-haired woman in her mid-70's, with a penchant for animal sanctuary sweatshirts. She has been married to her overly dependent husband DEREK for 54 years and has 3 daughters and 4 grandchildren. She is distractedly packing a battered suitcase on a blanketed double bed populated by 3 large slumbering dogs.

DEREK

(from downstairs)

Glad!

She pulls a fleece jacket from under the largest dog, throws it into the overflowing case and attempts to shut it.

DEREK

Glaad!

After bouncing up and down on it a couple of times, she secures the clasps, and drags the heavy case from the bed and across the floor, dodging a slumbering dog.

DEREK

Glaaaaaad!

INT - GLADYS' HOUSE - KITCHEN

DEREK's large posterior dominates the room which is largely decorated with photos of children, grandchildren and dogs. He is peering head first into an overstuffed freezer.

GLADYS
(dragging the suitcase)
What's the matter love?

DEREK
How many nights are you going for?
There are only two frozen dinners in here.

GLADYS
Just two nights love.

DEREK
But what about lunch?

GLADYS
There's bread in the cupboard and ham and cheese in the fridge. And there's milk and Coco Pops for breakfast.

DEREK
Can't you make the sandwiches before you go - you know what I'm like Glad.

GLADYS
The coach'll be here any minute and you know what Marjorie's like about timekeeping.

DEREK stares, sad-faced. She drops the case with a sigh.

GLADYS
Oh go on then.

She prepares two ham and cheese sandwiches for DEREK who watches her at the kitchen table.

DEREK
Thanks love. I'll miss you you know.

GLADYS is silent. She completes the second sandwich and a loud horn sounds outside, prompting barking from the dogs. As she puts the plated sandwiches into the fridge she is nearly knocked over by a herd of dogs who bound through the closed kitchen door.

GLADYS

You lot! Look after dad while I'm gone. Doris will be in tomorrow to walk them and sort out their food.

She fusses over each dog, ruffling and kissing their fur. Picking up the case, she drags it to DEREK.

GLADYS

Take care love.

She kisses him on the cheek and drags the case to the door, awkwardly opening and closing it without letting any dogs escape outside. DEREK looks on, as forlorn as the animals who bark at the window.

EXT - GLADYS' HOUSE - ROADSIDE

A mid-sized 'luxury' coach is parked outside GLADYS' suburban semi. The door swings jerkily open and BARRY appears. He is mid-40's with a disheveled shirt & tie which reflects the condition of both his business and bus - although he is trying. The coach's faded 'Barry's Executive Travel' logo indicates he is the company owner.

BARRY

Mrs Pemberton?

GLADYS drops her case and shakes BARRY's outstretched hand.

GLADYS

Glad. Hello Barry, thanks for helping us out at such short notice. When Shawcross' let us down I thought the trip was off...Lucky you had that cancellation.

BARRY

Er, yes...Here let me help you with that bag.

He takes the suitcase and loads it underneath the bus.

BARRY

(straining)

Blimey, what do you Townswomen take to Lake District Knitting Weekends?

GLADYS

(touching her nose and laughing)

You'd be surprised Barry! We're though

to the regional finals of the
Townswomen's Competitive Knitting
Competition. It's real battle
stations. And our Chair Marjorie's
quite the...competitive type.
 (catching a glimpse of her watch
 and bustling)
We better go, she'll kill me if we're
late.

They both climb onto the bus. The doors shut and it pulls
off. The dogs bark at the kitchen window. DEREK stands
forlorn behind them.

INT - MARJORIE'S STATELY DETACHED HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAYTIME

MARJORIE is the Chair of Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild.
She is mid-70's, slim and dressed in a smart twin-piece with
pearls at her wrist. Her grey back-combed hair gives her a
Thatcher-esque appearance. She is stood at the window of her
large, ornately-dressed living room looking pointedly at her
watch.

MARJORIE
Where is she?

She reaches down to an antique glass table and picks up the
local newspaper, The Potter's Bluff Bugle. The front page
headline announces 'Inspire-ing Historian Dead: Fatal
Accident at Haddonfield Hall'. It is accompanied by a
photograph of the HISTORIAN in obvious toupee.

MARJORIE
How indelicate.

Her reading is interrupted as BARRY's coach pulls hastily
through the immaculately maintained garden and pulls to a
halt on the spacious drive. The door swings open & a
blustering GLADYS emerges followed by BARRY. They hurry to
the front door. MARJORIE replaces the paper, lifts the
suitcase, and leaves the room.

EXT - MARJORIE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

MARJORIE emerges from the front door, closes and locks it
behind her.

GLADYS
 (flustered)
Oh, Marjorie, I'm so sorry. We got
stuck in the traffic from that new

roundabout at Delbury.

BARRY
 (reaching out)
 Let me take your case, Marjorie. I'm
 Barry, your driver.

MARJORIE looks BARRY up & down.

MARJORIE
 Indeed.

She reluctantly hands over the case. BARRY straightens his tie with his free hand, self-conscious. They walk to the coach.

GLADYS
 There's no rush is there? We'll pick up a bit of time en route once we've collected the others. How long to the Lakes Barry?

BARRY
 Three hours with a tail wind Glad.

BARRY offers MARJORIE his hand to board the coach. She shoos it away and looks dismissively at the faded exterior sign.

MARJORIE
 Not very 'executive' is it?

She boards the coach and BARRY and GLADYS share an exasperated glance behind her.

INT - BERYL'S STONE TERRACED HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAYTIME

BERYL is a short, sprightly, rebellious 78 year old. Her short grey hair is streaked with purple and she wears ethnic clothing. She is politically active and a staunch feminist. BERYL is the Guild's Social Secretary & GLADYS' best friend. She is on the phone in a hallway so full of plants it resembles an overgrown tropical garden.

BERYL
 Yes, I saw it in the paper. What a way to go, and to think I only saw him last week.
 (pauses)
 Are you sure no one was with him?
 (listening)
 I see. Well, I'm sorry I can't come to

the funeral but bloody Marjorie's got us trolling off to the Lakes on knitting retreat. We'll talk when I get back. Take care love.

She puts the phone down and reaches to one of the ethnic fabric bags at her feet. She removes a piece of paper and secretes it in her generous bra.

BERYL
Safe keeping.
(tapping her breast)
Now...

She climbs half way up the stairs and opens the lids of numerous ethnic pots on a shelf above the staircase.

BERYL
Where the bloody hell did I put it?

After lifting the fourth lid she extracts a small plastic bag.

BERYL
You can't hide from me Mary Jane!

It is marijuana. She sniffs it deeply & grins. A loud horn honk breaks her smile.

BERYL
I'm coming, keep your wig on
(pauses)
Bad choice of words, poor bugger.

INT - BERYL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

In a chaotic kitchen, overflowing with world pottery, BERYL fills three large bowls with cat biscuits.

BERYL
There you go El Gato. See you on Sunday!

She strokes a purring black cat. The horn honks again, longer.

BERYL
Alright, alright. Sodding Marjorie.

She lifts up a mixture of carrier and ethnic fabric bags, juggling them with her hands and knees, and leaves the

kitchen.

INT - COACH - DAYTIME

MARJORIE has the 'executive' front seat. GLADYS joins BERYL on the seat across the aisle behind BARRY.

MARJORIE

Wonderful. And now we're 10 minutes late.

GLADYS & BERYL exchange a glance. BERYL opens one of her bags just enough for GLADYS to see a flask of whisky inside. She widens her eyes & checks MARJORIE isn't looking. BERYL winks. The bus moves off.

GLADYS

Beryl, this is Barry, the driver.

BARRY raises one hand from the wheel to wave, and looks into the rear view mirror.

BARRY

Nice to meet you Beryl.

BERYL

You too love.

GLADYS

Rose & Sophia are getting picked up at June's house, Barry. Should save us a few minutes.

BERYL looks at MARJORIE pointedly and BARRY gives a thumbs up.

GLADYS

You've got the ramp for Daphne's wheelchair. She's our final stop and then off to the sunny Lakes.

BERYL

Sunny!? My teepee got washed away in the rain at the Women's Spring Retreat last year. And there's no burning bras when you can't keep your matches dry!

BERYL winks and MARJORIE frowns and looks away, her face creased as though she has encountered a bad smell.

EXTERIOR - JUNE'S FLAT - DAYTIME

JUNE is younger than the other Guild members at 62. She is glamorous, overdressed & has heavy make-up and bleached hair. She joined the Guild when she met BERYL at a yoga retreat. She was appointed Treasurer as she has her own mobile hairdressing company and is used to accounts. She waves frantically as the bus pulls up, accompanied by fellow Guild members ROSE & SOPHIA, both mid-60's and sporting more appropriate fleece jackets and slacks. They begin to gather up their mound of luggage outside the modern housing block.

INT - COACH - DAYTIME

JUNE drags an enormous suitcase behind her along the aisle of the bus. BARRY hurries up the steps and along the aisle behind her.

BARRY

Do you want me to put that under the bus for you?

JUNE stops in her tracks & turns to get a good look at BARRY.

JUNE

Well Barry, it's not every day you meet such a gentleman is it?

(looking overtly for a non-existent wedding ring)

And a single one at that.

BARRY

Just divorced. A bit like just married...but more fun.

JUNE

Oh a lot more fun I should think Barry...

(suggestive - making BARRY awkward)

A lot more of a gentleman than that last one I met on the Silver Fish website. Dull as dishwater. Spent the whole night going on about 18th century lavs then left me with the bill!

BARRY scurries off back down the bus. JUNE drags and flings her case onto an empty seat, greeting her fellow Townswomen as she passes them. They all take their seats and a bemused BARRY drives off. A scornful MARJORIE quickly changes the subject.

MARJORIE

Gladys have you printed out the schedules? Shall we remind ourselves why we are here.

(looking pointedly at JUNE)

We're not letting those awful women from Wisbrey Dell take our prize again this year.

GLADYS

The ink's running out a bit on my printer, but you can get the gist.

She pulls a handful of papers from her handbag and unfolds them, straightening out the creases. She passes the first copy to MARJORIE.

MARJORIE

Really Gladys. It's barely legible.

BERYL

Give her a break Marjorie. With that husband of hers and the dog sanctuary, she barely has two minutes. Couldn't you have done it?

MARJORIE

May I remind you that that is the role of the Assistant. To assist the Chair with administrative duties...You're the Social Secretary, Gladys is the Chair's Assistant. We each have our role. Mine is just more...senior.

BERYL is raising up for an argument. GLADYS interrupts, ever the peace keeper.

GLADYS

Don't worry Ber, I had two minutes when Derek was at the chiropodist the other day. That printer needs sorting anyway.

BERYL shakes her head and smiles at kind-hearted GLADYS. The coach slows as it pulls into the car park of Potter's Bluff care home.

EXT - CARE HOME - CAR PARK - DAYTIME

DAPHNE is slowly lifted on an electric platform into the bus. At 85 she is the Guild's oldest member. She is grinning

blankly - a near-permanent feature which has become more prominent with age. She is followed onto the bus by mid-70's twin sisters BARBARA and BLANCHE and their slightly younger friend DOROTHY, all long-time members of the Guild, and best friends to DAPHNE. The Potter's Bluff Townswomen are now all onboard.

INT - COACH - DAYTIME

DAPHNE is wheeled down the aisle by BARBARA immediately followed by her twin sister BLANCHE. She sits legs astride in her chair, a pair of bloomers peeking out from under her dress.

DAPHNE

(shouting and waving)

Hello everyone! Hope you've packed your rubber rings for the beach. I've brought my daughters with me!

She waves her arm to the twins behind her.

BERYL

Don't think you'll be able to use your rubber ring in the Lakes Daph, but you never know.

(aside)

Still thinks she's mum then girls?

BARBARA & BLANCHE nod and raise their eyebrows simultaneously. They are used to being mistaken for DAPHNE's daughters & rarely correct her.

BLANCHE

Wouldn't change it Ber!

BARBARA

(the twins always repeat each other)

Change it Ber!

BARRY secures DAPHNE's wheelchair in place. JUNE smiles coyly as he passes. He hurries back to his seat.

BARRY

Next stop the Lake District! I always start my journeys with a sing-song. What'll it be ladies?

The bus jolts forward & they are on their way.

MARJORIE

(ignoring BARRY)

Gladys, pass out those schedules to the others & we'll debrief on the weekend's activities.

BERYL

We're just leaving Potter's Bluff Marjorie, can't we do it when we get there? And you know she gets motion sickness on coaches. Remember the Bridlington Half Barf-athon?

MARJORIE stays silent. BERYL reluctantly takes some leaflets from GLADYS and passes them back begrudgingly.

MARJORIE

There is a purpose to our weekend Beryl, and that purpose is primary. If it hadn't been for blatant inside voting last year, we would have been the current Regional Townswomen Knitting Champions...Derbyshire branch. We have secured a prime location for the weekend, away from distractions, so that we can focus on honing our skills and winning the prize that I should have had last year.

(catching herself)

We should have had.

MARJORIE lifts the leaflet and half-stands, cautiously, to address the whole group.

MARJORIE

Gladys and Blanche, you will represent us German style, Sophia, speed knitting: mega hooks, Barbara and Dorothy cartridge rib belt, Beryl, Irish Cottage, June the controversial knocking method.

(dismissive)

And Rose will be competing in the sub-category baking competition.

BERYL

And Daphne is team mascot.

A cheer erupts from all but MARJORIE.

BERYL

Rose, I've invited a very special guest to help with your baking. She's an old pal from my Greenham Common days. Hush hush 'til the morning, when she's coming to give us a demo.

(touching her finger to her nose)

GLADYS

I spoke to the Thompsons and the cabins are ready. They're going to meet us on the roadside. It's a devil to find apparently. We're the first guests after the renovations and they seemed very eager to please.

MARJORIE

Excellent, then we should expect a high standard of accommodation and a trouble-free weekend.

BERYL raises her eyebrows at GLADYS.

MARJORIE

Right ladies, Point 1 on your schedules...

A voice from the back of the coach begins to sing 'I've got a louverly bunch of coconuts'. The women turn to see DAPHNE grinning & singing. BERYL seizes the opportunity & joins in loudly. JUNE joins her, & one by one the women begin a rousing chorus together joined by BARRY. MARJORIE huffs, sits down heavily and reaches into her hand luggage.

MARJORIE

Well I suppose we couldn't read them properly anyway.

She removes ear plugs & an eye mask from her hand bag, which she puts into place. She folds her arms. GLADYS finally joins in with the sing-song once she knows she is unseen/heard by MARJORIE.

EXT - COUNTRY LANE - DAYTIME

A rousing chorus of 'I've got a louverly bunch of coconuts' rings out as the coach travels down a country lane towards its destination.

EXT - LAKE DISTRICT LOG CABIN RESORT - ROADSIDE - EVENING

SU & PAUL THOMPSON stand at the roadside entrance to their secluded log cabin resort surrounded by dusky forest. They are both in their mid-40's and dressed in country casuals. They are holding lamps with which they survey the small country road for headlights.

PAUL

(both well spoken)

What time are the biddies arriving Su?

SU

Don't call them that Paul! They're our first customers. After all the money we've ploughed into the renovation...

PAUL

But why do we have to stand by the bloody road in the freezing cold?

SU

Until the sign goes up nobody knows we're here. We're in the middle of bloody nowhere Paul. We don't want them getting lost, the next house is miles away.

PAUL

God, I miss the city. Canary Wharf, annual bonuses, my backside photocopied at the Christmas party!

SU

You should have thought about that before you bollocks-ed the job, took the money and ran. Putting it into this place was our only option. They were desperate to get rid of it.

PAUL

Cabins that hadn't been used for 30 years with a lake officially deemed hazardous because of chemical waste. Prime estate.

SU

Oh shut up Paul. We're not in the clear yet. Make the most of it...

(softening, coy)

And don't forget Dom and Desiree are

coming tonight, so we haven't left all of the old lifestyle behind.

PAUL
(deflating)
If they can bloody find it...

The headlights of a coach appear in the road. SU jumps into the road and waves her lamp frantically in front of it. BARRY slams on his brakes.

INT - COACH - EVENING

The sleeping women are all thrust forward and woken with a jolt. DAPHNE's wheelchair comes free from its lock and she sails down the coach's aisle. BERYL reaches out and grabs one of the handles as she is about to sail past and out of the front windscreen. DAPHNE grins broadly throughout.

DAPHNE
Weeeeeee!

BERYL
Bloody hell Barry! There are already 12 replacement hips on the bus. Are you going for a full house? You alright Daphne love?

DAPHNE
(oblivious)
Are we at Brid? Can you see the Tower?

BARRY
Sorry Beryl. She jumped out into the road.

He points at SU who is making a large gesture of ushering him in through the gates with the lamplight. He turns into the hidden driveway.

GLADYS
That'll be the Thompsons.

MARJORIE
(removing her eye mask and looking at DAPHNE confused)
Well, as the Chair I should be the first to greet them. Gladys, bring the paperwork.

GLADYS scrabbles in her bag and BERYL shakes her head. BARRY

pulls the coach onto a patch of land behind the cabins.

EXT - LOG CABIN RESORT - COACHSIDE - EVENING

SU

(extending her hand to MARJORIE)
Hello, you must be Gladys. So nice to meet you.

MARJORIE

(affronted)
Madam, I am Marjorie, the Chairwoman of Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild. THIS is my assistant Gladys.

GLADYS

Hello Mrs Thompson. Lovely to meet you.

A surprised SU shakes GLADYS' hand.

GLADYS

I know you're not quite ready to open yet, but Marjorie was insistent on solitude. We didn't want any Wisbrey Dell spies stealing our weft and warp methods. Marjorie knew of this place, and here we are!

SU

Oh, don't worry. We may be a bit rough round the edges, but your cabins are all ready and there's plenty of sites around the lake for your workshops. This is Paul by the way.

She reaches behind and tugs PAUL forward by his arm. He has been skulking behind her.

PAUL

(engaging a charming tone)
Good evening ladies.

He shakes MARJORIE's hand with a barely perceivable bow.

SU

And the one thing we can guarantee you, no spies. We're miles from anywhere and nobody really knows we're here yet. There'll just be you and us, up at the big house.

She points to a large, well-lit farmhouse on the other side of the lake through the forest.

SU

Oh, and no mobile phones or internet connection.

PAUL

Reception's a bugger round here...Got rid of our mobiles. Real country living. But there's a landline in the house if you need it.

GLADYS

I don't think that'll be a problem with this lot. Daphne's daughter bought her a mobile and she tried to use it to change the channel on the telly. And Beryl's convinced the others that they're tapped by the CID.
(shakes her head)

SU

Keys are in doors and there are print-outs with information in each cabin. If you need us, we're just over the other side of the lake.

MARJORIE

Can we bring the bus closer to the cabins to disembark? It's quite a walk...
(shaking her head disapprovingly)

PAUL

Pull up next to the cabins on the lakeside. We haven't finished renovating the pathway yet, so you may find it a little muddy...

MARJORIE

Go and tell Barry to get closer, Gladys.

SU

(raising her eyebrows at PAUL
unseen)

If there's anything we can do just pop in. Have a lovely weekend ladies.

They head back towards the farmhouse.

PAUL

(under his breath)

Well she's a barrel of laughs. And
what the hell is weft and warp?

SU

Sshhh.

GLADYS has returned to the doorway of the bus and is pointing BARRY to the lakeside. She and MARJORIE climb back onboard.

EXT - LAKESIDE - EVENING

BARRY steps down from the coach which is parked on a very muddy lakeside next to the cabins.

BARRY

(shouting back into the coach)

Glad, we'll have to be fairly quick.
It's going to flippin' sink in this.
You might have to push me out.

MARJORIE

(appearing first down the steps
followed by GLADYS)

Some of these ladies are infirm. You
can't expect them to walk that
distance. We'll unload and then you
can be on your way.

The ladies begin to emerge from the coach and step tentatively into the mud.

BARRY

You go ahead ladies, I'll bring your
luggage.

The women all disembark and gingerly cross the mud to the cabins. MARJORIE's face is scrunched again, apparently victim of another bad smell. DAPHNE emerges last, and slowly, down the automated wheelchair lift. She is still grinning.

EXT - OUTSIDE CABINS - LATE EVENING

The Townswomen assemble in front of a row of compact yet quaint log cabins which overlook the lake and woodland. BARRY dashes backwards and forwards dropping off luggage at each cabin. GLADYS indicates cabin occupants from a list.

GLADYS

Marjorie, you've got the double with the en suite as requested. Beryl you're in with me. Daphne you're sharing with Barbara and Blanche as usual. June you're with Rose, and Sophia's with Dorothy.

JUNE

Come on, we're bunking up Rose. Hope you don't snore.

(suggestive)

Barry, you don't snore do you?

He scurries past with MARJORIE's case, avoiding the question.

DAPHNE

(shouting)

I hope you've got bunk beds for the girls. They'll only ever sleep in bunk beds!

BARBARA and BLANCHE smile and all the women gradually disappear into their cabins. GLADYS & MARJORIE remain outside. BARRY drops off the last of the luggage.

BARRY

That's it then ladies. I'll be back to pick you up at 6pm sharp on Sunday. I hope the weather's good to you.

GLADYS

Lovely, thanks Barry. Have a safe journey back.

MARJORIE

And don't be late on Sunday.

BARRY

Absolutely not.

He doffs an imaginary cap behind her back and bows.

BARRY

Bye ladies, have a good one.

GLADYS

Bye.

BARRY traipses back to the bus through the mud, shaking his head at his muddy feet.

MARJORIE

Well I think we should all retire.
It's 8.30pm already and we've a busy
weekend ahead of us. 9am prompt
tomorrow!

GLADYS

Of course Marjorie.

MARJORIE

And make sure they all read those
schedules...if they can make head or
tail of them.

GLADYS

(ignoring the insult)
Will do. Goodnight Marjorie.

MARJORIE retires to her cabin. GLADYS knocks on the other
cabin doors & says goodnight to the women in turn. She peers
into DAPHNE's cabin where she is already fast asleep in her
wheelchair.

EXT - LAKESIDE - LATE EVENING

BARRY circles the muddy ground surrounding the coach and
shakes his head.

BARRY

How she expects me to get 15 tonnes of
coach out of this, I don't know.

He climbs into the coach leaving the doors open. He starts
the engine, engages first gear and puts his foot on the
accelerator. The engine growls and the wheels spin wildly in
the mud. There is no movement. He reaches behind his seat and
re-emerges with two large pieces of cardboard which he puts
next to the coach's back wheels. He re-boards and puts his
foot firmly on the accelerator. The coach jolts backwards as
the tyres slip in the mud, missing the card. The back of the
coach veers left and collides with an electricity pylon.
BARRY brakes sharply just before plunging into the lake.

INT - COACH - LATE EVENING

A collection of half eaten pies, days-old half drunk cups of
coffee, and an open bag of prawn cocktail crisps, falls into
BARRY's seat from the dashboard. He pulls on the handbrake,
distracted.

BARRY
Bloody hell!

He makes a half-hearted effort at clearing the debris from his lap, adding to the litter already surrounding him. Pulling a dirty handkerchief from his pocket and dabbing at the foul coffee on his trousers, BARRY tosses the cups to the floor. He reaches awkwardly into the footwell to grab the fallen prawn cocktail crisps.

BARRY
(testing one of the crisps)
Urgh!

He throws the open packet aside and puts the bus into gear. This time the tyres successfully make contact with the cardboard and BARRY drives away, too distracted by the chaos in the cabin to notice the collision. The wooden pylon leans precariously at an angle over the water in the rear view mirror.

INT - BERYL & GLADYS' CABIN - LATE EVENING

BERYL & GLADYS sit at a small kitchen table with a bottle of whisky. BERYL is pouring generously. Their unopened cases sit beside them.

BERYL
You can't let her speak to you like that Glad, you're not her bloody slave you know.

GLADYS
Oh you know me Ber, don't like to rock the boat.

BERYL
That's why folks walk all over you. That Derek of yours, he's the same. You need to stand up for yourself love.

GLADYS
Well we'll see what happens this weekend.

BERYL
You can't let people keep walking over you. It was the same story when you worked with that history society at Haddonfield.

GLADYS
 (lowering her voice)
 Did you hear what happened Ber?

BERYL
 I spoke to his partner just before I
 left. Awful business.

GLADYS
 Slipped on moss I heard.

BERYL
 That's the story.

She lifts the bottle as if to pour another generous measure.

GLADYS
 (putting her hand over her glass)
 Oh no, Beryl, it's 10 already and
 we've got your special guest first
 thing.

She taps her finger to her nose.

BERYL
 I suppose nodding off would be a bit
 rude.

GLADYS
 Then it's workshops all day. Speed,
 knocking, Irish cottage and German
 method.

BERYL
 Spoil sport. Alright then, I suppose
 we should save some for tomorrow.
 Night love and think on.

GLADYS hugs her best friend.

GLADYS
 You're my best friend Ber and I
 promise I'll try. But folks don't
 change over a weekend. Sleep well
 love.

BERYL takes the glasses to the sink and necks the contents.
 GLADYS disappears into the bedroom with her suitcase.

MONTAGE - CABINS - NIGHTTIME

- INT - MARJORIE'S CABIN

MARJORIE is fast asleep wearing her ear plugs & eye mask.

- INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN

All three women are asleep. The twins are in bunk beds (the only room available for three). DAPHNE is still smiling broadly in her sleep.

- INT - BERYL & GLADYS' CABIN

GLADYS is fast asleep and snoring gently. BERYL is lying in bed, an arm holding an empty whisky bottle is draped to the side. The bottle falls. She grumbles and falls back deep asleep, snoring heavily.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT - LAKESIDE - NIGHTTIME

A storm rages. Rain pelts the lake and wind howls through the woods. Lightening illuminates the water as the hillside rumbles with thunder. A sharp close thunderclap is followed by a splintering lightning bolt which lights up the lakeside and strikes the dislodged pylon. It crashes heavily into the lake. A blaze of sparks sear across the water's surface, crackling electricity.

INT - JUNE & ROSE'S CABIN - NIGHTTIME

JUNE stirs. She lifts her 'wrinkles away' eye mask & looks across at ROSE who is fast asleep.

JUNE
(quietly)
One of those earth moving dreams
then...

She puts her eye mask back into place, smiles and falls back asleep.

EXT - BOTTOM OF LAKE - NIGHTTIME

The pylon sinks and falls to the bottom of the dirty lake water. As it thumps to the murky bed, a dark, ominous figure begins to stir in the thick reeds next to it. Entangled in reeds and pond weed, the humanoid bulking shape begins to rise. Electricity surges through the foul water and the

sinister figure begins to fight itself free.

EXT - LAKESIDE JETTY - NIGHTTIME

FROM BEHIND. A large, ravaged humanoid hand emerges from the water onto the moonlit jetty. A dark hulking figure slowly and ominously rises, water-ravaged and covered in pond weed, from the lake.

EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

Oil lamps light up the exterior of the 'big house'. Two Range Rovers are parked outside. Shrieks & laughter come from a small cellar skylight which is propped open.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

SU & PAUL have a secret in their basement. They are the owners of the Lake District's best equipped S&M dungeon. They are hosting an S&M party with another swinging couple, in the heavily candle-lit basement. All are dressed in leather S&M gear and engaging in well-equipped S&M play. The room is filled with devices of sexual torture and pleasure combined.

EXT - LAKESIDE - JETTY - NIGHTTIME

FROM BEHIND. The hulking mutated figure emerges fully from the lake, little more than an ominous shadow in the moonlight. It stops on the muddy lakeside. The light from the 'big house' filters through the trees. The CREATURE looks towards the light and blunders from the lakeside into the heavy windswept woods.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHTTIME

MOONLIT. A downstairs bathroom window sits open. A ravaged hand thrusts through the window, followed by a hulking shadow form, as the CREATURE climbs into the bathroom. It stops, tilting its engorged head to listen. There are pleased shrieks from the basement. Lumbering, it opens the bathroom door. In the hallway ahead a small hidden door lies open to a staircase to the basement. The CREATURE steps forward through the door and ominously disappears down the dark staircase.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

FROM BEHIND. The shape of the ravaged humanoid CREATURE appears in the doorway of the candlelit dungeon. It pauses to survey the scene of sexual debauchery. Both couples are engaged in S&M activities. Sensing more company, PAUL looks up.

PAUL

(pausing his erotic activities)
Well hello. Wasn't expecting another
guest tonight. Did you find us through
the forum? I bet John sent you, did
he?

There is no reply. PAUL strains to make out the unexpected
visitor in the candlelight.

PAUL

Strong silent type. Quite the
costume....Pongs a bit though.
(waving his hand in front of his
face)

The sinister figure stands motionless, surveying the scene.
Distracted, SU also temporarily ceases her play.

SU

Paul, have you been on that awful
forum again? I told you no more horror
play. That night with Freddy Krueger
still brings tears to my eyes.

All the participants are now half looking at the shadowy
figure but still more interested in resuming their
activities.

SU

(to her bondage partner)
Get on with it then!

PAUL

Thought it was just these two tonight.
God knows how you found it, but since
you're here...you might as well get
stuck in old chap!

He gestures the hulking form forward and resumes his
activities. The CREATURE surveys them all before stepping
forward. In the dim candlelight it sets about a mutilation
frenzy. It grabs hold of the female guest and smashes her
repeatedly against the wall in the leather 'sleep sack' into
which she has been zipped by a shell-shocked PAUL. A trapped
SU & her companion are diced into pieces by the CREATURE who
wraps the harness swing they are enjoying around them
multiple times. It squeezes until cubes of flesh explode
across the dungeon floor and walls. A howling PAUL scrambles
into a corner. His exit is blocked by the imposing figure.

PAUL scrambles back against the wall and knocks into his guest's hanging trousers. A mobile phone falls out of the pocket. He picks it up. There is one reception bar.

PAUL
I don't bloody believe it. In the
basement!

He scrabbles to ring 999. The phone slips from his lubed hand and to the feet of the CREATURE. He crawls towards it but his tormentor has already bent to pick it up.

PAUL
Look, if this about the money I swear
I'll pay it back.

The CREATURE batters PAUL round the head with the phone. Bloodied and battered he continues to plead.

PAUL
Please! Who sent you? I'll pay double!

The CREATURE rams the phone into PAUL's mouth, down his throat and into his intestines. It lifts his mangled body into the air on its arm which protrudes from PAUL's anus. The phone is lost in PAUL's internal organs. The CREATURE casually shakes the lifeless, savaged body from its arm onto the bondage table and slowly leaves the bloody, flesh-splattered room.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - BASEMENT 'COSTUME ROOM'

FROM BEHIND - FACE STILL UNSEEN. The CREATURE passes a costume room filled with rubber and leather S&M gear. It is drawn inside by a mirror. In murky candlelight, it surveys the image, a hand on what remains of the face. It is huge with distorted limbs. Years of decay at the bottom of the lake have ravaged its skin. It is dressed in disintegrating workman's overalls fowled by reads, mud, and now the flesh and blood of its victims. It howls at the horrific image then reaches for a rubber gimp mask slung over the mirror's corner. It pulls the mask on and turns away from the mirror. MASKED FACE SEEN FOR THE FIRST TIME, it crumples to the floor emitting a high pitched howl.

EXT - REAR OF CABINS - MORNING

BERYL, GLADYS, SOPHIA & JUNE are exploring an outbuilding in the woodland behind the cabins.

BERYL

So you heard the pylon fall June? I must have been spark out...long journey.

GLADYS

Something like that
(winking at BERYL)

JUNE

Well I definitely heard something go bump in the night, but I was dreaming about Barry, so...

SOPHIA

You need to raise your standards! Of all the men you could dream about...

GLADYS

Beryl, look over here. Is this it?

She points to a large generator.

BERYL

Aha, yes, they've got a back-up generator for the cabins. Didn't think they'd rely on the mains out here. I'll get this running and then pop over to the big house later.

GLADYS

Good plan. We'd better not be late, or Marjorie'll kill us. What time's your special guest arriving Ber?

BERYL

Should be half an hour love, but if she went out last night, who knows...Get set up and I'll meet you over there.

GLADYS rushes away as BERYL rolls up her sleeves.

EXT - LAKESIDE - PATIO AREA - DAYTIME

GLADYS is frantically running around setting out chairs. A large table with cooking equipment stands prominent at the front of the patio area.

MARJORIE

Come on Gladys, she'll be here in a minute. She's one of our secret weapons in securing victory.

(snide)

Even if it is only baking. We need everything to the standard to which she's accustomed.

GLADYS

If you could just put a couple of chairs at the back there it would be a big help Marjorie.

MARJORIE

I'm the welcoming committee Gladys. I have to be in position roadside to meet and greet. Sophia can help.

GLADYS

Never mind.

SOPHIA

It's no problem Glad.

SOPHIA picks up a chair from the ground and unfolds it.

SOPHIA

Daphne's had one of her turns so we've left her in her cabin with her radio.

She takes two folding chairs from GLADYS' shoulder and sets them down.

EXT - ROADSIDE - COUNTRY LANE - DAYTIME

MARJORIE stands looking at her watch. She continually pulls at her clothing and smooths her hair. BERYL emerges from the lakeside car park. She is wiping her oily hands on her trousers.

BERYL

Oh keep your wig on Marjorie. If she said she'll be here, she'll be here.

(aside)

What condition she'll be in...

(back to Marjorie)

And the generator's fixed...to a fashion

BERYL pulls a mechanical part from her pocket and discreetly

throws it behind her into the woods.

MARJORIE

(fixing on BERYL)

You can't greet her like that. You're filthy!

BERYL

Listen Marjorie, me and Kairey go back more years than you've had hot...expensive...dinners and she's seen me in much worse states than this. There was that weekend in 1981 when acid first arrived at Greenham Common. Neither of us knew which way was up for 3 days. We spent 6 hours trying to get out of a tent...proper Marcel Marceau.

MARJORIE holds her hand up and frowns. A taxi approaches and drives past. MARJORIE waves frantically. It screeches to a stop, reverses and pulls in. The car door opens and a disheveled KAIREY CHERRY emerges. She is clearly hungover and possibly still drunk from the night before. A cigarette hangs from her mouth. Her hair is a mess and her clothes are crumpled.

MARJORIE

(fawning)

Ms Cherry. What an absolute pleasure to meet you and thank you so much for coming straight from television's favourite country kitchen. I can't tell you how much it means to us all. I...

KAIREY CHERRY

(ignoring MARJORIE)

Ber! Bugger to find. Sorry if I'm a bit late, was out with Pete Doherty and the chaps straight from the Beeb last night. Haven't been home yet. Pissed as a fart.

They embrace.

KAIREY CHERRY

Not fit for this demo yet Ber. Let's sneak off for a crafty smoke to straighten me out before we get into it, shall we.

She produces a roll-up from behind her ear.

KAIREY CHERRY
(to Marjorie)
My stuff's in there...

BERYL guffaws and follows CHERRY towards the woods.

MARJORIE
(horrified)
GLADYYSSS!

KAIREY CHERRY
Is she the one you warned me about?

BERYL nods and raises her eyebrows and they disappear towards the woods.

EXT - LAKESIDE - PATIO AREA - DAYTIME

The version of KAIREY CHERRY more familiar to viewers of her cosy Friday evening television cooking programme is giving a baking demonstration to the ladies. Her hair and clothing are perfect and her tone is refined.

KAIREY CHERRY
(holding a perfect flan aloft)
And so ladies for a fabulous flan you
must remember the three
c's...consistency, consistency,
consistency.

The women, led by MARJORIE sitting front and centre, politely clap.

MARJORIE
(fawning)
Bravo!

KAIREY CHERRY
But, of course, if you really want to
perfect your pastry and Rose, give
those ladies from Wisbrey Dell a good
run for their money, then my new high-
powered, 6-bladed Kairey Cherry
Blender is what you really need.

She reaches under the table and produces a packaged battery powered blender. She opens the packaging and switches it on. The sound is akin to a jet engine taking off.

KAIREY CHERRY

(shouting)

You can give them a real roasting with this ladies. Look at the 6-blade folding action. And at and RRP of only £189.99 it's a real bargain.

(aside)

And definitely better than that Bake Off posho's one.

(Louder, more formal)

I do take cards.

The ingredients whir wildly in the bowl. The excessive noise sends the birds flying from the trees. It also draws the attention of the flesh and blood soaked CREATURE. Sun-reflecting rubber mask first it suddenly thrusts forward from the thick woods behind KAIREY CHERRY. The women scream but CHERRY cannot hear them above the blender sound. The CREATURE lunges powerfully from behind her, grabs the blender and thrusts it into her face. Flour forms a thick gloopy paste with blood as her face is ripped apart by the blades. Viscera flies onto the shocked Townswomen. CHERRY eventually slumps to the ground mutilated beyond recognition, and covered in a bloody congealing flour mixture. The gore-strewn women jump from their seats.

BERYL

Kairey! What the hell? Into the woods, run!

They all begin running, but at their age some cannot move very fast. The CREATURE catches DOROTHY easily. It grabs her head, thrusts it back and rams CHERRY's piping tube down her throat, squeezing hard. The bloody frosting oozes from her torn mouth as she sinks to the ground, suffocated by icing sugar.

GLADYS

(looking back)

Dorothy!

BERYL

It's too late Glad. Get to the big house!

The women disappear into the woods. MARJORIE stops momentarily and looks back before following them.

EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

JUNE and SOPHIA bang on the front door. The others gradually

catch up and join in. To the side of the house there are two Range Rovers. They are smashed to pieces.

GLADYS
Su, Paul, Kairey Cherry's dead! Let us
in!

The frantic knocking gains no response.

BERYL
(barging to the centre)
Has anyone tried the bloody door?

She turns the handle and the door opens. They all run inside and slam the door behind them.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAYTIME

JUNE
(panting)
Where are they?

GLADYS
(shouting)
Mr Thompson...Mrs Thompson?

The shaken women lock the door and gather in the hallway. Some wear the remains of KAIREY CHERRY.

MARJORIE
They must be here. There were two cars
down the drive.

SOPHIA
Did you see the cars?!

GLADYS
They said there was a landline in the
house. We need to find it.

JUNE
What's going on? What was that thing?

BERYL
I don't know. But we'll need to
barricade ourselves in. It could be
coming back.

GLADYS
You're right. Check all the doors and
windows.

BERYL

We'll have to board them up. I doubt a few locks will hold it.

MARJORIE

We can't destroy their property Beryl!

BERYL

Look Marjorie, if you want to try to rationalise with that...whatever, good luck. But I'd rather we protect ourselves. We're in the middle of bloody nowhere. Our only chance now is to find the phone, call for help, and stop that thing from getting in.

GLADYS

She's right.

MARJORIE sulks. The women shout for the Thompsons and begin to disappear into the rooms off the hallway searching for their hosts. SOPHIA emerges from the kitchen with a damp hand towel with which she attempts to wipe the gore from her cardigan.

SOPHIA

Poor Kairey. Poor Dorothy.

She hands the bloodied towel to ROSE.

MONTAGE - INT - SU AND PAUL'S HOUSE

- INT - LOUNGE

ROSE is holding the phone in one hand and a larger, still bloodied, bath towel in the other.

ROSE

It's dead. Nothing. The line must have gone down with the power cables.

BERYL and GLADYS are wrestling to turn over a sofa and barricade the window.

BERYL

Bloody hell! Let's get this place secure and regroup.

- INT - DINING ROOM

BLANCHE and BARBARA are breaking the legs off a large wooden

table. BERYL, GLADYS and JUNE join them.

BARBARA
Here, help us.

BLANCHE
Help us.

The five women lift the table in front of the window.

BERYL
We'll need some nails for this or
it'll get in easy. I saw a hammer and
nails in the hall.

SOPHIA enters the room with the tools.

SOPHIA
Here Beryl, we used them in the
office. They won't be using their desk
again I'm afraid.

BERYL takes a nail and the hammer and sets to work.

BERYL
Arts and craft this!

She smashes the table repeatedly venting her frustration. Her
final blow is so hard that the head flies off the hammer and
smashes a delicate vase in the fireplace.

BERYL
Never was one for Moorcroft anyway

- INT - DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM

MARJORIE and ROSE remove a twee family portrait of a grinning
SU & PAUL from the bathroom wall.

ROSE
That should cover it.

She holds it up to the window. MARJORIE nods. BARBARA and
BLANCHE appear barefoot with nails and a shoe each to hammer
them in with.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

The sound of Barry Manilow's 'Bermuda Triangle' rings out

loud through the woods and lakeside. DAPHNE's disharmonious singing accompanies it. The trees behind the cabin begin to vibrate. A huge dark shadow looms into view at the edge of the woodland.

INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

DAPHNE is sitting in her wheelchair with her back to the door. She is grinning as ever, and singing. The door opens slowly behind her, revealing the gore-drenched masked CREATURE. It looms up slowly behind her and stops. She is oblivious. It reaches out with mutated humanoid hands.

DAPHNE

Is that you Arthur. I've told you no funny business while the girls are here!

(looking side to side)

Oh, they're not here. In that case...

She reaches up and puts her hand on the CREATURE's ravaged skin. It recoils.

DAPHNE

This always happens when we come to the seaside, doesn't it. That sea air! Give us a kiss!

The CREATURE recoils and reaches for the nearest available weapon - a pair of DAPHNE's oversized frilly bloomers lying on the bed next to her. It wraps them around her face and suffocates her.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAYTIME

The women are assembled in the hall arguing.

BERYL

Marjorie are you seriously suggesting that we leave Daphne out there with that thing? She's a sitting duck.

MARJORIE

Go out there and we'll all end up savagely murdered. What help will that be to Daphne? We should stay here.

BERYL

And do what? The phone lines are down and we're miles from anywhere.

MARJORIE

Somebody will come. The Thompsons.
They'll have to return at some point.

BERYL

I'm not leaving Daphne out there on
her own. Sisterly solidarity. Who's
with me?

BLANCHE and BARBARA raise their hands immediately. MARJORIE
shakes her head.

MARJORIE

It's suicide.

GLADYS

Sorry Marjorie, but I can't leave her
out there. Daphne needs help.

She raises her hand.

MARJORIE

Ridiculous. I hope the rest of you
have got more sense.

The other women stay quiet. BERYL goes into the kitchen and
reemerges with the kitchen knives. She goes to the front
door. The 'rescue party' follow.

BERYL

We're coming to get you Daphne.

She unlocks the door and peers cautiously out holding the
knife in front of her.

BERYL

Alright, let's go!

The women dash out of the front door and MARJORIE promptly
locks it behind them.

MARJORIE

Well I doubt we'll be seeing them
again.

JUNE

They're just trying to do the right
thing. You wouldn't want to be left
alone out there would you?

MARJORIE

If you feel so strongly why didn't you go with them?

JUNE looks down.

SOPHIA

Please. There's no point arguing, we need to stick together.

MARJORIE

If they'd have listened to me we'd still be together!

JUNE

Ssssshhhh!

MARJORIE looks affronted. JUNE puts her hand out to stop her. A muffled mobile phone ringtone sounds.

JUNE

We're saved!

MARJORIE

But they said there was no reception.

JUNE

Well clearly there is. Where's it coming from?

The women look frantically around them.

JUNE

It's coming from underneath us.

MARJORIE

But this is the ground floor.

JUNE

Well there must be another floor. Find the door!

They hurry into the different rooms. The phone rings off.

ROSE

(returning to the hallway)
Oh please call back.

A long pause and then the phone rings again.

JUNE

It's here!

She points to the outline of a hidden door in the hallway.

MARJORIE

What on earth?

JUNE pushes the door and it swings open to reveal a dark descending staircase.

JUNE

Oh blimey! That doesn't look good.

SOPHIA

We need that phone. Beryl took the knives. What's left in the kitchen that will do as a weapon?

JUNE disappears and reappears in a hurry with a fish slice, a pan and two pairs of tongs.

MARJORIE

(deadpan)

Marvelous. Rose, you stay up here and keep guard.

She nods. There is a long pause

MARJORIE

Well I'm not going first.

After a short wait JUNE sighs and goes first and they disappear tentatively down the stairs into darkness.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

The three women stand motionless in the doorway to the S&M dungeon. Most of the candles have blown out. It is murky and barely legible, but the women can see enough to witness the equipment in the costume room which represents the Thompson's unique interests.

JUNE

Well I'd read about it in books, but I'd never quite believed it!

SOPHIA

(lifting a leather S&M contraption in the doorway)

What on earth are you meant to do with

this?

JUNE

I don't think you want to know.

SOPHIA drops it, pulls a tissue from up her sleeve and wipes her hands. The women take a step further into the room and the carnival of flesh and blood unveils in the candlelight. SOPHIA faints to the floor, dropping her tissue. MARJORIE picks it up and covers her mouth and nose.

JUNE

Sophia, have you got your smelling salts?

She crouches and delves into SOPHIA's pocket. MARJORIE carries on into the room. As she approaches it, inside PAUL's body, the phone rings. She is startled and drops the pan. It falls into a pile of viscera. She does not retrieve it.

MARJORIE

Leave her, she'll come round. We need to find that telephone while it's still ringing.

JUNE

(stopping fussing over SOPHIA)
Well where is it?

They follow the sound. In the murky light both look at what is left of PAUL on the bloody bondage table, and then look at each other. JUNE lowers her head above his body and listens.

MARJORIE

Is it underneath him?

JUNE reluctantly takes her fish slice and lifts PAUL's torso. As he moves upwards the sound moves with him.

JUNE

Oh no Marjorie, you don't think...

MARJORIE nods. JUNE moves her fish slice to PAUL's blood-soaked mouth and flinchingly opens the gaping wound. The light of the screen illuminates PAUL's mangled internal organs. Light also radiates from the gaping wound at the other end of his torso. The phone stops ringing.

JUNE

Oh God, I don't know which end's worse!

MARJORIE

You've got the fish slice, it's longer
and that *ahem* end's harder to reach.

She points to his rectum.

JUNE

You have the bloody fish slice then!

MARJORIE

Come on June, we must retrieve that
telephone!

The women take their positions at either end - MARJORIE at the top and JUNE at the bottom. As JUNE tentatively begins to delve into PAUL's intestines and MARJORIE stalls, SOPHIA wakes up. She screams at the sight in front of her and faints again. The shock of the scream causes MARJORIE to jolt violently and knock PAUL's body to the floor from the bondage table. The phone rings briefly, dwindles and dies. The women look at each other. JUNE is covered in unthinkable effluence. The phone is dead.

JUNE

Wonderful. And I'd just had a new do!

INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

The door opens slowly and BERYL appears first holding her knife.

BERYL

(whispering to BARBARA and BLANCHE)
How did you manage to lose that knife
in the woods? We've only got two now!

They mime pushing through branches and dropping it, too afraid to speak. BERYL pushes the cabin door open and they cautiously head inside. The radio blares out 'Psycho Killer' by Talking Heads. GLADYS switches it off. The women move cautiously towards the back of the room. BLANCHE and BARBARA see DAPHNE's lifeless body first.

BLANCHE

Oh Daphne!

BARBARA

Daphne!

DAPHNE is lurched forward in her wheelchair, her spare bloomers wrapped around her face.

GLADYS

We're too late.

BERYL comforts a distraught BLANCHE and BARBARA while GLADYS gently removes the bloomers. DAPHNE is still grinning.

BLANCHE

You know I would have loved it if she was my mum. Such a kind heart.

BARBARA

Mum. Such a kind heart.

BERYL

I'm so sorry, I know how close you were.

She rests her hands on their shoulders. GLADYS puts down the knife she has been clinging to and embraces them. For a moment they are all silent.

BERYL

But it's not safe here loves. That thing could still be about and we're safer at the big house for now. The Thompsons will be back soon if they're not already there. The police could already be waiting for us.

GLADYS

She's right. And we don't want to be out here when it gets dark.

The shaken women gently encourage BLANCHE and BARBARA away from DAPHNE's body. They cautiously head for the door. As BERYL passes BLANCHE's case she spots a pair of knitting needles sticking out. She picks them up. This time GLADYS is first to peep out of the door.

GLADYS

All clear!

The women hurry out. BLANCHE and BARBARA turn and smile at DAPHNE. They hurry out holding hands. The knife sits on the cabin floor.

EXT - WOODS - EARLY EVENING

It is becoming dark as dusky sunlight disappears under the cover of the gloomy woods. The women furtively creep towards the 'big house'. Every animal noise and branch crack alarms

them. The shadows of the trees stop them in their tracks. They whisper.

BARBARA

What on earth do you think it is?

BLANCHE

It is?

BERYL

I don't know but I think it's got a taste for Townswomen.

GLADYS

(stopping abruptly)

Bugger Ber. I've left my knife. I'll have to go back.

BERYL

No way Gladys. That house is our only stop. It's our best bet for tonight.

GLADYS

(carrying on)

Do you really think the police could be there already?

BERYL

Well the Thompsons could have come back.

GLADYS

But the cars Beryl.

BERYL

I know.

GLADYS

Do you think they're still here somewhere?

BERYL

If they are, then there's a good chance they're not going to be able to help. Unless they're hiding.

GLADYS

What it did to the women...

BERYL shakes her head. Suddenly there is a piercing howl and a hulking CREATURE steps out into a gap in the trees 100

yards in front of them. The shafts of dusky sunlight reflect from its rubber mask. It is holding KAIREY CHERRY's mangled head. The CREATURE powerfully lobbs the head at the women, narrowly missing GLADYS who ducked in the nick of time.

BERYL
Bloody hell. Run girls!

They obey BERYL's command and run as fast as they can in the opposite direction. BERYL stops, turns and throws her knife haphazardly at the CREATURE. It lands in the tree trunk next to it.

BERYL
Bollocks!

She runs after the women into the woods.

EXT - BARN - EVENING

BARBARA
(shouting and pointing)
There - the barn!

BLANCHE
Barn!

The outline of an old barn house looms just beyond the edge of the woods.

BERYL
Yes, go!

The exhausted women crash against the doors. They are heavy and BERYL and GLADYS struggle to open them.

GLADYS
Where is that thing. It was right behind us.

She looks furtively behind them.

BERYL
Come on ladies, put your back into it.

With a concerted heave the women prise the doors open and they all fall inside.

INT - BARN - EVENING

BLANCHE and BARBARA slam the doors. BERYL picks up a broom

from the floor and slides it between the door handles.

BERYL

It won't hold for long. We have to
hope that it didn't see us come in.

GLADYS reaches into her fleece pocket and retrieves her
trusty dog walking torch. The barn is almost pitch black
apart from the torch light.

GLADYS

Look at this.

She is pointing the torch to the wall of the barn which is
lined with vicious gardening tools including a scythe,
sheers, strimmer, and a chainsaw.

BLANCHE

Bloody hell!

BARBARA

Bloody hell!

Simultaneously the barn doors swing open with an enormous
crash. The CREATURE stands in the doorway, backlit by the
dusky light. The women flee behind two enormous bales of hay
and attempt to hide.

BERYL

(whispering)

Turn that bloody torch off Glad! It's
like Blackpool illuminations back
here.

BLANCHE

(hissing)

Turn it off Glad!

BARBARA

Glad!

GLADYS

I'm trying, it's stuck!

The women wrestle with the torch sending light beams wildly
across the ceiling.

BLANCHE

Give it to us, we'll do it.

BARBARA

Do it.

They step out from between the hay bales. Like lightning a large pair of sheers emerge from the darkness and cut BLANCHE in half, her torso flying into the hay and crashing to the floor. BARBARA screams and darts out from the other side of the bale attempting an escape. Her hideous attacker pulls the strimmer from the wall and begins to shred her from behind before she can reach the door. Bits of Townswoman fly in all directions. BERYL and GLADYS shriek.

BERYL

Now Glad, it's our only chance.

She pulls a knitting needle from her pocket and thrusts it at GLADYS. She wields the other needle.

GLADYS

I'm not sure now's the time for
knitting Beryl.

BERYL mimes a stabbing motion and GLADYS nods in recognition. The women run past the CREATURE busy strimming BARBARA. It sees them and lifts the strimmer. It is blocked with Townswoman and grinds to a halt.

GLADYS

Go!

It drops the strimmer and reaches the women just outside the doorway. It reaches out inches away from BERYL. GLADYS turns and stabs it in the eyehole of the mask with the knitting needle. The CREATURE staggers backwards. The women flee, too scared to look back.

EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - LATE EVENING

GLADYS and BERYL bang on the door screaming to be let in. SOPHIA eventually opens the door and the blood-soaked women run inside. MARJORIE looks on, almost disappointed, from the hallway.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - LATE EVENING

The group of gore and blood-soaked women assemble on the surviving chairs. The house is lit by candles and oil lamps.

BERYL

She saved my life, you know. It was
right on me. Came from nowhere and it

had us trapped. If it hadn't been for Glad...

GLADYS

But Blanche and Barbara...I've never seen anything like it in my life. And Daphne...

She wipes away a tear and shudders.

BERYL

(comforting her friend)

Come on love. They died together and they died trying to save Daphne. It's what they would have wanted. Solidarity in life, solidarity in death.

MARJORIE

Is this really time for your Marxist claptrap?

BERYL bristles, ready for a fight.

JUNE

(sensing tension and interrupting)

You wouldn't believe what we found in the basement. 50 Shades of Grey has got nothing on these people...Had nothing...

She examines the gore on her clothes.

ROSE

No phone...anymore. And the Thompsons definitely won't be coming back.

GLADYS

So we're trapped in here with that thing on the loose?

BERYL

We've got no chance if we go out there in the dark. But if we can get back to that barn in daylight we can at least arm ourselves.

SOPHIA

The house is as secure as it can be. Looks like we're spending the night?

GLADYS

We can set up a lookout system and sleep in shifts.

MARJORIE

I'm on medication that should render me exempt.

BERYL

(deadpan)

Of course. And the rest of us aren't. Shake any of us and we'll rattle. Come on Glad, let's take up position. Sophia and Rose, why don't you bed down in the lounge and we'll wake you up in a few hours to take over.

MARJORIE

Good idea. June and I will take the bedrooms upstairs. Come on June.

JUNE shrugs her shoulders apologetically and the women leave the room.

BERYL

We lost some of our best friends today and she's barely raised an eyebrow. I was right about her all along.

GLADYS

Ignore her Ber. Let's just do our best to save the rest of them.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

GLADYS emerges from the hidden doorway. She bends as close to double as she can get, catching her breath and shaking her head. BERYL follows her out.

BERYL

Well that reminded me of Glastonbury in '78. The Thompsons were quite the dark horses.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

BERYL and GLADYS enter the kitchen, GLADYS still shaking her head and visibly shaken. She slumps at the table while BERYL begins exploring the cupboards behind her.

GLADYS
If only we had a drop of that whisky.

BERYL
Why have whisky when you can have Remy
Martin?

She reaches into a cupboard and pulls a bottle from a well-
stacked alcohol rack.

GLADYS
Purely medicinal.

BERYL
For the shock.

GLADYS grabs two glasses from beside the sink and pours two
generous measures.

GLADYS
Honestly Ber. Do you think we'll make
it?

She slugs her drink and pours another.

BERYL
The odds can't be good Glad.

GLADYS
The thought of never seeing the girls
again...

She takes another hearty swig.

BERYL
And old El Gato.

They contemplate their drinks in silence for a moment. BERYL
shakes her head.

BERYL
Listen Glad, there's something I've
wanted to tell you for a while. And
I'm not sure there's much to lose
anymore...

GLADYS
What Ber?

BERYL
You know I've been working for the

Potters Bluff Historical Society over the past few months?

GLADYS

(nodding)

Yes, I gave you that awful man's name after he sacked me as his assistant. Not that he was ever paying me.

(pauses)

But then you shouldn't talk ill of the dead.

BERYL

I've been working with him in the archives and I think we've uncovered something unpleasant close to home...

She chugs her drink and pours another. GLADYS looks confused. BERYL reaches into her bra and pulls out a yellowing piece of paper.

BERYL

You see I don't think what happened at the Hall last week was an accident. And I don't think it's the first time either...

MONTAGE - INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE

- INT - MASTER BEDROOM

Marjorie is asleep in the king-size bed. She is dreaming fretfully and visibly writhing.

MARJORIE

(waking with a jolt)

Peter!

- INT - GUEST BEDROOM

JUNE is fast asleep, gore still in her hair.

- INT - LOUNGE

ROSE & SOPHIA sleep, draped in armchairs.

- INT - KITCHEN

The 'look-outs' are asleep on the kitchen table, an empty bottle of Remy Martin in front of them with a lone candle. As they slumber unaware the door slowly opens behind them. An

unseen figure appears in the doorway and stops. A large sharp piece of glass from the broken vase in the lounge glistens in his/her hands. The unseen figure steps forward into the kitchen, moving towards BERYL with the glass weapon. As the shadowy assassin is about to step into the candlelight, there is a crash down the hall. The figure quickly disappears backwards into the shadows of the hallway.

- INT - DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM

A mangled fist punches through SU's face in the tweek family portrait nailed across the bathroom window. Another arm rips through the frame followed by a horrifying masked face with a knitting needle for a right eye. The enraged CREATURE rips the portrait from the window and climbs into the house.

END OF MONTAGE

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

BERYL & GLADYS continue to slumber at the kitchen table unaware that a different dark figure is stood in the doorway watching them. It moves its head side to side slowly, surveying them. A toilet flushes upstairs. The CREATURE looks up and leaves the room. The women slumber.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

The sound of running water is followed by the door opening. MARJORIE emerges from the bathroom and hurries to her room, cursing. Candles illuminate the hallway.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM

JUNE jolts awake. She reaches out and grabs the bedside lamp. Realising it was only the toilet flushing, she puts it down.

JUNE

Oh, now I need to go!

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

JUNE opens her bedroom door and comes face to mask with the CREATURE. She screams and slams the door into it, pushing the needle further into its eye. It howls and falls backwards. She flees into the nearest room, MARJORIE's master bedroom.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

JUNE rushes in and slams the door.

JUNE

We need to barricade the door!

MARJORIE

What on earth is going on?

JUNE

Quick, the chest of drawers. Help me
Marjorie!

MARJORIE helps JUNE to drag the over-sized drawers in front of the door. One drawer falls open and spills a variety of sex toys to the floor.

MARJORIE

Good lord what was wrong with these
people?

The CREATURE easily breaks through the barricade, spilling the contents of the other drawers. The women cower in the corner and JUNE picks up an enormous dildo which has spilled onto the floor. She brandishes it in front of herself, the only weapon available. The CREATURE stops and picks up a killer black stiletto from a pair neatly placed by the doorway. It slowly approaches, towering over the women.

JUNE

For God's sake someone help us! Get
back or I'll use this on you!
(she waves the dildo)

The CREATURE moves closer. It lashes out with the stiletto heel. In a split second MARJORIE pulls JUNE in front of her. JUNE's eye is impaled, the deadly weapon embedded deep into her eye socket. Blood arcs across the white walls of the bedroom. Her uninjured eye frantically stares at MARJORIE in disbelief as she falls to the ground, blood spurting from her eye and trickling from her nose and ears. The CREATURE also looks at MARJORIE. Up close, it pauses. It lowers the stiletto. She takes the opportunity, hits it with an empty drawer and flees the room. JUNE lies dead, a large shard of glass on the floor behind her amidst the strewn contents of the drawers.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY

MARJORIE bumps into ROSE & SOPHIA as she runs into the hallway.

MARJORIE

Go, now!

SOPHIA

Where? The doors and windows are all barricaded. It'll catch us before we can get them off.

GLADYS

(hissing, from the kitchen)

IN HERE!

INT - SU & PAUL'S KITCHEN

BERYL & GLADYS lean out from the open door of an integrated utility cupboard.

GLADYS

(whispering loudly)

In here! Quickly...

ROSE and SOPHIA run toward them.

MARJORIE

What on earth are you doing in there?
We need to leave now.

BERYL

The doors are boarded up - we're trapped.

MARJORIE

We need to remove the boards.

She grabs a hammer from the kitchen table and starts pulling and hammering at the board blocking the kitchen door. Pieces crack and crash loudly.

BERYL

Shut up Marjorie, you'll bring that thing in here.

MARJORIE

You can stay here and die. I'm leaving.

GLADYS

Please shut up!

A huge dark figure appears in the kitchen doorway. The women's hiding place is exposed. In panic ROSE shuts the

doors and the women latch them from the inside. MARJORIE removes enough wood to expose the kitchen door handle. She unlocks it and runs outside.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN CUPBOARD

SOPHIA
(whispering)

Do you think it's got her?

ROSE
I don't know. It's gone very quiet.

GLADYS
I heard the door.

BERYL
So did I.

GLADYS
Maybe he's gone after her.

The cupboard doors rattle violently. The CREATURE is outside and has them trapped. The early morning sun filters in through the slats on the door. The CREATURE's enormous shadow blocks it.

BERYL
We're bugged.

GLADYS
Look!

She points to a handheld hoover with a long pipe in the corner of the cupboard.

BERYL
I'm not sure now's the time for
hoovering Glad.

GLADYS makes a poking gesture. BERYL cottons on and nods.

SOPHIA
What?!

The doors swing violently open and a nightmarish figure looms over them back-lit by the rising sun. GLADYS thrusts the vacuum pipe into the zipped mouth hole of the mask, tearing it.

BERYL

Now!

She switches on the hoover. It sucks the air out of the mask crushing the decayed bones in the CREATURE's face. She flings the vacuum at the CREATURE and it falls to the ground wrestling the domestic appliance crushing its face. The women run out of the back door screaming.

ROSE

Where to now?

BERYL

(shouting)

The barn. We need those weapons.

INT - BARN - EARLY MORNING

The women stare at an empty wall.

BERYL

Well where the hell are they?

GLADYS

It must have taken them. And the twins by the looks of it.

The bodies are gone.

ROSE

What time's Barry coming to get us?

GLADYS

Not until 6. We'll never make it until then. What about Kairey Cherry. Wasn't someone coming to collect her?

BERYL

No, she was coming back to mine for a few days.

SOPHIA

Let's make a run for the road?

GLADYS

We're in the middle of nowhere and it goes on for flipping miles. Did you see another car on the way here? Besides which I don't fancy our chances of outrunning that thing.

BERYL

Ladies, it's taken Dorothy, Daphne, Blanche, Barbara and June...and TV's Kairey Cherry...

(reflects)

...and hopefully Marjorie. We're losing here. We have to fight back. It's four against one.

SOPHIA

One what? And how can we fight back without any weapons? And at our age? Do you want us to chuck our bus passes at it?

GLADYS

We'll just have to improvise. That hoover trick worked pretty well, and we gave it a good flesh wound with that knitting needle.

BERYL

(suddenly enthused)

That's it Glad! Knitting! We need to get back to the cabins - I've got an idea. If we can hold it off until 6 Barry'll be here with the coach and we're rescued. Until then we'll teach it not to mess with the Potters Bluff Townswomen's Guild champion knitters. Come on!

Perplexed, the women hurry out of the barn behind BERYL.

INT - BARRY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

The sound of deep rumbling snoring fills a sparsely decorated, yet still messy, bedroom in which a figure lies prostrate under a sheet. A naked leg hangs over the side of the bed. The radio alarm clock suddenly blasts out 'Holding Out For A Hero' by Bonnie Tyler. There is a groan and a hand reaches out from under the sheet and presses snooze. The snoring resumes. Moments later the alarm rings again - this time blasting 'Hero' by Enrique Iglesias.

BARRY

Alright Enrique!

He slams the off button and slowly sits up, disheveled and bleary-eyed. He stares into the distance, immobile, for a minute then slowly climbs out of bed. Dressed in y-fronts and

socks he walks slowly out of the door scratching his backside and yawning. A moment later there is the sound of a flush from the bathroom.

EXT - LAKESIDE CABINS - MORNING

The Townswomen peer round the corner of the end cabin and run inside.

INT - MARJORIE'S CABIN

MARJORIE is inside waving a mobile phone in the air. A packed suitcase is beside her. She looks surprised as the women suddenly enter the room.

GLADYS

What! You had a mobile phone all this time?

MARJORIE

It's not working. There is no reception.

BERYL

But there is in the basement. You nearly got us killed back at the house, you selfish bitch!

MARJORIE

I had to get to the telephone.

BERYL

And if you'd got reception what then? Would you have waited for us?

MARJORIE

Of course.

BERYL

(snorting)

That packed suitcase suggests otherwise. I'm onto you Lady Muck and if we get out of this, I won't be the only one who is...

SOPHIA

Beryl! Come on. We're fighting that thing not each other. And it could be anywhere.

GLADYS

I think we gave it a good knock so we should have a bit of time, but you're right, we've got to fight back.

BERYL takes the phone from MARJORIE, still simmering.

GLADYS

But how can we? Five septuagenarians against the creature from the black lagoon.

BERYL

Bloody useless out here anyway and we're not going back to that house.

(throwing the phone down)

Alright ladies. You know last year when we came second in the knitting competition?

The still somewhat baffled women nod.

BERYL

And we vowed never to be beaten again? Well, we're going to make bloody sure we're not beaten now....with an unfortunate life or death element.

The women look confused.

BERYL

Sophia, you're our mega speed knitting and crochet champion, right?

SOPHIA

Yes, but I don't see how whipping up a lovely Fairisle will help in this situation.

BERYL

What equipment did you bring with you star knitter?

SOPHIA

Well, I've got the mega needles, crochet hooks, scissors, pin cushions, picking knives...

BERYL

Rose, you won that baking Gold medal 6 years running. You're lethal on a

stove. Do you think you could rustle us up a piping hot pot of that award winning jam?

ROSE
(starting to grasp the link)
Of course Beryl.

BERYL
Glad, your German style is the stuff of legend. Pretty nasty those bespoke needles and what about the stitch holders. Didn't your Derek nearly have his eye out with one of those?

GLADYS
Nice choice of words. Don't forget the metal wire string and shears I brought for the flower arranging social.

BERYL
(smiling)
The weapons in the barn are gone so we make our own. When it comes back we show it what an award-winning regional Townswomen's knitting team looks like. Right?

ALL EXCEPT MARJORIE
RIGHT!

BERYL
It'll take more than a knock-off Jason Vorhees to beat us.

ROSE
Who's Jason Vorhees?

BERYL
Never mind.

MONTAGE - INT - CABINS

INT - SOPHIA'S CABIN

SOPHIA rifles through her luggage. She finds a bag of particularly long, thick knitting needles (mega needles). She lifts them up and smiles.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

ROSE stands at the cooker stirring a boiling hot pot of homemade jam. She lifts the spoon and the piping hot thick mass falls into the pan.

ROSE

Lethal!

BERYL appears in the doorway.

BERYL

Found the knife Glad left in Daphne's cabin. We're amassing quite the armoury.

She joins ROSE in the kitchen, puts the knife down, and begins to pour flour haphazardly into a large bowl.

BERYL

You couldn't attend a women's lib demo in the 70's without a flour bomb or two.

She puts on ROSE's apron and gets to work.

INT - GLADYS' CABIN

GLADYS empties out her suitcase and retrieves the fallen tools from the mess. She takes a vicious-looking stitch holder and thrusts it into a ball of wool.

GLADYS

(misappropriated)

Take that Jonathan Vorhees!

She takes the other weapons and puts them into the elasticated waistband of her skirt. MARJORIE is behind her looking in the wardrobe. She appears with a pair of metal coat hangers. BERYL enters.

BERYL

Well, it didn't do Jamie Lee Curtis much good...But worth a try.

Marjorie looks confused. BERYL goes to one of her ethnic fabric bags and searches inside a hidden pocket.

BERYL

(holding up a penknife)

So you are still there! Never know when you'll need to cut yourself free from a roped sit-in.

She pockets the knife.

BERYL

Let's take all of this to Rose's cabin. I've an idea how we might protect ourselves a bit.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

Two pans of jam bubble away on the stove. BERYL starts stripping cushions from the sofa. She grabs SOPHIA and uses a knitted scarf to wrap one of the cushions to her chest. The women take the rest of the cushions and wrap them to each other using a pile of knitted scarves from GLADYS' knitting bag. MARJORIE looks horrified and declines the makeshift armour. Eventually the women are all armed and somewhat armoured. They stand in the lounge, floral cushions protruding awkwardly from their chests, makeshift weapons in hand.

GLADYS

What do we look like?

ROSE

An explosion in a DFS factory!

The women take a brief moment from the horrors of the weekend to laugh at the absurd scene. The laughter subsides as the reality of their situation kicks in.

BERYL

Ready to make it to that coach journey home knitters?

GLADYS

As we'll ever be!

The women stand together in the cabin, makeshift weapons raised. MARJORIE skulks behind them.

END OF MONTAGE

INT - DISCOUNT SUPERMARKET - LUNCHTIME

A handful of Sunday shoppers wander slowly and aimlessly round a discount supermarket pushing trollies. A casually dressed BARRY is doing his weekly shop. Dreary music rings out, interrupted by occasional monotone announcements. He pushes his trolley mindlessly down the household goods aisle.

ANOUNCER

(unseen, over tannoy, monotone)
 And today only, two for one on carpet
 mousse and j cloths. That's Aisle 3,
 Homeware, two for one on carpet mousse
 and j cloths.

The music returns more upbeat - 'Rescue Me' by Fontella Bass. BARRY navigates the trolley to a large fridge cabinet. He picks up a packet of cooked ham and sniffs it. He puts it in his trolley and pushes it away. He stops. Returns to the fridge and puts the ham back. He pauses then picks up a cheaper brand and throws it into the trolley. He walks slowly to the next fridge and stops, consulting a crumpled list.

EXT - WOODS BEHIND DAPHNE'S CABIN - LUNCHTIME

The sound of Barry Manilow's 'Copacabana' rings out full volume from the cabin, filling the woods with music. The injured CREATURE has blundered from SU & PAUL's house & collapsed among the trees. It lies in the middle of fallen branches and moss. Its face is a hideous distortion of mask, decay and crushed bones. At the sound of Manilow, it rouses. It sits bolt upright, stands and follows the sound of crooning.

INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN

GLADYS cranks up the volume on the radio and scurries out of the door.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

GLADYS enters. The women, dressed in their makeshift floral armour, stand together facing the cabin door with their makeshift weapons in hand. GLADYS joins them. They are ready for battle.

BERYL

First place ladies!

The scene is set for confrontation.

EXT - ROSE'S CABIN

The CREATURE lurches from the woods towards DAPHNE's cabin door. As it passes the first cabin it is hit by a fleet of flying knitting needles and hooks, followed by a flurry of stones wrapped in balls of wool. Disorientated the CREATURE lurches backwards as ROSE appears from the cabin door. She flings a flour bomb into its ripped mask & distorted face.

The CREATURE is blinded & stumbles, howling, hands grasping its mutated face. SOPHIA seizes the opportunity & hurries up behind it with two hands full of mega knitting needles which she thrusts violently into its back. GLADYS follows. She leaps forward & stabs her tormentor in the chest with a fistful of foam strippers in each hand, rewarded by a blood-curdling howl. BERYL takes the final swing & secures a particularly vicious handful of stitch holders in the CREATURE's groin. It falls to the floor, silent, immobile. The women retreat and stand on guard a safe distance away, their few remaining weapons raised. They watch the mangled CREATURE.

ROSE

It's not moving. Have we killed it?

BERYL

I'm not sure. Rose go and get that jam just in case. It'll melt that rubber a treat.

GLADYS

(moving forward cautiously)

It's taken a good bashing but we can't take any chances.

She takes some metal wire from her waist band and creeps towards the CREATURE.

SOPHIA

Careful Glad!

She creeps cautiously towards it. The CREATURE remains immobile. She edges nearer, mega needle in hand, and prods it gingerly with her foot.

BERYL

Glad, careful! What are you doing?

She stops and looks for signs of breath.

GLADYS

It's not breathing, I think it's dead!

She thrusts the wire round the CREATURE's neck, pulling as tight as she can and ripping at the rubber mask, further exposing rotted decaying flesh.

GLADYS

And that's for my friends, you...shit!

She kicks the unmoving figure again then catches herself. Surprised at her own bravery, she scurries away to the other women.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

As the women begin to celebrate a perceived victory outside, ROSE returns to the kitchen. She reaches out for the pan of boiling jam still heating on the stove. The jam has overheated. It explodes violently into the air and all over her face and body. Her skin melts horrifically. She screams and collapses to the floor, her skin bubbling.

EXT - CABINS

The women abruptly stop celebrating and turn to face ROSE's agonised screams. As they hurry into the cabin, the CREATURE rises slowly, unseen behind them. It stands and pulls the makeshift weapons from its decaying flesh, furiously wrestling the wire from its neck. BERYL, GLADYS and MARJORIE disappear into the cabin. SOPHIA stops outside the doorway, horrified at the sight of the melting ROSE. The CREATURE appears behind her and plunges a mega needle through the back of her neck and out through her throat. She spits and chokes violently on her own blood before falling to the floor.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

BERYL and GLADYS try to revive ROSE. She is dead, her body melted hideously by boiling jam.

GLADYS

Come on Rose, you can't leave us as well.

BERYL

It's no good Glad.

Unseen by BERYL and GLADYS, the CREATURE is in the cabin doorway. It steps forward. SOPHIA, crawling on the floor, grabs its leg and gurgles a final death cry, trying to help her friends.

SOPHIA

(gurgling)

Run!

The women spin round.

GLADYS

Sophia! No!

The CREATURE easily shakes SOPHIA's weak grasp away, lifts its foot and explodes SOPHIA's head under its boot. BERYL spots the knife on the kitchen work surface where she left it, grabs it and flings it at the CREATURE. It lands in the wooden archway of the door.

BERYL
Bollocks! Run!

MARJORIE
(who has been lurking in the
background of the cabin)
Again?!

The terrified women fling open the back door and run for their lives, cushions falling from their bodies. MARJORIE follows them. So does the wounded CREATURE which, for once, is slower than its aging victims.

EXT - BARRY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

BARRY, now dressed in slightly disheveled 'Barry's Executive Travel' shirt, and tie, closes his front door and walks to the coach parked outside. He whistles 'Rescue Me' by Fontella Bass. Approaching the door of the coach he spots a large mud stain. He takes the stained handkerchief from his pocket and licks it.

BARRY
She won't like that.
(mimicking MARJORIE's voice)
Not very executive is it?
(under his breath)
Stuck up cow.
(mimicking MARJORIE)
Get closer to the lakeside!
(normal voice)
How they put up with that, I don't
know.

He partially removes the stain, blows his nose on the dirty tissue, replaces it in his pocket, and climbs onboard the coach. The doors close slowly behind him. The engine starts and the coach begins to move forward. It jars to a halt, the engine stops and the doors swing open again. BARRY gets out and strolls back into the house. He reappears through the front door with his sat nav.

BARRY
What did we do without you? Middle of
nowhere.

He stops and retrieves a crumpled piece of paper from his trouser pocket. He reaches into his shirt pocket and retrieves a pair of glasses which he perches on the end of his nose. After a painfully slow process of typing in the address, the screen produces a map and limited directions.

BARRY

Close enough. Do the rest when I get there. They'll probably be sat by the road with their cases anyway.

He climbs back onto the bus. The engine judders to life and the bus finally pulls off.

EXT - CABIN-SIDE - WOODS - AFTERNOON

The women run blindly in the opposite direction to SU and PAUL's house through the woods.

GLADYS

(breathless)

Where do we go now?

BERYL

I don't know, but I can't run much more Glad. This new hip!

She is struggling to keep running.

MARJORIE

There!

She points to a secluded, decaying boat house with a jetty ahead of them at the side of the lake. They keep moving forward as fast as they can.

EXT - BOAT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The exhausted women reach the boat house doors. Fortunately they are unlocked. GLADYS flings the doors open and they fall inside.

INT - BOAT HOUSE

GLADYS & MARJORIE see a pair of oars on the floor and use one of them to wedge the doors shut. BERYL is exhausted and struggling. They lean against the walls, breathing heavily. GLADYS moves to comfort BERYL. Suddenly there is a pounding on the doors. The women freeze, holding their breath and staring at the oar protecting them from the CREATURE outside. The pounding persists but the strong wooden oar holds. The

pounding eventually stops. The women stand frozen and silent for a moment, ensuring that the CREATURE has left. GLADYS moves closer to BERYL.

GLADYS
Are you alright, Ber?

BERYL
(exhausted)
I think I'm done Glad. I can't run anymore.

BERYL slides down the wall to the floor. As she sits the penknife slides from her pocket across the floor of the boat house. GLADYS gingerly sits down next to her and puts her arm round her best friend.

GLADYS
Come on love, keep going. If it weren't for you we'd all be gone by now.

BERYL
(defeated)
But look how many of us are gone. They all had families...kids, grandkids, husbands...I've run out of ideas Glad.

GLADYS
But we're still here and that's thanks to you. We haven't got long to hold on Ber. Barry's on his way right now. We're getting on that coach and getting the hell out of here.

MARJORIE
(from the other side of the boat house)
Do you really believe that fool will save us? That monster will have killed the idiot before he's even parked.

BERYL
(struggling to her feet. She has had enough)
Well, it takes one to know one, doesn't it Marjorie?

MARJORIE
(stiffening)
What do you mean?

BERYL
A monster.

MARJORIE
Are you delirious Beryl?

BERYL
Delirious? Not when there's evidence
Marjorie.

She reaches inside her generous bra and pulls out a slip of paper.

MARJORIE
What on earth is that?

BERYL
(with nothing to lose anymore)
We're onto you Marjorie. And we've got
the evidence to prove it.

MARJORIE
What evidence? What we? What are you
talking about?

BERYL
(thrusting out the paper)
I think you know exactly what I'm
talking about...Peter Dandridge.
Geoffrey Dandridge. Your son and
husband. You killed them.

There is a pause. MARJORIE steps forward and reaches out as if to take the paper. Instead she reaches to the floor and picks something up.

MARJORIE
Beryl, you dropped your penknife.

She straightens back up, penknife in hand, and lashes out at BERYL's throat, slitting it wide open. BERYL, stunned, reaches to her throat to try to stem the blood. It runs thickly between her fingers.

GLADYS
No!

BERYL slumps back to the floor, blood gushing from her neck. A record of births and deaths certificate falls from her hand. MARJORIE picks it up.

GLADYS

(falling to BERYL's side)

No! Beryl, hang on. Barry's on his way. We're getting on that coach!

She puts her hands to her best friend's throat, desperate to stop the bleeding. She uses one of the knitted scarves which is still round her waist, but it is soon soaked through with blood.

BERYL

You'll make it to the coach Glad.

BERYL chokes & coughs, blood running through her fingers.

BERYL

I'm done Glad. But it's been a hell of a ride.

GLADYS shakes her head in denial.

BERYL

It's finally time for you to stand up and give them hell love.

She dies, her head falling to the side against her friend. GLADYS sits weeping next to her on the floor.

MARJORIE

(still standing holding the bloody knife)

Well that's a shame. Beryl's death was supposed to look like an accident. And now I'm going to have to kill you too.

(patronising)

Such a harmless thing.

MARJORIE steps forward. The grinding sound of a motor outside the door stops her. It is followed by the clatter of crashing wood. The enraged CREATURE emerges chainsaw first through the wooden wall of the boat house narrowly missing GLADYS. Timber flies across the room. MARJORIE steps back in horror & trips on a tarpaulin sheet which falls to reveal the mutilated bloody bodies of all the dead townswomen. Mis-footed she falls into the gruesome pile. Scrabbling to her feet, she steps on the scythe discarded with the other weapons from the barn, and screams. It protrudes from her foot. The CREATURE looms towards her chainsaw-first.

MARJORIE

No!

The CREATURE lumbers forward.

MARJORIE

No...Peter...no!

The CREATURE stops. It lowers the still-buzzing chainsaw. It is a very long time since it has heard its name spoken. MARJORIE scrabbles and gets to her uninjured foot, slipping on blood.

MARJORIE

(gently)

It's OK Peter.

She moves towards him cautiously, dragging the scythe behind her, protruding from her foot. PETER drops the chainsaw. Gingerly and disgustedly MARJORIE reaches out and engages PETER in a twisted bloody embrace. The recently enraged PETER gradually becomes docile.

MARJORIE

There now. Mother's here.

GLADYS

(frozen, open-mouthed and
horrified)

What the hell...?

INT - BARRY'S COACH - AFTERNOON

BARRY is driving and singing along to Bon Jovi's 'Living On A Prayer' on the coach radio.

BARRY

(disharmoniously)

Ohhhhhhhh, we're halfway there...oh
oh...no we're not. Bloody hell.

He puts his foot on the brake and the coach grinds to a halt. There are a queue of cars in front of him.

BARRY

Which smart arse decided that that new
bypass at Delbury was a good idea?

He taps his fingers on the steering wheel for a while. Then he reaches for a packet of crisps from a multipack in his glove compartment, balances them precariously on his knee and opens them, taking a handful.

BARRY

Eurgh. Prawn cocktail. He puts them back.

The traffic slowly begins to move forward.

BARRY

And we're off again....
(resuming singing)
We're halfway theeere!

The coach lurches forward.

INT - BOATHOUSE - DAYTIME

MARJORIE is still locked in a gruesome, awkward embrace with her undead son PETER. GLADYS looks on from the floor, baffled and horrified.

GLADYS

What the bloody hell is going on?

MARJORIE reaches up and gently removes the mangled rubber mask from PETER's face. The horrific sight underneath causes GLADYS to retch. MARJORIE flinches but tries to hide her disgust. PETER's face has been eaten away after years at the bottom of the lake, and combined with the injuries inflicted by the women, what is left of his mutated features is hideous.

MARJORIE

(swallowing her revulsion)
Well, Peter's shall-we-say visit this weekend has proved to be somewhat of a surprise...

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

INT - MARJORIE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

In the centre of a cold windowless dark basement sits a bare grey cot. A baby, unseen under the thin grey blanket, cries. Nobody comes. The crying gets louder.

MARJORIE

(voice over)
You see I did indeed have a son. But he was not what any mother would hope for. He was born with significant...challenges. He couldn't have coped with the world outside and

I couldn't have coped with the shame.
 We had a reputation to maintain. It
 was for the best to keep him hidden
 away from life's...cruelties.

The baby thrashes and cries louder. Still nobody comes - the
 true cruelties are at home.

INT - MARJORIE'S BASEMENT - 10 YEARS LATER.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

And that's how we carried on for quite
 some time. Our little...secret.

The boy is now 11. He sits on a single bed with a thin sheet
 staring at a small black and white television in the bare
 cell-like room. He is only seen from behind, but is clearly
 excessively tall and abnormally well-built for his age.
 Growth has made his bodily deformities more prominent.
 MARJORIE unlocks the door and enters the room, locking it
 behind her. She thrusts a tray onto the bed. It holds a plate
 of food and glass of water. The boy does not react. He
 carries on staring at the television. MARJORIE pauses, looks
 on in revulsion, and leaves the room locking the door behind
 her. The boy continues to stare.

INT - MARJORIE'S BASEMENT - 7 YEARS LATER.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

But as he got older, my husband began
 to have some doubts...

The 18 year-old PETER seen only from behind, sits staring at
 the same black and white television on the same single bed.
 The door unlocks and timidly opens. GEOFFREY DANDRIDGE, his
 father, wearing a Christmas cracker paper hat, enters. He
 stares at the boy. From his pocket he produces a small gift-
 wrapped present. He places it next to PETER on the bed. PETER
 doesn't react and carries on staring at the television.

GEOFFREY DANDRIDGE

We can't go on like this lad.

(sitting on the bed)

It's not right. It's never been what I
 wanted from the start.

PETER stares at the television.

GEOFFREY DANDRIDGE

You can't stay down here anymore. I think it's time we got you out of here, don't you?

PETER looks at his father, moving his gaze from the television for the first time. Outside the basement door MARJORIE listens out of sight. She too is dressed in a paper hat and there are sounds of celebration in the house above. She rips the hat from her head and screws it into a ball angrily.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

He gave me no choice. The boy wouldn't cope in the outside world, and I'd spent so long protecting our secret. He'd ruin it all. I had to act. Fortunately, I knew just the place...

EXT - LAKESIDE CABIN - NIGHT

MARJORIE's car pulls into the same isolated Lake District resort. There is just one secluded cabin prior to the more recent renovation. She cuts her lights as she approaches. She gets out of her car and opens the post box next to the cabin. Inside is a receipt and keys. She unlocks the cabin door, looking over her shoulder. She then hurries back to the car and opens the back door. PETER is inside, covered by a blanket. She helps him out of the car unsteadily, closing the door behind him, and they disappear into the cabin. His unsteady figure towers over her.

EXT - LAKESIDE - THE FOLLOWING DAWN

In the dim dawn light MARJORIE leads the figure of a confused, towering PETER from the cabin to the lake. He is dressed in overalls. Unfamiliar with the outside world and blinded by the little dawn light, he is reluctant, and groans. She wades into the shoreline water, smiling to reassure her fearful son. She splashes and laughs, all the time pulling her struggling son further into the water by the hand. He moans and writhes as the water gets deeper, but she pulls him further with her. She begins to tread water. He can't. Panicking, he flaps his arms and legs. He becomes entwined in reeds. His head sinks and she releases his hand. His head re-emerges from the water, his arms flail. She treads water backwards to the shoreline, watching PETER pulled further into the lake's murky depths. PETER's last desperate view is of his mother watching him drown.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

It was the kindest thing Gladys. He wouldn't have coped. And I had the family reputation to consider. Nobody could know.

(pauses)

The farmer, however, was unfortunate. Not unlike you come to think of it.

PETER's cries and splashing alert the attention of the cabin-owning FARMER who is tending his cows in the nearby barn which would later be converted to the big house. He emerges onto the lakeside from the woods.

FARMER

(seeing PETER disappear under the water and MARJORIE watching)

He's drowning. Do something!

He begins to pull off his wellington boots to swim out to the boy. MARJORIE comes up behind him and dashes him over the head with a rock. He falls to the bank. Frenzied, she hits him once, twice, three times, until she is sure that he is dead. She wipes the blood from her face and drags the FARMER's body to the cabin.

EXT - OUTHOUSE BEHIND CABINS - DAWN

MARJORIE is frantically searching. She finds a large barrel marked flammable. She does not see the label indicating that it is formaldehyde, used by the farmer as a disinfectant for cattle. She drags the barrel to the front of the cabin, accidentally spilling most of the contents into the lake and polluting it. She pours the remainder into the cabin and onto the FARMER's body and sets fire to both. The cabin erupts in a huge explosion of wood and chemical fire, and flames seer across the polluted lake. MARJORIE runs to her car, jumps in, and drives away, watching the fireball in her rearview mirror. The grassland behind her is engulfed with flames, eliminating her tracks.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

Fatal accident they called it. He'd accidentally spilled the chemicals and he was a notorious smoker, an accident waiting to happen...

EXT - CASTLE ROOF - DAYTIME

MARJORIE

(voice over)

And, of course, one murder begets another. My husband Geoffrey couldn't understand that it was for the best. He threatened to inform the police. So there was that dreadful burglary gone wrong at our home. He didn't stand a chance. I played the grieving widow to a tee. And then, much later, of course, there was that awful historian...

MARJORIE, disguised in hat, wig and glasses, pushes the HISTORIAN from the ramparts. Pulling off her gloves to reveal the pearls on her wrist, she removes her hat and wig as he slides down the church spire.

HISTORIAN

(gurgling)

You!

MARJORIE smiles down at him, waving with a hand framed by her signature pearls.

INT - CASTLE ARCHIVE ROOM - DAYTIME

MARJORIE searches frantically through a box file and flings it to the floor when she can't find what she's looking for, exasperated.

END OF FLASHBACK MONTAGE

INT - BOATHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

MARJORIE

(still pointing the knife at
GLADYS and awkwardly embracing
PETER)

You see I found out that Beryl had been working with that pompous man. I feared that they had uncovered secrets that were better off hidden. I chose this resort for the weekend as I'd planned for Beryl to also meet with a tragic accident. Once I found the records were missing I knew for sure.

She points the knife at the lake.

MARJORIE

That lake would hold another secret.

GLADYS begins to stand. She has heard enough.

GLADYS

I already knew most of that you bloody
silly cow. Beryl told me!

PETER's embrace of MARJORIE suddenly begins to stiffen. Her talk of another murder in the lake has enraged him - he has remembered his own death at the hands of his mother. Her face begins to show signs of panic. PETER squeezes tighter until the embrace turns murderous. He begins to wail and literally squeeze the life out of MARJORIE. Her screams join with the sound of bones violently cracking and snapping. Blood runs from her eyes, ears and mouth. Viscera run to the floor as her life ebbs away. The screaming eventually stops. PETER drops the broken, bloody frame of MARJORIE and kicks the crumpled remains into the lake through the hole in the wall. Ignoring a cowering GLADYS he turns to the door and removes the oar. He flings it aside and leaves the boat house, his revenge complete.

EXT - BOATHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

PETER slowly walks back towards the jetty. Revenge has offered him the peace of a return to his watery grave. GLADYS, however, has revenge of her own in mind. The once timid Townswoman has been pushed beyond her limit. She runs screaming from the boathouse behind him, enraged and bloodied, pushed to the point of murderous rage by the deaths of her friends. She brandishes the chainsaw above her head and howls. Careering towards him, GLADYS thrusts the chainsaw violently through his decayed, mutilated midriff. PETER looks down blankly, almost relieved, at the grinding metallic weapon protruding from his body, tearing a huge hole in his decayed flesh. He finally falls, the chainsaw still whirring at his body.

GLADYS

(screaming)

I am not taking this anymore!

She kicks PETER's body, screams, and finally collapses bloodied and exhausted next to him.

EXT - LAKESIDE CABINS - EVENING

BARRY's bus pulls up at the lakeside outside the cabins. He honks the horn. There is no reply. He waits a moment then

climbs out cautiously into the mud bath.

BARRY
(shouting)
Helloo! Ladies! Glad, it's Barry. I'm
here to take you home.

He walks gingerly to the front of the cabins, keen to avoid the huge pools of mud.

BARRY
Glad, Beryl, where are you?

He peers into their messy cabin from the doorway.

BARRY
Well, where the chuff are they?

He moves along to the wide open door of ROSE's cabin where he is met by the sight of SOPHIA's headless body and the melted remains of ROSE in the kitchen.

BARRY
Bloody hell!

He steps back, stunned, from the doorway & into GLADYS who has appeared, resolute and shell-shocked behind him. She is covered in blood and gore.

BARRY
(jumping and screaming)
Jesus Christ Glad! I thought you were
doing some knitting?

GLADYS
Just get me home Barry.

BARRY
What about the others?

GLADYS
There are no others.

BARRY
I've never seen anything like it. It's
like one of those Michael Vorhees
films...

BARRY shakes his head, puts his arm around an exhausted GLADYS & helps her to stagger towards the coach. They are about to board when the grinding sound of a chainsaw rings

out behind them. PETER is running towards them wailing, a gaping hole in his midriff, and the chainsaw above his head.

GLADYS
 (turning slowly)
 Oh, for fuck's sake!

GLADYS sighs and pushes BARRY to safety down a steep bank towards the lake. He slips and falls in the mud, and into the lake.

BARRY
 (falling and confused)
 Glaaaad!

GLADYS hobbles up onto the coach and closes the door.

INT - BUS - EVENING

An exhausted, yet determined GLADYS looks into the rear view mirror and sees PETER running towards the back of the coach, chainsaw raised and screaming. She turns the keys & pushes the gear stick into reverse. She slams her foot to the floor on the accelerator and swerves violently.

EXT - CABINS - EVENING

The rear of the coach hits PETER full-on and he is dragged under the large wheels. His body explodes and gore gushes from underneath the coach. The chainsaw flies to the side of the bank, still running.

INT - BUS - EVENING

GLADYS moves to first gear, drives forward and then slams her foot on the accelerator again, reversing sharply. The bus bumps upwards as it crushes what remains of PETER's body. Without emotion she repeats this process once more until there is no bump & PETER is pulverised. GLADYS finally stops, puts the bus into neutral and pulls on the handbrake. She pauses, looks into the mirror and uses the handkerchief in her pocket to wipe a small streak of blood from her face, making only a small impact on the blood and viscera covering it. She looks down. A First Place rosette has propelled from underneath a passenger seat and landed in the aisle beside her. She picks it up and resignedly pins it to her chest. She puts the bus back into first gear and drives off into the sunset.

EXT - LAKESIDE - EVENING

A confused, mud and water-soaked BARRY appears over the brow of the lakeside bank. He keeps slipping in the mud as he tries to make his way to the top of the bank.

BARRY
Glad! Glaaad!

He looks around and sees that the coach has gone.

BARRY
Bugger, she's gone without me!

BARRY haphazardly climbs up to the path where he finds what's left of PETER. He gingerly and disgustedly prods the mess with his foot & then quickly wipes his shoe on a patch of grass.

BARRY
Who knew knitting was so dangerous?

He bends down and picks up the still-running chainsaw. As he tries to work out how to switch it off, the first rays of moonlight reflect off the lake. All is now peaceful aside from the still-buzzing chainsaw and BARRY's grumbles as he wrestles with it. Behind him the water gently ripples in contrast to the violent events which the lakeside has witnessed over the previous two days.

Ominously the rippling begins to increase near the boathouse. Bubbles fly up to the surface of the murky water, disturbing the gentle roll. Suddenly a hand violently thrusts from the lake and twists, the moon shimmering from the pearls on the same gloved wrist that pushed the HISTORIAN to his bloody demise. MARJORIE DANDRIDGE wants her revenge!

CUT TO CREDITS

Part Three: *Knitters!* Exegesis: Exploring the Praxis of Script Writing

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Introduction

In the Part One thesis, scholarly and case study analysis explored the cohesion between the apparently juxtaposed genres of horror and comedy. Existing theory was interrogated and applied, and direct research was conducted including semiotic and historical analysis, and close reading of a number of key texts belonging to both genres and the hybrid genre of horror comedy, aligned to the gross-out style. The thesis posited that horror and comedy can be linked through semiotic, narrative and thematic representations of **abjection**, **excess** and **absurdity**. These findings further pointed to the correlation between the genres through the grotesque in the co-present tension between comedy and horror, 'what is essentially a clash between incompatible reactions – laughter on the one hand and horror and disgust on the other' (Thomson, 1972, 2). The carnivalesque traits of the grotesque were also found to connote the spirit of carnival, subversion, transgression and excess. According to Paul, the experience of watching a gross-out film offers a 'celebratory frenzy' (1994, 64) and a 'festive communal atmosphere in the theatre' (ibid, 65). Moreover, the thesis outlined the original and rigorous research intent in application of academic findings in the experiment of praxis, in writing a feature-length horror comedy film script, which would form the second part of the doctorate. Part One closed in responding to research questions directly structured to enable application of thesis in praxis.

Following a brief cinema-going imitative 'Intermission' Part Two, then, served as the praxis of that academic research in the creation of the feature-length horror comedy film script *Knitters!* The script tells the story of the women of the Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild who, while on an isolated Lake District competitive knitting weekend, encounter an apparently unstoppable supernatural foe. With only their knitting and crafting equipment, they must try to fight off their homicidal nemesis and survive until their coach journey home. The intent in the creation of the script was to combine horror and comedy featuring narrative and semiotic representations of abjection, excess and absurdity, and reflecting genre porosity in gross-out content.

Part One findings indicated that connotation of horror could be achieved through the inclusion of genre iconography such as a supernatural, indestructible killer (who embodied an intertextual nod to one of the iconic slashers of horror cinema), and repeated and extensive representations of abjection and excess through escalating levels of blood and gore, aligned to inventive use of weaponry and productive

violence. 'A degree of upping the ante is built into the gross-out phenomenon,' argues King (2002, 76). Similarly Prince defines horror as, 'a cumulative experience...audiences become more accustomed to existing thresholds of violence and morbidity and filmmakers then find they have to go further to evoke some response' (2003, 84). Central to the script are 'set-piece' (Snyder, 2005, 80) death scenes, and it is within these scenes that the blend of abjection, excess and absurdity can be most usefully applied to connote both horror and comedy through gross-out material. Concurrently, a pervasive absurdity forms the core of the scenario itself in pitting societally coded demure, elderly women against a stereotypical slasher monster. This subverts genre which traditionally pits a slasher against a group of teenage victims (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2011, Conrich, 2010, Dika, 1990 et al.), and connotes humour through the potential for absurd subversion.

Further key research-informed considerations of praxis included application of the carnivalesque aspects of the grotesque in revelry in the abject, a core device engaging the 'lower bodily stratum' (Bakhtin, 1984), and the previously identified subversive and transgressive aspects of societal reconstruction through the grotesque carnivalesque:

'One of the key aspects of carnivalesque humour for Bakhtin is the representation of the human body as source of the grotesque....this involves a concern with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs: it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception...' (King, 2002, 65).

This significant research-informed approach to original praxis script creation will be rigorously explored in this Part Three exegesis. Reflection on praxis will also demonstrate application of scholarly and industry practice theory relating to script writing process. As an inaugural attempt at script writing, such theory and guidance enabled an informed, structured and considered approach throughout. Chapters herein open with an exploration of the initial concept of the original script, its title, taglines, research approaches, outline and full treatment. Analysis will then move to the creation of the characters, from anecdotal observation of the members of the Townswomen's Guild themselves, to detailed character interviews and biographies. Plot outlines and scene lists will then be explored, and their creation detailed. Blake Snyder's 'Beat Sheet' (2005, 70) will be applied to indicate that the rhythm of the film was a key concern in its plotting and structural planning. Snyder argues: 'After

coming up with the idea, identifying the 'who' in your movie – and who it's for – the structure is the single most important element in writing and selling your screenplay' (ibid, 65).

The writing of the first draft of the script will then be explored in detail followed by analysis of further drafts, exploring how and why the script morphed over a rigorous series of eight drafts. Application and consideration of research findings in the Part One thesis will be detailed in praxis throughout, alongside further relevant areas of theory relating to horror, comedy and genre, absurdity, excess and abjection. Screenwriting theorists including Parker (1999), Field (2005), Snyder (2005) and Selbo (2015) will be applied consistently to illustrate thoroughly informed and researched approaches to the creative praxis at every juncture in preparation of the script.

Chapter One: *Knitters!* The Beginning

Concept

'In essence, the start of a screenplay's development is an idea the writer believes in' (Parker, 1999, 57).

The overarching idea for the script which forms the praxis of this doctorate, was first conceived as a result of an intensive scholarly research period, fulfilling a Marxist reading of Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs* (2008). To secure a period of respite after exploration of the themes and semiotics of a markedly distressing film, a short break was taken at an isolated Lake District log cabin resort. One evening, watching over a moonlit cabin-side lake, and pre-programmed by years of immersion in horror narratives, a question arose. Were a seemingly undefeatable supernatural slasher to emerge from that lake, á la Jason Vorhees, who would be the most unlikely, and potentially amusing characters, in a genre-subversive context, to do battle with him? Familial connections to the traditional, ostensibly refined, yet inter-member politically fractious, Townswomen's Guild, immediately sprang to mind. The juxtaposition of the collision of the two opposing worlds, and subversion of genre tropes could offer a potentially original and comedic entry point into script writing:

'Audiences will return over and over to experience a film in their favourite genre. Now it is time to make the film unique, to show the screenwriter's personal artistry. The chosen elements to enhance each particular film are unique characters, locations, dilemmas, conflicts and choice of supporting film genres to elucidate the story and make the narrative seem fresh and new' (Selbo, 2015, 5).

One of the approaches to making this script 'fresh and new' (ibid) would be characterisation, and the juxtaposition of those characters in a slasher-coded narrative structure. Moreover, a doctorate which academically explored the potential cohesion between horror and comedy and directly applied those research findings in praxis, would combine the practice of horror comedy script writing with contribution of original, rigorous and significant knowledge to a relatively under-developed academic field. In the script's central character juxtaposition content could be written which could clearly align to the later-discovered abject, excessive and absurd semiotic and narrative cohesion demonstrated in gross-out horror and comedy. Parker argues:

'It is extremely important to understand which familiar aspects of screen narratives each project is bringing to an audience. These provide a framework within and around which the original elements of the project are placed...familiarity is fundamentally provided by stories, form and genre. Originality arises from subject, character, plot & style' (1999, 73).

Pitch/Tagline

'If you can't tell me about it in one quick line...I'm onto something else...until you have your pitch and it grabs me, don't bother with the story' (Snyder, 2005, 5).

It was significant from the outset that, were the doctorate/script to progress, the concept of the film could be summarised in a brief engaging fashion. This should reflect the concept's originality, its blend of horror and comedy, and an indication of what it would portray. Snyder argues: 'You must give it a fresh twist to be successful...you must give us the same thing...only different' (ibid, 28). The script's concept offered a unique twist on the slasher genre, which trades on narrative repetition and usefully escalation, in the juxtaposition of the unique characters placed within the frame of the slasher narrative (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2011, Conrich, 2010, Dika, 1990 et al.). This key connotation of subversion would be central in pitching the film.

Snyder further argues the importance of categorising a film in alignment to other related films, as an essential shortcut tool (2005). Genre theory highlighting relationship between filmmaker and audience supports this approach, aligned to audience expectation (Lacey, 2000, Chandler, 1997, Ryall, 1975 et al.). Filmic alignment was required in creation of a relatable tagline which would stress both horror and humour and the juxtapositional celebration and subversion of character-informed narrative cliché. The pitch '***Friday the 13th meets Calendar Girls***' clearly states the central potentially comedic juxtaposition. It enables understanding of the film as a horror, moreover, a slasher horror and offers direct evidence of the intended intertextuality with the iconic *Friday the 13th* (1980). It also embeds information on characterisation and the intriguing potential contradiction between the supernatural slasher and a group of older women belonging to a societally coded respectable organisation. While *Calendar Girls* (Nigel Cole, 2003) portrays the women of the Women's Institute, the familial connection with the Townswomen's

Guild ensured an anecdotal frame of reference, which would prove highly useful in reflecting and understanding inter-group dynamics and conflict. The connotation of character, is moreover, highly similar. *Calendar Girls* is aligned with the comedic, and partially subversive actions of the group in posing for a nude charity calendar, which also offers connotation of the script's comedic and subversive intent through characterisation.

According to Snyder:

'Along with a good 'What is it?', a movie must have a sense of what it's about and who it's for. It's tone, potential, the dilemma of its characters, and the type of characters they are, should be easy to understand and compelling' (2005, 16).

Alignment to these two films offered answers to many of these questions while also offering intrigue and connotation of the combination of horror and humour.

Title

'Like the irony in a good logline, a great title must have irony and tell the tale' (Snyder, 2005, 9).

Early consideration of the script's title reflected that of its tagline. The title should imply both horror and comedy, embed a clue as to the film's juxtaposition in its central character-based subversion, and offer a degree of intertextuality in order to inform genre fans that the author was versed in genre history and this would be interwoven through the text. This would connote Hills' 'pleasures of recognition' (2005, 170). The first title considered was *Tea Cosy of Terror*. This working title implied comedy, horror, and embedded potential age-associated iconography alongside implications of juxtaposition. It also reflected intertextuality in echoing the episode titles, themselves heavily based on the Hammer Horror and Amicus films of the 1960's & 70's, of BBC comedy horror series *Dr Terrible's House of Horrible* (Matt Lipsey, 2001).

Research further uncovered a working title of the influential *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), as *Teatime of the Dead* (Mental Floss, 2016). This little-known correlation could reinforce intended intertextuality and connote reassurance to a target audience of horror fans, that the author was genre literate and would fulfil

expectation (Hills, 2005). However, as script development progressed, the centrality of knitting in the narrative increased and the concept of the tea cosy became redundant. The title needed to better reflect one of the script's key narrative drivers in the women's goal of winning a knitting competition. Knitting could potentially offer the same implication of the genre-subversive age of the film's characters, while the title would still need to equally imply horror and comedy.

Knitters! derived from a brainstorm of how existing genre titles could be adapted to offer intertextuality and deliver key thematic connotation, while also referencing knitting (no mean feat!) *Critters* (Stephen Herek, 1986) is well-known among genre fans as a favoured example of a blend of horror and comedy. The title's rhythmic similarity to the word 'knitters' offered an intertextual adaptation of a known title. The addition of an exclamation point connoted dramatic intent, horror, comedy, intrigue, and central juxtaposition, in a direct title. 'The screenwriter is creating the mental space of the horror genre for the audience who may employ schematic (framing) knowledge' argues Selbo (2015, 143). Hantke furthers: 'The speed of these often offhand intertextual references allows audience members 'in the know' to enjoy the moment of recognition, but also it allows those who don't catch the 'joke' to continue their enjoyment of the broader plot' (2010, 90). The title was coded to deliver evidence of the script's content at different levels to different audiences, with a firm target audience of a horror (comedy) savvy audience.

Research

'Once you know your subject and can state it briefly in a sentence or two, you can begin preliminary research' (Field, 2005, 38).

Rigorous scholarly research began with compilation of the Part One thesis of the doctorate exploring the porosity between horror and comedy, which concluded that abjection, excess and absurdity are the key shared elements of the genres in gross-out materials. The thesis' research questions were, moreover, structured to enable application and testing of this conclusion in praxis. However, as a novice script writer, research into script writing practice was also required to ensure an informed and structured approach. It was essential that script writing be guided by industry practice at every stage. Praxis research thus incorporated three further direct sources: filmic, screen writing texts, and screenplays themselves. These further

research sources would enable the practical framing of the academic conclusions of the thesis.

The filmic element of this research has arguably been a lifelong project in relation to the script of *Knitters!*:

'When you're preparing to write you will 'screen' a dozen movies that are like the one you're working on to get clues about why certain plot elements are important, why they work or don't, and where you can change the cliché into something fresh' (Snyder, 2005, 24).

Parker furthers: 'It is equally important to watch and analyse screen works you feel are relevant or similar to your own project' (1999, 63). The horror comedy genre as both a point of academic interrogation and a genre for screen writing practice, was chosen from a point of personal enjoyment and knowledge, simultaneous to clear academic opportunities to expand theoretical perspectives. From early childhood obsession with *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Charles Barton, 1948) the blended genres of horror and comedy have formed the epicentre of the author's fascination with the horror genre, and the rigorous approach to its viewing delight is reflected in the extensive (yet selected) Filmography.

Alongside the films identified for close reading in Part One, further key texts including *Shaun of The Dead* (2004), *Severance* (Christopher Smith, 2006), *Doghouse* (Jake West, 2009), *Dead Snow* (Tommy Wirkola, 2009), *Hatchet* (2006), *An American Werewolf in London* (John Landis, 1981) and *Funny Man* (Simon Sprackling, 1994) were rewatched and analysed. These films were selected aligned to the conclusions of Part One in that their representations of horror and comedy were achieved through semiotic, thematic and narrative abjection, excess and absurdity. (Although a considerably higher number of films have been (re)watched in preparation of the doctorate as reflected in the Filmography). Consider for example, the scene in *Dead Snow* where a young victim escapes an advancing zombie horde by swinging off the edge of a mountain from the intestines of the zombie Nazi ensnared on the tree above him. These films demonstrate gross-out content of, 'extreme gross fury visited upon the human body as it is burst, blown-up, broken and ripped apart; as it disintegrates or metamorphoses; as it is dismembered and dissected' (Carroll, adapted from Hanning, 1990, 211). They each showcase

abjection, excess and absurdity, in representing both horror and comedy, while using tools such as iconography to ensure firm balance of connotation of horror.

Close attention was paid to narrative, pacing, characterisation, intertextuality, violence, gore, and how each film blended comedy and horror in the gross-out tradition. Researching films in the slasher genre was also significant, given that the script was intended to both align to and subvert slasher genre tropes through characterisation (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2011, Conrich, 2010, Dika, 1990 et al.). *Friday the 13th* and its sequels were rewatched, as were a number of other influential slasher films including *Halloween* (1978) and its sequels, *Black Christmas* (1974), *The Burning* (Tony Mylam, 1981), *Madman* (Joe Giannone, 1981) and *Sleepaway Camp* (Robert Hitzik, 1983). A number of those films were selected not just for their status within the slasher genre, but also because of their isolated lakeside/woodland settings, reflecting the intended location of *Knitters!* Slasher genre research was crucial to the formation of the indestructible supernatural villain, and it was in reflection that it was decided the character would be masked, both as an intertextual reference to key slasher villains of the 1980's, but also as a tool to heighten fear and tension and ensure connotation of horror. As Sipos argues: 'Horror psychos are empowered by masks. Their faces hidden, every horror psycho is potentially a disfigured uberpsycho' (2010, 20). This research also reinforced the genre 'twist' in refocusing characterisation on the Townswomen's Guild: all depicted the slaying of a group of young characters. Whereas, as Dika states, 'they are usually members of a single young community' (1990, 56).

Moreover, textual research was conducted in analysis of a number of relevant screenplays. *Evil Dead 2* and *Braindead* had been studied closely for the Part One thesis, and this was supplemented with close reading of the scripts of *Shaun of the Dead*, *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*. This research approach was significant in considering the requirements of script formatting from a novice perspective, in structuring, pacing and characterisation through dialogue. The description of scene and setting in particular offered a practical point of reference in recognising the conventions of a new written form. While embedded in the horror genre from a viewing perspective, which proved incredibly useful in recognising, applying and subverting genre tropes, much was yet to be learned about the practicalities of script writing. However, as Snyder argues: 'If you know what genre you're in, learn its rules and find what's essential: you'll write a better and more satisfying movie' (2005, 43).

While the practical process of script writing was not familiar, the horror (comedy) genre truly was.

Further, in an early supervision meeting, the script for *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1989) was suggested as an industry-recognised model of best practice, and therefore that script, while not in the related genre, was studied, and the significant importance of economy of writing was noted. 'The more scripts you read, the more familiar with the form you'll become,' argues Field (2005, 237). Indeed, economy of dialogue and description was a feature shared across all studied scripts, regardless of genre. Also notable in all script material, was the placement and increment of 'set pieces' (Snyder, 2005, 80) representing violence, the extent of which helped defined the genre. This key observation, aligned to the thesis findings in relation to delivering escalating representations of excess, abjection and absurdity, will be discussed further in these chapters.

Halloween and *Friday the 13th* further presented significant evidence of genre characterisation and the narrative modes of characters' deaths as the very slasher tropes which *Knitters!* intended to subvert. As Kavin states: 'Slasher films are sometimes called 'dead teenager movies'' (2012, 143). Moreover, all films (even, to a lesser degree, *Die Hard*), reflected Carroll's narrative theory that:

'The pattern falls into the familiar three phases: an initial period establishing the presence of both the monster and the stable situation that it threatens; a second usually lengthy phase in which the monster goes on the rampage and various attempts to deal with it are shown to be ineffectual; and third phase...in which the monster is finally defeated and some level of order is restored' (1990, 19).

This structure would be closely applied in praxis, aligned to the narrative patterns of the horror genre: 'Anyone familiar with the horror genre knows that its plots are very repetitive' (Carroll, 1990, 97). This repetition would be highly useful in structuring the script and ensuring a satisfying pace, while ensuring production of frequent and escalating core 'set pieces' (Snyder, 2005, 80). As Staiger argues: 'The process of comparison which requires pattern...is crucial to communication and may contribute to enjoyment of a text' (2000, 62).

Simultaneous to this filmic and textual research, a number of academic texts were interrogated on script writing practice. On supervisor guidance, particular attention

was paid to Snyder's *Save the Cat* (2005), while Field (2005), Parker (1999), Selbo (2015), Maras (2009) and Goldman (1996) also offered useful theory. Core guidance from each of these texts is applied herein alongside the research findings from Part One, in order to ensure consistent, considered and informed original practice. 'The information you collect allows you to operate from the position of choice, confidence and responsibility', states Field (2005, 36). He adds: 'Research...allows you to gain a degree of confidence so you are always atop your subject, operating from choice not necessity or ignorance' (ibid, 39). Once the beginnings of this core research could be melded with filmic and academic analysis aligned to the Part One conclusions surrounding cohesion between horror and comedy, the film's crucial outline, and moreover, treatment could be drafted.

Premise/Outline

Parker outlines three of the key 'Tools of the Trade' in the script development process as 'Premise – idea/proposal', 'Outline' and 'Treatment' (1999, 40). He adds:

'The first three options – idea, premise, proposal – are about summarising the essence of the project...The latter two – what it's about and what the story is – are seeking an understanding of how the narrative will develop and/or what the writer really wants to write about' (ibid, 41).

The premise for *Knitters!* was established at an early stage: *The ladies of the Townswomen's Guild must battle a supernatural slasher in an isolated lakeside resort. In the Lake District no-one can hear you scream!* The structure of this premise aligned to Parker's:

'...short one to three sentence statement, which captures the essential elements of the screenplay...assure the reader that this idea has definite screen potential, that there are some familiar and original elements in the project and that an intriguing question has been posed to launch narrative' (ibid).

The premise built on the script's title and tagline. Intertextuality was also connoted through the employment of the infamous tagline to horror/sci-fi film *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979): *'In space no-one can hear you scream!'* It situated the script in Snyder's 'Monster in the House' narrative structure (2005, 27), while also promising the crucial comedic twist: the monster will face its most unlikely foes – the demure

ladies of the Townswomen's Guild. The title, tagline and premise, were now defined. According to Parker: 'The next major document in terms of the writing process is the outline, synopsis, or treatment....a short prose version of the screen narrative' (1999, 42).

The outline should next be structured as this would form the basis of the script's treatment. 'An outline, incorporating the notion of a synopsis...concentrates on the main narrative story, the central protagonist/s and antagonist/s, their motivations and essential active questions,' states Parker (ibid). He furthers that the aims of the outline are to: 'Establish engaging characters with strong motivations; clear narrative structure; essential narrative elements including resolution of main story; style of narrative' (ibid). The full outline for *Knitters!* is available in the appendices as **Part Three Appendix 1 Outline**, indicating key story/narrative points and information delivered within each.

The creation of the outline involved a detailed, research-informed brainstorm of the script's sequence of events and its characters, with assurance that characters were suitably numerous to offer ample opportunity for horror and comedy through abject, excessive and absurd multiple murder set pieces (Snyder, 2005). According to Kawin: 'Inevitably victims or potential victims are the most numerous of horror movie characters' (2012, 119). Conrich stresses the importance of the 'body count' in the, 'recounting of the methodical slaughter of each helpless individual' (2010, 174). Essential here was assurance that the narrative housed enough characters to fulfil a genre audiences' expectations in relation to those gross-out set pieces, and moreover that these characters were rounded, likeable and unlikeable where required. As Snyder argues: 'The 'who' is our way in...The 'who' gives us someone to identify with...it's easier to communicate an idea when someone is standing there experiencing it for us' (2005, 47). The next chapter will focus on character development; analysis herein will address the structuring of the film's sequence of events, informed by Part One findings on excess, abjection and absurdity aligning to the carnivalesque, and their importance in structuring the film's 'production numbers':

'What really propels these movies is the satisfying chase and kill formula, leading inexorably to a shameless enjoyment of the moment of...gruesome death...The murder scene in a good slasher film is a production number with screams and blood instead of song and dance' (Thrower, 2008, 26).

The initial outline was divided into thirteen key narrative events around which the plot and characterisation would be delivered and through which, 'the dramatic structure which relates how essential story information will be revealed' (Parker, 1999, 72). The broad sub-headings (supported with full information in the appendices document) were:

1. *'Flashback (although the audience should not be aware that it is such)*
2. *Ladies set off for 'away weekend'*
3. *Ladies arrive at the lakeside resort in a night-time storm & meet the owners Paul & Su*
4. *The killer is revived in the lake due to a power cable falling (supernatural)*
5. *The killer kills the resort owners (and their 'friends')*
6. *The ladies begin their activities (unaware that a killer is on the loose)*
7. *The killer starts killing the ladies*
8. *The ladies decide to fight back*
9. *The heroes emerge (both false and true), but one is killed by the killer's mother (Marjorie)*
10. *FLASHBACK to the masked killer's first death*
11. *The killer kills his mother (Marjorie)*
12. *The hero (Gladys) kills the killer (or does she?)*
13. *Second (or does she?) ending – possible post-credit'*

In mapping story outline, a key device of intrigue outside the central conflict between the women and the supernatural foe, was identified. The script would have two villains: the supernatural masked killer, *and his mother*, who unbeknownst to the other characters, had drowned her own son in the lake years previously and conducted a secret murder spree to conceal her actions. Crucially, she would be the well-to-do Chairwoman of the Guild, and her dark secret would be concealed yet hinted at throughout, to be revealed in the script's final scenes. Parker argues: 'Holding back on key story information to create suspense, surprises and reversal is essential' (ibid). She would have organised the training weekend to lure the Guild's feisty Social Secretary who had uncovered her secret, to the same isolated lakeside, where she would murder her too.

The Social Secretary would be framed as the film's fake final girl (Clover, 1992), the empowered female sole survivor and one of the key signifiers of the slasher genre.

She would lead and motivate the women throughout only to be shockingly killed by the Chairwoman in the film's third act. This would leave the true final girl (ibid) role open for the Guild's timid, put-upon Secretary. She would ultimately defeat the film's supernatural foe, who would have already murdered his treacherous mother, thus offering multiple central characters an interesting arc, and providing layered and engaging characterisation.

This structure aligns to Snyder's third act arc:

'It's where the old world, the old character, the old way of thinking dies...clears the way for the fusion of thesis – what was – and antithesis – the upside down version of what was – to become synthesis, that being a new world, new life' (2005, 87).

Such narrative texturing also applies Parker's, 'distinct levels of stories within narrative dramatic structures...each level determines the level of development of any one particular story in relation to the narrative' (1999, 72). Parker delineates 'Main Stories' as, 'stories which run through the whole dramatic structure and dominate narrative space in terms of time dedicated to them' (ibid). In *Knitters!* this would be the central and immediate conflict between the women and the masked killer, depicting their attempts to simply survive and reflecting horror narrative tropes. Parker's, 'Secondary Stories – these also run throughout the whole length of the dramatic structure but do not occupy as much narrative time' (ibid) would be the crucial, yet hidden or hinted at, subplot surrounding the Chairwoman. In restricting the dominance of these scenes, audiences would encounter questions which were yet to be answered, providing engaging plot/narrative suspense and intrigue. Within the framing of that suspense, the very first clues should originate in the opening scene.

In the **first outline narrative event**, the film's crucial attention-grabbing opening scene was initially intended as a flashback of a boy drowning in a lake while his mother looked on. The gruesome murder by an unseen assailant of a historian at a refined National Trust property was also considered. In converting the outline to the treatment, the second option became prominent with its opportunity for an abject, excessive and absurd gross-out 'production number' (Thrower, 2008, 26) at the outset, alongside the comedic juxtaposition between the refined and the horrific. This secondary narrative would both open and play a part in closing the script in a

circular structure which underpinned the main narrative conflict between the women and the supernatural killer.

Outline point two was a device to introduce each of the women of the Guild. Parker demands: 'A clear reason or set of reasons as to why the central characters are engaging' (1999, 72). The overall narrative structure needed to be defined by a central cause, an event which drew the women to that isolated lakeside resort (with the subtext of murderous intent still hidden). Early exploration of what impromptu weapons the women might have available, led to research into seemingly innocuous crafting and knitting tools and implements, with intent that the makeshift weapons used against a frenzied supernatural foe could offer comedic potential in subversion of more iconographic horror weaponry. Within the frame of the carnivalesque, Bakhtin describes such 'carnival objects' as those which are, 'turned inside out – used the wrong way...household objects are turned into arms' (1984, 72). In order to gather the women together at the isolated resort, they would attend a weekend craft getaway. (The competitive element would come later in order to enhance the overarching narrative mission of the women).

Moreover, the women would travel to and from the getaway by coach, 'the act of travelling to a particular (isolated) setting' (Dika, 1990, 58). In collection of each member at home, crucial character information could be delivered through their environment and dialogue with those around them. The bus driver central to the linear narrative timeline of the Guild's weekend trip, would be introduced here. The coach journey would also prove an excellent device for dialogue establishing the fractious politics and relationships, furthering character development and narrative. It was decided that the central tension should lie between the Chairwoman and her Social Secretary, heightened by the Social Secretary defending her best friend, the Chair's put-upon Secretary. This could be firmly established through dialogue on the coach journey:

'Understand that the foundation of all good dramatic writing is conflict...Conflict must be at the very hub of your story, because it is the core of strong action and strong character' (Field, 2005, 246).

Conflict would be reflected not just in the fight for survival between the women and the killer, but also in their own interpersonal relationships.

The **third outline narrative event** would be the women's arrival at the isolated lakeside resort, and their introduction to the owners who are hiding their own secrets. The bus driver's distracted and haphazard departure in a raging storm would lead to the dislodging of a power cable beside the lake. This would later be struck by lightning, falling dramatically into the water and awakening the lake's deadly, horror genre-intertextual inhabitant. This supernatural event would form the narrative's **fourth key outline event**, reflecting Kawin's theory that, 'though it may have a placid surface, the water radiates danger and concealed horror' (2012, 80).

While the women slumber in their cabins, something stirs in the murky reeds at the lake's bottom. A ravaged hand will emerge on the moonlit lakeside jetty, followed by the back profile of a hulking humanoid form. The script's primary threat is partially exposed herein, the horror narrative driver which will propel forth much of the following narrative action, instigating meaningful violence, mutilation and death. 'A horror story requires an unnatural threat, which is to say, in addition to being unnatural, a threat must be a threat,' argues Sipos (2014, 9). This unnatural, supernatural and violent threat clearly connotes horror genre iconography, its 'rebirth' echoing Wood's 'Return of the Repressed' (1978). The character also represents rich intertextuality in connoting Jason Vorhees' multiple re-emergences from Crystal Lake in the *Friday the 13th* series.

Carroll states that: 'Even after the existence of the monster is disclosed, the audience continues to crave further information about its nature, its identity, its origin, its purposes, and its astounding powers and properties' (1990, 182). The supernatural threat offers narrative intrigue alongside intertextual connotation. Carroll furthers: 'Their disclosure insofar as they are categorical violations will be attached to some sense of disturbance, distress or *disgust*' (ibid, 185). This form of disgust aligns to research-informed intent in praxis. The creature's underwater grave and rebirth further align to Carroll's theory of monsters who emerge from under water who, 'belong to environs outside of and unknown to ordinary social intercourse' (ibid, 33). Especially unknown to the social intercourse of the member of the traditional Townswomen's Guild – and especially disgusting therein.

The **fifth key outline narrative event** firmly establishes the creature's murderous intent, the iconographical threat which aligns character and narrative to the horror genre, while blending horror and comedy in building on the opening scene's gross-out representation of abjection, excess and absurdity. According to Carroll:

'By and large, horror films follow a three-part narrative pattern...Instability is introduced into an apparently stable situation; the threat is removed and stability restored...absolute closure...is no longer obligatory' (1990, 18).

Within this structure the creature's emergence from the lake connotes the transfer into the second act of the narrative pattern.

Freeland argues: 'Visions of monsters and their behaviour or scenes of exaggerated violence are by the numbers in horror: what the audience goes to the films for and expects' (2000, 256). The monster, having been partially glimpsed in an unnatural rebirth, must now graphically demonstrate its murderous intensity in order to connote threat, signalling the significant danger to the women and encoding the iconography and narrative patterns of the horror genre. As Field states:

'Danger must be present danger. Stakes must be stakes for the people you care about. And what might happen to them must be shown from the get-go, so we know the consequences of the imminent threat' (2005, 134).

Sipos furthers: 'Horror presupposes a threat, building tension with its promise that something hideous will occur, there is no escape' (2010, 5).

Blundering from the lake, the creature (face unseen) will be drawn to the lights and noise of the cabin owners' house. In order to reflect representation of the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1974 et al.) core of Part One findings, it was decided that the resort owners would harbour a hidden secret. Underneath their reserved middle-upper class exterior, and literally underneath their well-appointed home, would be an S&M dungeon. They are well-equipped swingers with a penchant for domination, rubber and leather. The first mass killing 'production number' (Thrower, 2008, 26) would be in an environment which offered multiple unique weapons and the potential for abject, excessive gross-out deaths. Absurdity could be connoted through the context of the horrific violence within the unusual location itself. Moreover the well-stocked bondage room would also offer easy access to the killer's crucial intertextual mask.

The contrast in tone from the fifth narrative event to the **sixth** needed to be significant, a reminder of the juxtaposition between the creature and its unprepared

victims. Night would literally turn to day and a reminder of the contrast of the weekend's more refined purpose. The women's craft activities would begin, and a demure guest would arrive to further that juxtaposition. Mary Berry (a character who will be discussed further in Drafting and would later need to be re-characterised), close friend of the Guild's Social Secretary, would arrive to deliver a cooking demonstration. However, ensuring that the supernatural threat was ever present, this would be interrupted by the now-masked creature who would kill Berry first and then one of the Townswomen.

This would be the women's first encounter with their foe, and Berry's death would be suitably excessive and abject in order to represent the level of threat posed to them reflecting Paul's, 'shrewd dramatic escalation, setting up an ambivalence of anxiety and expectation in the audience of how far things will go' (1994, 297). At this stage in development, this **seventh** outline event merely alluded to a series of 'gruesome, yet comedic deaths in line with (the women's characteristics)' (from *Appendix One*). This would prove a key (carnavalesque) point of development prior to the production of the more detailed treatment and would be central to ensuring the balance of horror and comedy – and later in ensuring that deaths connoted abjection and excess, while balancing absurdity.

Those deaths would crucially lead to the **eighth outline event**, which would be the decision of the surviving women to fight back with the materials they have available; a central opportunity for comedic development, reflecting Carroll's, 'discovery plot' structure of 'onset, discovery and confrontation' (1990, 108):

'The discoverers...must deal with the supernatural encroachments on their own...after the onset of the horrific being, the hero/ine must have no alternative, there's no time; there's no opportunity; there's no living humans; the locale is too isolated; and so on – except to confront the monster on his/her/their own' (ibid, 109).

It was crucial that, in alignment with slasher genre iconography, the killer should appear defeated, but rise again, to slay more of the surviving women, on more than one occasion. According to Carroll, slasher films, 'frequently follow the victorious confrontation scene with an optional coda which suggests that the monster has not been completely annihilated and is preparing for its next onset' (ibid, 103). Only the Chair, the Secretary and the Social Secretary should survive the central showdown

with the creature, in order to reveal the mysterious secondary plot in which they are all (in some cases unwittingly) engaged.

Key narrative points nine to eleven were all structured to the revelation of the secondary hidden plot regarding the Chairwoman's murderous history and intent. Action and dialogue to this point would mislead the audience into believing the feisty Social Secretary to be the final girl (Clover, 1992), 'the last female alive at the end of the slasher film, the one who outwits or outlasts the psychopath' (Selbo, 2015, 131). The revelation that the creature's mother was the Chairwoman, would be enhanced by her shocking, unexpected murder of the Social Secretary. In this key scene, the Chairwoman would take the opportunity to kill her Guild nemesis and blame her death on the creature's rampage. This should be a key point of pathos through investment in character – both for the audience and for her best friend, the Secretary (later named Assistant). Consideration was given at this early stage, that the women should secretly be in love, although this was later rejected as a revelation too far, in drawing attention from the crucial secondary narrative.

The narrative's second, more calculating killer, the Chairwoman should then reveal her story through flashback, to her sole-surviving Secretary. According to Carroll: 'The purpose of most flashbacks in popular narratives is to answer questions (or to offer information in the direction of an answer) about why characters are behaving as they do or how the situation got this way' (1990, 134). The flashback would depict the creature's cruel childhood and lakeside drowning by his mother, who would then also kill his father - and anyone who came too close to the truth. As the Chairwoman is about to kill her Secretary, an unlikely saviour will emerge in the form of the supernatural creature who crashes through the walls of the boathouse with a chainsaw and gruesomely kills his mother, despite her self-serving attempt at emotional re-connection. His revenge complete, he will then seek a return to his watery grave, reflecting Carroll's, 'return-from-the-dead of someone...who wishes something unacknowledged to be brought to life, or who seeks revenge or reparation' (ibid, 108). Herein the creature is again the embodiment of Wood's 'Return of the Repressed' (1978).

However, the script's real final girl (Clover, 1992) will emerge in the film's **twelfth key narrative point**: the Secretary, tired of being a victim, will brutally and finally slay the creature. Significantly in reflection of intertextuality and recognition of slasher convention, it will take more than one attempt. Moreover, the final attempt

will be abject, excessive and absurd as she runs over her foe multiple times in the very coach on which she arrived, thus sealing the film's circular narrative, and reflecting both horror and comedy through their established porous gross-out traits. Kawin highlights, 'immortal slashers...repeatedly spring back from mortal wounds' (2012, 142). From Michael Myers disappearing after suffering multiple gunshot wounds and a fall from a balcony in *Halloween* (1978), to Jason's re-emergence from the lake at the climax of *Friday the 13th* (1980), slashers do come back....many times. In ensuring a brutal and bloody death, an intertextual point of humour can be derived...the pulped, bloody remains of this slasher cannot come back. The exasperation, frustration and sheer strength taken to repeatedly and bloodily reverse over a half-dead creature, is also a signifier of the character's arc to heroine status, while offering humour through excess, leading to absurdity of abject violence.

The Secretary will drive off into the sunset, the film's true hero, leaving the bus driver alone at the lakeside 'surrounded by bloody carnage and bits of Townswomen' (from *Appendix One*). However, the script's appropriately numbered **thirteenth key narrative point**, will reinforce the film's place within the slasher genre: 'The final scream is something we take pleasure in because it brings the work alive again just at the moment it seemed to be ending' (Paul, 1994, 416). The repeated return of the killer is a key slasher trope (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2011, Conrich, 2010, Dika, 1990 et al.), yet this killer has been excessively, abjectly and absurdly slayed. However, this film has two killers, and in order to subvert genre expectations, it will be the undead Chairwoman, not the masked creature who emerges from the lake at the end of the film, offering that 'final scream' (ibid). The final scene will reveal a hand emerging from the lake, a pearl bracelet on its distorted wrist, deriving intertextuality from its reference to the fact that Mrs Vorhees is the real killer in *Friday the 13th* and inverting the emergence of her son from the lake at the end of the film. Intertextuality also connotes the final scene of *Carrie* (1976), another film in which the actions of the mother turn murderous the child. Adhering to the 'final scream' (Paul, 1994, 16) narrative provides a clear indication that the script may offer one character positive narrative closure but ends with adherence to horror narrative tropes in the genre blend.

Treatment

Having mapped the script's outline, it was now essential to write the more detailed treatment or, 'present tense prose version of the intended screen narrative' (Parker,

1999, 42). According to Parker the treatment, 'concentrates on the main narrative story, the central protagonist/s and antagonist/s, their motivations, and essential active questions' (ibid). The document should contain: 'A clear reason or set of reasons as to why central characters are engaging: this could be their situation, classically an undeserved misfortune' (ibid). The treatment would expand on the research-informed outline, and crucially define key aspects of characterisation, alongside expanding on the gross-out 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26) which would place the script in the horror comedy genre through the representation of abjection, excess and absurdity. The full treatment document can be found in the Appendices as **Part Three Appendix 2 Treatment**.

In development of the treatment it became obvious that the opening scene should represent a statement of intent in relation to representations of the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1974 et al.). Viewing a large number of horror (comedy) films indicated that a core cohesive narrative event is an opening scene which indicates threat, offers intrigue, and often features a significant act of graphic violence. Audiences are being prepared for what is to come in the subsequent eighty to ninety minutes, while also beginning to question what the narrative drivers might be. 'The slasher film classically begins with the first 'slash' (the opening victim) being terrified and defiled', argues Selbo (2015, 143). In *Dead Snow*, for example, a skier is chased through a snowy twilight landscape by a number of grunting assailants (encoded as monstrous but not clearly visible thereby provoking intrigue). The victim is eventually caught and evisceration begins...all to the tune of Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, which contrasts with the violent acts onscreen, encoding comedy alongside horror.

The initial concept of the opening flashback scene of a boy drowning was overthrown in favour of a more direct opportunity for excessive violence, and humour derivation through the juxtaposition of the genteel versus the abject, provoking absurdity. This would be the script's first gross-out set piece (Snyder, 2005), its first graphic depiction of violence which would pre-encode the 'ever-increasing escalation' (Kawin, 2012, 17) to follow in line with audience's expectations of horror comedy:

'Shock cycles are important in understanding the pace of violence in the genre....the dynamics of the confrontations that form the backbone of the horror

movie's rampage phase are invariably based on the threat and application of violence' (ibid, 110).

The treatment, and script, would open with an unseen visitor touring a refined stately home/castle, accompanied by a dull, pompous tour guide. As the tour reaches its crescendo on the ramparts the guide would be violently pushed from the roof and down onto one of the building's vicious spires (representing intertextuality to *The Omen*, Richard Donner, 1976). As the historian graphically and bloodily slides down the spire, his toupee hanging from a fragile piece of tape, he will raise a shaking, gore-stained finger, and spit a bloody 'you!' at the unseen assailant. This scene initiates intrigue, violence and humour, while also offering a potential misdirection in terms of a single-killer narrative. In this instance a monster is lurking, but which one? According to Carroll: 'Suspense can be generated in horror stories at virtually every level of narrative development, from that of incident and episode to the overarching plot structure' (1990,134). Suspense, threat, violence and gore, alongside the crucial factors of abjection excess and absurdity, would all be present from the outset.

The next key address in narrative expansion of the treatment, was the introduction of the central protagonists, and it was between outline and treatment that each character was named. Marjorie would be the Chairwoman, Beryl her opposing Social Secretary, and Gladys her put-upon Assistant (amended from Secretary for its implication of subservience). Further address to characterisation will be given in the next chapter, but notable in the treatment, is extended detail on character development as the women are collected by coach at each of their homes. For example, 'Chair's Assistant Gladys has to juggle packing with feeding her pets and her husband, while removing the two small dogs which have secreted themselves in her travel bag' (from *Appendix 2*). Expansion was also given to the bus journey and the bus driver, Barry, who represents the script's circular narrative goal in the aim of the women to survive until Sunday night and their journey home.

The need for a high 'body count' (Conrich, 2010) led to the decision that ten women should board the bus. More detail was rounded of the young-at-heart and flirtatious June, and the Guild's oldest (and sweetest) member, the wheelchair-bound Daphne. It would be Daphne, to Marjorie's disgust, who would lead the ladies in a rousing rendition of 'I've got a luvly bunch of coconuts' as the bus disappeared down the winding country roads. As Sipos states:

'A horror story requires sympathetic and vulnerable potential victims. For a threat to threaten, audiences must sense that sympathetic characters...are at a genuine risk of serious harm' (2010, 7).

Treatment expansion then focused on the script's consecutive core 'production number' (Thrower, 2008, 26) and the characters of Su and Paul, the resort's middle-class owners, who had bought the cabin site cheaply due to contamination. Their deaths, and the deaths of the S&M swingers joining them, would form the script's first multiple death gross-out 'set piece' (Snyder, 2005, 80) and offer clear demonstration of the research-informed connotation of the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1974 et al.). Indeed, Hantke's:

'...explicitly visible, filmic representations of bloodshed or its direct result. The onscreen defacement or mutilation of - and/or penetration of objects into - a body, as well as the exposure of blood, sinew, organs and/or viscera resulting from such actions' (2010, 62).

Their blood and gore-drenched slaughter would culminate in the violent penetration of the house's only mobile phone into Paul's stomach and anal cavity, eviscerating his internal organs. This would not only represent graphic abjection, excess and absurdity, but also pre-empt one of the script's core gross-out scenes in which the horrified women would have to try to retrieve it from the visceral mess: direct representation of the carnivalesque grotesque and its obsession with the lower bodily stratum (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1974 et al.).

The other guests in the dungeon would also be graphically killed with the complex - and therefore potentially violently inventive - equipment that they have been enjoying. 'The more graphic a violent act, the more detailed its depiction and the greater its stylistic amplitude becomes,' argues Prince (2003, 35). Kawin states: 'An R rating is pretty much a prerequisite of gross-out, both for comedy and horror, in both films there seems to have been something of an escalation' (2012, 43). This scene should be one of the film's most excessive and memorable, a central gross-out 'production number' (Thrower, 2008, 26) of abjection and absurdity. It should also crucially climax with the creature finding the rubber S&M mask which will align the character to horror genre iconography, provoke mystery about what lies beneath, and provide a visually threatening image:

'The audience is left, for most of the time, to imagine his ugliness behind the mask, which of course makes him more effectively ugly, but the audience also fears him because of the mask. The mask makes him a faceless and unplaceable figure without the varying emotions that a face of flesh and blood would reveal' (Kawin, 2012, 132).

To further the carnivalesque frenzy (Paul, 1994) of violent bloodshed, the deaths of each of the Townswomen were expanded in the treatment – those core 'numbers in musicals' (Freeland, 2005, 55). Kawin, writing on Hitchcock's *The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963) argues that:

'...the film achieves a sense of forward momentum by increasing the frequency and size of the attacks and in the process, creating a dramatic expectation that each attack must in some way top the preceding one. The result is a dramatic structure largely like the structure of broad comedy with its progressive building up of a gag always seeking its own topper' (2012, 416).

The Townswomen's murders would accumulate and escalate the model of abjection, excess and absurdity (to varying degrees) portrayed in the dungeon massacre. A two-sided Mary Berry (refined in public, alcoholic chain smoker with her friend Beryl), would be the trigger murder leading to the massacre of the majority of the women. As Gelder posits: 'It is the eruption of abnormality into a mundane setting that has framed the genre's most common means of narratively exploiting its physical environment' (2000, 123). Berry's face will be blended with her own-brand blender during the cooking demonstration. Townswoman Ethel (later renamed Sophia and replaced in death by Dorothy) will also be caught and have the contents of Berry's piping tube thrust down her throat, suffocating her. The horrified, fleeing women will take refuge in Su and Paul's house. Daphne, however, has stayed behind in her cabin, having had 'one of her turns'. The eye-watering volume of Barry Manilow from her portable cassette player (reflecting musical intertextuality with sci-fi horror comedy *Mars Attacks* (Tim Burton, 1996)) will draw the creature who suffocates her with the nearest weapon to hand, her own spare bloomers.

To split the larger group and offer two sites for graphic production numbers (Thrower, 2008), Beryl will form an ill-fated rescue party for Daphne, causing tension with Marjorie who wants to stay put. Marjorie, June and two other women remaining at the house will hear the distant sound of a telephone ring, leading them to uncover

the grotesque carnivalesque (Danow, 1995, Bakhtin, 1984) scenes of carnage in the secret dungeon. This narrative event will in turn lead to the core gross-out scene in which they attempt to remove the phone from Paul's disgusting remains, using the only tools to hand, 'a pair of tongs and a fish slice' (from *Appendix 2*). This should reflect Thomson's theory that: 'Something which is very strange and perhaps ludicrous as well, is made so exceedingly abnormal that our laughter at the ludicrous and eccentric is intruded on by feelings of horror and disgust' (1972, 33). This scene with its focus on the 'lower bodily stratum' (Brottman, 2004, Danow, 1995, Bakhtin, 1984), then again forms the very core of the film's celebration of the carnivalesque grotesque which binds horror and comedy in the tension of the grotesque (ibid).

Meanwhile, in mapping the murders of the women, to ensure that, 'shock is rhythmically induced' (Carroll, 1990, 36), and that the body pile mounts as the 'set pieces' (Snyder, 2005, 80) continue to escalate, the women in the rescue party must fatally encounter the creature. In the site's dimly lit barn, the women will be cornered by their supernatural foe. The masked creature will snip Guild member Blanche's head off in one masterful thrust of an oversized pair of shears (an intertextual reference to *The Burning*, 1981). Her Guild colleague Barbara will be strimmed to death, her eviscerated flesh flying across the barn and blocking the strimmer which enables Gladys and Beryl to escape, but not before Beryl manages to land a knitting needle in the creature's eye.

Kawin argues on 'tension' on a 'macro and microscopic level' that there is firstly an, 'overall rise in tension throughout the whole narrative, ending in the movie's final resolution' (2012, 108). He furthers: 'This pattern is composed of a series of shorted sequences of events each following the suspense/shock-tension resolution pattern...each phase pushes us a little more: each shock gives another turn of the screw' (ibid). Each gross-out murder set piece, not only enables the practical application of abjection, excess and absurdity, but it also cranks the tension, raises the stakes and the threat level of the assailant, and strengthens the connotation of horror.

In expansion of treatment, the narrative, having delivered more abject, excessive and absurd murders, should then reunite the surviving women at the 'big house'. Here they will have to try to survive the night and inter-member tensions in the claustrophobic and already tense situation. Moreover, the undefeatable creature will break into the safe haven with ease, to take another victim. Having eerily surveyed

the slumbering lookouts Beryl and Gladys (in intertextual reference to *The Strangers* (Bryan Bertino, 2008)), the creature will come into direct conflict with June and Marjorie who have taken the bedrooms on the top floor. This narrative event builds on the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1974 et al.) connotations which are established in the dungeon massacre. Under attack, the women will drag a chest of drawers to block the door, out of which a large number of excessively large and absurd sex toys fall. The creature will make short work of the blockade and approach them with the only lethal weapon to hand, a sharp stiletto heel. With only oversized dildos in their hands to defend them, reflecting excess and absurdity, and the central character subversion of societally projected gentility of Townswomen versus abjection, the women are trapped.

As the creature lashes out at Marjorie, she will pull June in front of her and her throat will be graphically split from ear to ear. The creature stopping, confused by a moment of what we will discover is recognition, gives Marjorie the opportunity to push the drawers on top of him and flee. Clues are herein directly placed as to a relationship between the creature and Marjorie. 'In a sense a screenplay is a series of surprises. We detonate these as we go along,' states Goldman (1996, 116). The visual and narrative connotation is an implicit call-back to the film's opening scene and Marjorie's true character. It is intended to instil both doubt and intrigue as the narrative builds to the revelation of the secondary sub-plot.

To pre-empt the scene in which the women must decide to fight back with whatever makeshift weapons are available, the women need to recognise the potential to counter-attack at this narrative juncture. Beryl, Gladys and Rose will hide in the kitchen cupboard, but are exposed as Marjorie smashes the wooden barricade on the kitchen door, escaping just as the creature enters. Freeland argues: 'For real genre (or sub-genre) fans, the pleasures of graphic visual spectacles are associated with delight in a certain sort of cinematic creativity' (2000, 256). A number of the film's excessive, abject and absurd murder scenes seek such creativity in their violent and graphic representations. Research into the S&M community (which also informed rubber as the killer's mask material), revealed the practice of asphyxiation. Gladys, in one of her first acts of real defiance building her character arc, will thrust the pipe of a Hoover into the zip of the creature's mask, ripping it and sucking the air from within the mask and crushing its face.

The choice of the hoover as weapon was selected in the treatment to align to the more mundane aspects of the women's domestic lives, and the paradox, moreover carnivalesque grotesque absurdity (Bakhtin, 1984), of the situation in which they now find themselves. This reflects Miller & Van Riper's theory that:

'The cumulative effect is to dissolve normalcy into chaos, overturn the rhythms of characters' everyday lives and undermine their (and audience's) expectations about the bonds that join causes and effect. A world in which seemingly anything can happen at any moment' (2016, xv).

The juxtaposition is also a key connotation of humour concurrent to violently horrific representation. This minor victory, moreover, serves as catalyst to the 'tooling up' scene in which the women decide they must defend themselves, for, although the creature has been wounded, genre convention states that it should appear virtually indestructible. 'Much of the energy of a horror fiction will be devoted to establishing the improbability of success and the downright chanciness of any attempt to confront the monster,' argues Carroll (1990, 141).

To further the absurd juxtaposition of the creature and its demure foes, the women's unusual counter-attack weapons themselves were expanded upon in the treatment. They would include:

'Knitting needles, crochet hooks, baking equipment (hot jam is put on the stove, and Beryl teaches the women to make flower bombs, learnt in her activist days), flower arranging tools, and Beryl's trusty pen knife. They will briefly consider using coat hangers, but Beryl declares them 'shit' (in reference to *Halloween*)' (extract from *Appendix 2*).

The absurdity of the juxtaposition of the uses of these implements reinforces the humour of the grotesque carnivalesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984) and the imbalance of the opponents.

In that central battle between the supernatural slasher and the ill-equipped women, two more of the women die; one in a 'friendly fire' incident when the pot of jam explodes on her, melting her face; and the other at the hands of the creature. Only the film's central trio, Gladys, Beryl and Marjorie will survive, barricaded into the boat house on the other side of the lake. This will be the site for the third act

revelation of the hidden plot, and much of the film's exposition, 'the back story or details of the plot that must be told to the audience in order for them to understand what happens next' (Field, 2005, 121). With nothing left to lose, Beryl will directly confront Marjorie about what she had uncovered through the local history society. In an abrupt, and shocking act of violence, Marjorie will slay Beryl with her own pen knife, slashing her throat bloodily, echoing her own son's murder of June, which she provoked. Therein, the secondary killer is finally exposed.

Marjorie revealing the truth to a distressed and solitary Gladys in recompense for having to kill her, closes the circular narrative of the opening scenes, resolving the mystery. Yet this structure also offers elements to sustain interest to the close of the script through Parker's, 'development part of the narrative, where you present a new set of active questions which build on the first set and present the possibility of a different outcome' (1999, 28). Expansion in treatment here required detail of the creature's death at his mother's hands. At this significant narrative juncture, the boy would be given a name, Peter. Naming the creature humanises him, as does the flashback sequence in which it would be revealed that he was born with severe physical and mental disabilities and was kept locked in the basement by his cruel mother. The connotation should be that the real villain role resides with Marjorie. Shaviro posits: 'We are complicitous with the monster precisely to the extent...that the latter does not operate from a position of power but is in its own right victimised and driven by a passion compulsion' (1989, 60).

It will be revealed that Peter died when his mother and her lover watched him drown in the same lake adjacent to which the action takes place, in a pre-planned 'accidental' murder. Marjorie went on to kill her lover, burn the lakeside cabin, contaminate the lake with formaldehyde, and return home to kill her husband, the only other person who knew of Peter's existence. She had returned to the scene of the crime with her Guild companions to ensure that Beryl met a similar 'accidental' death. Moreover, it was she who had pushed the historian onto the castle's spire in the opening scene, as he had helped Beryl in her quest to find the truth about Marjorie. Therein, the plot question posed in the opening scene, is answered through flashback, and the mystery resolved: Marjorie is the film's secondary (and opening scene) killer.

Envisaging Marjorie's death in creation of treatment offered much pleasure in 'creativity' (Freeland, 2000, 256) of violence and destruction of true evil, aligned to

audience expectation and pleasure. The script's true monster is gruesomely squeezed to death (in paradox with the lack of affection the boy received when living) by her own undead son:

'Peter's grip tightens and the embrace becomes uncomfortable. As Marjorie grasps for breath, her bones begin to crunch and blood runs from her eyes and nose. Peter has literally squeezed her to death, broken her to pieces – a paradox given the lack of affection Peter received in his tragic lifetime. He kicks her broken and lifeless body into the lake' (extract from *Appendix 2*).

His revenge narrative cycle complete, Peter can then seek to return to his watery resting place. However the central character of Gladys has yet to fulfil her character arc. Enraged, she will chase and drive through him with the chainsaw, screaming and brandishing it aloft (in intertextual reference to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, 1978) after he crashes to the ground. Of course, however, this will be a mere temporary victory as, aligned to genre narrative coding, the killer will rise again. And, although coach driver Barry will return, he will fail to embody heroic potential as that role lies firmly with Gladys in fulfilment of her arc. Pushing a returning Barry aside, our final girl (Clover, 1992) will leave Peter a bloody pulp after she reverses over him not one, but three abject, excessive and absurd (just to be sure) times. The excessive gross-out violence of Peter's death should derive humour through the intertextual fulfilment of a character truly destroying the supernatural slasher and subverting previous ill-judged character actions within horror narrative.

The sheer violence of the bloody wheels crushing the killer three times over, should also satisfy the key criteria of abjection and absurdity (derived through excess). Yet this apparent closure in the death of the creature, should be misleading, as this narrative contains two killers:

'The resistance to closure in these films keeps anarchy in a suspended state halfway between wish fulfilment and nightmare. If the comedies and horror films should both conflate humour and terror, pleasure and anxiety, it is to produce an art of ambivalence, and with it, the promise of ceaseless festivity since ambivalence, by moving in two directions at once, always denies finality' (Paul, 1994, 419).

The expansion of the treatment, consciously positioned the script to invite: 'A proper ending for a film...one in which an expectation is fulfilled for the audience' (Goldman,

1996, 118). The narrative destroys one supernatural, apparently indestructible threat, but still teases the rebirth of another, with the intent to please genre fans on dual levels. The treatment prose closes with the description of a ravaged hand emerging from the lake. As moonlight shines from the pearls on its gruesome, glistening wrist, it becomes apparent that the narrative has not yet ended, and that it is Marjorie who is making her undead return. The audience is left with the satisfaction of the bloody death of one supernatural monster, and the open ending of the re-emergence of another, aligned to the slasher genre narrative pattern. As Brophy argues:

'Not only do films tend to be open-ended in order to allow for the possibility of countless sequels, but they also offer the delight in thwarting the audience's expectations of closure...the monsters and slashers rise again each time they are presumed dead' (in Gelder, 2000, 289).

Final expansion in creation of the treatment addressed the intended high level of intertextuality in *Knitters!* to connote genre, build and fulfil expectation, target a knowing genre audience, and also fulfil Hills 'pleasures' (2005) of genre viewership within that audience. Therein:

'The screenwriter, in creating the mental space of the horror genre for the audience, may employ schematic knowledge (framing) choices by setting up the genre...The schematic choices used in framing of classic horror films are familiar, expected and desired by the audience' (Selbo, 2014, 143).

The treatment closes with a full list of the intertextual references to be included in the script. This was intended to fulfil audience expectation based on genre theory (Lacey, 2000, Ryall, 1975, Chandler, 1997 et. al.), align the script to the horror (comedy) genre, and also enable humour and 'sub cultural capital' (Hills, 2005, Hunter in Jenkins, 2018) through intertextual recognition. At this stage of script preparation, the intended references were (from *Appendix 2 Treatment*):

- *'Friday the 13th series*– location lakeside; murderous mother; masked, hulking killer son; farm tool deaths; killers emerging from lakes & twist ending re. mother being the real (supernatural) killer (inverted) NB. The emergence of the hand in the final scene should echo *Carrie*

- *Halloween* – masked, hulking killer; killer's resurrection (the lying to sitting gesture should echo that of Myers in *Halloween*); knitting needle & coat hanger reference (which also nods to *Birdemic*)
- *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* – Gladys' chainsaw wielding 'dance' after she has defeated Peter should mirror that of Leatherface
- *Alien(s)* – strong female heroes; 'get off her you bitch' line; Daphne's suffocation with her control underwear should be reminiscent of the face hugger attack; tagline '*In the Lake District no-one can hear you scream!*'
- *The Omen* – death by church spire (echoing that of Troughton) – this film is also about a murderous son
- *Mars Attacks* – the killing to the strains of Manilow are a nod to the murderous easy listening record which defeats the aliens in *Mars Attacks*
- *Shaun of the Dead* – the hankie up the sleeve offered to the massacred women in the barn (references Shaun's mother); '*you've got jam on you*' is a direct reference to '*you've got red on you*'
- *The Burning* – the killer should hold the shears above his head in tribute to this film's poster, before beheading the Townswoman in one snip
- *The Strangers* – the kitchen scene in which the killer appears in the corner of the viewer's eye watching Beryl and Gladys sleeping, should echo *The Strangers* in which we realise the killer is stood in the doorway behind the characters, creating an insidious atmosphere.
- *Critters!* The title is a direct reference to this B movie monster film
- *Dead & Buried* – the name of the town of Potter's Bluff is taken from this comedy horror classic.'

Further references were added and some deleted in the production of the final script, but many remained to the completed document to connote intertextual genre placement and enable 'symbolic capital' through 'the pleasures of recognition' in 'cultural reproduction' (Hills, 2005, 170). Indeed, "the pleasures of horror can be as much about recognising generic histories and lineages as about 'being scared'" (ibid, 7).

Chapter Two: Characters

'Audiences will retune over and over to experience a film in their favourite genre. Now it's time to make the film unique, to show the screenwriter's personal artistry. The chosen elements to enhance each particular film are unique characters, locations, dilemmas and conflicts...to elucidate the story and make the narrative seem fresh and new' (Selbo, 2015, 5).

Early approaches in research and preparation enabled a praxis foundation which expanded a structured list of narrative actions in the script's outline and treatment. It was now essential to explore and delineate the characters who would fulfil them:

'Character is the essential foundation of your screenplay. The cornerstone. It is the heart and soul and nervous system of your screenplay. Before you can put one word down on paper, you must know your characters' (Field, 2005, 46).

In accordance with Field's instruction, a rigorous approach was taken to characterisation, beginning with early observation of anecdotes around the activities, politics and relationships of a real-life Townswomen's Guild, based on family member experience. These informal observations would educate a number of early considerations from concept to characterisation. Firstly, of the women as an unconventional and genre subversive foe for the supernatural villain. Secondly, the overt interest and engagement in craft activities including knitting, flower arranging, baking and craft demonstrations, informed both the weekend's purpose and potential weaponry. And thirdly, the politics and tensions within the Guild membership could be used to create drama, humour and pathos and strengthen narrative. Observation indicated that the power dynamics of the structured organisation with its roles and hierarchies, was a source of conflict, which could be used to build the character's motivations, actions and exchanges, enriching the characterisation delivered through the central women versus supernatural killer conflict. According to Field: 'Without conflict there is no action' (2005, 41). Consideration of anecdotal experience of a real-life institution provided the further form of the research which Field identifies as key to the writing of an engaging and informed script (*ibid*).

Further, Selbo instructs: 'Create a significant set of characters...to interact with' (2015, 87) This reflects the large number of characters required in the slasher genre

in order to fulfil Conrich's 'systematic series of murders' (2010, 177). With such requirements in mind, the first draft character list identified the following players:

Masked killer

Townswomen:

Chair of the Townswomen's Guild

Chair's assistant

Rebellious TG member

Doddering TG member

Glamorous TG member

Power-struggle TG member

'Everywoman' TG member

Three other supporting TG members (cannon fodder!)

Coach driver

Owners of cabins (live at 'big house')

Guests of cabin owners

History expert

Local youths – into smoking, sex & drugs (in a twist they survive – parodies slasher conventions around non-virginal behaviours)

Possible Other Characters

Families of Guild members

Other holidaying tourists

Celeb invited to give guest talk i.e. Mary Berry (death by cake!)

Maintenance person.

In this first draft the central characters of the Townswomen were broadly identified by their key characteristic/relationship to the other women. The 'power struggle' characterisation would be embedded within Beryl's role as the 'rebellious' member, as her character was developed. Three women were considered to be included as 'cannon fodder' indicating that they would not be central characters but would be key

to deliver the required body count (Conrich, 2010). Interesting is that early consideration was given to the inclusion of local youths who engaged in drinking, drug-taking and sexual activity, all actions which would traditionally result in death in classic slasher genre tropes (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2011, Dika, 1990 et al.). Narrative subversion would enable their survival while the Townswomen were killed, contrary to Kerswell's observation that: 'High schools and summer camps ran with teenage blood' (2011, 17).

These younger characters, along with the early-considered characters of other holidaying tourists and a maintenance person, were all removed due to the need for the women to be isolated from the outside world, trapped without assistance. Some Guild family members did ultimately appear in the opening scenes inside the women's homes to enable character context and connotation, and further in flashback sequences. And the 'Mary Berry' character would become central to the escalation of the narrative in relation to the beginning of the bloody murders of the Townswomen. Moreover, her characterisation as a drunk, weed-smoking louche in private, would also further absurdity in paradox to her demurer public persona. (The inevitable, potentially legally required changes to this character, will be addressed in discussion of Drafting.)

Researched approaches to script preparation indicated the significance of developing an understanding of each of the key characters better through a Character Analysis document. According to Field, it is essential to, 'know your character' (2005, 58). Fahy argues that: 'First you've got to know them as normal people: once you recognise them and they feel like the people next door, you totally buy it when they are being attacked by vampires' (2015, 66). Supervisor guidance suggested that this analysis could be bolstered by creating Character Biographies and Interviews with each key character, to capture their tone of voice. 'In order to really solve the problem of character, it's essential to go into your characters and build the fabric and foundations of their lives, then add ingredients that will heighten and expand the portrait of who they are', argues Field (2005, 63). He adds: 'Characterisation is expressed in the way people live, the cars they drive, the pictures they hang on their wall...expressed in their taste, how they look at the world, what they wear, what cars they drive' (ibid, 55).

The early plot device in the collection of each woman at her home, would enable a valuable insight into the day-to-day lives, homes, relationships and personalities of

the central protagonists. However, 'the level of development depends on the amount of narrative time you intend to give them' (Selbo, 2015, 85). The Character Analysis document focused in depth on Marjorie, Gladys, Beryl and Peter (the masked killer), while offering reduced consideration of the supporting characters aligned to their screen-time/significance to narrative (ibid). Biographies and Interviews were conducted for/with each of these four key characters. The full Character Analysis document, Key Character Biographies and Interviews can be found in the Appendices (***Part Three Script Appendices 3-11, Character Analysis, Beryl Biography & Interview, Gladys Biography & Interview, Marjorie Biography & Interview, & Peter Biography & Interview***).

It is significant to note that explicit intent from the outset was to overbalance the script with representation of female characters, moreover, older female characters, whose representation is often lacking in (horror) cinema. These women should be the heroes, villains, and all in between, of the piece: they should be the most visible characters onscreen. And while female representation should absolutely include 'the strong female lead' or final girl (Clover, 1992), it should also offer a balance of representation from the spectrum of human behaviour in order to be worthwhile and representative. As horror writer/director Amelia Moses (*Bleed With Me*, 2020) states:

'I think that expression ('strong female lead') has lost some of its meaning and I worry that it creates a false sense of female representation...I think there's a fear that a female lead has to represent all women which is literally impossible, and in turn there's a fear of creating female characters who are 'unlikeable'. But we would never discuss male characters that way' (Abertoir, 2020).

Knitters!' women should be at the forefront of the script – whether hero or villain. In prioritising female representation, the script would further purposefully expand subversion of the traditionally male saviour role in the form of coach driver Barry, to be explored further in the next chapter.

Detailed character analysis was required to develop key information on *Knitters!*' protagonists, such as defining incidents in the character's history, living and relationship situations, reasons for joining the Guild (for the Townswomen), personality, interests, aspects of their appearance and crucially the characters' relationship to the other members. The Interviews would form an early attempt to capture the characters' individual voices, to establish their thought processes which

would inform how they acted. 'You must create a believable character who is well-motivated in what they do,' states Parker (1999, 83), which is contingent on understanding enough about that character, their personality, history and relationships. Field identifies the significance of the 'professional', 'personal' and 'private' aspects of characters, and distinguishes between the 'interior' and 'exterior' aspects of each character:

'Separate the components of his/her life into two basic categories: interior and exterior. The interior life takes place from birth up until the time your story begins. It is a process that forms character. The exterior life of your character takes place from the moment your film begins to the conclusion of the story. It is a process that reveals character' (2005, 48).

This inner/exterior distinction is supported by Parker who argues:

'All characters in any dramatic form have three essential aspects to them. These are: Outer presence...Inner presence...and Context...These aspects can be developed from scratch to form the basis of a character profile...to provide a handle on the character and highlight any major areas for research or potential story developments' (1999, 81).

In creation of the Character Analysis, all key characters were embodied through their interior & exterior character traits, which would be built upon during script writing in defining the actions of the characters. The document was also written to include 'Major Plot Point/Scene Reflecting Character Traits'. 'Context' (ibid) was sought through definition of the inter-member relationships and the characters' personalities which were designed to indicate how they might react in the extraordinary situation they would face:

'The aim of this aspect of the profile is to establish the world the character lives in. This forms not only the basis for supporting characters, but also plot and specifically motivational options' (ibid, 83).

Analysis began with the film's 'fake' final girl, and 'true' final girl (Clover, 1992), Beryl and Gladys. In order to both incorporate genre convention, yet subvert audience expectation, and provide an intended third act shock, the script would kill the connoted final girl, replacing her with another and fulfilling that character's arc.

According to Field, one of the denotations of a 'good character' is that, 'they go through some kind of change or transformation' (2005, 54), and while many characters would transform in different ways, Gladys' arc would be one of the most significant and potentially fulfilling for the audience.

Final girl 'decoy' **Beryl**, was characterised from the outset and in both drafts of the Character Analysis, as the 'rebellious' Townswoman. She would be key to delivering the intra-Guild sub-conflict, underpinning the central conflict between the women and the killer, and also pro-actively leading the women in their survival attempts. Dika states: 'The heroine of these films is usually presented as a strong, practical character with a variety of well-developed skills' (1990, 55). Beryl, would be a feminist, activist, Green Party-voting Greenham Common survivor who joined the Guild to 'put a rocket up them!' She lives alone with her numerous cats but has had multiple lovers of mixed genders on her travels across the globe as a charity worker. She loathes Marjorie for her pomposity and grandiosity, and her mistreatment of Gladys, who Beryl loves dearly, and, if she's honest, more than platonically. Initially fiercer, Beryl did soften from her early character analysis to the version of Beryl in the script.

Abridged from *Appendix Three Character Analysis*:

'INWARD CHARACTER: Beryl is ferocious in her views and pro-active in her campaigning/engagement with charitable and left-wing causes. She fiercely believes in democracy and liberalism and is fiercely anti-capitalist. However, deep down Beryl is a lot softer than many people realise...

OUTWARD CHARACTER:...She is fierce in her opinions...rebellious and rarely suffers fools....She can be absent-minded – a mixture of old age, and a lifelong pot habit, and has a bohemian/eccentric appearance...Marjorie finds this repellent for a lady of the TG...

MAJOR PLOT POINT/SCENE REFLECTING CHARACTER TRAITS: Beryl will be the false final girl...She believes that Marjorie may have had a son who appears to have simply disappeared...Beryl is building up to confronting Marjorie about what she has discovered, when she is sharply and brutally killed by Marjorie...'

Gladys' description stands in some contrast to the feisty, fearless Beryl, aligned to the misdirection in relation to her final girl role (Clover, 1992). It was also crucial that

Gladys be written as a likeable character in order to deliver the fulfilment of her character arc from downtrodden to bold, heroic and self-saving:

'Gladys is 5"2 in her stockings feet...and a little overweight. She has a warm countenance, dyed blonde (Clairol Nice'N'Easy) bobbed hair, and favours brightly coloured shirts/sweatshirts matched with knee length skirts. She loves her family dearly and has dedicated much of her life to their happiness. She is overly kind due to her lack of self-confidence and fear of conflict. She is an animal lover and supports numerous local animal charities: she often sports sweatshirts supporting the local dog/cat adoption home...' (abridged extract from *Appendix Three*).

While the characters' inward and outward character traits, experiences and personalities, needed to be rounded, it was also useful to delineate some aspects of their appearances. Although it should be noted that the character's race is never identified in order to promote the potential for colour blind casting.

Gladys' overarching description is as the film's 'real' heroine and the only surviving member of the Guild, having fulfilled her character arc which began as 'Marjorie's put-upon Assistant'. Her rounding of character through her relationships, indicates Gladys has been married to Derek for 58 years and has three daughters and four grandchildren. She is very kind-hearted, too kind-hearted in many ways, and is an animal lover who owns a number of dogs. She worked briefly as a secretary in her youth but has mainly spent her life caring for her family and others. These characteristics are crucial in portraying her arc from 'put-upon' and fearful of conflict to her own detriment, to the Guild's sole survivor and defeater of the killer. She loves her husband but has never been in love with him, and, again at this point in script development, she would have been unsure about her feelings for Beryl. Key to the script's narrative is her relationship with Marjorie, who is manipulative and derogatory towards Gladys, which she absorbs due to her fear of causing upset. This character trait forms a central point of antagonism between Beryl and Marjorie, from which much of the script's secondary conflict derives.

Gladys' inner and outer characteristics and major plot point development are reflected in this extract (abridged from *Appendix Three*):

'INWARD CHARACTER: Gladys is incredibly under-confident...She is pushed by others into situations that she does not always feel comfortable with, but goes along with them as she doesn't want to 'rock the boat' or upset others...deep down Gladys knows that she cannot allow this to continue and that she deserves better & should stand up for herself more...

OUTWARD CHARACTER: Gladys is the heart of the Guild – she is kind and caring and can be relied on to get anything done (even at her own personal cost). She is clearly pushed around by Marjorie and many of the women feel she should stand up to her more. Everyone likes Glad as she is warm and helpful.

MAJOR PLOT POINT/SCENE REFLECTING CHARACTER TRAITS: Gladys will be the final girl & defeat the killer...Beryl's' death at Marjorie's hands will be the motivator Gladys needs to fight both her own subservience and lack of self-confidence, and the masked killer...'

Field argues: 'It's not very often that characters will be the same at the beginning of a story as they are at the end; their thoughts, their feelings will probably change during the emotional through-line of the action' (2005, 51). The audience should side with Gladys, warm to her, and will her character arc, urging her empowerment. Of course, aligned to slasher genre iconography, her empowerment should come in a flurry of the killer's blood and viscera.

Marjorie and Peter were the further key characters with an aligned relationship for analysis and expansion. Peter, especially, would need development, as his character arc encompasses both the iconographic faceless, relentless villain, and abused victim. Marjorie, too, would undergo a major arc and character revelation in her unveiling as cold-blooded killer and mother of the supernatural villain, embedding the script's secondary narrative. This extract from *Appendix 8 Marjorie's Biography* reveals something of that juxtaposition between **Marjorie's** Guild persona, and her real, hidden personality:

Education: St Mary's School, Ascot (boarder) – sent away at an early age

Work History: Never worked (wealthy husband), now a magistrate

Skills: Ordering others, hiding murders, lying, flower arranging

Phobias/fears: Vulgarity, filth, liberals!

Bad habits/vices: Murder.'

Marjorie embodies two overarching roles within the narrative: she is the pompous chair of the Guild and the murderous mother of the masked killer. She was married to her Executive Accountant husband until she had to kill him and frame his murder on a non-existent burglar. Her husband was the only other who knew about her physically and mentally disadvantaged son who she kept hidden in the basement beneath their immaculate four-bed detached country pile (to be revealed in flashback in the script's third act). Initially it was intended that she should have been having an affair and use that affair to lure her son to the log cabin resort where she would watch her son drown in the lake. However, the affair became uncharacteristic as her character developed (her vice should be murder), and she would eventually instigate Peter's intentional drowning alone.

More of Marjorie's murderous impulses can be found in this extract from *Appendix Three*, reflecting the paradox of her internal and external characteristics, enabling the dual narrative thread which underlies the script:

'She has no children (officially), pets (which she will not tolerate in the immaculately kept house) or living family...Her acts of terrorism against her neighbours are significantly worse than she will admit...she killed a neighbour's pet dog for defecating on her garden. Marjorie has had quite the murderous career in her past – her husband, her secret lover, and she is responsible for the death of her son. Then recently there were the people who came close to the truth about Marjorie's past...the local historian, who 'slipped' when visiting a National Trust property; the local journalist who was mysteriously relocated to the Hebrides at very short notice (but who is buried under Marjorie's immaculate rose bed)...'

The juxtaposition between Marjorie's inner and outer characters, is central to the film's underlying narrative, and numerous points of both tension and revelation. Expansion of her character also offered derivation of humour in reflecting the script's broader paradox of the demure and monstrous, and the placing of the unconventional character set within the slasher narrative framework:

'INWARD CHARACTER: Marjorie is entirely self-serving and...must always have the most status/power in any given situation...(She) strives for perfection in all aspects of her life. However...she has a murderous impulse which she will act upon freely to achieve her aims. She is, however, in denial about her own criminal impulses & believes herself to be an upstanding member of the local community...

OUTWARD CHARACTER: Marjorie is an upstanding member of the community – engaged in Guild, legal and charity activities. Her immaculate appearance and home reflect her perfect lifestyle and superior status. If only more people were like her, the world would be a better place.

MAJOR PLOT POINT/SCENE REFLECTING CHARACTER TRAITS: She will be killed by the son who she allowed to drown, but not before committing murder herself...she will kill Beryl at the film's climax...' (abridged from *Appendix Three*).

According to Kawin: 'Some slashers, notably Michael and Jason, wear masks that give them a mythological edge, as if they have become pure forces of anonymous destruction' (2012, 132). **Peter** is a character who, for much of the script's narrative, appears nothing more than a supernatural stereotypical (by intent) masked slasher, to be referred to as the **Creature** until the third act. The mask is key to furthering anonymity and lack of personality/individuality, and in creating the characters to fulfil the iconography and mystery/terror of the slasher genre in connotation of horror. The Creature is the definition of 'pure...anonymous destruction' (ibid). Kawin posits:

'Slashers...are determined to kill, sometimes because they are settling a grudge or finishing off a defined set of victims. They are merciless and most of them do not speak, expressing themselves through violence. The immortal ones are impelled by supernatural forces that allow them to overcome death' (ibid, 60).

Peter as the anonymous singularly murderous, yet to some degree-cognant Creature, is written to entirely connote Kawin's theory of the horror iconography of the supernatural slasher killer. He is undead, 'supernatural' (ibid), and determined to kill aligned to avenging his cruel treatment at the hands of his mother. Moreover, the Creature/Peter is, 'undead but not (a) zombie for they have most of their basic function...they remain supernatural creatures, animated by a change or exception in the laws of nature and the rules of death' (ibid, 132).

However, in the film's third act revelations, this singularly murderous and anonymous character requires expansion and humanisation to portray Peter's 'human' life as tragic. He must ultimately be supernatural killer and human victim simultaneously, in order to share the killer role with Marjorie. It is Marjorie who has caused this murderous spree, who has committed her own murders, and who is the film's second (and surviving) villain. Indeed, 'some humans not only perpetrate horrors but are horrors themselves' (ibid, 132). Marjorie, 'demonstrat(es) the worst

aspects of human natures...attack(ing) the body and spirit, performing atrocities that are both physical and in their way of testing and passing limits, transcendent' and are, 'of the bad, the painful, merciless and murderous' (ibid, 152).

Peter's Character Interview and Biography, then, focus on the 'human' Peter, and on his character before death at the hands of his truly monstrous mother, and subsequent supernatural resurrection. This victim role could be teased out in the Character Interview, written in the character's voice, in short staccato sentences, with little comprehension of the world outside his abusive family. From *Appendix 11 Interview with Peter*:

'Nobody knows I am: Alive (except for mother and father)...

Nobody would believe me if they saw me: At all

My major accomplishment: Not annoying mother...she beats me

A good time for me is: When father is being kind'.

Moreover, Character Analysis enables further exploration of Peter's physical and mental states which both qualify the masked killer's unusual form aligned to horror genre intertextuality, and the cruel rejection by a mother obsessed with perfection, leading to his seclusion in the family's basement:

'Peter (for that was the real name of the masked killer)...had health issues at birth which caused parts of his body to become enlarged/overgrown and he was both exceptionally tall, and distorted in his features...Peter had a substantially stunted mental development, both due to his medical condition, and the cruel and debilitating circumstances in which he was kept...Although a gentle boy when alive, Peter's propensity for murder will, after his resurrection, be partially inherited from his mother, and enhanced by the cruel circumstances of his upbringing, and death' (extract from *Appendix Three*).

Peter's inner/outer characteristics serve to further the sadness of the character's life, which emerge in resurrection as psychopathic destruction and the pursuit of revenge. The tragedy of Peter's life and death serve the narrative function of rendering Marjorie more villainous, thus transferring the primary villain role between them:

'INWARD CHARACTER: All Peter ever wanted was the love of his mother – this is the real sadness to his story. He understood very little beyond this. Post-revival as the masked killer he will simply be a killing machine hell-bent on revenge for the cruel treatment he received in life and at his death...

OUTWARD CHARACTER: Peter was a sad, quiet child who knew very little other than cruelty. Occasionally his father was kind to him, and this kindness gave him an element of kindness. Post-revival his one goal is murder – and his ultimate goal is the murder of his mother. Fate will give him that opportunity' (from *Appendix Three*).

Supporting characters were also expanded in the Character Analysis to ensure that those who were more prominent in the narrative had motivations for their actions based on their personality traits/experiences. Daphne and June were identified as the secondary Townswomen for expansion, while the other five women were all named and briefly described. Their names provide intertextual reference to *Night of the Living Dead* (George Romero, 1968)/*Shaun of the Dead* (2004): Barbara, and *The Golden Girls* (1985-1992): Dorothy, Blanche, Rose, Sophia. 'They will be the prim, aging women who populate Townswomen Guilds up and down the country...aged 65-75...grey-haired (or a modest dye) and conservatively dressed' (from *Appendix Three*).

Daphne was intended as a character who would connote both humour and pathos in the narrative. While her death was subsequently written to be the least explicit/graphic, the connotation would remain that not even the most vulnerable/beloved Townswoman is safe within the horror-signifying narrative:

'Daphne is the Guild's oldest member at 85. She knows she lived through one of the World Wars but can't remember which one...She has significant memory loss and is very unstable on her feet (mainly relying on a wheelchair). She hears very little and wears a hearing aid which occasionally slips its tuning and picks up the local radio station...The women look after her very well and are very fond of Daphne as she is such a sweet soul' (from *Appendix Three*).

Twins Barbara and Blanche are the closest characters to Daphne and she will mistakenly believe them to be her daughters. She is so kind to them that they wish she were their mother; their discovery of her murdered body invokes the pathos required for narrative and character engagement/empathy amongst carnage. This

pathos would later be signified in the death of Beryl and Gladys' distressed response, adding further emotional depth to the explicit viscerality.

Second significant supporting Townswoman, June, is the Guild's treasurer:

'June is the youngest member of the Guild (at a sprightly 62). She owns a mobile hairdressing business which enables her to seek out the finest gossip in the region. As she owns her own business, June was asked by Marjorie (who thinks she's 'brassy') to become the Guild's Treasurer. The role is not very demanding, but there are whispers of financial irregularities and a sudden investment in a time-share property in Tenerife' (from *Appendix Three*).

Active on the dating scene, June will also awkwardly flirt with coach driver Barry on the journey to the Lake District. Her dialogue would later expand to reveal that the flirtatious character had recently been on a blind date with the Historian from the film's opening scene, and he had left her with the bill. This enabled a further threading of the secondary narrative throughout, provoking intrigue and suspense as to how many of the women knew the Historian and what their relationships to him had been. Could any of them be the opening scene's killer?

Coach driver Barry's character was envisaged as central to the circular narrative of the arrival at and intended departure from the Lake District resort setting. Barry's return to the narrative offered the women escape from their desperate situation – if only they could survive until then. He is also the device by which the electricity pylon is knocked into the lake, eventually surging electricity and resurrecting the killer:

'Barry is in his early 40's and divorced with two daughters. He owns a mini-bus/coach company and has offered the Townswomen a deal on transport...If Marjorie likes him there may be more work in it for him...He is hard-working and honest and needs the money after the divorce...but can be blundering in his social/business engagements and does not always create the 'right impression'...' (*Appendix Three* extract).

While his actions represent the circular narrative, Barry offers a very useful point of subversion of both gender and age stereotyping, in that it would be a newly invigorated Gladys who saves him from the killer, and he will fail spectacularly to live up to the potential hero role. In later edits of the script more of Barry's mundane

home life was introduced as a plot device to slow the racing action in the Lake District. As the abject, excessive and absurd action escalated lakeside, Barry's humdrum homelife juxtaposed the gross-out carnage – morning ablutions, drab supermarket shopping – all while his return was a central narrative driver in relation to the women's survival. This provided a useful comedic juxtaposition, and slowed the frenetic, violent race to the film's finale. Berenstein argues: 'Horror narratives always provide heroes of sorts, men who look like they would be heroic if given half a chance... the only problem is they usually cannot figure out how to save the day' (1996, 4). Barry would fulfil this role, enabling Gladys to embody that of the hero/final girl (Clover, 1992) and fulfil her character arc.

The final supporting characters for development in Character Analysis were the site owners Su and Paul. Crucially, they, similar to a number of the other characters, have their own secret which was written to enable one of the film's core set pieces aligned to abjection, excess and absurdity and the findings of Part One:

'Su & Paul are 'posh', country set types in their mid-forties. They moved from London when Paul sold his marketing company and invested in the whole site which consists of seven log cabins, lake and a large country house/farmhouse. They got the site 'at a steal' following some tricky business with a chemical spill in the lake...As with much of Su and Paul's life, what lies on the surface does not reflect what lies underneath...They have an S&M sex dungeon underneath their house, and their few visitors are members of one of the numerous swinging organisations to which they belong' (abridged from *Appendix Three*).

That dungeon would be the site of some of the script's most abject, excessive and absurd gross-out scenes in delivery of horror and humour concurrently. It would be a location which would be discovered by the Townswomen, used to emphasise the juxtaposition derived from positioning the societally coded demure ladies within the excessive and abject narrative, thus provoking absurdity. A fish slice and pair of tongs would only serve to further that absurdity...This research-informed narrative expansion in plotting and scene listing will now be further explored, before addressing direct script writing and drafting/editing.

Chapter Three: Story Structure & Mapping

Plot Plan

'The subject of a screenplay, remember, is an action and a character. We've got the character, now we've got to find the action' (Field, 2005, 144).

Having expanded on the basic outline to create the prose treatment, and before beginning to write the script, key narrative points required expansion in a full Plot Plan. According to Snyder: 'After coming up with the idea and identifying the 'who' in your movie, and who it's for, the structure is the single most important element in writing and selling your screenplay' (2005, 68). Goldman agrees, 'screenplay is structure' (1996, 34). As alluded to in Chapter One, the gross-out set pieces (Snyder, 2005) and production numbers (Thrower, 2008) of the Townswomen's deaths required most expansion. In order to deliver the findings of Part One, close consideration was given to the script's timeframe in cohesion with its body count (Conrich, 2010). Potential weapons which would deal the excessive and abject death blows alongside comedic juxtaposition were also explored (**Part Three Appendix 12 Potential Weapons**). Moreover, **Part Three Appendix 13 Death Count/Timeframe** provides a full breakdown of the number of deaths and their frequently paced position within the narrative timeframe; herein it will be explored in cohesion with the **Plot Plan (Part Three Appendix 14)**.

'You need a road map, a direction – a line of development leading from beginning to end,' states Field (2005, 142). *Knitters!* Plot Plan built on the treatment to provide the crucial, 'linear progression of related incidents, episodes and events, leading to a dramatic resolution, that means your story moves forward from beginning to end' (ibid, 90). The *Death Count/Timeframe* was created to assess the overall timeframe of the weekend's events, ensuring that the film delivered frequent abject, excessive and absurd murders to fulfil the key criteria of Part One's findings, and also that enough characters existed to ensure ample victims. A combination of sufficient number of characters and level of visual spectacle through the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984 et al.) was crucial to fulfil the set pieces (Snyder, 2005), drive pace, and to deliver on a horror comedy audience's expectation. According to Selbo: 'The task of the screenwriter is, in most cases, to create a feeling of satisfaction by using the schematic knowledge and specific knowledge of film genre of the audience' (2015, 34).

With Part One findings and practice theory in consideration, the *Death Count/Timeframe (Appendix 13)* for *Knitters!* was mapped:

- **'PRE-CREDIT SEQUENCE** – Local historian. Impaled on church/castle spire (*The Omen* reference). Murderer = Marjorie (revealed at climax) **Death count: One**
- **Friday night/Saturday morning** (early hours) – Owners of 'big house' Su & Paul & their 2 guests (a man & woman). Killed in bondage dungeon using S&M devices. Paul to have mobile phone violently inserted into backside. Murderer = masked killer **Two-five**
- **Saturday morning** (late) – TG guest speaker i.e. Mary Berry & one secondary TG character. Guest speaker is whisked to death – the killer uses her own baking equipment to render her face a bloody pulp. TG woman killed fleeing the scene and is 'piped to death', suffocating on the contents of a piping tube which the killer thrusts down her throat. Murderer = masked killer **Six & seven**
- **Saturday afternoon** (early) – Dodderly guild member Daphne. Killed in her cabin with her own control underwear while listening to Barry Manilow. Murderer = masked killer **Eight**
- **Saturday afternoon** (late) – Two secondary guild members. Killed in the barn near to the big house with garden shears/trimmer. Murderer = masked killer **Nine & 10**
- **Saturday night/Sunday morning** (early hours) – Glamorous TG member June. Killed in the bedroom with a stiletto heel, after being sacrificed by Marjorie. Murderer = masked killer **11**
- **Sunday morning** (mid-late) – Two secondary Guild members. Means of death TBC, but to occur during the women's stand-off at the cabins in which they use whatever weapons they have to fight back. Murderer = masked killer TBC **12 & 13**
- **Sunday afternoon** – Beryl. Our false final girl is killed by Marjorie with her own penknife. The murder is witnessed by Gladys who is our true final girl. We also see the drowning of Peter & the murder of both Marjorie's lover & husband in flashback. Murderer = Marjorie **14-17**

- **Sunday afternoon** (late) – Marjorie. The masked killer finally achieves his bid for revenge and drowns Marjorie in the Lake. Murderer = masked killer **18**
- **Sunday evening** – The masked killer. Gladys, the final girl, avenges the murder of all her friends (but most especially Beryl), in the final confrontation. She uses the chainsaw from the barn to cause multiple injuries. When the killer rises again (in homage to *Halloween* & every other returning killer film), she runs him over multiple times with Barry's bus, rendering him a bloody pulp. It is Marjorie's hand which emerges from the lake in the final 'surprise' scene (homage to *Carrie*) **19'**.

This enabled expansion of detail of the script's body count (Conrich, 2010), totalling a fulfilling nineteen deaths, which embodied multiple gross-out set pieces (Snyder, 2005). This expansion also aided significantly in the creation of the detailed Plot Plan (available in full as **Part Three Appendix 14 Plot Plan**), twenty-two key plot points which embellished outline detail on the crucial murder pieces, locations and timeframe of events, explored in detail in Chapter One:

'Plot answers the following question, 'What is this most interesting way to tell the story or explore this theme, within the narrative? It is the means within the narrative by which the screenwriter engages the emotions of the audience from moment to moment throughout its involvement with the narrative' (Parker, 1999, 24).

The final rigorous pre-script writing approach was expansion of plotting with a 'moment to moment' (ibid) narrative scene list, and, further, to map this to Snyder's 'Beat Sheet' (2005, 70).

Scenes

Once the detailed Plot Plan had been created, it was essential to map those key points into a full scene list which would define the detail of the action in each narrative unit. This process incorporated three drafts. The first draft included an excessive 137 scenes. Expansion of those individual units of action led to an excess of activity, particularly in relation to the opening scenes of the establishment of the women's characters, and overwriting scenes of the flashbacks to Marjorie's hidden past, which initially ran from scenes 107-125. In approaching the second draft, the

required amendments were clear: the total number of scenes must be reduced, and the secondary plot revelations in the third act must not overbalance.

In revision, the second draft was reduced to 99 scenes, closer to the required number to fulfil a running time under 90 minutes (to be reflected on further in the chapter on Drafting). Attention focused on the overwritten backstory/reveal for Marjorie, and the number of flashbacks scenes were significantly reduced through application of descriptive dialogue and removal of scenes depicting each of her actions individually. Revision here also restructured the significant 'tooling up' scene in which the women decide they must employ the only weapons available to them. This had been written as a series of separate scenes; however montage could generate humour in parody of action genre montages of characters preparing for conflict, and more quickly progress narrative. The re-written scenes were tighter, a more comedic montage which highlighted the juxtapositions of the women's intended activities against their unexpected plight. As Greenwalt states: 'One of the things I like to do is confront a character with a situation that turns his/her world upside down' (in Fahy, 2015, 90).

In fulfilment of an informed and structured approach, Snyder's 'Beat Sheet' (2005, 70) was applied to an edited second draft of the scene list. This would ensure that: 'The craftsmanship it takes, the patient work, the magic of storytelling on film, all come together in how you execute and realise story structure' (ibid, 69). The 'Beat Sheet' (ibid) of *Knitters!* mapped well to Snyder's narrative definitions and structure (adapted and abridged from ***Part Three Appendix 16 Mapping to the Beat Sheet***):

'PROJECT TITLE: Knitters!

GENRE: Horror comedy

1. **OPENING IMAGE** (p.1) An elderly historian impaled on a church/castle spire. This aligns to Sid Field's 'INCITING INCIDENT' which '1) sets the story in motion & 2) grabs the attention of the audience' (2005, 130).

2. **THEME STATED** (p.5) The death of the historian in the genteel National Trust surroundings should be mysterious and crucially both gory and humorous, contrasting the genteel with the explicitly horrific. This delivers the theme of the first chapter research in establishing that through abjection, excess and absurdity, the

genre will be horror comedy and the theme will centre on gory mayhem vs societally-coded genteel respectability.

3. SET-UP (p. 1-10) A montage which shows the women packing and boarding the bus for their weekend away. The bus journey further reveals their characters and the dynamics between them...

4. CATALYST (p.12) As Barry struggles to drive the bus away in the mud he clips a power cable which is dislodged. When hit by lightning in the early hours the cable falls into the lake reviving the killer and driving the plot forward.

5. DEBATE (p.12-25) The women engage in two forms of 'debate'. Firstly there are the group's power struggles which are unveiled further as they engage in their scheduled activities. Then, once the killer attacks, they are in conflict with him, but also with themselves over who should lead them in the current situation (Beryl vs Marjorie).

6. BREAK INTO TWO (p.25) The women are divided (both in opinion and action) when the killer first strikes (the seeds of those who will emerge as heroes can be planted here). The group splits into two to form a rescue party for Daphne. This indicates the break into the second act, where the women have realised the peril they are in, and must respond accordingly, where we move from the THESIS to the ANTITHESIS (the new world order).

7. B STORY (p.30) We should see a hint here that Marjorie recognises the killer as his spree begins. There should also be references interwoven throughout to the death of the historian, maintaining intrigue/mystery.

8. FUN & GAMES (p.30-55) This will be the most gruesome/comedic part of the film as the women are killed in abject, excessive and absurd fashions. Indeed this is 'the essence of the movie's poster' (Snyder, 2005, 71).

9. MID POINT (p.55) The killer breaks into the relative safety of the 'big house' having ploughed murderously through a number of the women. This will be the impetus for the realisation that they must fight back using whatever weapons they have to hand (linked to their competition mission).

10. BAD GUYS CLOSE IN (p.55-75) The central conflict between the killer and the women will initially open with the montage scene of the women 'tooling up' and managing to do some collateral damage in their face-to-face showdown. However, the sense of impotence to defeat the killer will be foreshadowed by the death of one of the women in 'friendly fire' and the resurrection of their supernatural foe.

11. ALL IS LOST (p.75) We are down to the final three girls (Gladys, Marjorie & Beryl) who are clearly no match for the homicidal supernatural maniac. They barricade themselves into the boat house.

12. DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL (p.75-85) Marjorie reveals herself as the real monster – through flashback we see all of her crimes/murders and realise that she is the true monster. She is revealed as the killer's mother. She kills Beryl (our false final girl) as she always intended & this is the catalyst for Gladys' transformation into the hero.

13. BREAK INTO THREE (p.85) The Third Act, the resolution of Marjorie and Gladys' character journeys. We also have three active characters left – Marjorie, Gladys and the killer. The killer will brutally slay Marjorie and throw her body into the lake, thereby securing his revenge. He will then seek to return to his watery grave.

14. FINALE (p.85-110) Our true final girl, Gladys, will finally become the confident, assertive woman she has always wanted to be and will destroy the killer. As in all good horror films the killer will return, but Gladys will run over him repeatedly in Barry's coach & drive off into the sunset.

15. FINAL IMAGE (p.110) As Barry surveys the carnage around him a hand will emerge from the lake (second twist ending). This time it will be Marjorie's.... As Kawin writes of Jason Vorhees' surprise appearance from both the lake and the dead, at the close of Friday the 13th: 'Influenced by earlier films, it codified the device of the shocking open ending' (2012, 146).'

(It should be noted that the suggested number of scenes was longer than in the final script. The beat structure, while still aligning to Snyder's guidance, was mapped to a shorter scene list.)

Each of these elements can be reflected upon in gnosis of praxis to demonstrate rigorous, researched consideration of narrative plotting and pace. The '**Opening Image**' is: 'The very first impression of what a movie is – its tone, its mood, the type and scope of the film – are all found in the opening image' (Snyder, 2005, 72). He adds:

'Like many of the beats...the opening image has a matching beat: the final image...The opening and final images should be opposites, a plus and minus, showing change so dramatic it documents the emotional upheaval that the movie represents' (ibid).

In *Knitters!* these opposing beats would be achieved through the image of Marjorie's hand. Initially gloved and mysterious and belonging to the perpetrator of the abject and absurd murder which 'sets the tone, mood and style of the movie' (ibid). And finally the murdered victim of her killer son's vengeful fury and revealed as the film's true monster – an undead supernatural one at that. The '**Theme Stated**' is clearly aligned to both genre intent and the practice of the academic experiment established in Part One in connoting comedy and horror through abjection, absurdity and excess; but also in posing the question which is interwoven through the narrative as to who was the Historian's killer and why? Establishing the characters are the crux of the '**Set-Up**' according to Snyder, 'where we start to plant every character tic, exhibit every behaviour that needs to be addressed later on, and show how and why the hero will need to change in order to win' (ibid, 75). Witnessing the women firstly in their home environments and then in the coach group setting offers multiple evidence of their personalities and relationships. Focus here balances on the central relationship between Gladys (who will undergo the biggest explicit character arc), Marjorie and Beryl.

According to Snyder:

'Like many of the beats...the **Catalyst** is not what it seems. It's the opposite of good news, and yet, by the time the adventure is over, it's what leads the hero to happiness' (ibid, 77).

Knitters!' catalyst is clearly the emergence of the supernatural killer who sets the main plot of the women's fight to survive, in motion, and enables Gladys' transformative character arc. The '**Debate**' and '**Break Into Two**' beats are linked to

the conflict between both the women and their supernatural nemesis. Snyder indicates that the Debate can ask the question, 'Should I go? Dare I go? Sure, it's dangerous out there, but what's my chance?' (ibid). The women in conflict with themselves are prompted to this very question in the potential rescue of Daphne – and it is this mission which causes the group to split into two, enabling two different narrative courses and sites for action. This split also breaks up the film's acts, established with the emergence of the supernatural creature:

'The act break is the moment where we leave the old world, (thesis) behind, and proceed into a world that is an upside-down version of that, its antithesis. But because these two worlds are so distinct, the act of actually stepping into Act Two must be definite' (ibid, 79).

Both groups of women, at the house and in the barn, must now confront the 'new world' head on in direct conflict with the supernatural killer who has turned their world 'upside- down' (ibid).

The B Story is interwoven in hints, glances, half-told stories and exchanges throughout, and referenced almost directly in the aftermath of the **Debate/Break Into Two** beats, in this instance in terse dialogue between Marjorie and Beryl. A crucial aspect of the B Story is that this is the, 'place from which (the hero) will draw the strength she needs for the final push in Act Three' (ibid, 80). Marjorie's murderous final conflict with Beryl will provide Gladys with the final impetus she needs to become the final girl (Clover, 1992).

The beat described as '**Fun and Games**' is an acutely appropriate term for the practical experiment of delivering abjection, excess and absurdity in the production of a gross-out horror comedy film script. This is where, 'we are concerned with having fun' (ibid, 81). And in this context, the fun is derived from the murder showcases such as those in the barn, which are the 'heart of the movie' (ibid) and deliver on the application of the porous traits of horror and comedy delineated in the findings of Part One. The '**Mid Point**' & '**Bad Guys Close In**' are closely aligned in the script in that the killer breaching the relative safety of the 'big house' and killing many more of the women is the impetus which provokes the women to decide to attempt to fight back. Snyder describes this as, 'either an 'up' where the hero seemingly peaks (though it is a false peak), or a 'down' where the world collapses around the hero (though it is a false collapse), and it can only get better from here

on out' (ibid, 82). The central 'tooling up' scene which sees the women arm themselves with whatever is available from their knitting supplies, fulfils that 'false peak' (ibid). The women will do some collateral damage with their limited means, but it will be a false hope that they have defeated the slasher iconographical killer.

As the film reaches its crescendo: 'The forces that are aligned against the hero, internal and external, tighten their grip. Evil is not giving up, and there is nowhere for the hero to go for help' (ibid, 86). This connotation is required to fulfil the **'All Is Lost'** beat and to signify that: 'It seems like total defeat...all aspects of the hero's life are in shambles...wreckage abounds...no hope...' (ibid). With just three women surviving, Beryl, Marjorie and Gladys, are trapped in the boathouse, outmatched by their brutal tormentor. And it is in this context that Marjorie's **'Dark Night of the Soul'** will occur. 'It is the point, as the name suggests, that is the darkness right before the dawn...the point before the hero reaches way, deep down,' argues Snyder (ibid, 88). Marjorie's revelation as the film's true monster, and her savage murder of Beryl, will provide the narrative impetus for Gladys to finally fight back, and finally stand up for herself.

This secondary plot revelation arc also aligns to the **'Break Into Three'** or 'solution' (ibid, 89) and **'Finale'** beats. The final act begins with three active characters in Marjorie, Gladys and Peter. Peter will fulfil his revenge in the brutal murder of his cruel mother, finding his own 'solution' (ibid), and seek to return to his watery grave. Yet Gladys, enraged at the brutal murder of all of her friends, will seek her own 'solution' (ibid) in destroying him. The circular narrative will be fulfilled with the return of Barry and his coach, which Gladys will put to good use in reversing over Peter multiple times until he is nothing but a bloody pulp. 'The finale is where a new society is born' (ibid, 90) and the newly empowered Gladys will drive off into the sunset, a new woman. However, a new monster will ultimately stir in the lake...

Once matched to the Beat Sheet, a final draft of the Scene List was completed to further shorten the overlong number of scenes (**Part Three Appendix 15 Final Pre-Writing Scene List.**) A further five scenes were removed, leaving a more focused 94 scenes, while still aligned to Snyder's (2005), narrative map. The 'Dark Night of the Soul' (Snyder, 2005) finale scenes were further reduced, and the opening sequences shortened as all had overbalanced in volume of pages. A grinning Daphne first appeared being lifted in her wheelchair onto the coach rather than in her care home, for example. However, one area of expansion of detail, was in the

description of the Creature's underwater resurrection. Intended as a core gothic image in the film, aligned to Frankensteinian imagery, horror iconography must be explicitly described. From *Appendix 15*:

'24 (EXT-night) Hillside next to lake. A storm rages outside. Thunder rolls across the hillside and forks of lightening fill the sky. A lightning bolt hits the communication mast on the hillside. It blows dramatically emitting sparks and smoke. 25 (EXT-night) Lakeside. A lightning bolt hits the cable dislodged by Barry. It plunges into the lake, causing further lightning bolts to spark dramatically across the lake.'

The Frankensteinian imagery would also be furthered in the creature's finding and donning of the rubber mask in the basement dungeon. The resurrected creature would take the mask in response to his hideous uncanny image in the mirror, similar to Frankenstein's (Shelley, 1818) response to his own hideous reflection in the lake:

'Then like an anti-narcissus he sees his reflection. It repulses him and he dashes the image away...horror faces and becomes conscious of itself' (Kawin, 2012, 60).

As Freud writes, 'the uncanny effect occurs when something returns to consciousness that has long been forgotten' (in Gelder, 2000, 51). He adds: 'When it returns it threatens the subject with dissolution, blurring the boundaries which are conventionally and naturalistically drawn between human and inhuman, clean and defiled (ibid, 49). The Creature is literally a return to 'consciousness' (ibid) of Peter who significantly 'blurs the boundaries' (ibid) of all of the characters' world orders. The mask is an intertextual connotation of the explicit threat of violence and horror connoted by the masked slasher villain: 'The executioner's mask establishes a cold, mechanical and faceless killer devoid of personality...more frightening than the mask is the concealed face' (Conrich, 2010, 179-180).

As final notes of reflection on this pre-writing scene list, it was initially written that car keys would be violently inserted into Paul's intestines in the dungeon massacre sequence, rather than a mobile phone. The phone retrieval was written instead as it offered more comedic and dramatic suspense potential in the women's hurriedly graphic attempts to retrieve it before it rang off – a missed opportunity if not applied. Moreover, the most significant development was that the women should have more

of a central goal than merely attending an arts and crafts weekend. They would be in training for a knitting competition which they had narrowly lost the previous year. This would enable narrative drive and a focus in giving each of the women a unique (and humorously named) skill and weapon in the showdown sequence. It also enabled Gladys to find a 'First Place' rosette on the coach and pin it to herself as she drove off into the sunset. Parker advises to: 'Develop credible character problems and goals....these are essentially what will make both this narrative unique and this character's use of story distinctive' (1999, 85). This alteration expanded character drive through shared, although ultimately to be overturned, goals. He furthers: 'Character motivations need to move beyond simple central problem established in a premise...does their motivation change as the narrative unfolds?' (ibid, 42). The Townswomen could never envisage the abject, excessive and absurd realignment of their competitive knitting goals at the outset of the narrative – and therein the script would closely address the conclusions of Part One in delivering both horror and comedy concurrently.

Chapter Four: Bringing *Knitters!* to Life

Writing the Script

Once the rigorous research and planning period had been concluded, script writing could begin. As a first-time script writer, format and structure became an important point of study including familiarisation with the script writing software Celtx as, according to Field, 'screenplay form is unique and precise' (2005, 217). Step outlines including details such as Brief Outline, Characters, Location and Dialogue were created for the first three scenes but given the level of effort expended in clear and detailed scene listing, mapping and expansion, it quickly became apparent that writing was already supported by ample detail.

Writing began in drafting the opening scenes and creating the significant pre-credit sequence. This scene would be key in setting the tone of the thesis' findings on abjection, excess and absurdity in blending gross-out comedy and horror. The sequence would also pose the crucial secondary narrative question from the outset in the murder of the Historian by an unknown assailant. This would reflect Parker's, 'active question...created by the narrative in the audience's mind, which intrigues and holds narrative while the answer is sought' (Parker, 1999, 24). Parker recommends the continued application of questions throughout the narrative, and clues as to this secondary plot device were interwoven throughout. The writing of this secondary narrative opening sequence would be key to establish intrigue, narrative circularity, and the horror comedy tone from the outset.

According to Snyder: 'The first 10 pages are the most difficult. Your writing is going to be awkward, stilted, and probably not very good' (2005, 244). This first sequence required three early drafts which responded to supervisor feedback and provided a number of lessons which were later applied. Snyder advises, 'don't expect your character to start talking to you from page one' (ibid, 72), and this proved particularly true of the character of the Historian who had not warranted a character biography/interview due to highly limited screen time, but who was the only speaking character in the opening scene. He would set the script's tone through dialogue. It was intended from the outset that the character be both pompous and dull, and that he should express an obsession with the history of sanitation, establishing an early connection to the carnivalesque aspects of the lower bodily stratum (Brottman, 2004, Danow, 1995, Bakhtin, 1984 et al.).

While his character was envisaged as tiresome and long-winded, early drafts of dialogue were themselves long-winded. There was further a superfluous comedic scene in the master bedroom, which was later adapted to suit narrative, as a sequence in the secondary plot-related archive room. The first task of draft editing, was therefore to cut those opening scenes, as it had been with the early lengthy scene list. Comedy could still be delivered in the Historian's actions and behaviours with less dialogue and scenes; as a secondary character, the required level of character context was not equal to the primary players. Moreover, the key narrative event in this scene informed by Part One findings, was the abrupt push by the unseen murderer onto the castle's spire (later to be in a 'sitting' position which aligned to his historical sanitary fascination and aligned to the gross-out tradition of bodily function). As he slid bloodily down the spire in intertextual reference to *The Omen* (1976), his toupee hanging from a single piece of adhesive to ensure the absurd aspect of the horror-comedy balance, the Historian would cry 'You!' and the credits would begin. This key incident would also create 'the mental space of the horror genre' and fulfil Selbo's requirement that, 'the opening moments of the monster horror film must include a nod to, or promise of impending danger' (2005, 143).

The drafting of this pre-credit sequence was useful to become familiar with the formatting of the script in Celtx and, with a tendency to overwrite dialogue and description in mind, writing could begin in more detail. Writing of the first draft was limited to the first fifty scenes – a significant amount of content for feedback and revision, before completion of a full first draft. Scripting closely followed the detailed scene list and referred frequently to character notes, interviews and bibliographies, alongside Part One findings. *Knitters!* eventually underwent eight drafts from partial to full script. Analysis here will centre of the creation of the first full draft, informed by the review of two partial drafts (**Part Three Appendix 17 Knitters! Draft One-Full Script**). Excerpts from this draft will be provided throughout as context of research in praxis, illustrating the process of genre, narrative and character delivery. The significant changes in subsequent drafts which would eventually become the script which forms the doctorate's Part Two, will then be reviewed and offer a platform for reflection on development and conclusions on applying research in praxis. The fourth draft is included in the appendices for mid-process context (**Part Three Appendix 18 Knitters! Full Draft Mid-Process**).

According to Field there are three stages of a first-draft screenplay:

'(The) first stage is the 'words on paper' stage. That's when you put it all down – everything....If in doubt, write....It's easier to cut scenes than to add them to an already structured screenplay' (2005, 247).

Early approach was therefore to simply write, basing decisions on the well-informed preparation and research process and, 'keep moving forward in your story...any major changes you need to make, do in the second draft' (ibid).

Richard Hatem, writer of television series, *Supernatural* (2005-2020), states of Stephen King: 'He taught me how to write by basically making it so evident that I had to care about the characters before you were going to care about any of the supernatural stuff that happens to them' (in Fahy, 2015, 66). Having written the pre-credit sequence which established the blend of comedy and horror through abjection, excess and absurdity, and introduced secondary narrative mystery, the introduction of the women who would be the script's key characters and narrative drivers from the outset, was important. 'What is Character, but determination of incident? And what is incident but the illumination of character?', asks Jones (in Field, 2005, 129). It would be the dialogue between the women in their home environments, on the coach and on arrival at their destination which would connote their personalities, relationships and likeability (or lack thereof). Dialogue would establish the relationships which formed much of the script's vital conflict and writing was closely informed by the Character Interviews and Biographies:

'MARJORIE Gladys have you printed out the schedules? Shall we remind ourselves why we are here. (She looks pointedly at JUNE) We're not letting those awful women from Wisbrey Dell take our prize again this year.

GLADYS Yes Marjorie. The ink's running out a bit on my printer, but you can see most of it. (She pulls a handful of papers from her handbag and unfolds them, straightening out the creases. She passes the first copy to MARJORIE.)

MARJORIE Really Gladys. It's barely legible.

BERYL Give her a break Marjorie. With that husband of hers and the dog sanctuary, she barely has two minutes to spare. You've got your own printer, couldn't you have done it?

MARJORIE May I remind you that that is the role of the Assistant. To assist the Chair with administrative duties...You're the Social Secretary, Gladys is the Chair's Assistant. We each have our role. It's just that mine is more...senior' (all Chapter Four extracts from *Appendix 17*).

Dialogue during the coach journey sequence is written to connote the intra-Guild tensions and politics between its central three protagonists, framing Beryl as an outspoken and loyal friend to Gladys, and defining Gladys as put-upon and kind to all at her own cost. Marjorie's pomposity and disdain for others, as well as her conflict with Beryl, is delineated. As Field states: 'Conflict must be at the very hub of your story because it is the core of strong action and strong character' (2005, 246). Dialogue in this scene is also written to represent June as flirtatious, Daphne as senile but gentle, kind and loved, and the twins as her imagined daughters.

These characterisations through dialogue would be furthered in writing the sequence of resort arrival, meeting the owners, and 'bedding down' for the night. Dialogue introducing cabin owners' Su and Paul, enabled context for both their duplicitous characters, and the history of the lakeside setting itself. The audience required contextual dialogue to understand that the resort was remote, isolated, in alignment with horror genre iconography, and that the women were effectively trapped in the circular narrative of Barry leaving and returning to collect them:

'PAUL (both well spoken) What time are the biddies arriving?

SU Don't call them that Paul! They're our first customers and we need as many of them as we can get after all the money we've ploughed into the renovation.

PAUL But why do we have to stand by the road in the bloody freezing cold?

SU I've told you already. Until the sign goes up nobody knows we're here. We're in the middle of bloody nowhere Paul. We don't want them getting lost, and the next house is miles away. We're not in the city now, you know.

PAUL I wish we were.

SU You should have thought about that before you lost your job then. We had to get rid of that money fast and putting it into renovating this place was our only option at the time. They were desperate to get rid of it.

PAUL I'm not surprised. A resort that hadn't been used for 30 years with a lake officially deemed hazardous because of chemical waste. Prime estate.'

Highlighted herein was the isolated location (crucial to narrative and horror iconography), and hints at the site's murderous past, to be revealed fully in the third act reveal. Moreover, dialogue with the arriving Townswomen was employed to further define the intra-Guild hierarchies, the weekend's competition focus, and the lack of contact with the outside world. The required lack of mobile phone access was also established here: the site had no reception, the women did not have mobile phones, but there was a landline at the 'big house'. These scenes forming the opening act were written according to Field's direction that dialogue:

- 'moves the story forward
- reveals information about the characters – after all they do have history
- communicates necessary facts and information to the reader
- establishes character relationships, making them real, natural and spontaneous
- gives your character depth, insight and purpose
- reveals conflicts of story and characters
- reveals the emotional state of characters and comments on the action' (2005, 244)

Once at that isolated setting, the script's key location, scenes were added to further the women's characters and relationships through dialogue, before the supernatural threat thrust itself into the narrative. This dialogue focused primarily on Beryl and Gladys and their relationship with Marjorie, connoting the further seeding of Beryl as false final girl (Clover, 1992), and underpinning Gladys' character arc:

'BERYL You can't let her speak to you like that Glad, you're not her bloody slave you know.

GLADYS I know Beryl, but it is my job.

BERYL To be spoken to like dirt? It isn't. You know it's OK to stand up to her, don't you?

GLADYS Oh you know me Beryl, don't like to rock the boat.

BERYL I know Glad, and that's why folks walk all over you. That Derek of yours, he's the same. You're so kind-hearted, but you need to stand up for yourself love.

GLADYS Well we'll see what happens this weekend, but I'm not making any promises Ber.'

This narrative structure and its accompanying dialogue aligned to Snyder's Beat Sheet (2005) which required the first act to primarily establish character, conflict and context. Meanwhile, the awakening of the script's central narrative driver and second act antithesis instigator (Parker, 1999), should quickly follow. The sudden emergence of this Creature would turn the established context on its head, representing Carroll's, 'fusion figures...creatures that transgress categorical distinctions such as inside/outside, living/dead etc...both living and dead' (1990, 43). The supernatural agitator was written to literally emerge from the murky underwater world of death into the known living world, throwing the established context of the Townswomen's lives into chaos. The creature would be 'impure or repulsive' (ibid, 45) aligned to Carroll's theory that: 'The emotion of art horror is generated in part by the apprehension of something that defies categorisation in virtue of our standing or common place ways of conceptualising the order of things' (ibid, 126).

As the Creature is primarily non-verbal, which furthers that portrayal, this section of writing focuses more on description and establishing horror iconography through setting and location, alongside the generation of mystery/tension in unexplained narrative intrusion:

'EXT - BOTTOM OF LAKE - NIGHTTIME

The pylon sinks and falls to the bottom of the dirty lake water. Next to it a dark figure begins to stir in the reeds. The dark bulking shape is entangled in reeds and pond weed. Electricity surges through the water and the figure begins to fight itself free.

EXT - LAKESIDE JETTY - NIGHTTIME

FROM BEHIND. A ravaged humanoid hand emerges from the water onto the moonlit jetty. A dark hulking humanoid figure slowly and ominously emerges from the water-ravaged and covered in pond weed.'

According to Snyder:

'Danger must be present danger. Stakes must be stakes for the people we care about. And what might happen to them must be shown from the get-go so we know the consequences of the imminent threat' (2005, 134).

Therefore, from its first appearance, it was essential that the mysterious and ominous Creature get straight to its primary narrative function: abject, excessive and absurd murder. This function and the resulting showcase murders were crucial to align *Knitters!* to the horror comedy genre and the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1985 et al.) of gross-out filmic material. This was applied directly in writing the Creature's first murder set piece (Snyder, 2005) situated in the hidden sex dungeon basement of 'big house' owners Su and Paul:

'The figure surveys them all. He kills the female guest by dashing her against the wall in the leather 'sleep sack' into which she has been zipped by PAUL. SU & her companion are diced as the creature wraps the harness swing which they are enjoying, around them both and squeezes. PAUL has scrambled into a corner. The doorway is blocked by the figure. He knocks into his male guest's coat & a mobile phone falls out. He picks it up. There is one reception bar.

PAUL I don't bloody believe it. In the basement of all places! (...)

...The figure rams the phone into his mouth, down his throat and into his intestines. The phone lost in PAUL's internal organs, the figure's gore-soaked hand emerges from his rectum. The figure shakes the lifeless body from his arm and leaves the bloody room.'

Directly written to evoke the iconography through bodily violence (especially lower stratum) of Aristophanes and the Feast of Fools (Brottman, 2004, Danow, 1995), this is one of the script's central carnivalesque grotesque (ibid) 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26).

The sequence further offers a point of genre reflexivity in that, 'the characters...note the similarities between their filmic situation and conventions of the form' (Tudor, 1989, 209). Su observes that the mystery visitor reminds her of a previous 'horror play' encounter with a fellow swinger dressed as Freddy Krueger. Krueger would not be the only slasher icon directly named in dialogue. Jason Vorhees is also later named by Beryl prior to the women's central confrontation with the creature, and in intentional mocking of the intertextuality of the script itself:

'BERYL We're not going to be beaten by a knock-off Jason Vorhees'

GLADYS Who's Jason Vorhees?

BERYL Never mind.'

Intertextuality and reflexivity offer connotation to the audience of the film's positioning within the genre and creates Selbo's mental space of genre (2015), concurrently fulfilling Hills' pleasures of subcultural capital in genre consumption and recognition (2005, Hunter in Jenkins, 2018). As Hunter states: 'Genre fandom has long been recognised as related to the expression of very specific subcultural identities and pleasures' (in Jenkins, 2018, 100). This capital can be held through specialist knowledge, and application of that knowledge, decoding and comprehending the 'in-joke' of intertextuality, is intended to be an enjoyable element of the script for its target audience of horror (comedy) fans. 'The highly repetitive nature of the story formula is also addressed as is the status of the film experience itself as a 'game',' argues Tudor (1989, 209).

The narrative events of the morning following the dungeon massacre follow the antithesis (Parker, 1999) shift of the abrupt abject, excessive and absurd violence. The audience should be reminded of the juxtaposition of the societally coded demure women, their genteel activities, and the abjection and extremity which surrounds them, further connoting absurdity and humour. Yet the antithesis shift is further stressed and horror genre firmly connoted by the sudden, threatening intrusion of the 'impure and repulsive' Creature (Carroll, 1990, 45). The Townswomen's murders were written to begin in shocking fashion with the brutal and bloody gross-out death of the Mary Berry character - with her own blender - one of the many innocuous tools turned deadly in the script:

'The figure lunges from behind her, grabs the blender and rams it into her face. Flour mixes with blood as her face is ripped apart...The figure catches (DOROTHY) easily. He suffocates her by ramming BERRY's piping tube down her throat and squeezing'.

The baking massacre sequence closes with a description of Marjorie pausing to look back at the Creature (here named 'figure') as she disappears into the woods, ensuring the secondary plot is seeded throughout to maintain intrigue.

The Townswomen body count (Conrich, 2010) was written to promptly increase with the murder of Daphne, stressing the escalation of stakes and ever-presence of real danger and threat (Snyder, 2005). While the women find temporary safety in the 'big house', the Guild's much-loved Daphne remains in her cabin after 'one of her turns'. She unfortunately draws the now-established horrifying, real and dangerous threat (ibid) of the creature's attention with the volume of her portable radio. She is suffocated with her own bloomers to the disharmony of Barry Manilow's *Bermuda Triangle*, in order to connote absurdity in murder, aligned to both comedy and horror. The emphasis in this death balances more towards comedy, in removing the excesses of abjection, and leaning more towards absurdity. One of the characters connoted as most likeable is written to suffer a consciously less explicitly violent and abject death, yet the stakes are still connoted as high, the risk real to all in the narrative (ibid).

To punctuate these Townswomen murder 'set pieces' (ibid, 80), and ensure a balanced pace in measured relief (Paul, 1994), scenes were interspersed to further conflict between the women trying to understand their new world order (Carroll, 1990). This dialogue, moreover, added depth of characterisation and connoted further clues as to the secondary narrative. Conflict is built among the women in a scene which depicts the debate to split and form an ill-fated rescue party for Daphne. Not only are the women at conflict with the creature, but with each other, reflecting the importance of conflict at multiple levels in script writing (Snyder, 2005):

'BERYL Marjorie are you seriously suggesting that we leave Daphne out there with that thing? She's a sitting duck in her wheelchair.

MARJORIE If we go out there we could all end up savagely murdered and what help will that be to Daphne. We should stay here.

DOROTHY And do what? The phone lines are down and we're miles from anywhere.

MARJORIE Somebody will come. The Thompsons. They'll have to return at some point.

BERYL No, I'm not leaving Daphne out there on her own. Sisterly solidarity. Who's with me? (BLANCHE raises her hand. DOROTHY cautiously follows. MARJORIE shakes her head.)

MARJORIE It's suicide you know.'

The final line of this scene, 'We're coming to get you Daphne' connotes a further intertextual reference to *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and its subsequent parody in *Shaun of the Dead* (2004).

This conflict-driven narrative device of splitting the women into two groups enabled the writing of the close concurrence of two key abject, excessive and absurd 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26). The central carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1985 et al.) mobile-phone retrieval scene is structured at approximately the mid-point of the script. According to Snyder: 'Scenes that stand out...will be remembered' (2005, 250). Intent in writing, is to provoke the disgust aligned to the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1985 et al.) through gross-out material most explicitly within this scene. Moreover, it is 'literally obsessed with corporeality' (Cherry in Jancovich, 2000, 196).

In the central sequence, the women at the 'big house' hear a phone ringing and discover a hidden doorway to the basement. They snatch the closest weapons to hand, and descend into dark dungeon where they find Paul's mutilated body, phone deep lodged inside:

'JUNE moves her fish slice to PAUL's blood-soaked mouth and flinchingly opens the gaping wound. The light of the screen illuminates Paul's internal organs. Light also radiates from the gaping wound at the other end of his torso. The phone stops ringing.

JUNE Oh God, I don't know which end's worse!

MARJORIE You've got the fish slice, it's longer and that *ahem* end's harder to reach. (She points to his rectum)

JUNE You have the bloody fish slice then!

MARJORIE Come on June, we must retrieve that telephone!

The women take their positions at either end - MARJORIE at the top and JUNE at the BOTTOM. As JUNE tentatively begins to delve into Paul's intestines and MARJORIE stalls, SOPHIA wakes up. She screams at the sight in front of her and faints again. The shock of the scream causes MARJORIE to knock PAUL's body to the floor from the bondage table on which it has been dumped. The phone rings briefly, dwindles and dies. The women look at each other. JUNE is covered in gore.'

The scene is at the centre of both the script's running time and its intent to evoke the disgust embedded in the abject, excessive and absurd:

'The mouth and anus, the endpoints of a tube that runs through the centre of the body, are crucial to the conceptualisation of the disgusting...the anus and excrement are the great reducers of human pretension' (Miller, 1998, 20).

It reflects Miller's claim that: 'They are the holes that allow contamination in to pollute the soul and they are the passageway through which substances pass that can defile ourselves and others too' (ibid, 59). The (im?)pure combination of the abject, disgusting and potentially most explicitly grotesque scene in the film, apply the findings of Part One, with focused application of the absurd to ensure the concurrence of gross-out comedy and horror. The intended enjoyment in reception is written to embody Thomson's claim that:

'Our laughter at some kinds of the grotesque and the opposite response – disgust, horror etc. – mixed with it, are both reactions to the physically cruel, abnormal or obscene; the possibility, in other words, that alongside our civilised response something deep within us...something hidden but very much alive, sadistic impulse makes us react with unholy glee and barbaric delight' (1972, 8).

The consecutive scenes of the parallel narrative are written in contrast, as the rescue group discover Daphne's body. This sequence was written to remind the audience of the characters' humanity and likeability amongst the carnage, and to invoke a degree of pathos through character empathy, foreshadowing the required pathos in the death of Beryl in the final act. 'I wish she was our mum', mourn the twins, finding Daphne's still-grinning body. It is intended that, 'the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen' (Williams, 1991, 143), and that the signalled connotation in character action is of empathy in provocation of pathos.

Yet, within the slasher framework, again this must be merely a brief emotional stakes-raising period of 'measured relief' (Paul, 1994) as horrific threat remains explicitly ever-present (Snyder, 2005). The failed rescue group's 'production number' (Thrower, 2008, 26) is written to explicitly increase the Townswoman body count (Conrich, 2010) as they are trapped in a barn by the Creature and a number of potentially lethal weapons. Embracing Kawin's theory that, 'horror is a compound of terror and revulsion' (2012, 3), these further explicit/disgusting murders form another carnivalesque gross-out set piece (Snyder, 2005) written to connote the key iconographic and semiotic signifiers of concurrent horror and comedy through abjection, excess and absurdity. The iconographic signifiers of horror meanwhile are well represented in the terrifying supernatural attacker, deadly weaponry, dark barn location, and graphic, productive violence:

'BERYL (whispering) Turn that bloody torch off Glad! It's like Blackpool illuminations back here.

BLANCHE (hissing) Turn it off Glad!

GLADYS I'm trying, it's stuck!

(The women wrestle with the torch sending light beams across the ceiling.)

BLANCHE Give it to me, I'll do it.

She steps out from between the hay bales. Like lightning a large pair of sheers emerge from the darkness and cut her in half. (BARBARA) screams and darts out from the other side of the bale attempting an escape. The figure removes the trimmer from the wall and shreds her from behind before she reaches the door.'

Dika argues in the 'stalker' genre trend popularised in the late 1970's/early 1980's: 'Here a game was played...as audience members shouted their support for both the film's heroine...and the killer' (2003, 209). In writing the celebratory frenzy (Paul, 1994) of the multiple abject, excessive and absurd murders (Townswomen are not often perceived to engage in activities which lead to them being cut in half by shears – nor are they traditionally depicted blocking strimmers), it is the intent that the genre-targeted audience should celebrate the 'work' of the genre intertextual Creature and its carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984 et al.) actions. The Creature is the medium of delivery of that frenzy (ibid) in meeting the genre-aligned expectations/mental space of the audience (Selbo, 2015) in disgusting, bloody, intertextual and inventive carnage.

The following sequences of the surviving, shaken women regrouped at the 'big house', enabled writing of further secondary plot questions (Field, 2005), maintaining intrigue. Still primarily characterised by conflict, dialogue was written to tease a revelation of the relevance of the opening sequence and secondary narrative. In a night-time scene, as the women attempt sleep, Beryl and Gladys take first look-out shift. The dialogue appears to directly reference the character of the Historian, teasing the audience with a partial revelation before fading...:

'BERYL Listen Glad, there's something I've wanted to tell you for a while, but it felt too risky. But now, well, I'm not sure there's much to lose.

GLADYS What is it Ber?

BERYL Well, you know I've been working for the Potters Bluff Historical Society more often over the past few months? (Gladys nods) I've been working with a local historian and I think we've uncovered something quite unpleasant worryingly close to home... (she chugs her drink and pours another)'.

Moreover, the secondary narrative is exposed further in the following confrontation sequence between the Creature, who has made short work of the house's makeshift barricades, reinforcing threat (Snyder, 2005), and Marjorie and June. Under siege, the women barricade themselves into one of the bedrooms with a chest of drawers. It spills their only potential weapons, absurdly over-sized dildos (reinforcing comedy through the carnivalesque connotation of absurdity). They are trapped by the terrifying and seemingly unstoppable foe:

'The women cower in the corner and JUNE picks up an enormous black dildo which she brandishes in front of her. The figure stops and picks up a killer black stiletto. He slowly approaches.

JUNE For God's sake someone help us! Get back or I'll use this on you! (she waves the dildo)

The figure moves closer. He lashes out with the stiletto heel. In a split-second MARJORIE pulls JUNE in front of her. JUNE's throat is severed, blood arcs across the white walls of the bedroom. She looks at MARJORIE in disbelief as she falls to the ground, blood spurting from her neck. The killer also looks at MARJORIE. And pauses. He lowers the stiletto. She takes the opportunity, hits him with an empty drawer and flees the room.'

The oncoming move into the third act enables the increase in the narrative connotation of the secondary plot's twist regarding Marjorie. The scene also connotes a call-back to the comedic juxtaposition of the women in the sex dungeon, and an intertextual dialogue reference to horror comedy programme *The League of Gentlemen* (Steve Bendelack, 1999-2002).

In order for narrative to cross into that third act and set the context for the pivotal showdown between the women and Creature, the characters had to first be written to realise in action and dialogue, that their attacker can be harmed and, just perhaps, defeated. To achieve this the scene was constructed which trapped them in the unusual location of the kitchen cupboard. Forced to use whatever is at hand to defend themselves, the scene foreshadows the crucial 'tooling up' scene which proceeds the showdown. Gladys is written to take more of an aggressive lead, foreshadowing her final girl (Clover, 1992) character arc, at this narrative juncture. Moreover, she does so with the violent adoption of another in a series of unlikely (Danow, 1995) counter-weapons which connote the domesticity/mundanity juxtaposition of the scenario: the Hoover. Thrusting the Hoover through the zip of the attacking Creature's mask, she:

'Sucks the air out of his mask and crushes the decayed bones in his face. She throws the vacuum at him and he falls to the ground wrestling the domestic appliance. The women run out of the back door screaming.'

The pivotal confrontation between the knitters and their supernatural foe has been seeded, aligning to Snyder's Beat Sheet (2005) and Parker's three act structure (1999). In the following scene the women must find the barn empty of its previous deadly weapons, this narrative event forcing the horror/humour juxtaposition of the adoption of the only weapons available to them, which deliver on the script's title, *Knitters!* The innocuous tools of the knitting and crafting trade are about to be put into absurdly abject juxta positional use, as are the skills of the women who wield them:

'BERYL Alright ladies. You know last year when we came second in the craft competition and vowed never to be beaten again? Well, we're going to make bloody sure we're not beaten now....with an unfortunate life or death element. (The women look confused) Sophia, you're our master knitting and crochet champion, right?

SOPHIA Yes, but I don't see..

.

BERYL What equipment did you bring with you?

SOPHIA Well, I've got needles, crochet hooks, scissors, pin cushions, picking knives...

BERYL Rose, you won that baking Gold medal 6 years running. Do you think you could rustle us up a piping hot pot of that award-winning jam? And I've heard tell of some creative practices with flower...

ROSE (starting to grasp the link) Of course Beryl.'

The subsequent montage is written to describe the women adapting their innocuous crafting and knitting (which would be favoured in later drafts) supplies into potentially lethal weapons, again reflecting the film's central humorous subversion of genre characterisation and iconography. Wong stresses the importance of 'looking for an approach that is not completely expected, taking an idea in a direction that is less familiar' (in Fahy, 2015, 72).

In order for narrative to enter the cumulative 'dark night of the soul' beat of the script the women must initially appear to win this confrontation, but ultimately lose,

initiating the 'all is lost' beat (Snyder, 2005). Narrative events have connoted that the Creature can be injured, but as slasher convention dictates, it will rise again (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2011, Dika, 2009 et al.), and more Townswomen will fall. Only the script's central trio of Marjorie, Beryl and Gladys should enter the final and third act, fleeing to the boat house, the site of the full revelation of secondary narrative through dialogue/flashback. The boat house is written as the isolated location of both Marjorie and Beryl's deaths, leaving the path clear for Gladys to fulfil her character arc. Dialogue in this contained setting is heavy in exposition, revealing Marjorie's hidden character arc and beginning to unravel hidden plotting, while answering questions posed at the outset:

'MARJORIE Are you delirious Beryl? Preposterous.

BERYL Nothing's preposterous when there's evidence to back it up Marjorie. (She reaches inside her generous bra & pulls out a slip of paper)

MARJORIE What on earth is that?

BERYL You see we're on to you Marjorie. And we've nearly got all the evidence we need. (Beryl has nothing to lose anymore)

MARJORIE What evidence? Who is we? What are you talking about?

BERYL I think you know exactly what I'm talking about...Peter Dandridge. Geoffrey Dandridge. Your son and husband. You killed them.'

The following abrupt action was written to shock and subvert expectation, aligned to the false final girl (Clover, 1992) arc, as Marjorie lashes out with Beryl's own penknife and fatally slits her throat. This dialogue-heavy sequence balances the fast-paced action of the previous confrontation in favour of exposition and is the key site of the narrative conclusion of the conflict between the women. Again, 'conflict must be at the very hub of your story because it is the core of strong action and strong character' (Snyder, 2005, 246). Contrary to her connoted positioning within the action, the connoted hero has fallen at the hand of one of her fellow Guild members.

The abrupt event of Beryl's murder leads directly into a flashback montage of Marjorie's secondary narrative explanation. Over the closely-structured flashback sequence, she reveals her concealment of her secret son; how she watched him drown in the lake by which they now stand; how she killed her husband and blamed a burglar; how, years later, she had to kill the Historian who had got too close to the truth; and finally how she lured the Townswomen to the same lakeside resort with the intent of disposing of Marjorie in a 'freak accident'. To add to the ever-presence of the grotesque (Thomson 1972), this dialogue is all delivered with her mutilated, undead, long-lost son in her embrace, the final revelatory piece in the secondary narrative structure, that Marjorie is the Creature's mother:

'The figure looms towards her chainsaw-first. She scrabbles and tries to get to her feet.

MARJORIE No! (The figure lumbers forward) No...Peter...no!

The figure stops. He lowers the chainsaw. It is a very long time since he has heard his name spoken. MARJORIE scrabbles to her feet, slipping on blood.

MARJORIE It's OK Peter.

She moves towards him cautiously. He drops the chainsaw. Gingerly and disgustedly she reaches out and engages him in a bloody embrace.

MARJORIE There now. Mother's here.'

The utterance of the Creature's name somewhat humanises the character and passes the murderous mantle to his mother (with a surname of Dandridge in intertextual reference to *Fright Night* (Tom Holland, 1985)). Peter is written to be present for the whole twisted flashback narrative and having been reminded of his mother's callous and murderous actions towards him, saves one of his most visceral acts of violence for her. Crucially, this murder prioritises the abject over the absurd aligned to some of the previous excesses of mutilation. This death scene had to be written to minimise comedy and to connote the deserved horrific punishment of Marjorie's foregone (and ongoing) evil deeds:

'PETER's embrace of MARJORIE suddenly begins to stiffen...He begins to wail and literally squeeze the life out of MARJORIE. Her screams join with the sound of bones violently cracking and snapping. The screaming stops. He drops the broken female frame and kicks the crumpled and bloody body into the lake through the hole in the wall.'

The scene was also written to connote the poetic justice in the abject, bloody, pulverising hug destroying the mother who robbed her son of affection. Audience response is moreover guided by character response in that of the horrified and repelled Gladys (Williams, 1995). The flashback sequence slows the frenetic, violent pace towards the climax, provides the required exposition in exposing the secondary narrative, and prioritises the less expressly comedic in representation of absurdity through excess.

Fulfilling Gladys' character arc serves to further connote the new world order (Parker, 1999) of this third and final act. While Peter seeks return to the peace of his watery grave, almost in narrative conclusion, Gladys must not enable such a low-key conclusion. Enraged at the death of her friends and finally pushed too far, Gladys is the character who now controls the narrative progression and frenetic violence (which again leans towards the abject rather than excessive and absurd in connoted reflection of her fury at her friends' deaths.) 'I'm not having this anymore!' she screams and finally collapses, after running Peter through repeatedly with a chainsaw.

The circular narrative is written to close in the following scene in which Barry's coach finally arrives to collect the women. Again, this is not the script for a male rescuer/hero, and this sequence explicitly connotes that Gladys will be her own saviour to fulfil that new world order (ibid). In connotation of the immense contextual distance travelled from the opening scenes of the women arriving at the lakeside, to the escalated frenzy of violence, Barry surveys the scenes of carnage in the once innocuous cabin retreat. He finally encounters an exhausted Gladys. As they are described hobbling towards the coach, a chainsaw whirrs behind them, wielded furiously by a still undead Peter. No longer horrified, and now more exasperated (as the audience is intended to be at the returning killer plot device (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2011, Gelder, 2000, Carroll, 1990 et al.), she pushes a useless Barry aside.

Re-instigating the blend of the abject, excessive and absurd to connote the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984 et al.), Gladys boards the coach and violently reverses over Peter multiple bloody times. This gross-out 'celebratory frenzy' (Paul, 1994, 6) both fulfils and subverts genre convention surrounding the inevitable return and less inevitable death of the killer:

'GLADYS moves to first gear, drives forward and then reverses sharply again. The bus bumps upwards as it crushes PETER's body again. Without emotion she repeats this once more until there is no bump & PETER is pulverised. GLADYS finally stops. She looks in the mirror and uses BARRY's handkerchief on the dashboard to wipe a streak of blood from her face. She looks down. A 1st Place rosette has propelled from underneath a passenger seat and landed in the aisle. She picks it up & resignedly pins it to her chest. She puts the bus back into first gear and drives off into the sunset.'

The narrative focus of the competition enabled writing of the conative placing on her lapel of the rosette as an emblem of Gladys' victory over her own confidence and in trans mutating into the film's heroine. She finally defeats the monsters: real and emotional. And resoundingly so, by crushing Peter into a pulp, and abruptly halting his genre-encoded further return. According to Scheider: 'In these movies survival depends not only on knowing the conventions of modern horror cinema, but on figuring out how to use that knowledge to break free of those conventions' (in Ursini, 2000, 176). Yet, while genre conventions have been acknowledged and subverted in the action of Peter's unquestionable defeat, the script closes with the connotation that the real evil has yet to be defeated.

The final sequence describes a baffled, solitary and redundant Barry trying to make sense of the events and his surroundings, while:

'Behind him the moonlight reflects off the lake. All is now peaceful aside from the chainsaw. The water gently ripples. The rippling begins to increase near the boathouse. The gentle roll is disturbed by movement under the water. Violently a hand thrusts from the lake, the moon shimmering from the pearls on the wrist...'

Kawin argues, 'Such open endings have become expected...most of them still aim to send the audience out with a shock or unresolved fear, to carry the chill outside' (2012, 13). As the script has a false final girl (Clover, 1992), it also has that false

representation of the finality of death of the killer. Kawin furthers: 'Genres include recurring elements, figures and situations, and their repetition from one film to another is part of the pleasure' (ibid). *Knitters!* is a script which intends to deliver much pleasure to genre fans through its intertextuality and adherence to horror narrative convention (with its own core subversions), and in the writing of its final narrative image, the connotation that the true monster is not yet dead, intends to fulfil that genre-encoded pleasure, while also reflecting narrative circularity (Hills, 2005).

Drafting/Editing

'Revision, revision, revision. It's the most important thing to producing good writing' (Greenwalt in Fahy, 2015, 91).

Knitters! underwent a total of eight drafts from partial drafts to redrafts of complete scripts. As outlined in Chapter Two, the first full draft forms *Appendix 17*, while *Appendix 18* is a contextual mid-completion draft. Herein, discussion and analysis will centre on the most significant changes, additions and eliminations which took place in completion of the final script of *Knitters!* These amendments offer opportunity for reflection on the development of praxis in script writing, and the development and understanding of the script writer in applying research findings in practice in relation to the porosity of horror and comedy.

Knitters!' opening sequence had always been intended to function as Snyder's, 'visual 'grabber'...an opening that grabs you by the throat and seizes your attention (and) boldly establishes style and tone of the entire screenplay' (2005, 128). It has also been established that the opening would set the tone in blending abjection, excess and absurdity in connotation of both horror and comedy in gross-out material. However, writing these scenes proved among the most challenging throughout drafting: the opening sequence and flashback exposition sequence of Marjorie's murders, were the most edited to the final draft. The primary purpose of the opening sequence should be the Historian's abject, excessive and absurd death, connoting the grotesque and carnivalesque from the outset (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984). Field states: 'Your story determines the type of opening you use...the opening of your story must be well thought-out and usually designed to illustrate what your story is about' (2005, 99). And while the grotesque death scene

delivered that intent, the Historian's dialogue was overwritten to the final stages of drafting, extending the opening sequence in its required screen time.

The sequence was cut in every draft with only the essential scenes remaining, and while carnivalesque humour is still derived from the Historian's expert knowledge of lavatorial matters, his dialogue is significantly reduced in the final draft. This furthered pace and priority of the murder 'production number' (Thrower, 2008, 26). Added, however, was a line of dialogue which established that a woman called Gladys had been his assistant, and that he had been unkind to her, offering a potential motive for murder and further interweaving the secondary plot – of which the Historian's murder was a triggering device. In the penultimate draft, moreover, his death was amended to further reflect the connotation of the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984) in ensuring he land anus-first on the castle's spire (adding intertextuality to the 1995 horror comedy *Funnyman*).

This interweaving of the film's secondary narrative throughout became an important addition in the drafting process to maintain the intrigue and narrative tension connoted in the opening sequence. While the film's core murder set pieces (Snyder, 2005) required much attention in delivering the thesis' Part One findings, the importance of fulfilling narrative complexity developed throughout drafting and editing, proved a key point of learning through practice. While those gross-out 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26), were crucial to setting the horror comedy tone, multi-layered plotting and characterisation through dialogue were also important in constructing an engaging and fulfilling narrative.

To further interweave the significance of the Historian's death throughout narrative, dialogue was added to Beryl's introductory phone conversation to reflect that she could not attend his funeral due to the knitting weekend. She would also indicate that a conversation should be had about the circumstances of his death when she returned, little knowing that she wouldn't return. Dialogue was added for June during the coach journey sequence, in which she indicated that she had dated a pompous historian who had left the restaurant without paying the bill. Most significantly, a later draft introduced a scene in which a shadowy figure watched the slumbering Gladys and Beryl in the doorway of the 'big house's kitchen. The creature had not yet broken into the house, so this figure would be Marjorie (revealed in the flashback sequence), wielding a fragment of broken vase as a weapon.

A breadcrumb trail was scattered throughout the narrative to offer clues and red herrings around the opening murder, and the links of many of the women to the apparently disconnected event. 'The opening scene and story that's going to unfold are directly linked,' states Field (2005, 129). This secondary plot was seeded more frequently in drafting to provide recurrent reminders of the opening events and their coherence to the primary narrative, as: 'For a narrative to actually work, active questions are raised...from moment to moment, from scene to scene, from sequence to sequence throughout the narrative' (Parker, 2006, 25). Praxis improved in editing through recognition of this structural construct.

A research-informed approach which further improved structure, was targeted coherence of the length of the script to similar films within the horror comedy genre. The early drafts of *Knitters!* were too brief (especially in dialogue), and therefore areas of expansion were essential. However those expansions should simultaneously be meaningful. Close research was undertaken into the length of similar films in the blended genre, and it became clear that the script should not exceed 85-90 minutes including opening and closing credits. Films which are the script's intended genre allies in tone and content, reinforced this requirement. *Evil Dead II* (1987) runs at 84 minutes, *Dead Snow* (2009) at 91 minutes, *Hatchet* (Adam Green, 2007) at 85 minutes, and *Doghouse* (2009) at 89 minutes, for example. The script should therefore not exceed 85 pages, with a target of 80 pages (allowing for opening and closing credit sequences) - successfully reflected in the final draft.

Much of the consequent mid-point draft expansion focused on dialogue between the Townswomen as the murderous grotesque carnival frenzy (Paul, 1994) mounted and the film raced promptly (too promptly) towards its crescendo. Blended genre research had indicated the required overemphasis on showcasing excessive and abject gross-out murders, however, characterisation and intra-Guild relationships should also take prominence in order for narrative to be meaningful and character actions to be justified and believable. This would also reflect Paul's measured relief (ibid) pacing structure in balancing violent frenzy (ibid) with moments which furthered character and plot. These expansions served to expand the intra-Guild conflict (Snyder, 2005), adding dimension to dialogue which had an early tendency to be more expositionary in explaining narrative actions.

Moreover, expansion prompted review of all of the Townswomen characters in early-mid drafting to ensure that even less prominent characters had unique

distinguishing characteristics and enough dialogue to hold narrative context and significance. Barbara and Blanche, for example, became twins who would echo each other's speech and who Daphne believed to be her daughters, furthering connotation of pathos at the discovery of her murder. Simultaneously, the stormy, supernatural awakening of the supernatural Creature was expanded further to give dramatic description/impetus and to reinforce the balance of the horror genre through iconography. This crucial narrative event should hold sufficient narrative context and significance alongside character expansions. The aligned movement from thesis to antithesis (Snyder, 2005), had been undersold in early drafts, and the dialogue-less scene required strengthening to more explicitly encode the horror iconography at the core of the pivotal movement between acts of the script:

'EXT - LAKESIDE - NIGHTTIME A storm rages. Rain pelts the lake and wind howls through the woods. Lightening illuminates the water as the hillside rumbles with thunder. A sharp close thunderclap is followed by a splintering lightning bolt which lights up the lakeside and strikes the dislodged pylon. It crashes heavily into the lake. A blaze of sparks sear across the water's surface, crackling electricity' (all Drafting/Editing extracts from **Part Two**).

With consideration of expansion of characterisation and core narrative events, review of pacing was simultaneously required to ensure structural balance. What increasingly felt on re-reading like a frenetic race to the third act, required nuance for improved application of dramatic tension and measured relief (Paul, 1994). In order to achieve this, later drafting brought a major addition in a series of solely comedic scenes. These were added to further connote the clash of the suburban with the supernatural, increase the extent of the gross-out excesses in juxtaposition with the comedic mundane, and slow that frenetic pace to the conclusion and synthesis (Parker, 1999). The scenes were written to depict the mundanity of coach driver Barry's day-to-day life in juxtaposition with the life-threatening excesses of violence, horror and abjection facing the women:

'INT - BARRY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING The sound of deep rumbling snoring fills a sparsely decorated, yet still messy, bedroom in which a figure lies prostrate under a sheet. A naked leg hangs over the side of the bed. A radio alarm clock suddenly blasts out 'Holding Out For A Hero' by Bonnie Tyler. There is a groan and a hand reaches out from under the sheet and presses snooze.

The snoring resumes. Moments later the alarm rings again - this time blasting 'Hero' by Enrique Iglesias.

BARRY Alright Enrique!

He slams the off button and slowly sits up, dishevelled and bleary-eyed. He stares into the distance, immobile, for a minute then slowly climbs out of bed. Dressed in y-fronts and socks he walks slowly out of the door scratching his backside and yawning. A moment later there is the sound of a flush from the bathroom.'

This scene was positioned to juxtapose directly with sequences in which the Townswomen have just come under attack in the 'big house', graphically and violently losing more of their number. It occurs on the final morning of the knitting retreat-turned-festival of carnage, and further serves as a reminder of the circular narrative plot device of the potential coach rescue that evening. The early over-focus on (and frankly, deep enjoyment of) showcasing the celebratory frenzy (Paul, 1994) horror-aligned murder set pieces (Snyder, 2005), was improved by this addition in balance of pace, and the enablement of pure humour presented to connote through difference, the extent of the concurrent gross-out comedy horror. The juxtaposition further reinforces the humour in the conflict of normality versus the escalation of horror/threat aligned to the abjection, excess and absurdity of the action in the Lake District setting. It also crucially plays with the hero role, which Barry is knowingly positioned within the narrative to fulfil as the women's rescuer. Gladys' character arc requires that she is her own hero, and that Barry is incapable of fulfilling the role which the narrative playfully carves out for him.

A further scene of Barry's heroic impotence was added directly after the montage of the women preparing their unconventional weapons and standing ready for ill-prepared battle: thus furthering humour through the punctuation of escalated tension with mundanity.

'INT - DISCOUNT SUPERMARKET - DAYTIME A handful of Sunday shoppers wander slowly and aimlessly round a discount supermarket pushing trolleys. A casually dressed BARRY is doing his weekly shop. Dreary music rings out, interrupted by occasional monotone announcements. He pushes his trolley mindlessly down the household goods aisle.

ANNOUNCER (unseen, over tannoy, monotone) And today only, two for one on carpet mousse and j cloths. That's Aisle 3, Homeware, two for one on carpet mousse and j cloths.

The music returns - 'Rescue Me' by Fontella Bass. BARRY navigates the trolley to a large fridge cabinet. He picks up a packet of cooked ham and sniffs it. He puts it in his trolley and pushes it away. He stops. Returns to the fridge and puts the ham back. He pauses then picks up a cheaper brand and throws it into the trolley.'

Moreover, as the odds escalate in the central Lake District conflict and the women appear to be overwhelmed by the force of supernatural threat, two extra scenes of Barry were introduced. In the first he is depicted dithering while boarding the coach, excruciating an audience aware of the increasing stakes in the script's primary location (Parker, 1999). The second, on his coach, stuck in traffic approaching halfway in the rescue journey, which is reflected in his disharmonious singing of the Bon Jovi's *Living On A Prayer*: '*We're halfway there...take my hand we'll make it I swear!*' Again, both served to slow the frenetic pace, build tension, connote that the potential saviour role was subject to mockery, and remind of the humour/absurdity in the juxtaposition of mundanity versus the gross-out excesses of the carnivalesque grotesque.

According to Field: 'It's important to remember that structure is not something embedded in concrete, or something that is unbending or unyielding, rather, it is flexible, like a tree that bends in wind, but doesn't break' (2005, 141). These structural amendments were a rich addition to the script's pacing and proved an interesting point of reflection on the writing of scenes of pure comedy in a blended genre script. The writing of the comedic scenes derived much pleasure, more than anticipated due to the author's genre preference for horror, as reflected in those earlier explored scenes in which horror took priority in the established balance of application of the porous genres. While the gross-out carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984) 'set pieces' (Snyder, 2005, 80) were the scenes in which horror and comedy were most directly co-present, reflecting the findings of Part One, there was still room in the script for scenes and sequences which punctuated with comedy alone. In presenting these scenes in juxtaposition to the central horrific action in the Lake District resort, the abjection, excess and absurdity of the narrative context could be humorously highlighted and further exposed (aligned to Gary Sherman interview in *Intermission*).

While these scenes were added in drafting to slow the frenetic pace towards the third act and improve narrative structure (although fulfilled more), the flashback sequence which exposes the script's secondary narrative, was trimmed to the very final draft. The overbalance in exposition and the excess number of scenes chronicling Marjorie's murderous history, threatened the cliché of the rambling killer revealing in detail why and how they did it at the film's climax, stealing too much screen time in dialogue over action. To address this overbalance, the sequence of the murder and funeral of Marjorie's husband, for example, were removed, and instead, described in dialogue over the core scene of the destruction of the evidence at the site of Peter's death. Trimming the montage ensured a faster-moving pace while still delivering key scenes of Peter's tragic childhood and eventual death at his mother's hands. Editing to balance pacing and slow the dash between murder production numbers (Thrower, 2008), while speeding up an overly long flashback sequence, enabled a more engaging narrative structure. 'Long scene, or short one...moment of silence or action...they are signposts, the goals, the objectives, the destination points of each act – forged links in the chain of dramatic action,' according to Field (2005, 159). While Marjorie's exposition was significant, it should not overbalance the overarching narrative of the script.

As the script's drafting progressed towards a final, closely considered version of *Knitters!*, two essential points for address arose in its content. (A third potential legal issue will be addressed in closing reflection on final edit). The script still contained areas of overly explanatory dialogue; and an illogical oversight in plotting had gone unnoticed. If there was no mobile phone reception, how did Barry's mobile phone ring on the coach as he was leaving the site? Firstly, in expanding dialogue in the early to mid-drafting process, some had been overwritten through a tendency to over-explain and not allow the action to speak for itself. Burroway advises: '(Dialogue's) purpose in fiction is never merely to convey information....(but) to characterise, provide exposition, set the scene, advance the action, foreshadow, and/or remind' (2011, 75). Writing dialogue had always been the most challenging aspect of novel script writing praxis and required the most editing in order to sound more natural, and less explicitly a delivery tool of exposition. This process was improved by reading aloud, studying the dialogue closely in similar scripts/films, and employing the Character Development materials to ensure more rounded verbal characterisation. Lines of dialogue were trimmed and edited to the close of writing

the script, and shorter, more direct and natural sentences and exclamations were favoured in sequences containing longer exchanges.

Meanwhile, the sequence in which Barry distractedly reverses into the power cable at the lakeside, was rewritten as a distraction by means of food and drink debris in his driver's compartment, aligned to his Character Analysis. In the rewritten scene the mobile telephone is removed and instead the slamming of Barry's brakes causes half-drunk coffee cups, and the debris of snack food to fall into his lap from around the dashboard. Flustering to clean the mess he drives away, oblivious that the power cable pole is dislodged and vulnerable to the oncoming storm.

Knitters!' final edit followed the submission of a penultimate draft for supervisor comment. Delay in return enabled distance from the script, thesis and exegesis, and offered a fresher perspective on return to close final reading. This distance prompted a review of the description of the explicit horror in the script's crucial gross-out 'set pieces' (Snyder, 2008, 80). Foremost, however, sparked by direct comment, one of the crucial final amendments would be the removal of the 'Mary Berry' character, or her replacement with a fictional character with a similar career profile and character traits. As a novice screen writer a potential legally problematic approach had been taken in featuring a well-known and much-loved real-life celebrity. A character type could be connoted without the potential legal ramifications of directly using a known celebrity without permission. The stereotype of a character who the audience could denote as similar to the well-loved former *Great British Bake Off* (Andy Devonshire, Scott Tankard, 2010-) judge and cultural icon, could be achieved by amending the name to Kairey Cherry (chosen for its baking connotation, alongside the rhythmic association). This enabled a shorthand connotation of the expectation of the character's public persona in contrast with the louche behaviour displayed privately. In order to reassure that this character was not Berry herself, a line of dialogue was added to signal that while the script nodded to this certain type of national treasure, this was not her, and that Cherry was not a fan of 'that Bake Off posho!'

The final drafting address, then, was to ensure that the descriptions of the film's core horror-aligned iconography and 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26) were suitably explicitly written, as they were crucial to the praxis of applying Part One findings. While much of the film's comedy (and aspects of the horror) could be derived through dialogue, the majority of the carnivalesque murder scenes took

place in description alone, without dialogue, therefore the horror would need to be explicitly described to maximise impact. This silence of dialogue also extended to the script's masked killer, whose actions alone, must 'sell' the horror and threat of the character (Snyder, 2005).

To this end, all encounters with the Creature were revisited to ensure that they were suitably horror iconographic, and that the descriptions of the Creature's actions and appearances were sinister enough to inspire fear/threat – in the same way that the Creature's revival in the lake had been revised to increase connotation of horror and ominosity (Sipos, 2010). The threatening presence of the Creature insidiously lurking in the woods needed to be strengthened and maintained throughout, as did its insidious and homicidal intrusions into the relatively safety of the locations. This would fulfil Sipos' theory that: 'A horror story requires an unnatural threat, which is to say, in addition to being unnatural, a threat must be a threat' (ibid, 9). For example, the thrusting of the hand of the 'ravaged humanoid creature' into the compromised bathroom window was expanded: 'Another arm rips through the frame followed by a horrifying masked face with a knitting needle for a right eye'.

The descriptions of some of the Creature's abject, excessive and absurd murder set pieces (Snyder, 2005) themselves were rewritten to be more explicitly abject, starting with the gross-out dungeon slaughter which would set the tone of threat and productive violence from the outset of the killing spree. The scene became a 'mutilation frenzy' and the couple diced in the sex swing were reduced to 'cubes of flesh' which 'explode across the dungeon walls'. June's death scene was also revised as murder by the piercing of a stiletto heel through the eye. This amendment reflected the potential creativity (Carroll, 1990) in depiction of violence and mutilation, avoided repetition in Marjorie's throat-slitting murder of Beryl, and connoted an intertextual reference to Lucio Fulci's *Zombi 2* (1979). The abject horror iconographic spilling of blood was described more explicitly in its abject intent: 'Blood arcs across the white walls of her bedroom' as the stiletto heel pierces deep into her eye.

In revising and reviewing the balance of horror and comedy in the final drafts of the script, it was interesting to reflect that the script did deliver on its intent to apply Part One findings in representation of abject, excessive and absurd scenes of blended gross-out horror and comedy (and some which prioritised each element, applying the ability to adjust the balance of genres). Moreover, these findings had been

proven to be reliable and accurate in application in praxis. However, there had been genuine, unanticipated enjoyment in writing the comedy in some of the script's more contextual and character and pace driven scenes, especially those which played with the character of Barry in his complete inability to assume the heroic role. While the Part One findings of genre porosity of horror and comedy, are mostly present in praxis in *Knitters!*' carnivalesque scenes of grotesque excess (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984 et al.), some of the scenes which surround them have leaned more towards the comedic than anticipated in the script's conception, and this has served to benefit characterisation, narrative and pacing, while also serving to enhance the carnivalesque gross-out frenzy (Paul, 1994) in the abjection, excess and absurdity of their counterparts.

Conclusion

A rigorous, researched approach has informed the praxis and exegesis of the creation of the original feature film script *Knitters!* In Part One, scholarly and direct case study research identified the cohesive factors between horror and comedy in gross-out material, as **abjection, excess and absurdity**. These key cohesive semiotic, thematic and narrative traits have been uniquely applied in the creation of *Knitters!*, a script written in the gross-out tradition within an overall slasher horror comedy narrative framework. Horror iconography such as a supernatural masked killer, productive threat (Sipos 2010), (multiple) cabins in woods, deadly weaponry and excesses of blood, gore and viscera have been liberally applied in order to firmly connote horror genre alignment (Lacey, 2000, Neale, 2000, Grant, 2003 et al.). Yet the comedic is co-present in the film's excesses of abjection and in the associated and moreover, underlying, absurdity of the placing of the members of the Townswomen's Guild within the narrative. Further, in connotation of the **disgust** provoked by the presence of the **grotesque**, the co-present tension between comedy and horror (Thomson, 1972). As Carroll argues:

'Disgust, including disgust elicited by the violation of our standing norms and categories, does not belong solely to the domain of the genre of horror. It is also a natural ingredient of comedy...But in order for a categorical violation to turn into an occasion for horror, something else must be added, namely fear' (2013, 197).

The blend of horror and comedy in the **carnavalesque** (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1974) is deliberately connoted in the film's explicitly murderous gross-out 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26). It is intended that a knowing genre audience for whom the script is directly intended, as reflected in the multiple points of intertextuality, will revel in these carnivalesque 'set pieces' (Snyder, 2005, 80) which are central to the horror (comedy) genre. The resulting semiotic and narrative signals of the **carnavalesque grotesque** (ibid) at the script's core, are similarly directly targeted at a knowing genre audience. *Knitters!* actively seeks Paul's aligned 'celebratory frenzy' (1994, 64) and 'festive communal atmosphere in the theatre' (ibid, 65) through semiotic representation, genre-aligned narrative and thematic tropes, and moreover express intertextuality. It plays to Selbo's, 'understanding of the specific knowledge (audience expectations and how to satisfy them)...at the core of making scene and sequence choices' (2015, 317). She furthers:

'The film audience is drawn into a genre due to personal memories and/or emotional experiences. These reactions and anticipations can be identified and explored by considering the primal desires that appeal to an audience interested in a certain genre' (ibid).

This close construction of the 'mental space of film genre' (ibid, 34) has enabled audience-targeted construction of screenplay with intent to offer Hills' 'pleasures' of genre recognition and engagement (2005). Yet, the freshness which Snyder (2005) prioritises in adding new material to the existing genre bank, is derived through the characterisation of the film's unlikely heroines/victims and the juxtapositions connoted therein:

'It is the journey that must be original, it is the characters that must feel fresh and new and contemporary, while at the same time connecting with the experience of the audience. The outcome may surprise but at the same time it needs to satisfy' (ibid, 43).

Application of each of the three research-established cohesive elements between horror and comedy can be evidenced in turn in the praxis of creating *Knitters!*, aligned to the thesis' research question findings. In Part One, **Abjection** was found to exist in horror genre-aligned iconography (Lacey, 2000, Neale, 2000, Grant, 2003 et al.) of representations of blood, viscera and gore. Representations of the lower bodily stratum/sexual abjections were found to connote abjection which aligned more to comedy iconography and representation, and moreover to the carnivalesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984). In writing the script to ensure combination of horror and comedy, iconography, narrative and visual representation was included which showcases excesses of blood, mutilation and gore at the hands of an intertextual supernatural masked killer. The script does also incorporate elements of violence which involve sexual abjection, and the abjection of the lower bodily stratum (ibid), to a lesser degree. Creativity in application of abjection has proven an effective tool in ensuring that horror is signalled as the lead genre in the horror comedy blend, while proving that application of each shared trait is on an adjustable scale in connotation of that porous combination. Moreover, presentation of abjection itself as a porous trait between horror and comedy, has been tested and the conclusion found both astute and effective in praxis.

Excess has been concluded to be a recurring element in both horror and comedy material, and a key cohesive trait shared by the genres. This proved a core thematic, narrative and visual tool in praxis: multiple excessive, escalating murder set pieces (Snyder, 2005) dictate much of the script's narrative (slasher) rhythm and visual style. Excesses of violence, blood and gore ensure the horrific. While, in the level of excess itself combined with the unlikely victims of that violence, the comedic is concurrently connoted. Moreover, *Knitters!* is a 'gross-out' (Paul, 1994, 20) film to the core, proudly showcasing excesses of inhibition, aligned to both horror and comedy gross-out tropes, and seeking pronounced audience response:

'Gross-out films are looking for a comparatively strong response from their audience. A gleeful uninhibitedness is certainly the most striking feature...both of the comedies and horror films, and it also represents their greatest appeal' (ibid).

Again, this original conclusion has been uniquely tested in practice wherein it has found to be both effective and judicious in the creation of original material which blends horror and comedy in the gross-out tradition.

The **Absurd** lies at the narrative heart of *Knitters!* in its central characterisations and context, demonstrated in related character actions. Absurdity is central to the paradox of the demure, suburban Townswomen in all-important conflict with the apparently undefeatable supernatural killer, rendered further absurd by their lack of shared experience/understanding (Snyder, 2005). An established key signifier in depicting the absurd, escalation of stakes is significant in the blend of the comedic and horrific in the script (ibid). Both humour and horror are connoted in grotesque tension (Thomson, 1972) as the grounds for concern escalate alongside the abject excesses. The escalation of the desperate, unfamiliar situation, carnage, bodily defilement and abjection itself all align to ensure the absurdity of *Knitters!* And therefore its alignment to the horror comedy genre through the shared cohesive factors.

Absurdity has, however, been applied in balance of connotation through representation of excess. In alignment with Part One findings, excesses of....excess itself, can connote the absurd as overly comedic. For example, in the grotesque scene in which the Townswomen must seek to retrieve a telephone from a defiled, abject body, comedy is the lead intended connotation over horror (while both still exist concurrently (Thomson, 1972)). Therefore absurdity is escalated when the

women are armed only with the absurd kitchen implements of a fish slice and tongs. The excesses of this scene align to the comedic and absurd, while directly violent/threatening (Snyder, 2005) excesses are reduced. In contrast, however, excesses of absurdity are limited in the scene of Marjorie's death. Violence, threat and abjection are present in the depiction of her long-deserved murder - yet excess in the act is not of a degree to connote the comedic over the horrific through the absurd. Absurdity has provided a useful tool in adjusting the scale of connotation between horror and comedy on a scene-by-scene level. Part One findings indicated that the factors representing porosity of the genres was on an adjustable scale, and this was a highly effective tool for application in praxis on a macro and micro level, from overarching narrative to individual sequence/scene. Again original academic conclusions have proven an effective and judicious tool in original praxis.

The **Grotesque and Carnavalesque** are also intentionally well-represented in *Knitters!* aligned to the academic conclusions of Part One. There exists a tension between the comedic and horrific (Thomson, 1972) from the opening sequence in which a dull historian is disembowelled on the spire of a genteel National Trust property, his toupee clinging by one thin strip of tape; to closing scenes, in which an elderly Townswoman repeatedly pulverises a supernatural slasher under the wheels of Barry's Executive Travel coach. The darker aspects of the grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984 at al.) are also at the forefront of connotation of the supernatural force (Peter) leaning the connotation towards the lead genre of horror through iconographic characterisation and narrative momentum.

The **Carnavalesque** (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984 at al.) is central to the characterisation and narrative of *Knitters!* Transgressing the traditional stereotype of the Townswomen provides an intended plentiful platform for the carnivalesque aligned to the absurd. The film's iconography represented in bodily violence (especially lower stratum) aligns to Aristophanes and the Feast of Fools (Brottman, 2004, Danow, 1995) in representing the carnivalesque, as does the overarching celebration of violence through multiple gross-out set pieces (Snyder, 2005) which are intended to be the film's standout moments of genre-cognant audience revelry (Hills, 2005) in transgression. In combining abjection, excess and absurdity through the grotesque and carnivalesque, disgust is fully intended. This is particularly showcased in *Knitters!*' mid-point scene in which two elderly Townswomen must stand top and bottom to a mangled and violated corpse, armed with those forementioned innocuous kitchen implements, in order to retrieve a

mobile telephone from its desecrated bodily orifices. Such representation aligns *Knitters!* to: 'Bakhtin's formulation of the carnivalesque includ(ing) the concept of 'grotesque realism' which centres on exaggerations of the body, its orifices, its functions and a lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract' (Danow, 1995, 186).

The script of *Knitters!* and the Part Three exegesis have, further, reflected a rigorous practice-informed approach to script creation; from concept and research, plot planning, story structure, characterisation and script writing, to drafting and editing. Expert instruction has been applied at every juncture of the script writing process in order to create a fulfilling and meaningful work, and to guide the novice script writer in praxis. Theorists and experts such as Snyder (2005), Field (2005), Goldman (1996), Parker (1999) and Selbo (2105) have been closely consulted and application of Snyder's 'Beat Sheet' (2005, 72) has informed a paced approach to narrative, while incorporating key iconography and semiotic representation to ensure researched genre connotation. A significant development in praxis has been recognition of the significance of narrative structure to create tension and measured relief (Paul, 1994) and the aligned crafting and expression of characters, in balance with those genre-required gross-out 'production numbers' (Thrower, 2008, 26). Extensive editing has consistently proven the significance of closely mapping and, where necessary, revising narrative structure, characterisation, dialogue and description.

Moreover, the final script of *Knitters!* adheres closely to Snyder's 'thesis, antithesis and synthesis' structure (2005, 76). Act one forms the film's thesis, and is, 'where we see the world as it is before the adventure starts' (2005, 79). In *Knitters!*, the key intent of structuring this world is to establish the comedy/horror porous juxtaposition at the film's core of the collision of the worlds of the Townswomen and the supernatural slasher narrative. The 'antithesis' comes with, 'the act break...the moment where we leave the old world, (thesis) behind, and proceed into a world that is an upside-down version of that' (ibid). The Creature's emergence from the lake, crafted to occur at almost exactly a third of the script's structure, forms this jarring (abject and absurd) antithesis. This ultimately leads the characters to the third act 'synthesis', where, 'the lessons learned are applied...where story A & B end in triumph for our hero' (ibid, 90). Gladys' climactic heroic character arc embodies: 'The turning over of the world and the creation of a new world order – all thanks to the hero, who leads the way based on what (s)he experiences in the upside-down,

antithetical world of Act Two' (ibid). In the carnivalesque grotesque (Danow, 1995, Carroll, 1990, Bakhtin, 1984 at al.) world of *Knitters!* the Townswomen's worlds have truly been turned upside-down, and occasionally, viscerally, inside-out. 'The finale is where a new society is born' (ibid) and it is also where, true to slasher film narrative, Marjorie's 'new world order' (ibid) will also begin in the closing scene of the emergence from the lake of her pearl-wristed hand which mirrors the opening scene's introduction of that murderous hand. This final narrative event closes the circular structure in satisfaction of plot seeding/narrative tension, while hinting at the beginning of a new narrative cycle aligned to slasher genre iconography (Kerswell, 2011, Rockoff, 2011, Conrich, 2010, Dika, 1990 et al.)

In summation, this rigorous three-part doctorate offers significance in contribution of original knowledge straddling both film theory and practice. Part One builds upon, furthers and updates the work of Paul (1994), in academically identifying the cohesive factors between horror and comedy, particularly within gross-out material. It furthers academic debate in positing the original conclusion that abjection, excess and absurdity are the cohesive factors between horror and comedy in gross-out film and television. This finding is particularly significant in filling a research gap in an academic field which offers much potential for expansion and update as identified at the opening of the thesis. Part Two provides an original contribution to film practice in the feature-length horror comedy film script *Knitters!* This praxis is closely informed in research, planning, writing and editing, by the conclusions of the thesis. Those conclusions are explored and uniquely tested in praxis and prove both judicious and highly effective in the construction of the original horror comedy material. Part Three of the thesis presents a detailed exegesis of that script praxis and the rigorous research-informed process of its creation. The significance of the Part One findings are herein tested and demonstrated in the meaningful praxis of original script writing, bolstered by the extensive application of academic theory and expert instruction. The thesis therefore demonstrates significance in adding to original knowledge in both film theory and practice, and in rigorous presentation, analysis and application of its findings.

APPENDICES

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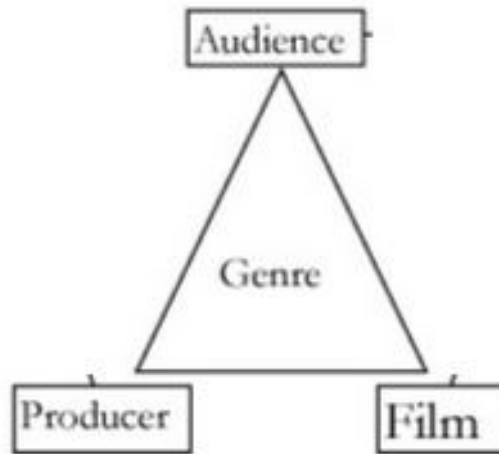
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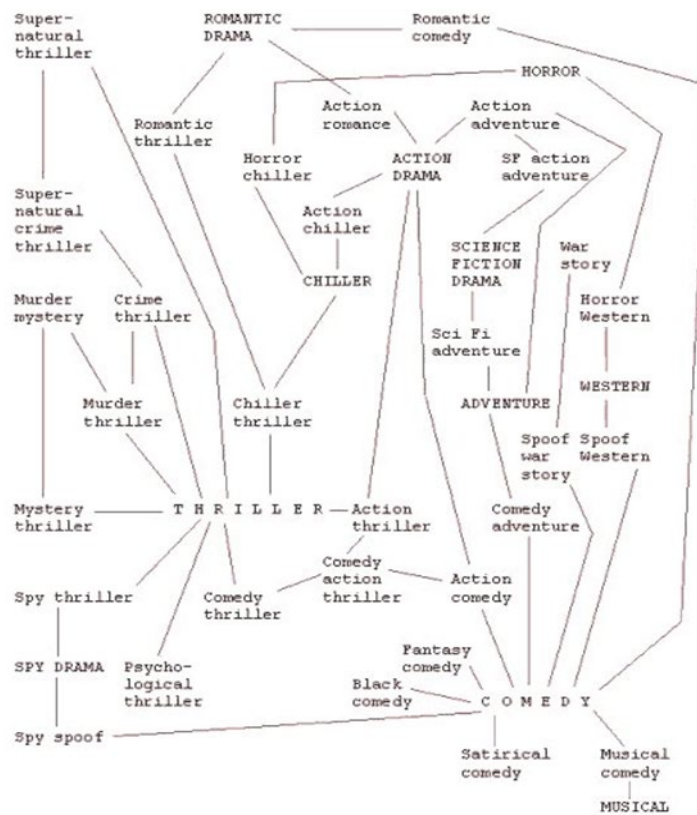
Page 353: Appendices 17 & 18: *Knitters!* Draft One – Full Script & *Knitters!* Full Draft Mid-Process (Page 414)

PART ONE APPENDIX: Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1.



Ryall, T. (1975) 'Teaching through the Genre'. *Screen Education*. No. 17, p. 27-28, graph **Figure 2.**



Chandler, D (1997) in Lacey, N. (2000) *Narrative & Genre: Key Concepts in Media Studies*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 12, graph

Figure 3.



Braindead (1992). Directed by Peter Jackson. New Zealand: WingNut Films

Figure 4.



There's Something About Mary (1998). Directed by Bobby Farrelly/Peter Farrelly. USA: Twentieth Century Fox

Figure 5.



Grimsby (2016). Directed by Louis Leterrier. UK/USA: Blue Sky Films/Big Talk Productions/Columbia Pictures

Figure 6.



Nighty Night (2005) BBC/Baby Cow Productions

Figure 7.



The Meaning of Life (1983). Directed by Terry Jones/Terry Gilliam. UK: Celandine Films/The Monty Python Partnership/Universal Pictures

Figure 8.



Evil Dead 2 (1987). Directed by Sam Raimi. USA: DEG/Renaissance Pictures

PART THREE APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Outline

(Key Points & Key Information Delivered: Draft 1)

1. FLASHBACK (although the audience should not be aware that it is such)

EITHER: we see a flashback of a young boy drowning in a lake while a mother and her lover look on from a window (obviously post-coital). We then see the woman brutally murder the man and bury his body. NB. This may be too obvious that the killer is the son of one of the women.

OR: We see an aging, 'nerdy' local historian visiting the ramparts of a National Trust property with an unseen companion. The historian is pushed from the ramparts and impaled on one of the building's spires. NB. While Marjorie (unknown to the audience) is the killer in both scenarios, the second may provide more comedic/gory opportunities, establishing the paradox of the genteel and the gruesome, alongside more humorous gore! The first may also reveal too much detail at the outset.

2. Townswomen set off for 'away weekend' (post-credit opening of film - montage)

The Townswomen are each introduced. We see them in their own homes as they are each collected by the bus. We get a feel for how they live and certain character traits are delivered. This opening montage gives us an insight into each character through their activities and lifestyles i.e. Marjorie is pristine in her packing, appearance and home; Beryl is chaotic and smuggles pot away with her; Gladys has to juggle packing with feeding her pets and her husband etc. Here we are also introduced to the coach driver, Barry, who forms a core part of the circular narrative (and whose responses to the women can guide the audience in their characterisations.)

3. Ladies arrive at the lakeside resort in a night-time storm & meet the owners Paul & Su

The coach journey introduces Barry the coach driver, the comedy foil, whose return at the end of the film to collect the women should provide a form of closure to the narrative. The coach journey will also provide a narrative device to reveal more about the women's individual personalities, and crucially about the power struggles (the TG is built on power struggles!) This will form part of the narrative tension between the characters, aligned to secondary plot, and established here. The interplay on the bus will introduce character traits and their interpersonal tensions, furthered on arrival at the resort.

Su and Paul, the cabin owners, will be introduced when the women arrive at the stormy lakeside at 9pm. They will hand out the keys to the women who will settle into their temporary homes while the storm rages outside. NB. Su and Paul will be the first to be killed and the juxtaposition between their outward and inward personalities will provide humour – and crucially an opportunity for gory abject, excessive and absurd deaths!

In the meantime Barry will haphazardly attempt to leave the muddy lakeside (Marjorie has insisted that he drive right to the muddy edge of the lake as they cannot be expected to have to trek through the mud!) His wheels will spin in the muddy ground and the bus will slide backwards, dislodging a power cable - which will be struck by lightning and fall into the lake. He will not realise and will drive off oblivious.

4. The killer is revived in the lake due to a power cable falling (supernatural)

The storm rages outside the cabins and the power cable is struck by lightning falling into the lake.

The power surge in the lake revives the long dormant body of Peter, who has been preserved by the contamination of formaldehyde. This preservation was instigated by his murderous mother, in an attempt to pollute the scene of his death, and unaware that in doing so she had also preserved the evidence. Although the energy has revived his body, Peter's mind is long-corrupted, and the supernatural killer is born – the key narrative tension is between the women and the killer. Their aim is survival. He is the soulless, death-driven monster who drives the murderous narrative forward. His revival begins with a stirring in the weeds at the bottom of the lake, and the first we see of him is a (disfigured) hand on the jetty.

5. The killer kills the resort owners (and their 'friends')

The killer (in shadows, although clearly bulky and intimidating), will blunder towards the lights of the 'big house' where Paul and Su will be having 'one of their parties'. Su and Paul will be 'entertaining guests' in their secret sex dungeon, and the killer should enter the fray and cause bloody carnage. This should include death by mobile phone inserted into the rectum – which the ladies must attempt to retrieve later in their attempts at escape. Here we learn more about the intent of the mysterious creature who has emerged from the lake – he is a supernaturally powerful and remorseless killer. We firmly establish that the film's sense of humour will be dark and irreverent, and that the violence will be abject, excessive and absurd. The killer will also secure his signature (intended to be ominous) look. Research into S&M 'gimp masks' suggests that a shiny black rubber mask with a zip mouth could be the most effective in providing anonymity and intimidation. The killer should don this in response to his hideous appearance (viewed in a mirror in the dungeon).

6. The ladies begin their activities (unaware that a killer is on the loose)

The explicit violence of the previous night should be juxtaposed with the serenity of the women's activities such as flower pressing, crochet, baking etc., the following (sunny) day. The women, oblivious to many of the events of the night before, but aware of the fallen power cable (Paul and Su aren't responding to knocks on their door to report it-they'll try again later), begin their weekend of scheduled activities. NB. A guest speaker arrives to give a talk/demonstration – Mary Berry/Esther Rantzen (linked to TG) – they should be the next to die. This presents the women further as lambs to the slaughter and makes their revolt further engaging. The women's personalities and conflicts can be further developed here. Hints can also be dropped about hidden contexts re. Beryl and Marjorie and Beryl and Gladys.

7. The killer starts killing the ladies

The serenity and gentility are smashed by brutal violence: the beginning of recognition of peril and the need to survive. The understanding that their lives are at risk and that the killer is both supernatural and superhuman should dawn here. The first to die should be the guest speaker – the death of a celebrity will be impactful and potentially comedic. A number of the women are killed, and the rest feel seemingly helpless under the supernatural attack. Are they not the polar opposites of their superhuman foe? DEVELOPMENT HERE: gruesome, yet comedic deaths in line with characteristics and aligned to abjection, excess and absurdity.

8. The ladies decide to fight back

The women's key driver in their narrative should present itself here – they must survive. They will recognise that they are in mortal peril and recognise their own weaknesses i.e. they are all over 70 and facing a supernatural homicidal foe. They should take stock of their potential weapons at this point (aligned to research on potential weapons), and humour should be derived from attempts to turn the innocuous into the deadly. Our heroes will begin to rise here, but others will be killed (gruesomely), in the fight. Characters who had previously seemed meek will rise above all expectations to become heroic. DEVELOPMENT HERE: decide on weapons which will temporarily hold off killer until he ultimately proves too strong, killing all the women (expand on their deaths), but the final three characters.

9. The heroes emerge (both false and true), but one is killed by the killer's mother (Marjorie)

Those characters who rise will survive while others die (fighting valiantly with their home-made weapons). Beryl will be our 'false hero/final girl' – she will be portrayed to be the character in charge and will lead the audience to believe that she is the final girl. However, as was always her secret intent, Marjorie will kill Beryl and blame it on the masked killer. At this point Marjorie and the killer's full back stories will be revealed to the audience and the surviving characters.

10. FLASHBACK to the masked killer's first death

In this flashback we will learn what really happened at the lake all those years ago – we will discover the circumstances around Peter's cruel childhood at his mother, Marjorie's, hands, and we will learn of her part in his death i.e. she watched him drown while she cavorted with her lover (who she later killed and buried at the lakeside). She then killed her husband. We will also learn of her misguided attempt to pollute the crime scene (instead preserving the evidence). In flashback we will also see her other crimes, murders, and her discovery that Beryl was close to uncovering her true nature. She will reveal (to Beryl & overheard by Gladys), that she arranged the trip to lure Beryl to her death. As Beryl dies, Gladys will go to her and they will reveal their secret love.

11. The killer kills his mother (Marjorie)

The killer will finally be granted his revenge (we will have empathy towards him for the way he was treated by her) and kill his mother. She will attempt an emotional reconnection but will meet the most gruesome of all the deaths and end up in the lake. (NOTE: SHE SHOULD ALSO COME BACK AS UNDEAD AT THE END OF THE FILM). The purpose of the killer will be fulfilled, and he will seek to return to his own resting place at the bottom of the lake. However, our unexpected hero, Gladys, will remain to attain revenge for the death of her friends – and for her secret love Beryl. Her death has given Gladys the final motivation/anger required for her to overcome her own lack of self-confidence and become the woman she has always wanted to be (secretly).

12. The hero (Gladys) kills the killer (or does she?)

The unexpected and transformed hero will finally destroy the monster and the plot cycle will be complete. (DEVELOPMENT HERE: suitably over-the-top death.) Or will it? As Barry returns to collect the women (the action will take place over the full weekend), and witnesses the carnage, he has only one woman left to collect. As they stagger to the coach together, the killer (in true slasher style – a tip of the cap), will re-emerge from the lake and again give chase. However, Gladys has had enough and will take charge of the bus and run over him multiple times leaving a bloody pulp and no opportunity of resurrection. She will drive off on her own into the sunset...our hero...leaving Barry surrounded by bloody carnage and bits of Townswomen.

13. Second (or does she?) ending – possible post-credit

As Barry stands surveying the carnage and gingerly attempts to pick-up and 'tidy away' limbs, we will see a hand rise from the lake...this time it will be Marjorie's hand (ensure that she wears a recognisable piece of jewellery), and as in all good horror

films, we will realise that the real monster has not yet been defeated...Sequel!! (And nod to Mrs Vorhees who was the real killer in *Friday the 13th*).

Appendix 2: Treatment

Our story of the battle of the genteel ladies of the Townswomen's Guild against a monstrous supernatural foe, begins in the austere location of a National Trust property. An ageing, brown suited, toupee-d local historian is delivering a droning tour of a National Trust castle with an unseen companion. The tour tiresomely progresses through the building & up onto the building's roof – where the dull historian is suddenly pushed by the unseen companion from the ramparts and impaled on one of the building's spires. He slides down the sharp, gothic spire pointing at his assailant in disbelief, his toupee hanging backwards and spouting blood. With a final gasp he exhales 'you!'

A month later, the ladies of the Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild are preparing for an arts and crafts weekend in an isolated Lake District resort. The Guild Chair Marjorie, Social Events Organiser Beryl, Chair's Assistant Gladys, and members June and Daphne are all packing and preparing to be collected by coach. As the women prepare for the trip, their homes, engagements with family, and packing styles reflect their key character traits. Despotic Guild Chairwoman Marjorie is pristine in her packing, appearance and home; original Greenham Common peace protester & Social Events Organiser Beryl is chaotic and smuggles marijuana away; diminutive, animal charity volunteer & Chair's Assistant Gladys has to juggle packing with feeding her pets and her husband, while removing the two small dogs which have secreted themselves in her travel bag.

They are each collected (Marjorie first of course), by the coach driver, Barry, a kind-hearted but slightly haphazard former bus driver who has recently divorced and set up his own business. The coach journey reveals more about the women's individual personalities, and crucially about the power struggles amongst the women. A total of ten women from the Guild are attending the weekend trip, and we will meet them all here. The interplay on the bus introduces conflicting character traits and the women's interpersonal tensions – mainly between Marjorie and Beryl. Marjorie's snobbery infuriates Beryl, whose rebelliousness in turn horrifies Marjorie. Gladys is uncomfortably submissive to Marjorie and Beryl is keen for her to stand up to the 'snooty cow'. Young-at-heart June (more mutton dressed as lamb) flirts with Barry and the group's oldest member, the doddering Daphne has remained generally oblivious since being collected from her care home. When Barry attempts a sing-song he is dismissed by Marjorie as vulgar, but Beryl overrules her and the bus cruises through the Lakeside countryside to the tune of *'I've Got A Lovely Bunch of Coconuts'*.

In the evening the coach finally arrives at the isolated and stormy Lake District log cabin resort which is their home for the (autumn) weekend. The women meet Su and Paul, the resort owners who live at the 'big house' in the woods. They have moved from London (where she was a yoga teacher and he owned a marketing company) and bought the resort at 'a steal' after certain problems with contamination of the land. The women are their first visitors following the (limited) works which they completed to revitalise the site. The women retire to their cabins next to the lake to settle into their temporary homes while the storm rages outside. In the meantime Barry haphazardly attempts to leave the muddy lakeside (Marjorie has insisted that he drive right to the muddy edge of the lake as they cannot be expected to have to trek through the mud to get to their cabins!) His wheels spin in the muddy ground and the bus slides backwards, dislodging a power cable. Barry is too busy trying to field a call from his ex-wife on his mobile phone and drives off oblivious. He has been booked to return to collect the women on Sunday evening.

As the women sleep the storm rages outside the cabins and the dislodged power cable is struck by lightning, falling into the lake. As the power surges through the lake there is a stirring in the weeds in the murky depths. Initially we believe this to be electricity running through the undergrowth, but we gradually see the outline of a sub-human form moving in the weeds. As the storm rumbles and the electricity surge dies down we see a mutated hand reach up onto the jetty in the darkness. Something or somebody has been awoken in the lake...

Meanwhile, in the 'big house' Su and Paul are 'entertaining guests' into the night. Su and Paul, who present a refined image, have a secret. They are swingers with a preference for S&M. They are 'entertaining' another couple in their secret sex dungeon in their basement. The creature emerges from the lake (in shadows, although clearly bulky and intimidating) and blunders towards the lights and sounds of shrieks at the house. As the sexual shenanigans continue downstairs, the creature enters the house through an open downstairs bathroom window. Following the sound of cavorting it enters the fray and causes bloody carnage, killing Su and Paul and their guests. Paul is killed by death by mobile phone which is inserted violently and gorily into his rectum and lodged in his intestines (in a key scene the ladies must attempt to retrieve it later in their attempts at survival). The creature who emerged from the lake is a supernaturally powerful, subhuman and remorseless killer. After using the implements of sexual torture to murder his first four victims, he catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror. Although we do not see his face but recognise a large hulking and mutated sub-human creature, he ponders his reflection before smashing the mirror. Surveying the carnage he takes a shiny black rubber 'gimp mask' with a zip mouth and small eye holes which he puts over his own distorted face.

The explicit violence of the previous night is juxtaposed with the serenity and gentility of the next morning as the women begin their weekend of scheduled craft activities. Marjorie is a-fluster as she rushes to the taxi to welcome their guest speaker who arrives to give a demonstration. The speaker is Mary Berry (her producer on *Great British Bake Off* is an old friend of Beryl's) who will be giving a talk about baking. She has brought some bakery equipment with her – apparently to demonstrate her talk, but really to flog at extortionate prices. She is foul-mouthed, drunk and smokes like a chimney. Quickly dismissing Marjorie, she makes a beeline for the rebellious Beryl who takes her to the lakeside (where they both share a spliff) and she begins her talk (during which she reverts to her refined genteel public personality).

Just as Mary is demonstrating her new battery-powered high-velocity 6-blade blender, the domestic scene is shattered as the masked killer emerges suddenly from the woods. He uses Berry's own blender to brutally murder her, tearing her face to pieces. Panic ensues, and the women flee (as fast as they can with their hips), back towards the 'big house'. One of the women (Ethel) is caught and suffocated with the contents of a piping tube which is forced into her mouth, and as the killer busies himself with her murder, the women make good their escape. They flee to the 'big house' where they discover Su and Paul are absent. With Beryl in the lead as she is the most worldly-wise, the women use whatever they can to barricade the ground floor doors and windows. They gain a moment of respite to process what has happened which is well beyond the realm of their experience (although it does remind Beryl somewhat of Altamont).

In the meantime, Daphne, the Guild's eldest member, is still in her cabin, oblivious to the carnage. She had to skip the morning's activity as she had had 'one of her

turns'. The sound of Daphne's Barry Manilow record (turned to ear-splitting volume as she is deafer than she will admit), draws the killer towards the cabin. After a moment of confusion in which Daphne thinks the S&M masked killer is her husband 'up to funny business', she becomes the killer's next victim. To the strains of *Bermuda Triangle* he sneaks up on and suffocates her with her own control underwear.

Back at the 'big house' the shaken women are in conflict in debating the best means of survival. None has brought a mobile phone (Marjorie banned them) and the house phone in the 'big house' is down following the collapse of the mast in the lake. The division in the group is mainly between Marjorie and Beryl. Beryl insists that a search party is formed to rescue Daphne, and she, Gladys (who is showing her first signs of standing up to Marjorie), and two other women, leave the short-term safety of the big house. While Marjorie, June and the other three women discuss their 'suicide mission', they hear the distant ringing of a mobile phone somewhere in the house. Marjorie and June grab whatever weapons are closest to hand (in this instance a pair of tongs and a fish slice) and move cautiously down to the basement. Here they are met with a scene of sexual carnage. The phone has now stopped ringing, but as they disgustedly explore the scene, it begins again. In utter horror they discover that the phone has been forcibly inserted through the mouth and into the intestines of Paul who has been murdered in bondage, the forcible trauma partly causing his death. In their darkest moment they realise that they must attempt to remove the phone (from both ends) with the tongs and fish slice in order to survive. They are unsuccessful, and Marjorie's twinset will never be the same again.

The other group have made it safely to the cabins and discovered Daphne's lifeless, gusset-suffocated body. The killer has ransacked all of their belongings but is nowhere to be seen. The women try to salvage what they can carry and Beryl spots Gladys' knitting bag with needles protruding, realising that they may be the best weapon they have. Beryl also has her trusty penknife in her luggage, which she pockets. They decide to get back to the relative safety of the 'big house' & tentatively scurry back across the site. Dusk is falling and they attempt to use the darkness of the woods as cover. However one of the women hears a rustling and sees a large bulking shadow. The women flee towards a large outbuilding/shed at the other side of the big house, where they take refuge.

The shed is shrouded in darkness, but dog-walker Gladys has a torch in her handbag (which she has insisted on keeping with her throughout the carnage). It is filled with gardening equipment including shears, scythes, rakes and spades, hung from the walls. A chainsaw takes centre stage. There are two large bales of hay in the shed and the women separate to hide behind each in pairs and catch their breath. Just as Beryl demands that they remove the potential weapons from the wall to defend themselves they hear the door open, close, and heavy footfall. In the panic to turn off Gladys' torch, the women reveal their hiding place, and as Gladys and Blanche fight over the torch, they shine the beam directly onto the leather mask of the killer, who is now stood over them. Blanche's head is dissected by the shears in one maniacal snip, covering Gladys in blood. Dorothy offers her a tissue from up her sleeve, but blinded by the blood, she falls backwards and is caught by Beryl, leaving Dorothy in front of the masked maniac. He reaches up to the wall and pulls down a strimmer with which he shreds Blanche (still holding her hankie). Gladys and Beryl are cornered at the back of the barn and must pass the killer to escape. As the killer struggles with the strimmer, which is jammed with parts of Dorothy, Beryl makes her move lurching forward and stabbing him in the eye with one of the knitting needles. As he flails she grabs Gladys and they run for the 'big house'.

Horrified by the sight of the blood-stained Gladys, the women compare stories. Marjorie, pointing to her ruined twinset, alludes to the horrors in the basement, but declines to give detail on grounds of decency. Night has now fallen, and the women realise that they are potentially trapped until morning as none of them can see especially well in the dark and they could be sitting ducks if they venture outside. They check the barricades and decide to try and get some rest with two of the women staying in the kitchen as lookouts on a rota basis. Beryl and Gladys take the first lookout shift while Marjorie and June head to the bedrooms on the top floor, and the other two women take the sofas in the lounge. After exploring the basement and Beryl declaring that it reminds her of Glastonbury in '78, the women find a bottle of brandy and Beryl insists that they have 'a drop to calm their nerves' – which she then follows with a spliff – Gladys' first. A while later they are both asleep at the kitchen table.

As the temporary residents of the house sleep, there is the sound of smashing glass in the basement in a hidden side room (where the really strong stuff specialist sex equipment is kept!) The killer is in the house. Making his way upstairs, the killer watches the sleeping Beryl and Gladys in the kitchen, his leather/rubber mask glistening as he lurks in the doorway behind them. As the killer moves forward he is disturbed by the sound of a toilet flushing upstairs. Marjorie's weak bladder has woken her up yet again. He follows the sound towards the top floor where June and Marjorie have a bedroom each. June has also been disturbed by the sound of the toilet flushing, and, as she scurries to the bathroom, comes face to mask with the killer himself. Slamming the door into him she runs into Marjorie's bedroom where the women attempt to barricade themselves in with a chest of drawers. As the killer bashes at the door, one of the drawers flies open to reveal a number of sex toys. The women (Marjorie is more horrified than June), arm themselves with oversized dildos and brace themselves against the drawers. However they are no match for the supernatural force and the killer is soon in the room. The makeshift weapons do little to withhold him and reaching for the nearest murderous tool (a razor-sharp stiletto heel) he lashes out at Marjorie. As the stiletto is thrust towards her neck, she pulls June in front of her and the younger woman's throat is cut. She looks at Marjorie with horror as she slowly dies. As the killer then focuses his sight on Marjorie he hesitates and studies her. She pushes the chest of drawers on top of him and runs downstairs.

The other women have been awoken by the crashing and have all taken refuge in the utility cupboard in the kitchen. Marjorie has run straight for the back door and is halfway through removing the barricade when the killer appears. She redoubles her efforts and flees into the dawn light. 'I told you we should have gone out of the back door', says Rose as the other women shush her, but it is too late, their location has been revealed. The killer approaches the door and thrusts it open. He is met by Gladys, in her first real act of defiance, brandishing the pipe of a small Hoover. 'Now!' she screams as Beryl hits the power and she thrusts it into the zip of the bondage mask breaking it and lodging it in the mouthpiece. As he wrestles to free it the Hoover begins to suffocate the killer, making the mask shrink causing him to recoil backwards and howl in pain. The women follow Marjorie out of the door.

With very few options the Townswomen all stumble back to the log cabins where they find Marjorie. From the cabin window Gladys sees the killer, obviously hurt, stumble to the barn, and collapse through the doors. As the sun rises they argue about the fact that Gladys and Beryl fell asleep and the power struggles re-emerge. In anger Beryl tells Marjorie that 'she is certainly no angel'. Marjorie quickly changes the subject. They are united in the fact that they must barricade the cabins and fight back, finding weapons with which to defend themselves. The women search their

luggage and assemble/create their unlikely weapons from what they have. Their home-made weapons include knitting needles, crochet hooks, baking equipment (hot jam is put on the stove, and Beryl teaches the women to make flower bombs-she learnt in her activist days), flower arranging tools, and Beryl's trusty pen knife. They briefly consider using coat hangers, but Beryl declares them 'shit' (in reference to *Halloween*.) When the killer returns they will be ready and waiting for him. Their only chance of survival lies in his destruction.

The women draw the killer back to the cabins and their homemade 'trap' with the sound of Barry Manilow (*Copacabana*). They put up a valiant fight against the injured killer, but his supernatural strength wins out and two more women die, one in 'friendly' fire when jam explodes in her face. (The women will be confused as to whether the jam is confectionery or gore, leading to one of them suggesting a tasting. 'You've got jam on you!' she says in a nod to *Shaun of the Dead*.) The three survivors, Marjorie, Beryl and Gladys (who has grown in strength in combat) flee the cabins and head towards the lake where they find a boat house. This will be where the confrontation between the three will occur...And we will discover that before nodding off in the kitchen, Beryl shared Marjorie's secret with Gladys.

These three characters have risen to survive while others died (fighting valiantly with their home-made weapons). Beryl is herein set to be revealed to be the false hero/final girl, having previously been portrayed to be the character in charge and the most likely to be the final girl. However, as was always her secret intent, Marjorie herself will shockingly kill Beryl. At this point Marjorie and the killer's full back stories will be revealed. The women who are baffled, blood-splattered, and exhausted, attempt refuge in the last place to hide. Aware that the killer is hot on their heels, they find a pair of oars in the boathouse and use them to wedge the doors shut. The killer pounds on the door, but is unable to force it open, and they have a moment's respite. Instead of uniting the women persist in their arguing. Beryl, feeling that she has little left to lose, finally confronts Marjorie with the fact that her work for the local history society has uncovered some curious information about her.

Over flashback scenes of Beryl working in libraries and record archives she will explain that she knows Marjorie has a secret son, and that she suspects she may be linked to the murder of her husband. Just as she tells Marjorie she feels she has enough evidence to hand over to the police, Marjorie lashes out and Beryl falls backwards. As she reaches for her throat, we see that her hand is covered in a gush of blood. Marjorie has slit Beryl's throat with her own penknife which she dropped in the fracas. Gladys, horrified, drops to the floor and embraces her friend. As she takes her final breaths Beryl asks Gladys 'You knew, didn't you?' and Gladys replies, 'Yes, and I felt the same.' As Beryl dies Gladys screams 'Get away from her you bitch!' (*Aliens* reference) at Marjorie. Knowing that she has her assistant trapped and is holding the only weapon, Marjorie decides that she should finally share the burden of her story with someone before killing her and getting rid of the evidence.

As Marjorie narrates her story the revelation of the masked killer's true identity is revealed in flashback, revealing the truth of Peter's tragic life and Marjorie's murderous impulses. Peter, the real name of the masked killer, is Marjorie's son. He was born with severe physical deformities and mental disabilities. The flashback exposes the circumstances around Peter's cruel childhood at his mother's hands, ashamed of her less-than-perfect son. He is kept locked in a basement with only an occasional kindness from his father providing him any happiness. The tragic and cruel circumstances of his death are revealed: Marjorie, who could have easily saved her son, watched from one of the cabin windows as he drowned in the very lake by which the women stand, while she cavorted with her lover. His last sight was

that of his mother smiling as he became entangled in weeds and sunk into the water. She then killed her lover before setting fire to the cabin and polluting the lake to remove evidence of her murderous spree. The fire spread across the cabins and caused the site to close (alongside the contamination of the lake). She then returned home and killed her husband who was the only other person who knew of Peter's existence. We also learn that her misguided attempt to pollute the crime scene instead preserved the lake's evidence. Peter's body was partially preserved by contamination by formaldehyde – instigated by his murderous mother to pollute the scene of his death. When the energy revived his body, Peter's mind, however, was long-corrupted and the supernatural killer was born. He became the soulless, death-driven monster who has ploughed his way bloodily through the Townswomen.

Marjorie reveals to Gladys that she arranged the trip to lure Beryl to her death, as she knew she was getting too close to the truth. She had planned an 'accident' during the hill walking which they had scheduled on Sunday. In flashback Marjorie is revealed to be the hidden killer who pushed the tiresome historian from the castle's ramparts (she suspected he knew too much). She casually adjusts the jacket of her twin set as he slides down the spire, and turns on her heel, crying 'there's been a terrible accident!' Tired of hearing of Marjorie's horrific past, Gladys finally snaps, 'Shut the fuck up you pompous old cow! Beryl already told me most of this!' She is finally rising up to become the film's hero/final girl. As Marjorie, horrified at her language, edges towards her with the penknife, telling her that 'she'll have to go too as she knows too much', the side of the boathouse is ripped to shreds and Peter emerges through the torn remains wielding a chainsaw. Marjorie, in shock, drops the penknife and Gladys moves quickly to the back of the boathouse. The stage is set for the confrontation between mother and son.

Peter will finally seek his revenge. As Peter advances with the chainsaw towards her, Marjorie begins pleading for her life and attempting to justify her actions towards her son. She attempts a faux reconciliation. He stops his advance and lowers his chainsaw. He recognises her. Marjorie, flinching, pulls him towards her and, grimacing, embraces him (as he towers over her). Just as it appears she has won over her murderous son; she begins reaching for the chainsaw herself. In response Peter's grip tightens and the embrace becomes uncomfortable. As Marjorie grasps for breath, her bones begin to crunch and blood runs from her eyes and nose. Peter literally squeezes her to death, breaking her to pieces – a paradox given the lack of affection Peter received in his tragic lifetime. He kicks her broken and lifeless body into the lake from the gap through which he entered and begins to walk away, thrusting the oars holding the doors shut aside.

The purpose of the killer has been fulfilled and he embarks on a return to his own resting place at the bottom of the lake. However, he has not accounted for Gladys – the unassuming woman who has been pushed to her limits by the murder of all her friends and her secret love. Beryl's death has given her the final motivation/anger required for her to overcome her own lack of self-confidence and become the woman she has always wanted to be (secretly). She is the final girl, the hero, and she has found the chainsaw that the killer dropped in the boathouse and is coming after him. Brandishing the chainsaw she runs full pelt at Peter (who towers over the diminutive woman), ramming the chainsaw straight through his midriff and being showered in his decaying viscera. As she repeatedly thrusts the chainsaw backwards and forwards and Peter falls to the ground, she screams in sheer frustration at the horror in which she has become entwined, but also in celebration of the bold, fierce woman she has become. Pulling the chainsaw from Peter's lifeless body she brandishes it in the air (not unlike Leatherface, the anti-hero of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) before finally dropping it and collapsing to the floor. The sun

sets on Peter's dead body and the exhausted, heroic Gladys collapsed to the ground.

Barry the bus driver is met by a scene of carnage from the past two days, as he pulls up his bus at the site expecting to take the women home. He has only one woman left to collect, and she is slumped by the lake, a chainsaw and a mutilated, horrific body next to her. 'Bugger me!' he exclaims. As Barry's wakes her and helps her to stagger to the coach together to escape, we see the killer (in true slasher fashion) sit up (much like Myers in *Halloween*), and rise to his feet. Gradually he begins to gain on them, and Barry hears his lumbering steps behind them. However, Gladys, exhausted, but at her wits end, has had enough of being the victim. She pushes the terrified Barry aside, climbs into his bus, slams it into reverse and runs Peter over. Again. And again. And again. Peter is left no more than a bloody pulp. There is no chance of resurrection this time. Stopping for a moment to wipe a small streak of blood from her covered face, Gladys drives off on her own into the sunset...our hero...leaving Barry surrounded by bloody carnage and bits of Townswomen.

As Barry stands surveying the carnage and gingerly attempts to pick-up and 'tidy away' limbs, we see a hand rise from the lake...this hand has Marjorie's pearls on its wrist. And as the moonlight reflects on the pearls, as in all good horror films, we will realise that the real monster has not yet been defeated...

(NB. CORE HORROR FILM REFERENCES - Intertextual)

1. *Friday the 13th series* – location lakeside; murderous mother; masked, hulking killer son; farm tool deaths; killers emerging from lakes & twist ending re. mother being the real (supernatural) killer (inverted). NB. The emergence of the hand in the final scene should echo *Carrie*
2. *Halloween* – masked, hulking killer; killer's resurrection (the lying to sitting gesture should echo that of Myers in *Halloween*); knitting needle & coat hanger reference (which also nods to *Birdemic*)
3. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* – Gladys' chainsaw wielding 'dance' after she has defeated Peter should mirror that of Leatherface
4. *Alien(s)* – strong female heroes; 'get off her you bitch' line; Daphne's suffocation with her control underwear should be reminiscent of the face hugger attack; tagline '*In the Lake District no-one can hear you scream!*'
5. *The Omen* – death by church spire (echoing that of Troughton) – this film is also about a murderous son
6. *Mars Attacks* – the killing to the strains of Manilow are a nod to the murderous easy listening record which defeats the aliens in *Mars Attacks*
7. *Shaun of the Dead* – the hankie up the sleeve offered to the massacred women in the barn (references Shaun's mother); '*you've got jam on you*' is a direct reference to '*you've got red on you*'
8. *The Burning* – the killer should hold the shears above his head in tribute to this film's poster, before beheading the Townswoman in one snip
9. *The Strangers* – the kitchen scene in which the killer appears in the corner of the viewer's eye watching Beryl and Gladys sleeping, should echo that in *The Strangers*, creating an insidious atmosphere
10. *Critters!* - the title is a direct reference to this B movie monster classic
11. *Dead & Buried* – the name of the town of Potter's Bluff is taken from this comedy horror classic

Appendix 3: Character Analysis

(Early Script Development & Pre-First Script Draft)

Townswomen

MARJORIE - Chair of the Townswomen's Guild (NB. The secret murderous mother of the masked killer)

Marjorie is 75. She has never worked and lives off the proceeds of her husband's insurance payment following his death. She is a serving magistrate and an active campaigner for the *Countryside Right of Way Act*. She was widowed following the heart attack of her Executive Accountant husband years previously – at least that's the official line – she killed her husband after watching the drowning of her son and killing her lover. Her dress is always immaculate – preferably a twin set and pearls. Her hair is backcombed, her nails filed and discreetly painted precisely, and she has something of the 'Thatcher' about her. She is a fierce monarchist and a Brexiteer. She votes for UKIP and is constantly physically attached to her handbag. She has a signed photo of Margaret Thatcher in her bedroom (which she often addresses directly: one of her most common thoughts is 'What would Margaret do?')

Marjorie's life is dominated by her concern with status and rampant snobbery. She watched as her son drowned as his imperfections were an embarrassment to her (see below). She could not have a family which was less than perfect, although she herself was having an affair (her life is a paradox in many, often murderous, ways.) She has no children (officially), pets (which she will not tolerate in her immaculately kept house) or living family. She induced her husband's heart attack partially to secure the money to maintain her wealthy lifestyle, but mainly to conceal her family's 'shameful' secret. Her acts of terrorism sit in direct contrast to her outward appearance – and are significantly worse than she will recognise. Marjorie has had quite the murderous career in her past – her husband, her secret lover, and she is responsible for the death of her son. Then recently there were the people who came close to the truth about Marjorie's past...the local historian, who 'slipped' when visiting a National Trust property; the local journalist who was mysteriously relocated to the Hebrides at very short notice (but who is buried under Marjorie's immaculately maintained rose bed)... & now she has murderous intent towards Beryl who has taken up a new interest in local history. Indeed the real motivation for the trip is to rid herself of Beryl once and for all - she will portray the death as accidental.

She lives in a 4-bed detached countryside pile with an immaculately maintained garden (she is an ardent gardener). The colour scheme embraces both the floral and ivory colour set. She has a cleaner and occasional gardener (for the larger jobs). She is dismissive of the 'new money' set who have moved into her area and pens letters to the local newspaper in complaint of any behaviour which she considers 'vulgar' (more-or-less any behaviour other than her own). Under the cover of darkness she has been known to commit acts of terrorism against her neighbours – roses removed from flower beds, tyres let down, and worse... She recently killed a neighbour's pet dog for defecating on her garden. She adamantly denies that these acts have anything to do with her and dismisses those culpable. She drives a 2-year old Volkswagen Golf estate car – roomy (she has to transport many guild/Countryside Alliance materials – although she never does and always relies on her underlings) and reliable, yet mid-range stylish.

Marjorie considers herself to be far superior to all the other members of the Guild and has served as Chair for 5 consecutive years. The seat has not been contested for the previous 4, mainly because the other women are too afraid of her wrath if they do dare to contest her. She is patronising and sharp to her assistant, Gladys, who she believes to be incompetent (although she does much of the work for which Marjorie takes credit.) She believes her opinions (of which she has many) outweigh those of the mere members. She has a special dislike for the liberal-minded Beryl, who is her nemesis in the Guild and will often argue with Marjorie, much to the embarrassment of the other members (who just want everyone to 'get on'). She also knows Beryl, who is an active member of the local historical society, is getting too close to her family secret.

INWARD CHARACTER: Marjorie is entirely self-serving and obsessed with status. She must always have the most status/power in any given situation & strives for perfection in all aspects of her life. However, Marjorie is far from perfect and has a murderous impulse which she will act upon freely to achieve her aims of perfection and superiority. She is, however, in denial about her own criminal impulses/actions & believes herself to be an upstanding member of the local community (unlike many of the people who she encounters on a daily basis).

OUTWARD CHARACTER: Marjorie is an outstanding member of the community – engaged in Guild, legal and charity activities. Her immaculate appearance and home reflect her perfect lifestyle and superior status. If only more people were like her, the world would be a better place.

MAJOR PLOT POINT/SCENE REFLECTING CHARACTER TRAITS: She will be killed by the son who she allowed to drown, before committing murder herself. A homicidal maniac on the loose is the perfect foil for her own murderous impulses & she will indeed get her chance to kill Beryl (who will be the false final girl), at the film's climax. This will, however, be witnessed by Gladys, who will use the rage it causes (Beryl and Gladys were secretly in love) to find the strength to take on the masked killer in the final bloody battle. The killer himself will kill Marjorie as this is required for story resolution and the delivery of 'plot justice'. Her death should be one of the nastiest and the audience should be pleased that the film's real villain has had her comeuppance (or has she?)

See accompanying character interviews/bios for further character detail

GLADYS - Chair's Put-Upon Assistant (NB. Gladys is the FINAL GIRL & the film's only surviving Townswoman)

Gladys is 76. She joined the TG on the recommendation of her eldest daughter (she has three daughters) to 'get out a bit more'. Gladys has been married for 54 years and is now a grandmother to 4 children. She only worked briefly as a secretary when she was very young and has spent her life looking after others (mainly her husband Derek). Her husband is a retired civil servant and a keen bowler (crown green). They live in a suburban semi-detached three-bed house, are more-or-less comfortable, but not well-off, and have several dogs.

Gladys suffers with her self-confidence and joined the Guild both to make new friends and 'get out more' as her daughter suggested. Having been to secretarial college at the age of 16 (but never really used her skills), she was bullied into taking the role of assistant/secretary by Marjorie. The role started as secretary, but

Marjorie ensured that it became more assistant to hide her own laziness and superiority. She has held the role for 4 years and has been trying to tell Marjorie that she no longer wants the responsibility. She suffers with a lack of assertiveness and is rarely heard to say no. This character trait has been reflected in her relationship with Marjorie. She tried to tell Marjorie 2 years ago that she didn't want her role anymore but has since felt so guilty she now panders to Marjorie's every whim. Beryl has told her many times that she should stand up to Marjorie, but she doesn't want to 'rock the boat' and just wants everyone to get along. She is a peacemaker. She frequently moans to her husband about it when she gets home from meetings and visits, but duly spends the rest of the evening typing up notes or minutes, and organising Marjorie's diary. She has just laid out for a small word processor especially for the task.

Gladys is yet to truly admit it to herself, but she is secretly in love with Beryl, who's lifestyle she partially covets, and who she wishes she could be more like. Beryl's death at the end of the film will trigger the anger which Gladys needs to take on the masked killer and defeat him in a bloody battle which will see her the victor. The strength of character which she always secretly possessed but never dared to show, will finally emerge. Gladys has never been in love with anyone other than her husband who was her childhood sweetheart, and therefore feels both guilty towards her family and confused by her feelings (they didn't do things like that in her day!) Her husband is a good man, but there has never been a real romantic spark in their marriage, and she was pushed into the ceremony by her family as it was 'the done thing'. Although she was never sure that it was the right step for her, she went along with the wedding to keep everyone happy. She loves her husband (although she is not in love with him) and her daughters and would never 'rock the boat' for their benefit. Her husband is also lazy and over-reliant on Gladys and she fears he wouldn't cope without her.

Gladys is 5'2 in her stockinged feet (Marjorie towers over her at 5'8), and a little overweight. She has a warm countenance, dyed blonde (Clairol Nice'N'Easy) bobbed hair, and favours brightly coloured shirts/sweatshirts matched with knee length skirts. She loves her family dearly and has dedicated much of her life to their happiness. She is overly kind due to her lack of self-confidence and fear of conflict. She is an animal lover and supports numerous local animal charities. She often sports sweatshirts supporting the local dog/cat adoption home.

Gladys and her husband used to vote Liberal Democrat but are confused following the coalition with the Conservatives. They read the local newspaper and occasionally catch ITV News while eating their dinner on their laps in the evening. They holiday in their caravan on the Welsh coastline. Their three daughters are all married and still in the area, so they spend much of their time with the family. They adore their grandchildren and are relied on heavily for babysitting duties. (Gladys ends up doing much of the care, while her husband goes bowling.)

The Guild members all like Gladys but question her undying dedication to Marjorie who is clearly a bully. She is enjoying making new friends and expanding her horizons on the numerous trips and through the craft/educational sessions. As she is a kind woman she has never struggled to make friends, but her life has always centred around her family.

INWARD CHARACTER: Gladys is incredibly under-confident and dominated by those around her. She is pushed by others into situations that she does not always feel comfortable with but goes along with them as she doesn't want to 'rock the boat'

or upset others. However, deep down Gladys knows that she cannot allow this to continue and that she deserves better & should stand up for herself more. She doesn't know what the trigger will be. Although she has been married (not entirely happily) to her husband for decades and loves her family dearly, she has a strange feeling about Beryl that she can't quite – or more accurately – dare't quite, put her finger on.

OUTWARD CHARACTER: Gladys is the heart of the TG – she is kind and caring and can be relied on to get anything done (even at her own personal cost). She is clearly pushed around by Marjorie and many of the women feel she should stand up to her more. Everyone likes Glad as she is warm and helpful.

MAJOR PLOT POINT/SCENE REFLECTING CHARACTER TRAITS: Gladys will be the final girl & defeat the killer: Gladys will seemingly be one of the least prepared Guild members when the supernatural foe strikes, but this will be Gladys' time to shine. Beryl's death at Marjorie's hands will be the motivator Gladys needs to fight both her own subservience and lack of self-confidence, and the masked killer. She will be the ultimate victor – she will have overcome her own personal demons as well as the literal one. To compound this, when the killer makes his last-minute revived reappearance, she will have descended into bloody anger and will dominate the situation immediately. When Barry returns with the bus (horrified by the carnage), she will leap into the driver's seat and run over the killer multiple times (backwards and forwards), until he is a bloody mess on the road and a further revival is an impossibility. She will then drive off into the sunset, leaving a baffled, useless Barry staring at the carnage.

See accompanying character interviews/bios for further character detail

BERYL - Rebellious TG member (NB. FALSE Final Girl)

Beryl was one of the women who chained herself to the fence in Greenham Common in 1981. She is a peace campaigner, feminist and anti-war activist. She is now 78 but behaves as she did in her youth. Age has barely stopped Beryl, and she is constantly engaged in charity and campaigning activity for her local Green Party. She joined the Guild to add another string of activities to her already packed calendar, and to 'put a rocket up them'. Beryl has no time for Marjorie who she regards as 'all pomp, no knickers'. Gladys thinks she should challenge Marjorie for leadership, but Beryl is a socialist and thinks all members should be equal. She does, however, undermine and argue with Marjorie at every opportunity.

Beryl lives alone and does not have children but has had many lovers (male and female) through her life. She has five cats, all of whom she adopted as strays. Outwardly Beryl says that she never wanted children as it would have restricted her independence, but inwardly not having children is her biggest regret. She lives in a 2-bedroom terraced town house which is packed with relics from her travels all over the world. She has travelled extensively and worked with the under-privileged (especially children) in numerous countries, but mainly India. She has also lived on communes in Israel and Morocco. She has books lining every wall (even the staircase) which are mainly about travel and feminism. She has had journals of her travels published in zines and feminist magazines. She has been a freelance writer in her time and contributed articles to major newspapers – mainly opinion pieces about her outrage at global poverty and the abuse of the environment. She doesn't have much time for cleaning her home with all her activities but does her best and

uses ornamental ethnic throws to cover much of the mess (mainly piles of books and newspapers/journals.)

Beryl comes across as extremely opinionated and often 'rubs people up the wrong way'. She is not concerned about this as she cares deeply about everything and everybody (except Marjorie and her capitalist attitude). Her strong views will always be linked to a worthy cause. She wishes Gladys would tell Marjorie to stick her orders up her arse and would like to eliminate the role of Chair from the group entirely. She believes in communist principles and has toyed with anarchy in her time. Some of the other members think Beryl is unusual and can be rude, and are under Marjorie's spell, but then she did manage to get Mary Berry as a guest speaker at their retreat (her old friend Marco is a producer on Bake Off), so they are secretly impressed by her. Beryl has lived quite the life – especially in the 60's when she made the most of drug-infused free love! She has maintained some of her habits from the era and is a regular cannabis smoker.

Beryl has a real soft spot for Gladys – and if she's honest with herself, it's a little more than that. She thinks that Gladys is one of the most kind-hearted, selfless people she has ever met, and this is very attractive to someone with Beryl's democratic, liberal and charitable world view. She is also impressed by Gladys' active involvement in animal charities and care for others. She has tried on numerous occasions to persuade Gladys to stand up to Marjorie and not let her take advantage (there has to be a limit), but Gladys has never been brave of self-considered enough to do so. She is envious of Gladys' family life and can see that she does not love her over-reliant husband. She once went for a 'very quick-I have to get back to make Derrick's tea' drink with Gladys (who had a slimline tonic-Beryl had half an ale.) Gladys opened up a little about her marriage and Beryl thought that just maybe there had been a spark...but Gladys was married after all, and her never shown signs of sexual exploration in her experience.

Beryl doesn't have a television but enjoys world cinema and poetry. She reads the Socialist Worker and occasionally The Guardian. She used to have a subscription to Private Eye, but on her pension...She travels everywhere she can by foot, bicycle, or on public transport (she has a bus pass after all). She can be rather scatter-brained, but ultimately manages to get done what she needs to. The other members call her Social Secretary, but she rejects titles. Her hectic lifestyle will mean that she will pack for the trip 10 minutes before the coach arrives to pick her up – but will be sure she includes her marijuana stash which she keeps in one of the oriental pots on the landing.

INWARD CHARACTER: Beryl is ferocious in her political views and proactive in her campaigning/engagement with charitable and left-wing causes. She fiercely believes in democracy, socialism and liberalism and is fiercely anti-capitalist. However, deep down Beryl is a lot softer than many people realise. She is scared to show this as she fears it may be mistaken as weakness in her battles for multiple causes. She deeply wishes she had had a family but regrets none of her multiple mixed gender relationships. She would never publicly admit her desire for a family – after all she is a world traveller and a free spirit. Secretly she is very lonely and wishes she had someone to share her life with. Could it be Gladys?

OUTWARD CHARACTER: Beryl often either scares, baffles or infuriates most of the people who she encounters. She is fierce in her opinions (which often revolve around political, charitable or campaign issues), rebellious and rarely suffers fools and their foolish opinions. She can be absent-minded – a mixture of old age, and a

lifelong pot habit, and has a bohemian/eccentric appearance which often incorporates ethnic clothing and small campaign badges on all her jackets. Marjorie finds this repellent for a lady of the TG. However, those who know her well understand that she is an unrelentingly kind and caring person, whose only interest is in making the world a better place.

MAJOR PLOT POINT/SCENE REFLECTING CHARACTER TRAITS: Beryl will be the false final girl. Beryl hasn't yet told any of the other Guild members, but in her campaigning work for the town's historical society, she has uncovered some strange facts about Marjorie. She believes that Marjorie may have had a son who appears to have simply disappeared. And now the Historian Beryl has been working with has died in mysterious and gruesome circumstances. Beryl is building up to confronting Marjorie about what she has discovered, when she is sharply and brutally killed by Marjorie. Having led the women all the way through the film's confrontation with the killer, her knowledge has been her downfall and it is her Guild rival who kills her.

See accompanying character interviews/bios for further character detail

SECONDARY TOWNSWOMEN CHARACTERS

Daphne - Doddering TG member

Daphne is the Guild's oldest member at 85. She knows she lived through one of the World Wars but can't remember which one, or indeed who she was supposed to be at war with. She has significant memory loss and is very unstable on her feet (mainly relying on a wheelchair). She hears very little and wears a hearing aid which occasionally slips its tuning and picks up the local radio station or emits a high-pitched screech to which she is mainly oblivious. She is 5'5, very slim, with permed grey hair, and she wears a fur trimmed hat whatever the weather (which she keeps in a draw with mothballs when it's not perched on her head, giving it a unique aroma). She is always found in a 'house dress'. Her mother taught her the importance of house dresses when she was very young and she has upheld it ever since.

Daphne has been in the guild for 20 years and has long forgotten why she goes, or who any of the other members are...or indeed who she is fairly often. The other members humour her and are used to her age-induced eccentricities. Her greatest pleasure in life is a sherry (she used to be quite the drinker), and she is a huge fan of Barry Manilow who she has seen in concert 15 times

Daphne lives in a care home but insists on attending the Guild meetings and events whenever she can as she enjoys the company. Her husband lived with her in the home but died 3 years ago. She has a son, granddaughter and great grandson who visit often, but are never sure that they will remember who they are. She and her husband lived a colourful life before they retired, both enjoying drinking and socialising at the competitive ballroom dancing events which they attended up and down the country.

Daphne once worked as a nurse, but she can't remember where. She knows that her husband once had a job and that it had something to do with cars. She is no longer allowed to drive after the unfortunate incident when she drove the wrong way down the M6. She relies on lifts from the other Guild members to get to meetings and socials. The women look after her very well and are very fond of Daphne as she

is such a sweet soul. She hasn't been on holiday since 2008, so is looking forward to the weekend in the Lake District. Daphne thinks she gets on with all the members of the Guild, but occasionally can't remember if she's ever met them before. She's thinks they're 'all jolly nice bunch'. Daphne doesn't have any formal responsibilities in the Guild. The other members find constantly keeping an eye on her tiring, but think very highly of her, nonetheless. Marjorie thinks she should be forced to retire her membership, and that they should be trying to recruit a younger – but not vulgar – crowd. Daphne is oblivious to this fact – and many others.

JUNE - Glamorous TG member

June is the youngest member of the Guild (at a sprightly 62). She owns a mobile hairdressing business which enables her to seek out the finest gossip in the region. Everyone locally knows that she is the primary spreader of all scandal which occurs in the town. She offers a pensioner's special (although she will never admit that she's nearly old enough to qualify for it) and spends much of her time with clients whispering gossip and repeating the same set and dry five times a day. As she owns her own business, June was asked by Marjorie (who thinks she's 'brassy') to become the Guild's Treasurer. The role is not very demanding, but there are whispers of financial irregularities and a sudden investment in a time-share property in Tenerife. June believes that as she is not paid to fulfil her role, syphoning a little here and there is acceptable.

June recently divorced her husband 'because he couldn't keep up with her' and has an eye for younger men – the wealthier the better. She joined the Guild following her divorce when she met Beryl at an Iyengar Yoga retreat (she didn't like it). When she discovered the other members weren't as exciting as Beryl (and didn't know as many celebrities), she wanted to leave, but decided to stay with a view to taking over after Marjorie stepped down (which was yet to happen). She secretly covets Marjorie's role and thinks she's 'a stuck-up cow'. She has confided this to Beryl who also wants to bring about Marjorie's downfall. She has also told Gladys to stand up to Marjorie (although she herself never does).

June lives in a three-bed semi-detached house with her designer Malti-poo dog Stella who has her own bedroom complete with wardrobe and chaise longue. She gets on with Gladys over their love of dogs, but secretly dislikes the fact that she is a push-over. On the surface June is everybody's friend and is often the life and soul of the party-especially after a Chardonnay or two. She drives a Volkswagen Beetle convertible and frequently has Lionel Richie on the car stereo. She regularly holidays in Tenerife (she has a timeshare investment after all) and is known for her love of a perma-tan – real or fake.

She will have the largest suitcase with her on the trip, and by far the most items of clothing, jewellery and make-up. She will refuse to leave her room until she is fully made-up. She secretly thinks of the others as 'frumpy' and 'old'. She does, however, like Beryl's rebellious nature (and that she enjoys a trip to the pub) & thinks that Gladys is kind (although she does take advantage of her at times – don't they all?) June will flirt with Barry, the coach driver for the trip. Barry will be in his 40's and feel awkward with this 'older woman's' attention. June, however, will be convinced that he is immediately besotted with her – after all, aren't they all? She's a real catch for her age.

Further TG members (cannon fodder!)

There will be 5 more members of the Townswomen's Guild on the trip (10 in total). Marjorie, Gladys and Beryl will be the key characters, alongside Daphne and June who will be secondary. The other women will play supporting roles, ultimately to be killed in amusing and graphic fashions, aligned to abjection, excess and absurdity. They will be the prim, aging women who populate Townswomen Guilds up and down the country. They will be aged 65-75, all be grey-haired (or a modest dye) and fairly conservatively dressed. They will be:

Barbara – 'they're coming to get you Barbara!' – *Night of the Living Dead/Shawn of the Dead* reference in name.

Rose

Dorothy

Blanche

Sophia (*Golden Girls* references) NB. Sophia named *Ethel* in early drafts

OTHER KEY SECONDARY CHARACTERS (Non-Townswomen)

Su & Paul - Owners of the Lakeside Retreat Who Live at the 'Big House'

Su & Paul are 'posh', country set types in their mid-forties. They moved from London when Paul sold his marketing company and invested in the whole site which consists of 7 log cabins, lake and a large country house/farmhouse. They got the site 'at a steal' following some tricky business with a chemical spill in the lake a number of years ago. They have redeveloped the site and have a haphazard view of health and safety in order to cut corners and save money. They have had all the cabins built (on the cheap) and considered the safety issues surrounding the lake to the degree to which they could botch a certificate to let them open early. They are, however, marketing the property as a 'luxury retreat'. As with much of Su and Paul's life, what lies on the surface does not reflect what lies underneath. They pretend to embrace the country lifestyle but miss the city. However, they drive a large 4x4, dress head to toe in Barbour, and mix with the country set (the nearest of whom live some distance away.)

The couple have children at private boarding school. They use the site for 'bragging rights' amongst the London crowd, but they barely visit as they don't want to leave the city. They drink copious amounts of red wine and argue most nights. They have had the house built in a 'country set' style with a mock rustic farmhouse kitchen, exposed beams and Annie Sloan chalk paint covering most surfaces. They claim to have consulted one of the UK's leading interior designers in the design of their home, but did much of the work themselves with cut price paint from one of Su's yoga clients (she gave the occasional class in Notting Hill-just to fill the time.) Outwardly they support the 'hip' Jeremy Corbyn, but they actually vote Conservative and are very judgemental of those who are not wealthy (despite the fact that they no longer are).

Crucially Su and Paul have a secret – and so does their home. They have an S&M sex dungeon underneath their house, and their few visitors are members of one of

the numerous swinging organisations to which they belong. They are into S&M, fetish, rubber and domination. This will be where the killer secures his mask – a rubber/leather gimp mask from their well-stocked supplies. Their 'luxury retreat' is a secret fetish destination which is capable of hosting 'specialised erotic' parties and their basement is well furnished in terms of S&M equipment and rubber/leather gear. However, as the site is just getting up and running they have dropped their standards recently and responded to ads in the local classifieds, just to maintain their unique interests. If they can find the house, they'll do!

Su and Paul will be very welcoming to the ladies (they need the money – Paul lost a fortune in a dodgy shares deal & the S&M scene is struggling financially in the recession – leather fetish gear is expensive). However they will call the ladies 'the biddies' behind their backs and be most interested in getting their hands on Marjorie's cheque. They prefer gentrified clientele but project a laid-back attitude to all guests.

Barry - Coach Driver (NB. Comedic foil who links opening and closing scenes & causes the plot point which resurrects the killer)

Barry is in his early 40's and divorced with 2 daughters. He owns a minibus/coach company and has offered the Townswomen a deal on transport to and from their away weekend. If Marjorie likes him there may be more work in it for him, transporting the women on trips and events all over the country. He is hard-working and honest and needs the money after the divorce, so will make a big effort with the women. He had three minibus/coaches and has suffered under the recession and the divorce so is now down to one. He did share the driving with one other employee who he used to work with 'on the buses' before the redundancies, but has recently had to let him go as business is slow. This really hurt his pride, and his friendship. He needs new clients but can be blundering in his social/business engagements and does not always create the 'right impression'. His wife was always the one who had both the charm and the 'nouse'. She left him for his best friend after Barry started working day and night to get his minibus company off the ground.

Barry has never quite mastered the bachelor life, having married at 16, and although he makes the effort with a shirt and tie (squiffy), he manages to spill fried egg on his trousers before leaving the house, leaving debris behind for Marjorie to scoff at. He is a genuine, pleasant, friendly man if a little-rough round the edges. As he does with many of his clients, he will attempt a sing-song on the coach, and some members will join in, but Marjorie will put a dampener on it – TG ladies do not engage in singsongs!

OTHER PRIMARY CHARACTER

Peter - Masked killer

Peter (for that was the real name of the masked killer) was barely more than a teenager when he died. He had health issues at birth which caused parts of his body to become enlarged/overgrown and he was both exceptionally tall and distorted in his features. As many clothes failed to fit him his mother often dressed him in oversized workman's overalls. He didn't need 'outdoor' clothes anyway, as he was his mother's secret shame and was kept in the cold, sparse and cell-like basement of her home with nothing but a small portable television, some crayons and paper

for company (he enjoyed drawing the characters who he saw on the television). Peter's mother is Marjorie – although she had kept him a secret for the whole of his sad life. He had been born with disfigurement and mental disabilities and had 'disappointed her' in that he did not match her 'perfect' lifestyle (or at least her strife for perfection).

The only two people who Peter met other than his mother were his father, who showed moments of kindness to him when Marjorie wasn't looking – and from whom he learned small aspects of kindness himself, and, briefly, the man who was with her when he died. One of his happiest memories was when his father secretly gave him a small red Corgi car for Christmas when he was 5. The car was wrapped in paper covered with robin redbreasts and was the best thing he had ever seen. His father was only kind to him when Marjorie was not at home – as she would not tolerate his small kindnesses. When she found the car she beat Peter and he could hear her screaming 'upstairs' for hours at his poor father. The second man he knew very little of – and he wished to know very little of Peter (who had been hidden under a blanket on the back seat of the car during the journey). That was his first car journey – and although it scared him it reminded him of his red Corgi – but unfortunately it would also be his last as, unaware of the dangers of playing near the lake, he had died on his first day out of his basement prison.

Peter had a substantially stunted mental development, both due to his medical condition, and the cruel and debilitating circumstances in which he was kept. He understood very little of the world beyond what he saw on television – although what he watched was strictly controlled by his mother and mainly consisted of children's television programmes. He was aware that his mother was cruel but knew nothing else. While he was aware that a life existed beyond his basement prison, he feared what was beyond the walls and was underdeveloped in every sense to deal with the real world. He was utterly dependant on his mother and father for everything. When Peter was allowed to play by the isolated lake he was both excited at this glimpse of freedom, but also terrified as his mother disappeared into the cabin with the man and left him. He panicked in death, unable to fend for himself to the very last, and as his last view was that of his mother watching on and not helping, from the cabin window, his last thought was one of sadness – and a the swelling of a hatred which he was not emotionally advanced enough to comprehend.

Although a gentle boy when alive, Peter's propensity for murder following his resurrection will be partially inherited from his mother, and enhanced by the cruel circumstances of his upbringing, and death. He will emerge from the lake, zombie-like, but the triggers which he encounters such as the secret dungeon and torture rooms of Su & Paul's house, and the sight of his mother's face (the last hateful living memory he had) will render him hell bent on destruction and revenge. His disturbed psyche and supernatural reincarnation will render him a soulless, rage-filled killing machine and he will brutally slay all he encounters, bolstered with a supernatural strength from the electricity blast which revived him in the lake. His aim will be to kill his mother (although he will be slow initially to recognise her), for the cruelties which he endured as a child and the ultimate betrayal of his preventable death. He will kill all that get in his way of this goal.

INWARD CHARACTER: All Peter ever wanted was the love of his mother – this is the real sadness to his story. He understood very little beyond this. Post-revival as the masked killer he will simply be a killing machine hell-bent on revenge for the cruel treatment he received in life and at his death. Beyond that he understands very little of his circumstances or his own emotions.

OUTWARD CHARACTER: Peter was a sad, quiet child who knew very little other than cruelty. Occasionally his father was kind to him, and this kindness gave him an element of kindness. Post-revival his one goal is rage-fuelled murder – and ultimately the murder of his mother. Fate will give him that opportunity.

See accompanying character interviews/bios for further character detail

OTHER CHARACTERS TBC

Local historian pushed from battlements in opening sequence.

Guest speaker invited to give a talk to the ladies at their away weekend. This could be either a famous person, or an obvious parody of a famous person i.e. Mary Berry or Esther Rantzen (who is the chair of the Townswomen's Guild nationally).

NB. Further considered characters in early Character Analysis drafting referenced in Part Three Exegesis.

Appendix 4: Beryl Biography

Character Bio Sheets **BERYL**

Character bio sheets are not only a simple way to create characters, they are a great way to keep track of the characters you develop. When you write a longer work, such as a novel or screenplay, it is easy to forget minor character details. If you aren't careful, the blue eyes you described on page five can turn to brown eyes by the end of page eighty.

Using a character bio sheet, you can record all of the essential details for your characters and keep them in a single place so that you can check those details whenever necessary. As your story progresses and your characters continue to evolve, you can use bio sheets to keep track of any changes you have made to your characters. If you keep track of all your details on the bio sheet, your editing process will go much more smoothly.

When you fill out a bio sheet initially, don't feel as if you have to include a detail for every category. There are many things you will need to discover as your story progresses. On your first pass, record all of the details you are comfortable with and leave the rest. Feel free to add your own categories. This list has details that I find useful. You may have different needs or ideas.

- Character Name **BERYL**
- Nickname / Alias **BERYL THE PERIL, LAKSHMI (HER PARTNER'S NICKNAME FOR HER IN INDIA)**
- Place of Birth **BRIGHTON**
- Description of home **CHILDHOOD HOME - 2 UP, 2 DOWN, TERRACE**
- Residence **MESSY, CLUTTERED BACK-TO-BACK TERRACE, ALSO WITH CATS**
- General Appearance **ETHNIC CLOTHING, DISHEVELLED, ACTIVIST BADGES**
- Height **5'2**
- Weight **SLIGHTLY OVERWEIGHT**
- Clothing Choices **ETHNIC, 'HIPPIISH', CHARITY SHOP CLOTHES**
- Hair Colour **GREY (+ OCCASIONALLY PINK/PURPLE)**
- Hair Length **SHORT**
- Eye Colour **BLUE**
- Jewellery **SILVER RINGS ON MOST FINGERS, BANGLES (MULTIPLE)**
- Tattoos / Marks **NONE**
- Sees self as: **ACTIVIST**
- Is seen by others as: **SLIGHTLY ODD**
- Basic nature **CARING**
- Key Relationships **CATS + SISTER IN AUSTRALIA / GLADYS**
- Education **MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY - POLITICS (BA), SMOKING FOR MA**
- Work History **FREELANCE JOURNALIST, AUTHOR, 'TRAVEL JOBS', 'ARTIST' IN LOCAL HISTORY**
- Skills **ACTIVISM, WRITING, ART, ORGANISING DEMOS**
- Phobias / Fears **TORIES / UKIP / THE SPREAD OF CAPITALISM / TRUMP**
- Bad Habits / Vices **SMOKING WEED + DRINKING REAL ALE**
- Quirks **ALMOST SULKING!**
- Best Qualities **CARING + MOTIVATED**
- Worst Qualities **BOSSY**
- Key Childhood Experiences **HER FIRST KISS WITH ANOTHER GIRL IN THE PLAYGROUND**
- Key Teenage Experiences **LEAVING HOME TO TRAVEL AROUND EUROPE**
- Key Adult Experiences **GREENHAM COMMON / WORLD TRAVEL / PUBLISHED WRITER**
- Sexual Background **VARIED!! (SOM M/F + FEMALE + GLOBAL!)**
- Favourites (food, clothing, art, music, TV show, movie, book) **GREEK, AM, WORLD, QUESTION TIME, KOYANIS QATTI, ANUBIA**
- Goals and Motivations **TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE**
- Morality / Ethics **STRONGLY ETHICAL - BUYS GREEN, ACTS 'CAUSES' 'flexibly' moral ('it's all interpretation!')**

Appendix 5: Beryl Interview

PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH CHARACTER **BERYL**
(responses in his/her own voice)

FAVOURITE PIG OUT FOOD: WHEN I GET THE MUNCHIES (!) I SCOFF NUMMOUS ON PITTAS

FAVOURITE PERFORMER/AUTHOR/SPORTSMAN ETC: TONY BENN

EVERY NEW YEAR'S I RESOLVE TO: SAVE THE PLANET OF COURSE!

NOBODY KNOWS I AM: IN LOVE WITH GLADYS

I WISH I COULD STOP: GLADYS BEING BULLIED BY MARJORIE / THE TORIES / UKIP

I'M A SUCKER FOR: CATS / LIBERALISM

THE WORST PART OF MY LIFE IS: I HAVEN'T ANY CHILDREN (OTHER THAN THE CATS!)

I WANT TO TEACH MY CHILDREN THAT: SEE ABOVE

A GOOD TIME FOR ME IS: A PROTEST RALLY (ANTI-AUSTERITY CURRENTLY)

THE WORST ADVICE THAT MY FATHER GAVE ME WAS: CHILDREN SHOULD BE SEEN + NOT HEARD

I THOUGHT I WAS GROWN UP WHEN: I FIRST LEFT HOME TO TRAVEL EUROPE

WHEN I FEEL SORRY FOR MYSELF I: SMOKE WEED

NOBODY WOULD BELIEVE ME IF THEY SAW ME: UNCOVERING MARJORIE'S SECRET PAST

MY FRIENDS LIKE ME BECAUSE: I CARE (+ I'M SECRETLY SOFT-HEARTED)

MY PET PEEVE IS: TORIES - OR UKIP - THEY'RE WORSE!

MY MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT: PROTESTING AT GREENHAM COMMON

I CAN DIE HAPPY WHEN: NO PLANS JUST YET...

I'D REALLY RATHER: BE IN GOA

MY MOST HUMBLING EXPERIENCE WAS: WORKING WITH STREET CHILDREN IN WEST BENGAL

Appendix 6: Gladys Biography

Character Bio Sheets **GLADYS**

Character bio sheets are not only a simple way to create characters, they are a great way to keep track of the characters you develop. When you write a longer work, such as a novel or screenplay, it is easy to forget minor character details. If you aren't careful, the blue eyes you described on page five can turn to brown eyes by the end of page eighty.

Using a character bio sheet, you can record all of the essential details for your characters and keep them in a single place so that you can check those details whenever necessary. As your story progresses and your characters continue to evolve, you can use bio sheets to keep track of any changes you have made to your characters. If you keep track of all your details on the bio sheet, your editing process will go much more smoothly.

When you fill out a bio sheet initially, don't feel as if you have to include a detail for every category. There are many things you will need to discover as your story progresses. On your first pass, record all of the details you are comfortable with and leave the rest. Feel free to add your own categories. This list has details that I find useful. You may have different needs or ideas.

- Character Name **GLADYS**
- Nickname / Alias **GLAD, MUM**
- Place of Birth **WOLVERHAMPTON**
- Description of home **② - BED ROOM - GLADYS SHARED WITH HER SISTER**
- Residence **SUBURBAN, SEMI, ③ BED - FULL OF ANIMALS + VISITING FAMILY**
- General Appearance **'MUMSY', WARM, WEARS ANIMAL JUMPERS + SKIRTS**
- Height **5'2**
- Weight **OVERWEIGHT**
- Clothing Choices **ANIMAL PRINT / CARTOON / WATER JUMPERS**
- Hair Colour **DYED BLONDE (CLAIRE NICE 'N' EASY)**
- Hair Length **BOBBED**
- Eye Colour **BROWN**
- Jewellery **WEDDING RING, GOLD HEART NECKLACE BOUGHT BY DAUGHTER**
- Tattoos / Marks **NONE**
- Sees self as: **CARING**
- Is seen by others as: **UNDER-CONFIDENT / CARING**
- Basic nature **KIND / WARM**
- Key Relationships **HUSBAND, DAUGHTERS, GRANDCHILDREN, BERYL**
- Education **③ O'LEIGS IN HOME ECONOMICS, MATHS + BIOLOGY**
- Work History **HOUSE-WIFE - VOLUNTEERS FOR ANIMAL CHARITIES, SOME BED - KEEP**
- Skills **LOOKING AFTER OTHERS, CARING FOR ANIMALS, BOOK-KEEPING**
- Phobias / Fears **ANYTHING HAPPENING TO THOSE SHE LOVES; CONFRONTATION**
- Bad Habits / Vices **CREAM CAKES (SHE)**
- Quirks **WARM, HEARTY LAUGH, OBSESSION WITH ANIMALS**
- Best Qualities **GENUINITY, WARMTH, KINDNESS**
- Worst Qualities **FEAR OF CONFLICT, LACK OF SELF-CONFIDENCE**
- Key Childhood Experiences **FIRST FAMILY PET (DOG), FIRST FAMILY HOLIDAY,**
- Key Teenage Experiences **FIRST KISS (17) WITH HER HUSBAND - (CARNIVAL**
- Key Adult Experiences **GETTING MARRIED TO DEREK, HAVING HER KIDS / GRAND**
- Sexual Background **DEREK, BUT SOME 'OTHER' FEELINGS**
- Favourites (food, clothing, art, music, TV show, movie, book) **DAVE, WOOLIES, NO ABBA, LOVE OF DOGS, KIDS, ALMOST THE DOG**
- Goals and Motivations **'BE KIND' - LOOK AFTER EVERYONE, 'YOU COME SECOND'**
- Morality / Ethics **BOTH ETHICAL + MORAL - VERY CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS**

Appendix 7: Gladys Interview

PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH CHARACTER **GLADYS**
(responses in his/her own voice)

FAVOURITE PIG OUT FOOD: CREAM BUNS (ssshh!)

FAVOURITE PERFORMER/AUTHOR/SPORTSMAN ETC: PAUL O'GRADY (HE PRESENTS 'FOR THE LOVE OF DO

EVERY NEW YEAR'S I RESOLVE TO: BE MORE CONFIDENT + STAND UP TO MARJORIE

NOBODY KNOWS I AM: CONFUSED ABOUT HOW I FEEL ABOUT BERYL

I WISH I COULD STOP: ALLOWING MYSELF TO BE BOSSED AROUND

I'M A SUCKER FOR: ANIMALS OF COURSE (ESPECIALLY DOGS!)

THE WORST PART OF MY LIFE IS: I DON'T REALLY LOVE MY HUSBAND

I WANT TO TEACH MY CHILDREN THAT: YOU SHOULD ALWAYS BE KIND TO OTHERS

A GOOD TIME FOR ME IS: OUT WALKING THE DOGS

THE WORST ADVICE THAT MY FATHER GAVE ME WAS: MARRY DEREK - 'HE'LL BE GOOD FOR YOU

I THOUGHT I WAS GROWN UP WHEN: I'M NOT SURE I'VE EVER GROWN UP

WHEN I FEEL SORRY FOR MYSELF I: EAT CREAM BUNS (SSSHH!)

NOBODY WOULD BELIEVE ME IF THEY SAW ME: STAND UP TO MARJORIE

MY FRIENDS LIKE ME BECAUSE: I WILL DO ANYTHING FOR ANYBODY

MY PET PEEVE IS: MARJORIE (DON'T TELL ANYONE!)

MY MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT: MY CHILDREN / ANIMALS

I CAN DIE HAPPY WHEN: MY FAMILY ARE HAPPY

I'D REALLY RATHER: RUN A DOG SANCTUARY

MY MOST HUMBLING EXPERIENCE WAS: I'M NOT SURE THAT I'VE HAD MANY EXPERIENCES THAT WEREN'T HUMBLING

Appendix 8: Marjorie Biography

Character Bio Sheets

MARJORIE

Character bio sheets are not only a simple way to create characters, they are a great way to keep track of the characters you develop. When you write a longer work, such as a novel or screenplay, it is easy to forget minor character details. If you aren't careful, the blue eyes you described on page five can turn to brown eyes by the end of page eighty.

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- Character Name **MARJORIE**
- Nickname / Alias **BERYL CAUS ME 'SNOOTY DRAWS' + THINKS I DON'T KNOW**
- Place of Birth **WINDSOR**
- Description of home **4 BED DETACHED COUNTRYSIDE FIVE WITH IMMACULATE GARDEN**
- Residence **AS ABOVE (MY CURRENT HOME IS DESIGNED SIMILARLY)**
- General Appearance **BACK-COMBED HAIR, IMMACULATE, SOMETHING OF THE 'MATRONE**
- Height **5" 8**
- Weight **SLIM**
- Clothing Choices **PEARLS, TWIN SETS, HANDBAGS, ALWAYS IMMACULATE**
- Hair Colour **DIED BROWN (ACTUALLY GREY)**
- Hair Length **FAIRLY SHORT + SET**
- Eye Colour **GREEN**
- Jewellery **DIAMOND WEDDING RING, PEARL BRACELET (2 STRINGS)**
- Tattoos / Marks **VULGAR!**
- Sees self as: **SUPERIOR**
- Is seen by others as: **BOSSY**
- Basic nature **CRUEL**
- Key Relationships **SON (SECRET-DECEASED) + HUSBAND (DECEASED)**
- Education **ST MARY'S SCHOOL, ASCOT (BOARDER) - SENT AWAY AT AN EARLY AGE**
- Work History **NEVER WORKED - NOW A MAGISTRATE**
- Skills **ORDERING OTHERS, HIDING MURDERS, LYING, FLOWER ARRANGING**
- Phobias / Fears **VULGARITY, ALTH, LIBERALS!**
- Bad Habits / Vices **MURDER**
- Quirks **SECRET MURDERER**
- Best Qualities **SHE BELIEVES ALL OF THEM**
- Worst Qualities **ME KILLING**
- Key Childhood Experiences **BEING SENT AWAY TO BOARDING SCHOOL - MAKES A WOMAN**
- Key Teenage Experiences **BEING NEED GIRL, DISCOVERING MURDER,**
- Key Adult Experiences **ATTRACTING A WEALTHY MAN, KILLING BOTH SON + HUSBAND**
- Sexual Background **VULGAR! (HUSBAND + SECRET AFFAIR WITH AN ANCESTRAL MAN)**
- Favourites (food, clothing, art, music, TV show, movie, book) **PETT FOWLS, CLASSICAL, ANTIQUES, SWARIC ROADSHOW, BIBLE**
- Goals and Motivations **BE SUPERIOR, STRIVE FOR PERFECTION,**
- Morality / Ethics **OUTWARDLY: PERFECT / CONSERVATIVE WIFE MURDER INWARDLY: MURDERER, LIAR, BULLY**

Appendix 9: Marjorie Interview

PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH CHARACTER MARJORIE
(responses in his/her own voice)

FAVOURITE PIG OUT FOOD: PETIT FOURS

FAVOURITE PERFORMER/AUTHOR/SPORTSMAN ETC: MARGARET THATCHER / TEBBIT

EVERY NEW YEAR'S I RESOLVE TO: BE EVEN MORE SUPERIOR TO THOSE AROUND ME

NOBODY KNOWS I AM: A COLD-BLOODED KILLER

I WISH I COULD STOP: BERYL EXPOSING ME AS A COLD-BLOODED KILLER

I'M A SUCKER FOR: KITCHEN KNIVES

THE WORST PART OF MY LIFE IS: ANYONE WITH VULGAR MANNERS

I WANT TO TEACH MY CHILDREN THAT: I DON'T HAVE CHILDREN!!!

A GOOD TIME FOR ME IS: BEING RECOGNISED AS SUPERIOR TO THOSE AROUND ME

THE WORST ADVICE THAT MY FATHER GAVE ME WAS: TO RESTRAIN MY MURDEROUS IMPULSES

I THOUGHT I WAS GROWN UP WHEN: I KILLED MY FIRST ANIMAL

WHEN I FEEL SORRY FOR MYSELF I: I NEVER FEEL SORRY FOR MYSELF - HOW WEAK!

NOBODY WOULD BELIEVE ME IF THEY SAW ME: KILLING

MY FRIENDS LIKE ME BECAUSE: THEY LOOK UP TO ME

MY PET PEEVE IS: VULGAR BEHAVIOUR

MY MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT: HIDING MY 'IMPULSES'

I CAN DIE HAPPY WHEN: WHEN I DECIDE IT'S TIME

I'D REALLY RATHER: BE PRIME MINISTER (UKIP / TORY)

MY MOST HUMBLING EXPERIENCE WAS: I'VE NEVER HAD ONE - NUMBER ? ! ?

Appendix 10: Peter Biography

Character Bio Sheets **KILLER (PETER) - before he drowned at 25**

Character bio sheets are not only a simple way to create characters, they are a great way to keep track of the characters you develop. When you write a longer work, such as a novel or screenplay, it is easy to forget minor character details. If you aren't careful, the blue eyes you described on page five can turn to brown eyes by the end of page eighty.

Using a character bio sheet, you can record all of the essential details for your characters and keep them in a single place so that you can check those details whenever necessary. As your story progresses and your characters continue to evolve, you can use bio sheets to keep track of any changes you have made to your characters. If you keep track of all your details on the bio sheet, your editing process will go much more smoothly.

When you fill out a bio sheet initially, don't feel as if you have to include a detail for every category. There are many things you will need to discover as your story progresses. On your first pass, record all of the details you are comfortable with and leave the rest. Feel free to add your own categories. This list has details that I find useful. You may have different needs or ideas.

- Character Name **PETER**
- Nickname / Alias **'YOU', 'BOY'**
- Place of Birth **'UNKNOWN'**
- Description of home **CELLAR - BARE WITH A BED, TV, TABLE + CHAIR / NO WINDOW**
- Residence **MOTHER + FATHER'S HOME (CELLAR)**
- General Appearance **PETER WAS BORN DISFIGURED + HAS FACIAL + HEAD SWELLING -**
- Height **6"12**
- Weight **BULKY (WITH BODY SWELLING) - ABNORMAL GROWTH**
- Clothing Choices **MOTHER MADE HIM WEAR DUNGAREES / WORK OVERTS**
- Hair Colour **BLACK**
- Hair Length **SHORT BACK + SIDES**
- Eye Colour **GREEN**
- Jewellery **NO!**
- Tattoos / Marks **DISFIGUREMENTS (FACE + BODY) / VERY PALE (LACK OF SUNLIGHT)**
- Sees self as: **NOTHING LIKE IS REPEATEDLY TOLD SO**
- Is seen by others as: **OTHERS DON'T KNOW HE EXISTS - HIS MOTHER HATES HIM**
- Basic nature **MEEK BUT HAS INHERITED HIS MOTHER'S IMPULSES + HIS FATHER'S PESSIMISM**
- Key Relationships **MOTHER + FATHER**
- Education **NONE**
- Work History **NONE**
- Skills **AVOIDING BEATINGS / KILLING TIME**
- Phobias / Fears **MOTHER / BEATINGS**
- Bad Habits / Vices **ACCORDING TO MOTHER ALL OF HIS HABITS ARE BAD**
- 'Quirks' **RESTRICTED MEAL AGE**
- Best Qualities **SURVIVAL**
- Worst Qualities **MURDEROUS IMPULSES**
- Key Childhood Experiences **BEING KEPT LOCKED UP IN A BARE CELLAR**
- Key Teenage Experiences **AS ABOVE + THE BEATINGS**
- Key Adult Experiences **GOING ON HIS FIRST 'HOLIDAY' + GETTING TO LEAVE HOUSE**
- Sexual Background **MASTURBATION (FOR WHICH HE WAS PUNISHED!)**
- Favourites (food, clothing, art, music, TV show, movie, book) **WHATEVER MOTHER GIVES HIM**
- Goals and Motivations **TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE / AVOID MOTHER'S ANGER**
- Morality / Ethics **DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE TERMS.**

Appendix 11: Peter Interview

PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH CHARACTER
(responses in his/her own voice)

KILLER (PETER) - before he was
allowed to drown by his own mother
as a 2 year-old
with mental
deficiencies

FAVOURITE PIG OUT FOOD: I EAT WHAT I'M GIVEN BY MOTHER

FAVOURITE PERFORMER/AUTHOR/SPORTSMAN ETC: I WATCH ANDI PETERS ON THE TELEVISION
WHEN I'M AWAKE

EVERY NEW YEAR'S I RESOLVE TO: GET AWAY FROM MOTHER

NOBODY KNOWS I AM: ALIVE (EXCEPT MOTHER + FATHER)

I WISH I COULD STOP: MOTHER BEING CRUEL TO ME

I'M A SUCKER FOR: GETTING OUTSIDE (NEVER DONE IT YET!)

THE WORST PART OF MY LIFE IS: MOST OF IT

I WANT TO TEACH MY CHILDREN THAT: NO CHILDREN!

A GOOD TIME FOR ME IS: WHEN MOTHER IS KIND

THE WORST ADVICE THAT MY FATHER GAVE ME WAS: LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER!

I THOUGHT I WAS GROWN UP WHEN: MOTHER TOLD ME I COULD GO ON HOLIDAY

WHEN I FEEL SORRY FOR MYSELF I: PLOT HOW TO KILL MOTHER

NOBODY WOULD BELIEVE ME IF THEY SAW ME: AT ALL

MY FRIENDS LIKE ME BECAUSE: FRIENDS?!?

MY PET PEEVE IS: BEING TIED UP

MY MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT: NOT ANNOYING MOTHER TO ME POINT WHEN SHE BEATS ME

I CAN DIE HAPPY WHEN: I'VE NEVER BEEN HAPPY

I'D REALLY RATHER: BE ANYONE ELSE

MY MOST HUMBLING EXPERIENCE WAS: THEY ARE ALL HUMBLING, I THINK.
WHAT DOES HUMBLING MEAN?

Appendix 12: Potential Weapons Research

(Linked to Townswomen's Guild Activities)

Knitting/Crochet/Basket Weaving (NB. knitting would become a key plot point & therefore knitting-related weapons were ultimately favoured)

Knitting needles, crochet needles, sharp scissors, tweezers, pins, pin cushions, weaving hooks, secateurs, drill, shop knife, picket knife, cleave, rapping iron, bodkin, picking knife

Baking

Piping tube, rolling pin, cake cutters, cake mixers, whisk, spatulas, pans, knives, a variety of boiling hot ingredients – most notably piping hot jam. NB. flower bomb

Flower Arranging

Metal wire string, shears, foam stripper, a variety of unusual flower dressings which could be attached to the murdered victim as a garish and amusing decoration

Gardening

Scythe, sickle, hoe, trowel, fork, axe, rake, spade, saw, shovel, shears, lawnmower (ride-on for the elderly heroine?), claw....go on then...chainsaw...to be wielded by the killer/final girl reflecting intertextually

General/Misc.

Control underwear (girdles, bloomers)

Wire hangers – could be used in parody of *Halloween* wardrobe attack

Walking sticks, walking frames, wheelchair

Handbags

Chairwoman's gavel? (Could she become the victim of her own power trappings?)

NOTE ON MOBILE PHONES

While the women will either not have or be incompetent at using mobile phones (and there will be no reception on the resort with the limited exception of the basement), Su & Paul's visitor will have a mobile phone. This will cause the downfall of one of the characters in the sex dungeon who will have it inserted into his backside and intestines by the killer. In order to attempt to access the phone (could Marjorie have banned phones onsite due to her control freak – and murderous – nature?), the women will have to delve into the intestines of the man to retrieve it: from both ends. This mobile phone is both weapon and potential saviour.

Appendix 13: Death Count/Timeframe

1. **PRE-CREDIT SEQUENCE** – Local historian (impaled on church/castle spire: *The Omen* reference). Murderer = Marjorie (revealed at climax) **Death count: 1**
2. **Friday night/Saturday morning** (early hours) – Owners of 'big house' Su & Paul & their 2 guests (a man & woman). Killed in bondage dungeon with S&M devices. Paul to have mobile phone violently inserted into backside. Murderer = masked killer **2-5**
3. **Saturday morning** (late) – TG guest speaker i.e. Mary Berry & one secondary TG character. Guest speaker is whisked to death – the killer uses her own baking equipment to render her face a bloody pulp. TG woman killed fleeing the scene and is 'piped to death', suffocating on the contents of a piping tube which the killer thrusts down her throat. Murderer = masked killer **6&7**
4. **Saturday afternoon** (early) – Doddering guild member Daphne. Killed in her cabin with her own control underwear while listening to Barry Manilow. Murderer = masked killer **8**
5. **Saturday afternoon** (late) – Two secondary guild members. Killed in the barn near to the big house with garden shears/trimmer. Murderer = masked killer **9&10**
6. **Saturday night/Sunday morning** (early hours) – Glamorous TG member June. Killed in the bedroom with a stiletto heel, after being sacrificed by Marjorie. Murderer = masked killer **11**
7. **Sunday morning** (mid-late) – Two secondary Guild members. Means of death TBC, but to occur during the women's stand-off at the cabins in which they use whatever weapons they have to fight back. Murderer = masked killer TBC **12&13**
8. **Sunday afternoon** – Beryl. Our false final girl is killed by Marjorie with her own penknife. The murder is witnessed by Gladys who is our true final girl. We also see the drowning of Peter & the murder of both Marjorie's lover & husband in flashback. Murderer = Marjorie **14-17**
9. **Sunday afternoon** (late) – Marjorie. The masked killer finally achieves his bid for revenge and drowns Marjorie in the Lake. Murderer = masked killer **18**
10. **Sunday evening** – The masked killer. Gladys, the final girl, avenges the murder of all her friends (but most especially Beryl), in the final confrontation. She uses the chainsaw from the barn to cause multiple injuries. When the killer rises again (in homage to *Halloween* & every other returning killer film), she runs him over multiple times with Barry's bus, rendering him a bloody pulp. It is Marjorie's hand which emerges from the lake in the final 'surprise' scene (homage to *Carrie*). **19**

Appendix 14: Plot Plan

(Draft 1)

1. Pre-credit sequence. An unseen companion tours a National Trust castle with a droning historian. The historian is pushed from the ramparts and impaled on a spire.
2. Montage – the women of the Townswomen's Guild pack in their homes for their weekend arts & craft trip in an isolated log cabin resort. The scenes focus on key characters Marjorie (Chair), Gladys (her assistant), and Beryl (Social Events Organiser) with featured characters June (flirty) & Daphne (doddering).
3. Coach driver Barry picks up the women and key characteristics are delivered during the journey to the Lake District i.e. conflict between Marjorie and Beryl. Barry is key to the circular narrative as he will collect them at the end of the weekend.
4. The women arrive at the Lake District resort and meet owners Su & Paul. As the women settle into their cabins, Barry's coach slips in mud next to the lake and dislodges a power cable. He is oblivious.
5. A storm rages in the night and the power cable falls into the lake. A body which has lain dormant at the bottom of the lake is revived, and the film's supernatural villain emerges from the water.
6. Su & Paul are revealed to be hardcore S&M swingers and are hosting a party with another couple in the secret sex dungeon at the 'big house'. The sounds of revelry draw the killer and he brutally kills them all with their own sexual 'equipment'. Paul is killed by having a mobile phone inserted into his rectum and through to his intestines. The killer takes a black rubber gimp mask which he wears over his own distorted features.
7. Contrastingly, in the morning the women begin their genteel activities with a talk by national treasure, Mary Berry. The sound of Berry's high-velocity blender draws the killer who mutilates and kills her with her own equipment, alongside Townswoman Ethel (later to be named Sophia in reference to *Golden Girls* & first victim amended to *Dorothy*). The horrified Townswomen flee to the 'big house' where they barricade themselves in.
8. The Guild's oldest member Daphne is alone in her cabin having taken 'a turn'. Her loud Barry Manilow record attracts the killer who murders her with her own control underwear.
9. The women decide to split up – Beryl leads a rescue mission for Daphne. Marjorie insists many of the women stay in the 'big house'. After Beryl's group have departed, the women in the house hear a mobile phone ringing and Marjorie and June discover the carnage in the basement. They attempt to retrieve the phone from Paul's intestines/mouth/anus using all they have – a fish slice and tongs. They are unsuccessful.
10. The other group finds Daphne's dead body in her cabin. They salvage a few items and decide to head back to the safety of the 'big house' before dark. In the woods they see the shadow of the killer and flee to the barn in the woods.

11. The killer follows the women to the barn. He removes Blanche's head with shears and shreds Dorothy (later amended to *Barbara*) with a trimmer. Gladys and Beryl escape after Beryl stabs him the eye with a knitting needle.
12. The women regroup at the house. They decide to barricade themselves in for the night and attempt escape in daylight. Gladys and Beryl take the first lookout shift in the kitchen, but fall asleep after a stiff drink – and one of the spliffs that Beryl has smuggled in. Not before Beryl has told Gladys a piece of significant information...
13. As the house sleeps the killer breaks in through the window of a hidden room (where the strong stuff is kept) in the basement. Drawn by the sound of a flushing toilet, Marjorie and June are trapped upstairs by the killer and forced to fight for their lives with little more than Su & Paul's sex toys. About to have her throat slit by a stiletto heel, Marjorie pushes June in front of the killer to save herself. He pauses as he gets a closer look at her, giving her chance to escape. She runs for the back door and begins to tear down the barricade. Alerted by the crashing upstairs the other women have hidden in the kitchen utility cupboard. The killer flings the door open – to be met by Gladys with a Hoover pipe. Jamming the pipe into the zip of his mask's mouth she sucks the air from it, suffocating him, and they follow Marjorie out of the door.
14. The women regroup back in their cabins. Realising they must defend themselves, in a montage scene, they search their luggage for potential weapons. They amass knitting needles, crochet hooks, flower arranging tools, hot jam and flower bombs. Beryl has her trusty pen knife.
15. Drawing the killer with the sound of Barry Manilow, the women fight off the killer with their homemade weapons and manage to injure him. However, Rose and Sophia are lost – one in 'friendly fire' when jam explodes in her face. Marjorie, Gladys and Beryl survive and flee to the one place left to hide, the boat house.
16. The scene is set for the confrontation between the feuding women. Wedging the doors of the boat house shut with oversized oars, Beryl tells Marjorie that she has uncovered suspicious evidence about her past. Over flashbacks of Beryl at the local history club/library, she reveals that she knows Marjorie has a secret son and that she suspects she may have been involved in the death of her husband.
17. Marjorie kills Beryl with her own pen knife. As she dies Beryl and Gladys reveal their love for each other.
18. Marjorie reveals that she planned the weekend for Beryl to 'meet with an unfortunate accident' as she suspected she knew too much. In flashback her story is revealed – she had a disformed and mentally-disadvantaged son. Ashamed that her kin was less than perfect, she kept Peter in a stark, hidden basement in her home. On a trip with her lover to the same Lake District resort, she watched as her son drown in the Lake. She then killed her lover and her husband when she returned home – the only other people who knew of his existence. To pollute the crime scene, she dumped formaldehyde into the Lake. The resort closed soon after and lay derelict. Marjorie also killed the local historian in the pre-credit sequence – he had got too close to the truth.

19. Just as Marjorie approaches Gladys with the penknife, the killer crashes through the wall of the boathouse brandishing a chainsaw. As he advances on Marjorie, he stops as he recognises her. She opens her arms to draw him into a flinching embrace. He lowers his chainsaw and she reaches for it. However, his embrace becomes stronger, and to the sound of crushing bones, and the emission of blood from her eyes, he literally squeezes her to death and throws her body into the lake.
20. Having fulfilled his revenge, the killer turns to return to his watery grave to finally rest in peace. However Gladys, our final girl (Beryl had been the false final girl), who has finally found the strength in herself to fight back, has been pushed to her very limits by the death of her friends and love. She picks up the chainsaw and runs after him, plunging the rotating blade through his midriff multiple times, and finally pushing him to the ground. As the sun sets she waves the chainsaw triumphantly and desperately and falls to the ground too.
21. As coach driver Barry returns to collect the women, he is met by a scene of carnage. Recognising Gladys' barely moving body, he rushes to help her. As they stagger away towards the bus, the killer sits up and lumbers towards them. Gladys, at the end of her tether, pushes Barry away, gets into the bus and reverses into the killer, running him over again, and again, and again, leaving nothing but a bloody pulp.
22. As our hero drives off into the dusky sunset, and Barry begins to pick up bits of Townswomen strewn around the site, the falling moonlight picks up a shimmering in the lake. A hand, with pearls on the wrist, is emerging from the murk. The real monster, Marjorie, has yet to be defeated...

Appendix 15: Final Pre-Writing Scene List

*(NB. Scenes marked with * are SHORTER)*

Scene 1: (EXTERIOR-daytime) National Trust car park.

A car pulls up. A National Trust historian meets an unseen companion for a tour of the castle in front of them.

2: (INTERIOR) National Trust Castle ground floor state room.

The droning historian guides the visitor through the ground floor.

* 3: (INT) NT Castle first floor bedroom.

The tiresome tour continues. The gloved companion looks at his/her watch, bored.

4 (EXT) NT Castle roof/ramparts.

As the boring historian circles the castle's ramparts, a hand pushes him, and he falls onto one of the castle spires. As he slides down it, pointing and crying 'you!', the CREDITS begin.

5 (INT-daytime) Gladys (Guild Chair Assistant)'s twee house - bedroom.

Gladys is distractedly packing for a trip away. There are 4 dogs and 3 cats trying to get into her case. Her husband calls her, frustrated, from another room.

6 (INT) Gladys' chaotic kitchen.

Gladys' concerned husband is looking through the fridge at the frozen food she has left for him. She drags her case into the kitchen and is patiently explaining when there is a loud honk. She kisses her perturbed husband and most of the animals and drags her case outside.

7 (EXT) Outside Gladys' house

Gladys is met by Barry the friendly but dishevelled bus driver who loads her case and they board the bus. Gladys tells Barry they better collect Marjorie first or there'll be trouble. They set off.

8 (INT) Marjorie (Guild Chairwoman)'s large & immaculate house - bedroom

Marjorie is packing, her folding perfect. The doorbell rings. She looks at her watch and picks up her suitcase.

9 (INT) Marjorie's hallway/drive.

Barry is standing at the door. After berating him for being late, she gives him her case and follows him to the coach. Marjorie waits for Barry to take her hand to board the coach.

10 (INT) Bus.

Gladys greets Marjorie (who is demeaning), and as the bus pulls away they discuss the plan for the weekend (all the hard work done by Gladys) & how it will improve their chances of winning the Annual Townswomen Federation Arts & Crafts (knitting) awards after coming runners-up last year.

11 (INT) Beryl (Guild Social Secretary)'s house - lounge.

Beryl is busy lifting ethnic drapes and ornaments looking for her secret weed stash when she hears a horn honk. 'Keep your knickers on!'

12 (INT) Beryl's' house - kitchen.

Beryl finds the weed in the fridge, ties a rope round her old case and feeds her cat. She leaves the house to board the bus.

13 (EXT) June (Guild Treasurer)'s house.

Barry honks the horn outside a small semi with a pink Beetle parked outside. June emerges, heavily made-up and with 3 cases. She is joined by Dorothy & Sophia. They all board the coach.

14 (INT) Bus.

All the women are now onboard (including some who we have not yet been introduced to & Daphne, the only member in a wheelchair). Marjorie briefs the women on their near-military schedule for the Arts & Crafts Weekend in the Lake District. Beryl and Marjorie bicker about the importance of winning the award and Gladys demurs.

* 15 (EXT) Country lane.

As the bus winds towards their destination a rendition of 'I've got a luvly bunch of coconuts' echoes through the countryside, started by Daphne and dismissed by Marjorie.

* 16 (EXT-evening) Cabin resort next to lake.

The bus pulls up and resort owners Su & Paul rush to meet the women as they prepare to disembark.

17 (INT) Bus.

The slumbering women awake and Marjorie makes clear that she should make the official greeting as she is the Chair of the Townswomen's Guild.

18 (EXT) Outside the cabins.

Marjorie meets Su and Paul with Gladys in tow. They make their arrangements and Marjorie decides that Barry will have to bring the bus closer as they can't be expected to walk through mud to get to their accommodation. Gladys rushes back to tell him & he reverses onto the muddy lakeside, his wheels spinning and his head shaking (out of Marjorie's view).

* 19 (INT) Bus.

The women begin to disembark and help Daphne down. Barry helps them at the door.

20 (EXT) Outside cabins.

The women enter their cabins (most are sharing but not Marjorie) and Barry helps them with their luggage. Marjorie decides that they should retire as it is already 8.30pm. Barry arranges to pick them up on Sunday evening (today is Friday) and climbs back into his bus sighing. Immediately his phone rings – his ex-wife is haranguing him again. He is distracted as he tries to reverse on the muddy land and reverses into a power cable, dislodging it. He drives off oblivious.

21 (INT) Beryl & Gladys' cabin.

The women unpack and Beryl tells Gladys she must stand up to domineering Marjorie. They eventually retire to bed after a sneaky glass of Beryl's contraband brandy.

* 22 (INT) Marjorie's cabin.

Marjorie is fast asleep with ear plugs and eye mask.

* 23 (INT) Beryl & Gladys' cabin.

The women are fast asleep thanks to the empty brandy bottle next to the bed.

24 (EXT-night) Hillside next to lake.

A storm rages outside. Thunder rolls across the hillside and forks of lightening fill the sky. A lightning bolt hits the communication mast on the hillside. It blows dramatically emitting sparks and smoke.

25 (EXT-night) Lakeside

A lightning bolt hits the cable dislodged by Barry. It plunges into the lake, causing further lightning bolts to spark dramatically across the lake.

* 26 (INT) June's cabin.

June shifts in her bed and lifts her eye mask. She looks at Sophia who is both deaf and fast asleep, checks her rollers and goes back to sleep.

27 (EXT) In the lake.

A body which has lain dormant at the bottom of the lake surrounded by reeds, begins to stir in the murky water.

* 28 (EXT) Edge of lake/jetty.

A distorted hand emerges from the water followed by a shadowy, hulking form.

* 29 (EXT) The big house across the site owned by Su & Paul.

The lights are on and music and laughter can be heard.

30 (INT) 'Big house' basement.

Su & Paul are hosting a sex party in the secret basement sex dungeon. They are engaging in S&M with another couple.

* 31 (EXT) Woods outside 'big house'.

Drawn by the noise and light the creature blunders towards the house in the shadows.

* 32 (INT) Ground floor 'big house'.

An open bathroom window downstairs and a series of muddy footprints follow the creature to the basement stairs.

33 (INT) Basement dungeon.

The creature blunders into the scene of sexual debauchery and kills all four of the participants using their own torture equipment. One is dashed against the wall in a leather 'sleep sack' and a couple enjoying the harness swing are diced as the creature wraps the swing around them both and squeezes. Paul dies by having his guests' mobile phone forcibly inserted into his mouth and into his intestines/rectum.

34 (INT) Basement dungeon 'costume room'.

As the killer leaves the scene of carnage he sees his monstrous form in a mirror & takes a rubber gimp mask to cover his face. He leaves.

35 (EXT-morning) Outside the women's cabins.

The women assemble outside their cabins and discuss the fallen cable. Two cabins have no power, the others are linked to a generator. They will contact the owners later, but first they have their competition training activities.

36 (EXT) Lakeside woodland area.

The women gather for the first of their scheduled activities – a talk by Mary Berry who they hope can give them the edge in the baking competition. Gladys busies herself setting up the chairs/tables with Beryl's help.

37 (EXT) Lakeside next to the cabins.

A taxi pulls up & Mary Berry climbs out. She is hungover and smoking. Her language is foul. She is greeted by a starstruck Marjorie.

38 (EXT) Lakeside woodland area.

Beryl greets old friend Mary Berry and they sneak off together for a spliff. Marjorie orders Gladys around, contradictorily claiming that they'll never win unless they all pull their weight.

39 (EXT) Woodland area.

A more refined version of Berry gives her talk to the women. She has brought a new high-powered blender to flog. She gives them a demo and the sound of the 6 blades attracts the creature's attention. He emerges from the woods & kills Berry with her own blender applied to the face. The women, horrified, flee into the woods. The creature catches a shocked and slow Sophia (later *Dorothy*). He thrusts a piping tube down her throat suffocating her to death.

* 40 (EXT) 'Big house'.

The women bang at the doors of Su & Paul's house. There is no reply, so they let themselves in.

41 (INT) 'Big house' kitchen.

The women shout for Su & Paul but get no reply. They agree to barricade themselves in.

42 MONTAGE

(INT) Lounge.

Beryl and Gladys tip over a sofa & use it to cover the window.

(INT) Dining Room.

June and Rose balance the table on the sideboard covering the window. Beryl follows them with nails and secures it to the frame. 'Arts and crafts this!'

(INT) Downstairs loo.

Marjorie looks at the broken window, concerned. Beryl snatches a twee family portrait and nails it to the window frame. Gladys shouts that all the phone lines are down.

43 (EXT) Daphne's cabin.

Barry Manilow's 'Bermuda Triangle' is playing loudly. Daphne is singing off key. She has had one of 'her turns' & stayed behind. She is sitting in her wheelchair with a compress on her head.

* 44 (EXT) Daphne's cabin.

The sound of the music has drawn the killer. He lumbers towards it.

45 (INT) Daphne's cabin.

The killer approaches the oblivious Daphne from behind. He takes her throat and she believes it to be her husband 'up to funny business'. He suffocates her with the closest thing to hand – her own spare bloomers.

46 (INT) 'Big house' hallway

The women are arguing about Daphne. Beryl has formed a splinter group rescue party. Marjorie calls it a 'suicide mission' and she insists some of the women stay with her at the house. Beryl, Gladys, Blanche and Dorothy (later *Barbara*) prise open the front door and furtively head into the woods. Beryl has a kitchen knife in her hand.

47 (INT) 'Big house' hall.

Marjorie & June hear a distant phone ringing and realise that a staircase leads to a hidden basement room. Grabbing the only weapons to hand, a fish slice and a pair of tongs from the kitchen, Marjorie & June head down the stairs.

*48 (INT) Steps to basement.

The women find a small hidden panel at the bottom of the stairs. They open it & cautiously head in.

49 (INT) Dungeon.

They are met with a scene of sexual carnage. They cautiously survey the scene and June points to the phone ringing sound inside Paul's rectum...They argue but realise they must try to retrieve it. June delicately attempts to do so with the tongs while Marjorie wields the fish slice, but the pressure applied with the damage already sustained cause it to disappear further and fatally ring off. They temporarily leave the basement – June covered in gore.

50 (INT) Daphne's cabin.

Beryl's rescue group find Daphne dead. They are distressed, but Beryl is strong & tells them they must gather whatever they can from her cabin & head back to the other women. They find knitting needles. Shaken, they flee the scene quickly.

51 (EXT-evening) Woods.

As the women furtively creep through the woods towards the house discussing where Su & Paul's car might be, they see a shape lumbering towards them. They are too far to make it to the house and take shelter in the nearest building – the barn.

* 52 (EXT) Barn doors.

The women prise open the doors and hurry into the barn.

53 (INT) Barn.

With no lighting the barn is pitch black. But as Beryl is a dog walker she has her torch with her. They are exploring the gardening tools on the wall including scythes, sheers, a strimmer, and centre-stage a chainsaw, when they hear the doors opening. They flee to the back of the barn & hide behind 2 haystacks, scrabbling to switch off the torch. The scrabble alerts the killer to their hiding place and he removes Blanche's head with the sheers & shreds the fleeing Dorothy (*Barbara*) with a strimmer. Beryl & Gladys attempt to flee as he is distracted, but he is soon behind them. As he looms up on Beryl, Gladys boldly stabs him in the eye with a knitting needle & as he falls they run from the barn.

54 (EXT) 'Big house'.

Gladys and Beryl bang at the door & beg to be let in. Rose lets them in. Marjorie looks on in disdain behind her.

55 (INT) 'Big house' lounge.

The blood-stained women compare stories & realise they are trapped. It would be suicide to go back outside in the dark. They decide to attempt to survive the night barricaded into the house. They establish a 'look-out' system. Marjorie, of course, is exempt.

* 56 (INT) First floor.

Marjorie & June head to their bedrooms. Marjorie has the master.

* 57 (INT) Lounge.

Rose and Sophia bed down in the lounge.

58 (INT) Basement dungeon.

Beryl and Gladys survey the carnage in the basement. Gladys is horrified. Beryl is reminded of 'Glastonbury '78'.

59 (INT) Kitchen.

Beryl & Gladys are sat talking at the kitchen table. They have taken the first 'look-out' shift. Beryl produces whiskey from the kitchen cupboard and a spliff from her pocket. She persuades Gladys to indulge and as Gladys takes her first ever drag on a spliff Beryl tells her she has something important to tell her. The scene fades...

60 MONTAGE

(INT-night-time) Master bedroom

Marjorie is asleep in the king-size bed, but she is restless

(INT) Second bedroom.

June is fast asleep, gore still in her hair.

(INT) Lounge.

Rose & Sophia are fast asleep.

(INT) Kitchen.

The 'look-outs' are fast asleep on the kitchen table, an empty whiskey bottle in front of them.

(INT) Downstairs loo.

The twee family portrait lies shattered on the floor; the open window exposed. The killer is in the house.

61 (INT) Kitchen.

As the women slumber on the table, the killer stands in the doorway behind surveying them. As he takes a step forward the sound of a flushing toilet upstairs distracts him. He turns and leaves for the staircase.

* 62 (INT) Upstairs hallway.

Marjorie returns to her room from the bathroom, oblivious.

* 63 (INT) Second bedroom.

Disturbed by the flush, June now wakes and needs to go. She hurries to the door.

64 (INT) Upstairs hallway.

She opens the door and comes face to mask with the killer. She slams the door into him, pushing the knitting needle in his eye further in, & as he falls back she scurries into Marjorie's room.

65 (INT) Master bedroom.

The women barricade the door with a chest of drawers. One falls open spilling sex toys. They arm themselves with oversized dildos. The killer easily breaks through spilling the contents of another drawer. He picks up a killer stiletto and lashes out at Marjorie. She pulls June in front of her, and her throat is cut. She looks at Marjorie in disbelief as she falls to the ground dying. The killer also looks at Marjorie...and pauses. She hits him with an empty drawer and flees the room.

* 66 (INT) Downstairs hallway.

Marjorie bumps into Rose and Sophia and they all flee to the kitchen.

67 (INT) Kitchen.

Beryl & Gladys have awoken and are climbing into the utility cupboard to hide, joined by the other women. Marjorie runs to the back door and uses a chair to break the barricade down. She flees. The crashing rouses the killer who appears in the doorway and sees the women half-wedged in the cupboard.

68 (INT) Cupboard.

The Townswomen slam the door shut and attempt to hold the doors as the killer wrestles to get in. They can't hold him off.

69 (INT) Kitchen.

The killer thrusts the doors open and is met by Gladys brandishing a cordless Hoover pipe. She thrusts the pipe into the zip of his mask and into his mouth. The Hoover sucks the air out of the mask temporarily suffocating him. As he flails backwards the women run out of the back door.

70 (EXT-morning) Outside cabins.

The women regroup outside the cabins. They spot Marjorie packing.

71 (INT) Marjorie's cabin.

Beryl attacks Marjorie for exposing and leaving them. She asks what happened to June. Marjorie lies. Beryl says that the only chance they have now is to arm themselves with whatever they have and fight back and destroy their foe. Gladys stands by her and points out that they can each apply their unique arts & crafts competition skills.

72 MONTAGE

(INT) Beryl & Gladys' cabin.

Beryl briefs the women on potential weapons & instructs them to search all the cabins.

(INT) Rose & Blanche's cabin.

They find Rose & Blanche's crochet hooks and flower arranging tools. They are the competitive crochet and flower arranging women.

(INT) Sophia & Dorothy's cabin.

They find jam and flower. Sophia and Dorothy are the competition's bakers.

(INT) Daphne's cabin.

They remove the bloomers from the dead woman's face – 'they'll have to do', says Beryl. They also remove wire coat hangers.

(INT) Beryl & Gladys' cabin.

Beryl removes her trusty pen knife from her case. She then instructs the women in flower bomb making and tells them to heat the jam. Marjorie attempts to dominate and they argue. She tells her that she is 'certainly no angel.' Gladys arms herself

with her trusty knitting needles (she came first in her knitting category last year). Surveying the weapons, they declare themselves ready.

73 (EXT) Woodland.

The sound of Copacabana rings out. The killer who has blundered from the house and collapsed in the woods, awakens. He blunders towards the noise.

* 74 (INT) Dorothy's cabin.

Gladys cranks up the volume. She then scurries back.

75 (INT) Gladys & Beryl's' cabin.

The women, dressed in makeshift armour of sofa cushions and pillows, stand with their weapons. They are ready. 'First place ladies,' says Beryl.

76 (EXT) Cabins.

As the killer lurches towards the cabin door, Sophia ambushes him with a flower bomb. Blanche follows with crochet hooks which she thrusts into his back. Gladys stabs him in the chest with two knitting needles. Beryl manages a crochet hook to the groin. This floors him. He lies motionless and it appears the women have won. They begin to celebrate.

77 (INT) Beryl & Gladys's cabin.

As the women celebrate outside, Rose remembers the boiling jam still on the stove. As she reaches for it, it explodes on her face and body, melting her skin.

78 (EXT) Cabins.

The women turn at Rose's agonised screams. The killer rises behind them. As they move towards the cabin, he stands and pulls the makeshift weapons from his decaying flesh. He takes the crochet hook and plunges it through Sophia's throat, killing her.

79 (INT) Beryl & Gladys' cabin.

Hearing Sophia's death cry, the final girls, Marjorie, Beryl and Gladys, step over Rose's melted body and flee out of the back door.

80 (EXT) Woods.

The women run blindly in the opposite direction to the house. They spot a secluded boat house with a jetty at the side of the lake and run towards it.

* 81 (EXT) Boat house.

They fling the doors open and run inside.

82 (INT) Boat house.

The women find a pair of oars and wedge the doors shut. The killer pounds at them but they hold. The women begin arguing again – Marjorie criticises Beryl & Gladys' plan. Frustrated and feeling she has nothing to lose, Beryl finally confronts Marjorie. She tells her she knows that she is a killer. Marjorie smiles and lashes out at Beryl who falls backwards, blood gushing from her throat. She has killed Beryl with her own pen knife. Beryl dies in a hysterical Gladys' arms. As Marjorie approaches Gladys with the knife, the killer crashes through the side of the boat house wall brandishing the chainsaw from the shed. Marjorie calls him Peter and he stops, lowering the chainsaw. She opens her arms to him and he steps into them. He drops the chainsaw and embraces her back. Knowing that Gladys will soon be dead, Marjorie unburdens her secret.

83 MONTAGE

(FLASHBACK-INT) Marjorie's house basement.

Marjorie describes in voice-over that she did indeed have a son, and that he was born with significant mental and physical disabilities and deformities. She describes him as an embarrassment and says that she had to keep him locked up and hidden away.

(FLASHBACK-INT) Marjorie's basement.

The son, 12, sits staring at a small black and white television in a cell-like basement room. Marjorie enters the room, thrusts some food onto a bare table and leaves, locking the door behind her.

(FLASHBACK-INT) Marjorie's basement.

Peter sits staring at the TV on the same uncomfortable single bed. He is a young man. The door timidly opens and his father, wearing a Christmas cracker hat, enters and wishes him a Happy Christmas. Marjorie screams at him to leave him alone and he gets out. The son's gaze has not moved. Marjorie, in voice over, says that the secret had become too much of a burden and that she had to do something about it.

(EXT FB-NIGHT) Outside cabin (same resort, years before-just one secluded cabin).

Marjorie cuts her lights as she approaches the cabin. She gets out of her car and opens the post box outside the cabin. Inside is a receipt and keys. She opens the cabin door and hurries her blanket-covered son inside, closing the door behind them.

84 MONTAGE

(EXT FB-DAWN) Lake.

Marjorie leads her son to the lake. She begins to paddle in the water. Her son is scared but she pulls him in with her. He begins to panic as she pulls him deeper and deeper. She begins to tread water. He can't. In the panic he becomes entwined in reeds and begins to drown. Marjorie releases his hand and swims to shore. Peter's last view is of his mother watching him drown.

(EXT FB) Lakeside.

Peter's cries have alerted the attention of the farmer who owns the cabin. He emerges from the woods and tells Marjorie that he saw her kill her son. After a struggle Marjorie dashes him over the head with a large rock, knocking him out. She drags him to the cabin.

(EXT FB) Cabin rear.

Behind the cabin Marjorie finds a large barrel marked flammable. She does not realise that it is formaldehyde, used by the farmer as a disinfectant for cattle. She drags the barrel to the front of the cabin, spilling most of the contents into the lake and polluting it. She then pours the remainder into the cabin and onto the farmer's body and sets fire to both. She jumps into her car and drives away, the cabin and grassland burning and eliminating her tracks.

MONTAGE

85 (INT FB) National Trust Castle.

In VOICEOVER Marjorie explains that her husband had to go and that she framed his death as a burglary gone wrong. And then years later, there was the historian...

(EXT FB) Castle ramparts.

Marjorie pushes the historian from the ramparts (pre-credit sequence, but this time the killer is clearly a smiling Marjorie).

86 (INT) Boat House

Marjorie reveals that she had found out that Beryl had told the unfortunate Historian her secret. She planned the whole weekend not as competition training, but for Beryl to meet an unfortunate accident. Gladys has had enough – 'I already bloody new, Gladys told me!' As she becomes emboldened Peter's embrace begins to stiffen. Gradually the embrace turns murderous as he squeezes the life out of Marjorie, wailing. He kicks her crumpled and bloody body into the lake and turns to the door and removes the oars.

87 (EXT) Boat house.

Having fulfilled his revenge the killer begins his journey back to his watery grave. However, he has not accounted for Gladys, the once timid woman who has been pushed to the point of murderous rage and revenge. She chases after him brandishing the chainsaw. She thrusts it through his decayed midriff. He falls, apparently dead. She waves the saw in victory and collapses from exhaustion next to him.

88 (EXT-evening) Outside cabins.

Barry's bus pulls up. He climbs out and surveys the scenes of carnage, baffled and shocked.

* 89 (INT) Beryl & Gladys' cabin.

Barry stands over Rose's jam melted body. 'Bloody hell!'

90 (EXT) Opposite side of lake.

Barry spots a bloody and battered Gladys trying to stand and gingerly hobble. He runs over to her and helps her to walk slowly towards the bus. As they move cautiously towards safety the killer rises behind them. He stands and quickly makes ground on them. Gladys turns, sighs and pushes Barry down a bank in the woods. She hobbles onto the bus.

91 (INT) Bus.

A tired yet determined Gladys pushes the gearstick into reverse and runs over the killer.

* 92 (EXT) Bus.

The killer is violently crushed under the wheels.

93 (INT) Bus.

Gladys moves to first gear, drives forward and then runs over him again. Without emotion she repeats this twice more, leaving a bloody pulp beneath the wheels. Gladys looks next to the seat and uses Barry's handkerchief to wipe a streak of blood from her face in the mirror. Next to the handkerchief she spots a 1st Place rosette intended to be an activity prize. She pins it to her chest, puts the bus back into first gear and drives off into the sunset.

94 (EXT) Lakeside.

Barry emerges dishevelled from the bushes. He watches Gladys drive off in the distance. 'Right.' He starts picking up bits of Townswomen from the lakeside, unsure what to do with them. While behind him the light of the rising moon catches a pearl wristed hand emerging from the lake...

Appendix 16: Mapping to the Beat Sheet

PROJECT TITLE: *Knitters!*

GENRE: Horror comedy

1. **'OPENING IMAGE** (p. 1)' The austere setting of a National Trust castle, and the gentility of a tour of its building, crescendos to the core opening image of the gory and absurd impalement of a historian on one of its spires. The assailant remains unseen. This aligns to Field's 'inciting incident' which, '1) sets the story in motion... 2) grabs the attention of the audience' (2005, 130).
2. **'THEME STATED** (p. 5)' The death of the historian in the austere National Trust surroundings should be mysterious and crucially both gory and humorous, contrasting the genteel with the explicitly horrific. This delivers the theme of the Part One research in establishing that through abjection, excess and absurdity, the genre will be horror comedy and the theme will centre on gory mayhem vs genteel respectability.
3. **SET-UP** (p. 1-10) A montage shows the Townswomen packing, being collected from their homes, and the coach journey to their weekend away. The home settings deliver information about their characters, personalities and situations, and the dialogue-heavy bus journey furthers characterisation and demonstrates the dynamics between the group.
4. **CATALYST** (p.12) As Barry struggles to drive the bus away from the lakeside in the mud he clips a power cable which is dislodged. When hit by lightning in the early hours the cable falls into the lake reviving the supernatural killer who is the catalyst to drive the primary narrative action forward.
5. **DEBATE** (p.12-25) The women engage in two forms of 'debate'. Firstly there are the group's power struggles which are unveiled further as they engage in their scheduled activities. Then, once the killer attacks, they are in mortal 'debate'/conflict with him, but also with each other over the best means of survival and protection of the group.
6. **BREAK INTO TWO** (p.25) The women are divided (both in opinion and action) when the killer first strikes. The group literally splits into two to form a rescue party for Daphne. This aligns to the break into the second act, where the women have realised the peril they are in, and must respond accordingly, where we move from the thesis to the antithesis (the new world order).
7. **B STORY** (30) We should see clues as we move into the new world order, that Marjorie recognises the killer. There should also be references interwoven throughout to the death of the Historian, maintaining intrigue/mystery. These references should build as we move into the second act, to be revealed in the third.
8. **FUN & GAMES** (30-55) This will be the most gruesome/comedic part of the film as the killer engages in abject, excessive and absurd murder. Herein should be positioned the majority of the film's 'production numbers'

(Thrower, 2008, 26), 'the essence of the movie's poster' (Snyder, 2005, 71), and crucially the delivery of the findings of the PhD's Part One.

9. **MID POINT** (55) The killer breaks into the relative safety of the 'big house' having ploughed murderously through several of the women. This will be the impetus for the realisation that they must fight back using whatever weapons they have to hand (linked to their competition knitting mission).
10. **BAD GUYS CLOSE IN** (55-75) The central conflict between the killer and the women will initially open with the central montage scene of the women 'tooling up' and managing to do some damage in their ill-equipped face-to-face showdown. However, the sense of impotence to defeat the killer will be foreshadowed by the death of one of the women in 'friendly fire' and the inevitable resurrection of their supernatural foe.
11. **ALL IS LOST** (75) All of the Townswomen are dead apart from the final three women, Gladys, Marjorie & Beryl, who are clearly no match for the homicidal supernatural maniac. They barricade themselves into the boat house, trapped and exhausted.
12. **DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL** (75-85) Marjorie reveals herself as the real monster – through flashback we see all her crimes/murders and realise that she is the true monster. She is revealed as the killer's mother. She kills Beryl (our false final girl and the heroic driving force in much of the narrative). This cumulative act of darkness will be the catalyst for Gladys' transformation into the heroine/final girl.
13. **BREAK INTO THREE** (85) The narrative subplot has been revealed and we are now firmly in the third and final act which depicts the resolution of Marjorie, Peter and Gladys' character journeys (the three key active characters left). The killer will brutally slay Marjorie and throw her body into the lake, thereby securing his revenge and character fulfilment. Marjorie has a suitably gruesome come-uppance, and Gladys has all the stimulus she needs to finally stand up for herself.
14. **FINALE** (85-110) Our true final girl, Gladys, will finally become the confident, assertive woman she has always wanted to be and strike back, seemingly fatally at the killer. In order to cohere to slasher narrative sequencing, the killer will return, but Gladys will run over him repeatedly with a returning Barry's coach (closing the circular narrative), with no possibility of further resurrection. She will then drive off into the sunset.
15. **FINAL IMAGE** (110) As a redundant Barry surveys the carnage around him a hand will emerge from the lake. This time it will be Marjorie's.... As Kawin writes of Jason Vorhees' surprise appearance from both the lake and death, at the close of *Friday the 13th*: 'Influenced by earlier films, it codified the device of the shocking open ending' (2012, 146). *Knitters!* offers both an intertextual reference and a subversion in switching the mother/son role in the final image emergence from the water.

Appendix 17: *Knitters!* Draft One - Full Script

1 EXT - NATIONAL TRUST CAR PARK - DAYTIME 1

A car pulls up at the front of a National Trust castle. A disheveled male historian with an ill-fitting toupee and suit two sizes too small is stood in the doorway. He hurries to the car to greet the unseen driver who opens the door.

HISTORIAN

I'm so glad you made it. With that new bypass at Tedbury you can get up to 8 cars queued at that roundabout this time of day. Of course I objected from the outset. Not that that did any bloody good....Anyway, strictly speaking we're closed today, and the paperwork it's taken, but ...
(adopts faux grand tone)
Let the tour commence!

He spreads his arm to present the castle facade and bows as low as his overly tight trousers will enable. The visitor remains in the car unseen.

2 INT - NATIONAL TRUST CASTLE GROUND FLOOR STATE ROOM 2

VISITOR'S POV. The unseen visitor follows the bumbling jobsworth through a downstairs state room, glancing side-to-side at elaborate antique furniture and portraits.

HISTORIAN

Of course this is where Sir Melyvn would have conducted much of his business. Land planning, agricultural documentation, sewer regulation. All thrilling affairs.

The visitor's POV remains fixed on the historian. After an awkward silence the enthused historian carries on.

HISTORIAN

I've written a pamphlet on it, you know. 'Sanitary regulations at the turn of the century: Were the Peasants Revolting?'
(guffaws-his companion is silent)
Still, we can't all be interested in the same things, can we? We don't want to flood the effluence market. Er, shall we move on...

He leads the visitor towards the grand hall beyond. The visitor looks pointedly at the clock on the mantle.

3 INT - CASTLE FIRST FLOOR BEDROOM

3

VISITOR'S POV. The historian is wrenching open the door of a towering wardrobe in a period bedroom dominated by a four-poster bed.

HISTORIAN

Of course you wouldn't get that sort of rebound flex action on one of those Eeeekya deathtraps. Bought one last year and the door came clean off in my hand. Sent me flying backwards over the dog...and what with Ethel out at cribbage all day...

He shakes his head and looks mournfully towards the window. The VISITOR'S POV follows his gaze. He/She moves towards the window and his/her gaze catches on the castle's towering ramparts.

HISTORIAN

But the real highlight of the room?

The visitor turns back. The historian is crouching and reaching underneath the bed.

HISTORIAN

The sanitary system!

He holds a chamber pot aloft, grinning. The visitor's gaze returns to the ramparts.

4 INT. UPSTAIRS CASTLE HALLWAY

4

VISITOR'S POV. The historian blusters ahead in the large hallway. As he passes an ascending stone staircase the visitor's gloved hand reaches out. He looks at the hand on his arm, surprised. The visitor points to a sign leading up the staircase 'Ramparts & Castle Roof'.

HISTORIAN

I suppose we could get that out of the way now. Hope you don't mind a climb.

The visitor follows him up the stone staircase.

5 EXT. CASTLE ROOF/RAMPARTS

5

VISITOR POV. The huffing historian reaches the top of the staircase with his companion following. They walk to the edge of the ramparts and look out at the spacious secluded grounds.

HISTORIAN

Glorious, isn't it? Of course it takes a lot of tombolas and tea dances to raise enough to keep it in this condition. But then I think you know that.

Beneath them is a chapel wing. On it sit smaller turrets with a tall, sharp spire rising from the centre.

HISTORIAN

Ah yes, the old chapel.
(guffaws & turns)
Of course, with a spire like that, we're really getting to the point of the tour now, aren't we?

Another awkward silence. Followed by a sudden, unexpected push from the visitor's gloved hand. The Historian is knocked from the rampart and plummets down backwards onto the chapel spire. The spire pierces his midriff and blood shoots from his open mouth. As he slides backwards his toupee slips from his head, hanging behind him from one piece of adhesive tape. He raises a blood-soaked arm and points at the visitor, wide-eyed.

HISTORIAN

You!

CUT TO CREDITS

6 INT. GLADYS' SEMI-DETACHED COUNCIL HOUSE BEDROOM - DAYTIME 6

GLADYS is Assistant to the Chair of the Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild. She is a short plump, artificially blonde-haired woman in her early 70s who has a penchant for animal sanctuary sweatshirts. She has been married to her lazy husband DEREK for 58 years and has 3 daughters and 4 grandchildren. She is distractedly packing a battered suitcase on a bed populated by 3 large dogs.

DEREK

(from downstairs)
Glad!

She pulls a fleece from under the largest dog, throws it into the overflowing case and attempts to shut it.

(CONTINUED)

DEREK

Glaad!

She drags the heavy case from the bed and drags it across the floor dodging a slumbering dog.

7

INT. GLADYS' KITCHEN

7

DEREK's large posterior dominates the room. He is peering head first into a chest freezer.

GLADYS

(dragging the suitcase)

What's the matter love?

DEREK

How many nights are you going for?
There are only two frozen dinners
in here.

GLADYS

I'm only going for two nights love

DEREK

But what about lunch?

GLADYS

There's bread in the cupboard and
ham and cheese in the fridge. And
there's plenty of milk and Frosties
for breakfast.

DEREK

Couldn't you make the sandwiches
before you go - you know what I'm
like Glad.

GLADYS

Well the coach will be here any
minute and you know how Marjorie is
about timekeeping.

(drops the case with a sigh)

Oh go on then.

Gladys prepares two ham and cheese sandwiches for Derek who watches her at the kitchen table.

DEREK

Thanks love. I'll miss you you
know.

(CONTINUED)

Gladys is silent. She completes the second sandwich and a loud horn sounds outside, prompting barking from the dogs. She puts the sandwiches into the fridge and is nearly knocked over by 5 large dogs.

GLADYS

You lot! Look after dad while I'm gone. Sheila will be in later on, and Saturday and Sunday to walk them and sort out their food.

She fusses over each dog. Picking up the case, she drags it to Derek.

GLADYS

Take care love.

She kisses him on the cheek and drags the case to the door awkwardly opening and closing it without letting any dogs escape. DEREK looks on, as forlorn as the dogs.

8

EXT - ROADSIDE GLADYS' HOUSE

8

A mid-sized 'luxury' coach is parked outside. The door swings open and BARRY appears. He is mid-40s with a disheveled shirt & tie which reflects the condition of both his business and bus - although he is trying. The coach's faded 'Barry's Executive Travel' logo indicates he is the company owner.

BARRY

Morning! Are you Mrs Pemberton?

GLADYS

Glad. Hello Barry, thanks for helping us out at such short notice. When Shawcross' let us down last week I thought the trip was off. It was lucky you had that cancellation.

BARRY

Er, yes...Here let me help you with that bag.

He takes the suitcase.

BARRY

Blimey, what do you Townswomen take to Craft Activity Weekends in the Lakes? I thought it was all cross stitch and knitting. Have you got a potter's wheel in here?

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS

(touching her nose and
laughing)

You'd be surprised Barry! Now we're though to the regional finals of the Townswomen's Competitive Crafting Competition, we're getting ready for battle. Our Chair Marjorie's quite feisty when she puts her mind to it...in fact when she doesn't put her mind to it...in fact all the flippin' time. Speaking of which we better get going, she'll kill me if we're late.

They both climb onto the bus. The doors shut and it pulls off. Four dogs bark at the kitchen window.

9 INT MARJORIE'S STATELY DETACHED HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAYTIME 9

MARJORIE is the Chair of Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild. She is mid-70's, slim, dressed in a smart twinpiece with pearls on her wrist. Her grey back-combed hair gives her a Thatcher-esque appearance. She is stood at the window of her large, immaculately-dressed living room looking pointedly at her watch.

MARJORIE

Oh where is she?

The coach pulls up in the spacious drive. The door swings open & a blustering GLADYS emerges followed by BARRY. They hurry to the front door. MARJORIE leaves the window & lifts an immaculate suitcase.

10 EXT MARJORIE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY 10

GLADYS

Oh, Marjorie, I'm so sorry. We got stuck at that new roundabout at Tedbury.

BARRY

Let me take your case.

MARJORIE looks BARRY up & down.

MARJORIE

Indeed.

She reluctantly hands over the case. BARRY straightens his tie with his free hand. They walk to the coach.

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS

There's no rush is there anyway?
And we'll pick up a bit of time en
route once we've collected the
other ladies.

BARRY offers MARJORIE his hand to board the coach. She shoes
it away and looks dismissively at the faded exterior.

MARJORIE

Not very 'executive' is it?

11 INT. BERYL'S STONE TERRACED HOUSE - STAIRCASE - DAYTIME 11

BERYL is a short, sprightly, rebellious 78 year old. Her
short grey hair is streaked with purple and she favours
ethnic clothing. She is politically active and a staunch
feminist. BERYL is the Guild's Social Secretary & Gladys'
best friend.

BERYL

(opening the lids of ethnic
pots on a shelf above the
staircase)

Where the bloody hell did I put it?

After lifting the fourth lid she extracts a small plastic
bag.

BERYL

You can't hide from me!

It is marijuana. She sniffs it deeply & grins. A loud horn
honk breaks her smile.

BERYL

I'm coming, keep your knickers on!

12 INT BERYL'S KITCHEN - DAYTIME 12

BERYL fills three large bowls with cat biscuits.

BERYL

There you go El Gato. See you on
Sunday!

She strokes a purring black cat. The horn honks again,
longer.

BERYL

Alright, alright. Bloody Marjorie.

She lifts up a mixture of carrier and ethnic fabric bags,
and leaves the kitchen.

13 INT - COACH - DAYTIME

13

MARJORIE has the Executive front seat. GLADYS joins BERYL on the seat across the isle behind BARRY.

MARJORIE

Wonderful. And now we're 10 minutes late.

GLADYS & BERYL exchange an exasperated glance. BERYL opens her handbag just enough for GLADYS to see a flask of whiskey inside. She widens her eyes & checks MARJORIE isn't looking. BERYL winks. The bus moves off.

GLADYS

Dorothy & Sophia are getting picked up at June's house, Barry. Should save us a few minutes.

(BERYL looks at MARJORIE pointedly)

I see you've got the ramp for Daphne's wheelchair thanks. Once we've collected her and the others at the Village Hall we'll be on our way to the sunny Lakes.

BERYL

Sunny!? Have you been to the Lakes Glad? My teepee got washed away in the rain at last Spring's Women's Retreat. And there's no burning bras when you can't keep your matches dry.

14 EXT JUNE'S FLAT - DAYTIME

14

JUNE is younger than the other Guild members at 59. She is glamorous & has heavy make-up and bleached hair. She joined the Guild when she met BERYL at a yoga retreat. She was appointed Treasurer as she has her own mobile hairdressing company and is used to accounts. She waves frantically as the bus pulls up and boards with fellow Guild members DOROTHY & SOPHIA.

15 INT COACH - DAYTIME

15

BARRY offers to help JUNE store her excessive luggage.

JUNE

Well Barry, it's not every day you meet such a gentleman is it?

(She looks for a wedding ring)

And a single one at that.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

Just divorced. A bit like just married...but more fun.

JUNE

Oh a lot more fun I should think Barry...

The penny drops for BARRY who scurries off back down the bus. The women take their seats and a bemused BARRY drives off.

MARJORIE

Gladys have you printed out the schedules? Shall we remind ourselves why we are here.

(She looks pointedly at JUNE)

We're not letting those awful women from Wisbrey Dell take our prize again this year.

GLADYS

Yes Marjorie. The ink's running out a bit on my printer, but you can see most of it.

She pulls a handful of papers from her handbag and unfolds them, straightening out the creases. She passes the first copy to MARJORIE.

MARJORIE

Really Gladys. It's barely legible.

BERYL

Give her a break Marjorie. With that husband of hers and the dog sanctuary, she barely has two minutes to spare. You've got your own printer, couldn't you have done it?

MARJORIE

May I remind you that that is the role of the Assistant. To assist the Chair with administrative duties...You're the Social Secretary, Gladys is the Chair's Assistant. We each have our role. It's just that mine is more...senior.

BERYL is raising up for an argument. GLADYS interrupts.

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS

Don't worry Ber, I had two minutes when Derek was at the chiropodist the other day. It's fine. That printer needs sorting anyway.

BERYL shakes her head and smiles at kind-hearted GLADYS. The coach slows as it pulls into the car park of Potter's Bluff village hall.

16 EXT - CARE HOME CAR PARK - DAY 16

DAPHNE is slowly lifted on an electric platform into the bus. At 85 she is the Guild's oldest member. She is grinning blankly - a near-permanent feature since her mental health has declined. She is followed onto the bus by BARBARA, BLANCHE & ETHEL. The Potter's Bluff Townswomen are now all onboard.

17 INT - COACH - DAYTIME 17

DAPHNE is being wheeled down the aisle by BARBARA. She sits legs astride in her chair, a pair of bloomers peeking out from under her dress.

DAPHNE

(shouting)

Hello everyone! Hope you've packed your rubber rings. It's an age since I've been to the seaside. And I've brought my daughters with me!

She gestures to the boarding Townswomen behind her.

BERYL

I don't think you'll be able to use your rubber ring in the Lake District Daph, but you never know.

She pats her arm. The other women exchange a kind look with BERYL & GLADYS. They are used to being mistaken for DAPHNE's daughters & rarely correct her. BARRY secures DAPHNE's wheelchair in place. JUNE smiles coyly as he passes. He hurries back to his seat.

BARRY

(shouting)

Next stop the Lake District! I always start my journeys with a sing-song. What'll it be ladies?

The bus jolts forward & they are on their way.

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE

Very executive, I don't think.
Gladys, pass out those schedules to
the others & we'll debrief on the
full weekend schedule.

BERYL

We're just leaving Potter's Bluff
Marjorie, can't we do it when we
get there? And you know she gets
motion sickness on coaches.
Remember the Bridlington Half
Barf-athon?

MARJORIE stays silent. BERYL reluctantly takes some leaflets
from GLADYS and passes them back.

MARJORIE

There is a purpose to our weekend
Beryl, and that purpose is primary.
If it hadn't been for blatant
inside voting last year, we would
have been the current Regional
Townswomen Craft Champions
(Midlands). We have secured a prime
location for the weekend, away from
distractions, so that we can focus
on honing our skills and winning
the prize that's rightfully...ours.

GLADYS

I spoke to the Thompsons today and
the cabins are all ready for us.
They're going to meet us at the
lakeside at 6. We'll be the first
guests to stay after the
renovations. They seemed very eager
to please.

MARJORIE

Excellent, then we should expect a
high standard of accommodation and
a trouble-free weekend. Right
ladies, Point 1 on your
schedules...

A voice from the back of the coach begins to sing 'I've got
a louverly bunch of coconuts'. The women turn to see DAPHNE
grinning & singing. BERYL seizes the opportunity & joins in
loudly. JUNE joins her, & one by one the women begin a
rousing chorus together joined by BARRY. MARJORIE huffs and
reaches into her hand luggage.

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE

Well I suppose we couldn't read them properly anyway.

She removes ear plugs & an eye mask which she puts into place. She folds her arms. GLADYS finally joins in with the sing-song once she knows she is unseen/heard by MARJORIE.

18 EXT - COUNTRY LANE - DAYTIME 18

A rousing chorus of 'I've got a luvverly bunch of coconuts' rings out as the coach travels down a country lane towards its destination.

19 EXT - ROADSIDE LAKE DISTRICT LOG CABIN RESORT - EVENING 19

SU & PAUL THOMPSON stand at the roadside entrance to their secluded log cabin resort. They are both in their mid-40's and dressed in country casuals.

PAUL

(both well spoken)

What time are the biddies arriving?

SU

Don't call them that Paul! They're our first customers and we need as many of them as we can get after all the money we've plowed into the renovation.

PAUL

But why do we have to stand by the road in the bloody freezing cold?

SU

I've told you already. Until the sign goes up nobody knows we're here. We're in the middle of bloody nowhere Paul. We don't want them getting lost, and the next house is miles away. We're not in the city now, you know.

PAUL

I wish we were.

SU

You should have thought about that before you lost your job then. We had to get rid of that money fast and putting it into renovating this place was our only option at the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SU (cont'd)
time. They were desperate to get
rid off it.

PAUL
I'm not surprised. A resort that
hadn't been used for 30 years with
a lake officially deemed hazardous
because of chemical waste. Prime
estate.

SU
Oh shut up Paul. Thanks to you we
had no choice and we're not in the
clear yet. Make the most of it...
(softening)
And don't forget we've got visitors
coming tonight, so we haven't left
all of the old lifestyle behind.

PAUL
If they can bloody find it...

The headlights of a coach appear in the road. SU waves her
arm and lamp frantically in front of it. BARRY slams on his
brakes.

20

INT COACH - EVENING

20

The sleeping women are all thrust forward and woken with a
jolt.

BERYL
Bloody hell Barry! There are at
least 12 replacement hips on here.
Are you going for a full house? You
alright Daphne love?

DAPHNE
(Oblivious)
Are we at Brid? Can you see the
Tower?

BARRY
Sorry Beryl. She jumped out into
the road.

He points at SU who is making a large gesture of ushering
him in through the gates. He turns in.

GLADYS
That'll be the Thompsons.

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE

(removing her eye mask)

Well, as the Chair I should be the first to greet them. Gladys, bring the paperwork.

BARRY pulls the coach into a patch of land behind the cabins.

21

EXT - COACHSIDE - CABIN RESORT - EVENING

21

SU

(extending her hand to
MARJORIE)

Hello, you must be Gladys. So nice to meet you.

MARJORIE

(affronted)

Madam, I am Marjorie, the Chairwoman of Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild. THIS is my assistant Gladys.

GLADYS

Hello Mrs Thompson. Lovely to meet you. I know you're not quite ready to open yet, but Marjorie was insistent. You see we needed somewhere that could accommodate us all and our craft activities for the weekend. And we didn't want any Wisbrey Dell spies stealing our flan recipes, did we Marjorie?

SU

Oh, don't worry. We're nearly there. We may be a bit rough around the edges, but your cabins are all ready and there's plenty of sites around the lake for your activities. This is Paul by the way.

PAUL

(Changing his tune)

Good evening ladies.

SU

And the one thing we can guarantee you is no spies from Wisbrey Dell. In fact no spies at all. We're miles from anywhere and nobody

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SU (cont'd)
 really knows we're here yet.
 There'll just be you and us up at
 the big house.
 (She points to a large
 farmhouse on the other side of
 the lake)
 Oh, and no mobile phones.

PAUL
 Reception's a bugger round here. We
 got rid of our mobiles. Real
 country living. But there's a
 landline in the house if you need
 it.

GLADYS
 I don't think that'll be a problem
 with this lot. Daphne's daughter
 bought her one and she tried to use
 it to change the channel on the
 telly. And Beryl's convinced most
 of the others that they're all
 tapped by the CID.

SU
 OK ladies, so you should be all
 set. The keys are in the doors and
 there are print-outs with
 information in each cabin. If you
 need us, we're just over the other
 side of the lake.

MARJORIE
 Can we bring the bus closer to the
 cabins to disembark? It's quite a
 walk from here...and the mud!

PAUL
 Why not. You can pull up next to
 the cabins on the lakeside. We
 haven't finished renovating the
 pathway yet, so you may find it's
 still a little muddy...

MARJORIE
 Go and tell Barry to get closer,
 Gladys.

SU
 (raising her eyebrows at PAUL
 unseen)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SU (cont'd)

If there's anything we can do just
pop in. Have a lovely weekend
ladies and bye for now.

They head back towards the lake. GLADYS is in the doorway of
the bus pointing BARRY to the lakeside. She and MARJORIE
climb back on.

22

EXT - LAKESIDE - EVENING

22

BARRY steps down from the coach which is parked next to a
very muddy lakeside.

BARRY

Glad, we'll have to be fairly
quick. It's going to sink in this.
You might all have to push me out.

MARJORIE

(appearing first down the
steps followed by GLADYS)
Some of these ladies are infirm.
You can't expect them to walk that
distance. We'll unload and then you
can be on your way.

The ladies slowly emerge from the coach and step tentatively
into the mud.

BARRY

You go ahead ladies, I'll bring
your luggage.

23

EXT - OUTSIDE CABINS - LATE EVENING

23

Barry goes backwards and forwards dropping off luggage.
Gladys distributes cabins from a list.

GLADYS

Marjorie, you've got the double
with the en suite as requested.
Beryl you're in with me. Daphne
you're sharing with Barbara and
Blanche. June you're with Dorothy,
and Sophia's with Ethel.

JUNE

Come on, we're bunking up Dorothy.
Hope you don't snore.
(suggestive)
Barry, you don't snore do you?

He scurries past with MARJORIE's case.

(CONTINUED)

DAPHNE

I hope you've got bunk beds for the girls. They'll only ever sleep in bunk beds you know.

The women disappear into their cabins. GLADYS & MARJORIE remain outside. BARRY drops off the last of the luggage.

BARRY

That's it then ladies. I'll be back to pick you up at 5.30pm sharp on Sunday. I hope the weather's good to you.

GLADYS

Lovely, thanks Barry. Have a safe journey back.

MARJORIE

And don't be late on Sunday.

BARRY

Absolutely not. Bye ladies, have a good one.

BARRY traipses back to the bus through the mud.

MARJORIE

Well I think we should all retire, don't you. It's 8.30pm already and we've a busy weekend ahead of us. 8am prompt tomorrow.

GLADYS

Yes, I'll tell the others. Goodnight Marjorie, sleep well.

MARJORIE retires to her cabin. GLADYS knocks on the other cabin doors & says goodnight to the women. DAPHNE is already fast asleep in her wheelchair.

24

EXT - LAKESIDE - EVENING

24

BARRY circles the coach and shakes his head.

BARRY

What a monster...how she expects me to get 15 tonnes of coach out of this, I don't know.

He climbs into the coach leaving the doors open. He starts the engine and the wheels spin in the mud. There is no movement. BARRY re-emerges and puts cardboard behind the

(CONTINUED)

back wheels. He reboards and puts his foot firmly on the accelerator. The coach jolts backwards. BARRY brakes sharply just before plunging into the lake. The rear wheels veer left and the back of the bus collides with an electricity pylon. At the same time his mobile phone rings. The screen shows 'Ex (thank bugger)'.

BARRY

Bloody hell. The usual brilliant timing.

(He picks up)

What, I've signed the bloody forms.

BARRY balances the phone between his ear and shoulder and begins to drive forward. He failed to notice the collision. He drives away, shouting into his phone. The wooden pole leans precariously at an angle.

25

INT - BERYL & GLADYS' CABIN - EVENING

25

BERYL & GLADYS sit at a small kitchen table with a bottle of whiskey. BERYL is pouring generously.

BERYL

You can't let her speak to you like that Glad, you're not her bloody slave you know.

GLADYS

I know Beryl, but it is my job.

BERYL

To be spoken to like dirt? It isn't. You know it's OK to stand up to her, don't you?

GLADYS

Oh you know me Beryl, don't like to rock the boat.

BERYL

I know Glad, and that's why folks walk all over you. That Derek of yours, he's the same. You're so kind hearted, but you need to stand up for yourself love.

GLADYS

Well we'll see what happens this weekend, but I'm not making any promises Ber.

(CONTINUED)

BERYL

Give it some thought Glad. You
can't let people keep walking over
you.

(She lifts the bottle as if to
pour another generous measure)
And I've got some thinking juice
with your name on it...

GLADYS

Oh no, Beryl, it's 10 already and
we've got baking, cross-stitch,
knitting and flower arranging
tomorrow. I'm off to bed.

BERYL

Spoil sport. Alright then, I
suppose we should save some for
tomorrow.

BERYL takes the glasses to the sink and necks the contents.
GLADYS disappears into the bathroom.

26 MONTAGE - CABINS - NIGHTTIME 26

- INT - MARJORIE'S CABIN

MARJORIE is fast asleep wearing her ear plugs & eye mask.

- INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN

All three women are asleep. DAPHNE is still smiling broadly
in her sleep.

- INT - BERYL & GLADYS' CABIN

GLADYS is fast asleep and snoring gently. BERYL is lying in
bed, an arm holding an empty whiskey bottle is draped to the
side. The bottle falls. She grumbles and falls back deep
asleep, snoring heavily.

END OF MONTAGE

27 EXT - LAKESIDE - NIGHTTIME 27

A storm rages. Rain pelts the lake and wind howls through
the woods. A sharp close thunderclap is followed by a
splintering lightning bolt which illuminates the lakeside
and strikes the dislodged pylon next to the Lake. It crashes
heavily into the lake. A blaze of sparks sear across the
water's surface, crackling electricity.

28 INT - JUNE & DOROTHY'S CABIN - NIGHTTIME 28

JUNE stirs. She lifts her eye mask & looks across at DOROTHY who is fast asleep.

JUNE

Must have just been me who the
earth moved for then. These
dreams'll be the death of me.

She puts her eye mask back into place, smiles and falls back asleep.

29 EXT - BOTTOM OF LAKE - NIGHTTIME 29

The pylon sinks and falls to the bottom of the dirty lake water. Next to it a dark figure begins to stir in the reeds. The dark bulking shape is entangled in reeds and pond weed. Electricity surges through the water and the figure begins to fight itself free.

30 EXT -LAKESIDE JETTY - NIGHTTIME 30

FROM BEHIND. A ravaged humanoid hand emerges from the water onto the moonlit jetty. A dark hulking humanoid figure slowly and ominously emerges from the water-ravaged and covered covered in pond weed.

31 EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME 31

Candles and oil lamps light up the exterior of the 'big house'. Two Range Rovers are parked outside. Shrieks & laughter come from inside.

32 INT - BASEMENT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME 32

SU & PAUL are hosting an S&M party with another couple. They are swingers and their heavily candle-lit basement is a secret S&M sex dungeon. All are dressed in leather S&M gear & engaging in well-equipped S&M play. The room is filled with devices of sexual torture.

33 EXT -LAKESIDE JETTY - NIGHTTIME 33

FROM BEHIND. The hulking mutated figure emerges fully from the lake. The sounds of shrieks at the 'big house' ring out. The creature blunders from the lakeside into the woods towards the sound and light.

34 INT - BATHROOM - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME 34

FROM BEHIND. A downstairs bathroom window sits open. The figure climbs. It stops and listens to the shrieks from the basement. Lumbering, it opens the bathroom door and sees a staircase down which it slowly descends.

35 INT - BASEMENT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME 35

FROM BEHIND. The creature lumbers into the candlelit dungeon and the scene of sexual debauchery.

PAUL

(pausing his activities)

Oh hello. We weren't expecting another guest tonight. But what a costume....Pongs a bit though.

The figure stands motionless & surveys the scene. SU temporarily ceases her bondage play.

SU

Paul, have you been on that bloody forum again? I told you no horror play this time. That night with Freddy Krueger still brings tears to my eyes.

PAUL

Well I thought it was just these two tonight, but since he's here...You might as well get stuck in old chap!

The foursome resume their activities. The figure surveys them all. He kills the female guest by dashing her against the wall in the leather 'sleep sack' into which she has been zipped by PAUL. SU & her companion are diced as the creature wraps the harness swing which they are enjoying around them both and squeezes. PAUL has scrambled into a corner. The doorway is blocked by the figure. He knocks into his male guest's coat & a mobile phone falls out. He picks it up. There is one reception bar.

PAUL

I don't bloody believe it. In the basement of all places!

He scrabbles to ring 999. The phone slips from his lubed hand and to the feet of the figure. He crawls towards it but the figure has already bent to pick it up.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
 Look, if this about the money I
 swear I'll pay it back.

The figure batters PAUL round the head with the phone.
 Bloodied and battered he continues to plead.

PAUL
 Please!

The figure rams the phone into his mouth, down his throat
 and into his intestines. The phone lost in PAUL's internal
 organs, the figure's gore-soaked hand emerges from his
 rectum. The figure shakes the lifeless body from his arm and
 leaves the bloody room.

36 INT - 'COSTUME ROOM' - BASEMENT - NIGHTTIME 36

FROM BEHIND - FACE STILL UNSEEN. The figure passes a costume
 room filled with rubber and leather S&M gear. He is drawn by
 a mirror. He surveys the image in the mirror, a hand on his
 face. He is huge with distorted limbs. Years of decay at the
 bottom of the lake have ravaged his skin. He is dressed in
 disintegrating workman's overalls covered in reads and mud.
 He howls then reaches for a the rubber gimp mask slung over
 the mirror's corner. He pulls the mask on and turns away
 from the mirror. FACE SEEN FOR THE FIRST TIME. He crumples
 to the floor howling.

37 EXT - REAR OF CABINS - DAYTIME 37

BERYL, GLADYS & JUNE are exploring an outbuilding behind the
 cabins.

BERYL
 So you heard the pylon fall June? I
 must have been spark out...long
 journey.

GLADYS
 Yes, something like that
 (she winks)

JUNE
 Well I definitely heard something
 go bump in the night, but I was
 dreaming about Barry, so...

BERYL
 You need to raise your standards
 love. Of all the men you could
 dream about...

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS

Beryl, look over here. Is this it?

BERYL

Aha, yes, they've got a back-up generator for the cabins. Didn't think they'd rely on the mains out here. I'll get this running and then pop over to the big house later to find out what's going on.

GLADYS

Good plan. We'd better not be late, or Marjorie'll kill us. What time's your special guest arriving Ber?

BERYL

In half an hour love, but if she went out last night, who knows...

38

EXT - LAKESIDE - DAYTIME

38

GLADYS is frantically running round setting out chairs. A large table with cooking equipment stands prominent at the front. The women are all assembled.

MARJORIE

Come on Gladys, she'll be here in a minute. She's our secret weapon in securing victory against Wisbrey Dell. We need everything ship-shape and up to the standard to which she's accustomed.

GLADYS

If you could just put a couple of chairs at the back there it would be a big help Marjorie.

MARJORIE

I'm the welcoming committee Gladys. I have to be in position roadside to meet and greet. Dorothy can help.

GLADYS

Never mind then.

DOROTHY

It's no problem Glad. Daphne's had one of her turns so we've left her in her cabin. There's a radio in there, so should keep her entertained until we head back.

She takes two folding chairs from GLADYS' shoulder and sets them down.

39

EXT - ROADSIDE COUNTRY LANE - DAYTIME

39

MARJORIE stands looking at her watch. She continually pulls at her clothing and smooths her hair. BERYL emerges from the lakeside. She is dirty from setting up the generator.

BERYL

Don't get your knickers in a twist Marjorie. If she said she'll be here, she'll be here.

(aside)

What condition she'll be in is another matter...

MARJORIE

Beryl, you can't greet her like that. You're filthy!

BERYL

Listen Marjorie, me and Mary go back more years than you've had expensive dinners and she's seen me in much worse states than this. There was that weekend in 1981 when acid first arrived at Greenham Common. Neither of us knew which way was up for 3 days. We spent 6 hours trying to get out of a tent.

MARJORIE holds her hand up and frowns. A taxi approaches, slows and pulls in. The car door opens and a disheveled MARY BERRY emerges. She is clearly hungover and possibly still drunk from the night before. A cigarette hangs from her mouth. Her hair is a mess and her clothes are crumpled.

MARJORIE

(fawning)

Ms Berry! Oh what an absolute pleasure to meet you and thank you so much for being here today. I can't tell you how much it means to us all.

MARY BERRY

(ignoring MARJORIE)

Ber! Sorry if I'm a bit late, was out with Pete Doherty and the chaps in Shoreditch last night. Haven't been home yet. Pissed as a fart.

They embrace.

(CONTINUED)

MARY BERRY

Not fit for this demo yet Ber.
Let's sneak off for a crafty smoke
to straighten me out before we get
into it, shall we.

She produces a spliff from behind her ear.

MARY BERRY

(to Marjorie)

My stuff's in there...

BERYL guffaws and follows BERRY into the woods.

MARJORIE

(horrified)

GLADYYSSS!

40

EXT - LAKESIDE - DAYTIME

40

The version of MARY BERRY more familiar to television viewers is giving a baking demonstration to the ladies. Her hair and clothing are perfect and her tone refined.

MARY BERRY

And so ladies for a fabulous flan
you must remember the three
c's...consistency, consistency,
consistency.

The women, led by MARJORIE front and centre politely clap.

MARJORIE

Bravo!

MARY BERRY

But, of course, if you really want
to perfect your pastry and give
those ladies from Wisbrey Dell a
good run for their money, then my
new high-powered, 6-bladed Mary
Berry Blender is what you really
need.

She reaches under the table and produces a packaged battery powered blender. She opens the packaging and switches it on. The sound is akin to a jet engine taking off.

MARY BERRY

(shouting)

You can give them a real good
roasting with this ladies. Look at
the 6-blade folding action. And at

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARY BERRY (cont'd)
 and RRP of only £189.99 it's a real
 bargain. I do take cards.
 (the ingredients whir wildly
 in her bowl)

The excessive sound has drawn the figure. He emerges from the woods behind MARY BERRY, the sun reflecting off his rubber mask. The women scream but BERRY cannot hear them above the blender sound. The figure lunges from behind her, grabs the blender and rams it into her face. Flour mixes with blood as her face is ripped apart. BERRY eventually slumps to the ground dead, covered in a bloody flour mixture. The horrified women jump from their seats.

BERYL
 What the bloody hell? Get to the
 woods!

They all begin running, but at their age some cannot move very fast. The figure catches ETHEL easily. He suffocates her by ramming BERRY's piping tube down her throat and squeezing.

GLADYS
 (looking back)
 Ethel!

BERYL
 It's too late Glad, we can't save
 her. Run! Head for the big house.

The women disappear into the woods. MARJORIE stops momentarily and looks back.

41 EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

41

JUNE and DOROTHY bang on the door. The others gradually catch them up and join in. To the side of the house there are two wrecked Range Rovers. The figure has smashed them virtually to pieces.

GLADYS
 Su, Paul, Mary Berry's dead! Let us
 in!

The frantic knocking gains no response.

BERYL
 (barging to the centre)
 Has anyone tried the bloody door?

She turns the handle and the door opens. They all run inside.

JUNE

Su, Paul....Where are they?

The shaken women lock the door and begin to search the house.

MARJORIE

Well they must be here. There were two cars down the drive.

BERYL

But did you see the cars?! Whatever killed Ethel must have smashed them up.

GLADYS

They said there was a landline in the house. We need to find it.

JUNE

What on earth is going on? What was that thing? And why did it kill Mary Berry?

BERYL

I don't know, but I think we'll need to barricade ourselves in because it could be coming back.

GLADYS

You're right, Ber. Let's check all the doors and windows are locked.

BERYL

It'll take more than that. Any wood you can find, break it down. We'll have to board the windows. A few locks won't hold that thing.

MARJORIE

We can't destroy their property Beryl!

BERYL

Look Marjorie, if you want to try to rationalise with that thing, good luck. But I'd rather we protected ourselves. We're in the middle of bloody nowhere and the cars are wrecked. Our only chance now is to find the phone, call for

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERYL (cont'd)
help, and stop that thing from
getting in before it comes.

GLADYS
She's right.

MARJORIE sulks.

BLANCHE
Poor Ethel.

43 MONTAGE - INT - SU AND PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

43

- INT - LOUNGE

BLANCHE is holding the phone.

BLANCHE
It's dead. Nothing. The line must
have gone down with the power
cables.

BERYL and GLADYS are wrestling to turn over a sofa and
barricade the window.

BERYL
Bloody hell! We're bugged. Let's
get this place secure and regroup.

- INT - DINING ROOM

JUNE and BARBARA are breaking the legs off a large wooden
table. BERYL, GLADYS and BLANCHE join them.

BARBARA
Here, help us.

The five women lift the table in front of the window.

BERYL
We'll need some nails for this or
he'll get in easy. There's a tool
kit in the hall.

SOPHIA enters the room with a hammer and nails.

SOPHIA
Here Beryl, we used it in the
office. They won't be using their
desk again I'm afraid.

BERYL takes a nail and the hammer and sets to work.

(CONTINUED)

BERYL
Arts and craft this!

INT - DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM

MARJORIE and DOROTHY remove a twee family portrait of a grinning SU & PAUL from the bathroom wall.

DOROTHY
That should cover it.

She holds it up to the window. MARJORIE nods. BARBARA appears with a hammer and nails.

44 EXT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME 44

The sound of Barry Manilow's Bermuda Triangle rings out loud. DAPHNE's disharmonious singing accompanies it. The figure emerges from the woods next to the cabins and stops, drawn by the screeching.

45 INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME 45

DAPHNE is sitting in her wheelchair with her back to the door. She is grinning and singing. The figure looms up slowly behind her. He reaches out to her neck to strangle her.

DAPHNE
Is that you Arthur. I've told you
no funny business while the girls
are here!
(she looks around)
Oh, they're not here. In that
case...

She reaches up and puts her hand on his. The figure recoils.

DAPHNE
This always happens when we come to
the seaside, doesn't it. Must be
that sea air!

The figure reaches for the nearest available weapon - a pair of DAPHNE's oversized frilly bloomers. He wraps them around her face and strangles her.

46

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

46

The women are assembled in the hall arguing.

BERYL

Marjorie are you seriously suggesting that we leave Daphne out there with that thing? She's a sitting duck in her wheelchair.

MARJORIE

If we go out there we could all end up savagely murdered and what help will that be to Daphne. We should stay here.

DOROTHY

And do what? The phone lines are down and we're miles from anywhere.

MARJORIE

Somebody will come. The Thompsons. They'll have to return at some point.

BERYL

No, I'm not leaving Daphne out there on her own. Sisterly solidarity. Who's with me?

BLANCHE raises her hand. DOROTHY cautiously follows. MARJORIE shakes her head.

MARJORIE

It's suicide you know.

GLADYS

Sorry Marjorie, but I can't leave her out there. Beryl needs help.

She raises her hand.

MARJORIE

Ridiculous. I hope the rest of you have got more sense.

The other women stay quiet. BERYL goes into the kitchen and reemerges with the kitchen knives. She goes to the front door. The 'rescue party' follow her.

BERYL

We're coming to get you Daphne.

(CONTINUED)

She unlocks the door and peers cautiously out holding the knife in front of her.

BERYL
Alright, let's go!

The women dash out of the front door and MARJORIE promptly locks it behind them.

MARJORIE
Well I doubt we'll be seeing them again.

JUNE
Come on Marjorie. They're just trying to do the right thing. You wouldn't want to be left alone out there would you?

MARJORIE
If you feel like that why didn't you go with them June?
(June looks down)

SOPHIA
Ladies, please. There's no point arguing, we need to stick together.

MARJORIE
If they'd have listened to me we'd still be together!

JUNE
Sssshhhhh!

MARJORIE looks affronted. JUNE puts her hand out. A muffled mobile phone ringtone sounds.

JUNE
We're saved!

MARJORIE
But they said there was no reception.

JUNE
Well clearly there is. Where's it coming from?

The women look frantically around them.

(CONTINUED)

JUNE

It's coming from underneath us.

MARJORIE

But this is the ground floor.

JUNE

Well there must be another floor.
Find the door!

They hurry into the different rooms. The phone rings off.

BARBARA

Oh please call back.

A long pause and then the phone rings again.

JUNE

It's here!

She points to the outline of a secret door in the hall.

MARJORIE

What on earth?

JUNE pushes the door outline and it swings open to reveal a dark descending staircase.

JUNE

Oh blimey! That doesn't look good.

SOPHIA

But we need that phone. What's left
in the kitchen that will do as a
weapon?

JUNE disappears and reappears with a fish slice, a pan and two pairs of tongs.

MARJORIE

Marvelous. Barbara, you stay up
here and keep guard.

(Barbara nods. There is a long
pause)

Well I'm not going first.

After a long wait JUNE goes first and they disappear down the stairs.

47

INT - BASEMENT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

47

The three women stand motionless in the doorway to the S&M dungeon. Most of the candles have blown out. It is murky and barely legible.

JUNE

Well I'd read about it in books,
but I'd never quite believed it!

SOPHIA

(lifting a leather S&M
contraption)

What on earth are you meant to do
with this?

JUNE

I don't think you want to know
Sophia.

They take a step further into the room and the murky sight of the carnage emerges. SOPHIA faints.

JUNE

Sophia, come on love. Have you got
your smelling salts?

She delves into SOPHIA's pocket. MARJORIE enters further into the room. As she approaches PAUL's body the phone rings. She is startled and drops the pan. It falls into a pile of viscera. She does not retrieve it.

MARJORIE

Leave her June. She'll come round.
We need to retrieve that telephone
while we're still able to hear it.

JUNE

(resting Sophia's head gently
on the floor)

Well where is it?

They follow the sound. In the murky light both look at what is left of PAUL and then look at each other. JUNE lowers her head above his body.

MARJORIE

Is it underneath him?

JUNE reluctantly takes her fish slice and lifts PAUL's torso. As he moves upwards the sound moves with him.

(CONTINUED)

JUNE

Oh no Marjorie, you don't think...

Marjorie nods. JUNE moves her fish slice to PAUL's blood-soaked mouth and flinchingly opens the gaping wound. The light of the screen illuminates Paul's internal organs. Light also radiates from the gaping wound at the other end of his torso. The phone stops ringing.

JUNE

Oh God, I don't know which end's worse!

MARJORIE

You've got the fish slice, it's longer and that *ahem* end's harder to reach.

(she points to his rectum)

JUNE

You have the bloody fish slice then!

MARJORIE

Come on June, we must retrieve that telephone!

The women take their positions at either end - MARJORIE at the top and JUNE at the BOTTOM. As JUNE tentatively begins to delve into Paul's intestines and MARJORIE stalls, SOPHIA wakes up. She screams at the sight in front of her and faints again. The shock of the scream causes MARJORIE to knock PAUL's body to the floor from the bondage table on which it has been dumped. The phone rings briefly, dwindles and dies. The women look at each other. JUNE is covered in gore.

JUNE

Wonderful. And I'd just had an new do!

48

INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

48

The door opens and BERYL appears first holding her knife.

BERYL

(whispering to DOROTHY)

How did you manage to lose two knives in the woods? We've only got two now!

(CONTINUED)

The women push the door open and cautiously head inside. The radio blares out - Psycho Killer by Talking Heads. GLADYS switches it off. The women move cautiously towards the back of the room. BLANCHE sees DAPHNE's body first.

BLANCHE

Oh Daphne!

DAPHNE is lurched forward in her wheelchair, her spare bloomers wrapped round her face.

GLADYS

We're too late.

BERYL comforts a distraught BLANCHE while GLADYS puts her knife down to gently remove the bloomers. DAPHNE is still grinning.

BLANCHE

You know I would have loved it if she was my mum. Such a kind heart.

BERYL

I'm so sorry Blanche, I know how close you were.

(she rests her hand on her shoulder)

But it's not safe here love. That thing could still be about and we're safer at the big house for now. The Thompsons will be back soon if they're not already there. The police could already be waiting for us.

GLADYS

She's right. And we should get back before it gets dark.

The shaken women gently encourage BLANCHE away from DAPHNE's body. They cautiously head for the door. As BERYL passes DOROTHY's case she spots a pair of knitting needles sticking out. She picks them up. This time GLADYS is first to peep out of the door.

GLADYS

All clear!

The women hurry out. BLANCHE turns and smiles at DAPHNE.

49

EXT - WOODS - EARLY EVENING

49

It is getting dark and the cover of the woods adds to the gloom. The women furtively creep towards the 'big house'. Every animal noise and branch crack alarms them. The shadows of the trees stop them in their tracks. They whisper.

DOROTHY

What on earth do you think it is?

BERYL

I don't know but I think it's got a taste for Townswomen.

GLADYS

Bugger Ber. I've left my knife in the cabin. I'll have to go back.

BERYL

No way Gladys, we're sticking together.

A hulking figure steps out suddenly in a gap in the trees 100 yards in front of them. It is holding MARY BERRY's mangled head. It howls and throws the head at the women, narrowly missing GLADYS who ducked in the nick of time.

BERYL

The Great British Head Off. Run like hell girls!

They obey BERYL's command and run as fast as they can in the opposite direction.

DOROTHY

There - the barn!

The outline of an old barn house looms.

BERYL

Yes, go!

The exhausted women crash against the doors. They are heavy and BERYL and GLADYS struggle to open them.

DOROTHY

Where is that thing. It was right behind us.

She looks behind them. The dusk light makes it hard to see.

(CONTINUED)

BERYL

Come on Glad, put your back into it.

With a concerted heave the women prise the doors open and they all fall inside.

50

INT - BARN - EVENING

50

GLADYS slams the doors. BERYL picks up a broom from the floor and slides it between the door handles.

BERYL

It won't hold it for long. We have to hope that it didn't see us come in here.

GLADYS reaches into her fleece pocket and retrieves her trusty dog walking torch. The barn is pitch black apart from the torch light.

GLADYS

Look at this.

She points the torch to the walls of the barn which are lined with gardening tools including a scythe, sheers, strimmer, and a chainsaw.

BLANCHE

Bloody hell!

The barn doors swing open with an enormous crash. The figure stands in the doorway, backlit by moonlight. The women flee behind two enormous bales of hay and attempt to hide.

BERYL

(whispering)

Turn that bloody torch off Glad!
It's like Blackpool illuminations back here.

BLANCHE

(hissing)

Turn it off Glad!

GLADYS

I'm trying, it's stuck!

The women wrestle with the torch sending light beams across the ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

BLANCHE

Give it to me, I'll do it.

She steps out from between the hay bales. Like lightning a large pair of sheers emerge from the darkness and cut her in half. DOROTHY screams and darts out from the other side of the bale attempting an escape. The figure removes the strimmer from the wall and shreds her from behind before she reaches the door.

BERYL

Now Glad, it's our only chance.
Run!

She pulls a knitting needle from her pocket and thrusts it at GLADYS. She feels for the knife. It has fallen out in the chaos.

GLADYS

I'm not sure now's the time for
knitting Beryl.

BERYL mimes a stabbing notion and GLADYS nods in recognition. The women run past the figure busy strimming DOROTHY. He sees them and lifts the strimmer. It is blocked with Townswoman and grinds to a halt.

GLADYS

Go!

He drops the strimmer and reaches the women just outside the doorway. He is about to grab BERYL when GLADYS turns and stabs him in the eyehole of the mask with the knitting needle. He staggers backwards. The women run.

51 EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - EVENING 51

GLADYS and BERYL bang on the door screaming to be let in. SOPHIA eventually opens the door and the blood-soaked women run inside. MARJORIE looks on in disdain from the hallway.

52 INT - SU & PAUL'S LOUNGE -EVENING 52

The group of mainly blood-soaked women assemble on the surviving chairs. The house is lit by candles and oil lamps.

BERYL

She saved my life, you know. It was
right on me. If hadn't been for
Glad...

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS

But Blanche and Dorothy...

BERYL

They died trying to save Daphne.
Solidarity in life, solidarity in
death.

MARJORIE

Is this really time for your
Marxist propaganda?

BERYL bristles, ready for a fight.

JUNE

(sensing tension and
interrupting)

You wouldn't believe what we found
in the basement. 50 Shades of Grey
has got nothing on these
people...Had nothing...

(she examines the gore on her
clothes)

SOPHIA

And we came so close to getting a
phone. We've checked the house and
that was the only mobile. No
landline, no mobile phones.

MARJORIE

And the Thompsons definitely won't
be coming back.

GLADYS

So we're trapped in here with that
thing on the loose?

BERYL

We definitely can't go out there in
the dark. We've got no chance.

ROSE

The house is as secure as it can
be. We're going to have to spend
the night.

GLADYS

We can set up a lookout system and
sleep in shifts. Ber, you up for
the first shift with me?

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE

I'm on medication that should render me exempt.

BERYL

(Deadpan)Of course. Come on Glad, let's take up position. Sophia and Rose, why don't you bed down in the lounge and we'll wake you up in a few hours to take over.

MARJORIE

Good idea. June and I will take the bedrooms upstairs. Come on June.

JUNE shrugs her shoulders apologetically and the women leave the room.

BERYL

Even in a life or death situation. It's all about her. We lost some of our best friends today and she's barely raised an eyebrow. I was right about her all along.

GLADYS

Ignore her Beryl. Let's just do our best to save the rest of them, shall we.

53

INT - SU & PAUL'S KITCHEN - NIGHTTIME

53

BERYL

(entering the room)

Well, that reminded me of Glastonbury in '78. The Thompsons were quite the dark horses.

GLADYS

(following shaking her head)

Why did we go down there, Ber? My nerves are shot. If only we had a drop of that whiskey.

BERYL

Why have whiskey when you can have Remy Martin?

She reaches out and pulls a bottle from a well-stacked alcohol rack.

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS
Purely medicinal.

BERYL
For the shock.

GLADYS pours two generous measures.

GLADYS
Honestly Ber. Do you think we'll
make it?
(She slugs her drink and pours
another)

BERYL
The odds can't be good Glad.

GLADYS
The thought of never seeing the
girls again...
(she takes another hearty
swig)

BERYL
Listen Glad, there's something I've
wanted to tell you for a while, but
it felt too risky. But now, well,
I'm not sure there's much to lose.

GLADYS
What is it Ber?

BERYL
Well, you know I've been working
for the Potters Bluff Historical
Society more often over the past
few months?
(Gladys nods)
I've been working with a local
historian and I think we've
uncovered something quite
unpleasant worryingly close to
home...
(she chugs her drink and pours
another)

54 INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

54

MONTAGE

- (INT) MASTER BEDROOM

Marjorie is asleep in the kingsize bed. She is dreaming
fretfully and visibly writhing.

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE
 (in her sleep)
 Peter!

- INT - GUEST BEDROOM

JUNE is fast asleep, gore still in her hair.

- INT - LOUNGE

ROSE & SOPHIA sleep in armchairs.

- INT - KITCHEN

The 'look-outs' are asleep on the kitchen table, an empty bottle of Remy Martin in front of them.

- INT - DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM

A mangled fist punches through SU's face in the twee family portrait nailed across the window. Another arm rips through the frame followed by a horrifying masked face with a knitting needles for an eye. The figure is in the house.

55 INT - SU & PAUL'S KITCHEN - NIGHTTIME 55

BERYL & GLADYS slumber at the kitchen table unaware that a dark figure is stood in the doorway watching them. It moves its head side to side slowly, surveying them. A toilet flushes upstairs. The figure looks up and leaves the room. The women slumber on.

56 INT - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME 56

MARJORIE returns to her room from the bathroom. Candles illuminate the hallway.

57 INT - GUEST BEDROOM SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME 57

JUNE jolts awake. She reaches out and grabs the bedside lamp. Realising it was only the toilet flushing, she puts it down.

JUNE
 Bloody hell, now I need to go!

58 INT - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME 58

JUNE opens her bedroom door. She is face to mask with the figure. She screams and slams the door into him, pushing the needle further into his eye. He howls and falls backwards. She flees into the nearest room, MARJORIE's master bedroom.

59

INT - MASTER BEDROOM SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

59

JUNE rushes in and slams the door.

JUNE

We need to barricade the door!

MARJORIE

(sitting up)

What on earth is going on?

JUNE

Quick, the chest of drawers. Help me Marjorie!

MARJORIE rises from bed & helps JUNE to drag the oversized drawers in front of the door. One drawer falls open and spills a variety of sex toys to the floor.

MARJORIE

Good grief! What was wrong with these people?

The killer easily breaks through the barricade, spilling the contents of the other drawers. The women cower in the corner and JUNE picks up an enormous black dildo which she brandishes in front of her. The figure stops and picks up a killer black stiletto. He slowly approaches.

JUNE

For God's sake someone help us! Get back or I'll use this on you!
(she waves the dildo)

The figure moves closer. He lashes out with the stiletto heel. In a split second MARJORIE pulls JUNE in front of her. JUNE's throat is severed, blood arcs across the white walls of the bedroom. She looks at MARJORIE in disbelief as she falls to the ground, blood spurting from her neck. The killer also looks at MARJORIE. And pauses. He lowers the stiletto. She takes the opportunity, hits him with an empty drawer and flees the room.

60

INT - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME/EARLY MORNING

60

MARJORIE bumps into ROSE & SOPHIA.

MARJORIE

Go, now!

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIA

Where? The doors and windows are all barricaded. He'll catch us before we can get them off.

GLADYS

(hissing, from the kitchen)

IN HERE!

61 INT - SU& PAUL'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

61

BERYL & GLADYS lean out from a hidden utility cupboard.

GLADYS

(whispering loudly)

In here! Quickly...

ROSE and SOPHIA run towards them.

MARJORIE

What the hell are you doing in there? We need to leave. He took June.

BERYL

The doors are boarded up - we're trapped.

MARJORIE

Well we need to remove the boards.

She picks up a hammer and starts clattering at the board blocking the kitchen door. Pieces start to crack. The noise is deafening.

BERYL

Shut up Marjorie, you'll bring that thing in here.

MARJORIE

You can stay here and die. I'm leaving.

GLADYS

Please shut up!

The figure appears in the kitchen doorway. The women's hiding place is exposed. In panic ROSE shuts the doors and the women lock them from the inside. MARJORIE removes enough wood to expose the kitchen door handle. She unlocks it and runs outside.

SOPHIA
(whispering)

Do you think he's got her?

ROSE
I don't know. It's gone very quiet.

GLADYS
I heard the door.

BERYL
So did I.

GLADYS
Maybe he's gone after her.

The cupboard doors rattle violently. The figure is outside and has them trapped. The early morning sun filters in through the slats on the door. His shadow looms over them.

BERYL
We're fucked.

GLADYS
Look!
(she points to a handheld
hoover with a long pipe in the
corner)

BERYL
I'm not sure now's the time for
hoovering Glad.

GLADYS makes a poking gesture. BERYL cottons on and nods.

SOPHIA
What?!

The doors swing violently open and the figure appears back-lit by the rising sun. GLADYS thrusts the vacuum pipe into the zipped mouth hole of the mask, tearing it.

BERYL
Now!

She switches on the hoover. It sucks the air out of his mask and crushes the decayed bones in his face. She throws the vacuum at him and he falls to the ground wrestling the domestic appliance. The women run out of the back door screaming.

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS

Where to now?

BERYL

The barn. We need those weapons.

63 INT - BARN - EARLY MORNING

63

The women stare at an empty wall.

BERYL

Well where the bloody hell are they?

GLADYS

He must have taken them. And the women by the looks of things.
(the bodies are gone)

ROSE

What time's Barry coming to get us?

GLADYS

Not until 5.30. We'll never make it until then.

SOPHIA

Let's make a run for the road?

GLADYS

We're in the middle of nowhere and it goes on for flippin miles. Did you see another car on the way here? Besides which I don't fancy our chances of outrunning that thing.

BERYL

Ladies, it's taken Ethel, Daphne, Blanche, Dorothy and June. And Mary Berry. We're loosing here. We've only got one option now and that's to fight back.

SOPHIA

How can we fight back without any weapons?

GLADYS

We'll just have to improvise. That Hoover trick worked pretty well, and we gave it a good fleshwound with that knitting needle.

(CONTINUED)

BERYL

That's it Glad! We need to get back to the cabins - I've got an idea. We'll teach it not to mess with the Potters Bluff Townswomen's Guild. And we'll win that creative crafting prize at the same bloody time. Ladies, time to put those skills to practice. Come on!

(Perplexed, they hurry out of the barn behind Beryl)

64 EXT- LAKESIDE CABINS - MORNING 64

The women peer round the corner of the end cabin and run inside.

65 INT - MARJORIE'S CABIN - MORNING 65

MARJORIE is inside waving a mobile phone in the air. A packed suitcase is beside her.

GLADYS

What! You had a mobile phone all this time? Why didn't you tell us?

MARJORIE

It's not working. There is no reception.

BERYL

But there is in the basement. You nearly got us killed back at the house, you selfish bitch!

MARJORIE

I had to get to the telephone.

BERYL

And if you'd got reception what then? Call Barry? Would you have waited for us?

MARJORIE

Of course.

BERYL

That packed suitcase suggests otherwise. I'm onto you Lady Muck and if we get out of this, I won't be the only one who is...

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIA

Beryl! Come on. We're fighting that thing not each other. You're right, we've got to kill it. But how? Five septuagenarians against the creature from the black lagoon.

BERYL

(still simmering)

She takes the phone from MARJORIE.

Alright ladies. You know last year when we came second in the craft competition and vowed never to be beaten again? Well, we're going to make bloody sure we're not beaten now...with an unfortunate life or death element.

(the women look confused)

Sophia, you're our master knitting and crochet champion, right?

SOPHIA

Yes, but I don't see...

BERYL

What equipment did you bring with you?

SOPHIA

Well, I've got needles, crochet hooks, scissors, pin cushions, picking knives...

BERYL

Rose, you won that baking Gold medal 6 years running. Do you think you could rustle us up a piping hot pot of that award winning jam? And I've heard tell of some creative practices with flower...

ROSE

(starting to grasp the link)
Of course Beryl.

BERYL

Glad, you're our champion flower arranger. I've seen some of your kit and you could have someone's eye out with those foam strippers.

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS

Nice choice of words. Don't forget
the metal wire string and shears.

BERYL

(smiling)

The weapons in the barn are gone so
we make our own. When it comes back
we show it what an award-winning
regional Townswomen's arts and
crafts team looks like. Right?

ALL EXCEPT MARJORIE

RIGHT!

BERYL

It'll take more than a knock-off
Michael Myers to beat us.

ROSE

Who's Michael Myers?

BERYL

Never mind.

66

MONTAGE - CABINS - MORNING

66

-INT SOPHIA'S CABIN

SOPHIA rifles through her luggage. She finds a particularly
long and sharp crochet needle. She lifts it up and smiles.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

ROSE stands at the cooker stirring a boiling hot pot of
homemade jam. She lifts the spoon and the piping hot thick
mass falls into the pan.

ROSE

Nasty!

BERYL bustles next to her.

BERYL

You couldn't attend a women's lib
demo in the 70's without a flower
bomb or two.

She puts on SOPHIA's apron and gets to work on making flower
bombs.

INT - GLADYS' CABIN

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS empties out her suitcase and retrieves the fallen tools from the mess. She takes a foam stripper and thrusts it into a pillow.

GLADYS
(misappropriated)
Take that Malcolm Myers!

She takes the other weapons and puts them into the elasticated waistband of her skirt. MARJORIE is behind her looking in the wardrobe. She appears with a pair of coat hangers. BERYL enters.

BERYL
Well, it didn't do Jamie Lee Curtis
much good...

She goes to one of her ethnic bags and searches inside a hidden pocket.

BERYL
(holding up a penknife)
So you are still there!

She pockets the knife.

GLADYS
Let's take all of this to Rose's
cabin. I've an idea how we might
protect ourselves a bit.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

Two pans of jam bubble away on the stove. BERYL starts stripping cushions from the sofa. She grabs SOPHIA and uses her scarf to wrap one of the cushions to her front. The women take the rest of the cushions and wrap them to each other using scarves, towels, belts and curtain ropes. MARJORIE looks horrified, but concedes. Eventually the women are all armed and somewhat armoured. They stand in the lounge, floral cushions protruding awkwardly from their chests, weapons in hand.

GLADYS
What do we look like?

ROSE
A right set of plonkers!

The women take a brief moment from the horrors of the weekend to share the humorous scene. The laughter subsides.

(CONTINUED)

BERYL

Ready?

GLADYS

As we'll ever be!

67 EXT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME 67

The sound of Barry Manilow's Copacabana rings out full volume from the cabin. The figure has blundered from SU & PAUL's house & collapsed in the woods. The sound rouses it. It rises and follows Manilow's crooning.

68 INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME 68

GLADYS cranks up the volume on the radio and scurries out of the door.

69 INT - ROSE'S CABIN - DAYTIME 69

GLADYS enters. The women, dressed in their makeshift floral armour stand with their makeshift weapons raised.

BERYL

First place ladies!

The scene is set for confrontation.

70 EXT - ROSE'S CABIN - DAYTIME 70

The figure lurches towards DAPHNE's cabin door, ROSE appears from the side of the cabin and ambushes it with a flower bomb flung into the ripped mask & distorted face. It is blinded & stumbles. SOPHIA takes the opportunity & hurries up behind it with a handful of knitting needles which she thrusts into it's back. GLADYS appears from the cabin, leaps forward & stabs it in the chest with two foam strippers in each hand. BERYL takes a final swing & secures a particularly vicious crochet hook to the figure's groin. The figure falls to the floor. The women stand on guard, weapons raised watching it. It doesn't move.

ROSE

He's not moving. Have we done it?

BERYL

I'm not sure. Rose go and get that jam just in case. It'll melt that rubber a treat.

GLADYS

(prodding the figure gingerly with her foot)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS (cont'd)
I'm not taking any chances.

She takes some metal wire and wraps it round his neck, pulling.

GLADYS
And that's for Daphne, you shit!

71 INT - ROSE'S CABIN - AFTERNOON 71

The women begin to celebrate a perceived victory outside. ROSE heads for the kitchen. She reaches out for the boiling jam still heating on the stove. It has overheated and explodes violently all over her face and body. Her skin melts horrifically. She screams and collapses to the floor, her skin bubbling painfully.

72 EXT - CABINS - AFTERNOON 72

The women abruptly stop celebrating and turn to face ROSE's agonised screams. The killer rises slowly, unseen behind them. As they move reluctantly towards the cabin, he stands and pulls the makeshift weapons from his decaying flesh behind them. BERYL, GLADYS and MARJORIE disappear into the cabin. A horrified SOPHIA stops in the doorway - the site of the melting ROSE too much for her. The figure looms behind her and plunges the crochet hook through her throat. She spits and chokes violently on her own blood before falling down dead.

73 INT - ROSE'S CABIN - AFTERNOON 73

BERYL and GLADYS try to revive ROSE. She is dead, her body melted hideously by jam.

GLADYS
Come on Rose, you can't leave us as well.

BERYL
It's no good Glad, she's gone.

SOPHIA's gurgling death cry rings out behind them. They turn to see the figure in the doorway.

GLADYS
How the chuff can it still be alive? Run!

The terrified women flee out of the back door of the cabin, cushions falling from their bodies. MARJORIE follows them.

74 EXT - WOODS - AFTERNOON

74

The women run blindly in the opposite direction to SU and PAUL's house.

GLADYS

Where the hell do we go now?

BERYL

I don't know, but I can't run much more Glad. This new hip has hardly made me the bionic woman.

(she is struggling)

MARJORIE

There!

She points to a secluded boat house with a jetty at the side of the lake. They keep moving, too afraid to look behind them.

75 EXT- BOAT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

75

MARJORIE flings the doors open and they run inside.

76 INT - BOAT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

76

GLADYS & MARJORIE find a pair of oars and wedge the doors shut. BERYL is exhausted and struggling. The figure pounds at the doors but the strong wooden oars temporarily hold. The pounding stops.

GLADYS

Are you alright, Ber?

BERYL

(sinking to the floor
exhausted)

I think I'm done Glad. I can't run anymore.

As BERYL sits the penknife slides from her pocket across the floor. GLADYS gingerly sits down next to her and puts her arm round her best friend.

GLADYS

Come on love, you can't say that. If it weren't for you we'd all be gone by now.

BERYL

But look how many of us are gone. They all had families...kids,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERYL (cont'd)
grandkids, husbands...I've run out
of ideas Glad.

GLADYS
But we're still here and that's
thanks to you. We're going to get
out of this Beryl. We haven't got
long to hold on. Barry's on his way
back right now. We're getting on
that coach and getting the hell out
of here.

MARJORIE
Do you really believe that? That
monster will have killed him before
he's even parked the coach.

BERYL
(Struggling to her feet. She
has had enough)
Well, it takes one to know one,
doesn't it Marjorie?

MARJORIE
What do you mean?

BERYL
A monster. A killer.

MARJORIE
Are you delirious Beryl?
Preposterous.

BERYL
Nothing's preposterous when there's
evidence to back it up Marjorie.
(she reaches inside her
generous bra & pulls out a
slip of paper)

MARJORIE
What on earth is that?

BERYL
You see we're on to you Marjorie.
And we've nearly got all the
evidence we need.
(Beryl has nothing to lose
anymore))

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE

What evidence? Who is we? What are you talking about?

BERYL

I think you know exactly what I'm talking about...Peter Dandridge. Geoffrey Dandridge. Your son and husband. You killed them.

MARJORIE steps forward and reaches down.

MARJORIE

Oh dear Beryl, you seems to have dropped your penknife.

She picks up the penknife and lashes out suddenly at BERYL's throat, slitting it wide open.

GLADYS

No!

BERYL slumps back to the floor, blood gushing from her throat. A record of births and deaths certificate falls from her hand. MARJORIE picks it up.

GLADYS

No! Beryl, hang in there. We're going to get that coach.

She puts her hands to her best friend's throat, desperate to stop the bleeding.

BERYL

You make it to that coach Glad.
(she chokes & coughs, blood running through her fingers)
I've done all I can. It's finally time for you to stand up to them and give them hell love.

She dies, her head falling to the side against her friend. GLADYS sits weeping next to her on the floor.

MARJORIE

Well that's a shame. Beryl's death was supposed to look like an accident. And now it appears I'm going to have to kill you too. And such a harmless thing.

The sound of a motor outside the door followed by the clatter of crashing wood. The enraged figure emerges

(CONTINUED)

chainsaw first through the wooden wall of the boat house, timber flying in his wake. MARJORIE steps back & trips on a tarpaulin sheet which falls down to reveal the mutilated bloody bodies of all the dead townswomen. Mis-footed she falls into the gruesome pile. The figure looms towards her chainsaw-first. She scrabbles and tries to get to her feet.

MARJORIE

No!

(the figure lumbers forward)

No...Peter...no!

The figure stops. He lowers the chainsaw. It is a very long time since he has heard his name spoken. MARJORIE scrabbles to her feet, slipping on blood.

MARJORIE

It's OK Peter.

She moves towards him cautiously. He drops the chainsaw. Gingerly and disgustedly she reaches out and engages him in a bloody embrace.

MARJORIE

There now. Mother's here.

GLADYS

(a combination of open-mouthed
and enraged)

What the bloody hell...?

MARJORIE

Well, Peter's shall-we-say visit
this weekend has proved to be
somewhat of a surprise...

77

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

77

MARJORIE'S VOICEOVER

INT - MARJORIE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

NOTES NOTES NOTES Marjorie describes in voice-over that she did indeed have a son, and that he was born with significant mental and physical disabilities and deformities. She describes him as an embarrassment and says that she had to keep him locked up and hidden away.

(FLASHBACK-INT) Marjorie's basement.

The son, 12, sits staring at a small black and white television in a cell-like basement room. Marjorie enters the room, thrusts some food onto a bare table and leaves, locking the door behind her.

(CONTINUED)

(FLASHBACK-INT) Marjorie's basement.

Peter sits staring at the TV on the same uncomfortable single bed. He is 18. The door timidly opens and his father, wearing a Christmas cracker hat, enters and wishes him a Happy Christmas. Marjorie screams at him to leave him alone and he gets out. The son's gaze has not moved. Marjorie, in voice over, says that the secret had become too much of a burden and that she had to do something about it.

(EXT FB-NIGHT) Outside cabin (same resort, years before-just one secluded cabin).

Marjorie cuts her lights as she approaches the cabin. She gets out of her car and opens the post box outside the cabin. Inside is a receipt and keys. She opens the cabin door and hurries her blanket-covered son inside, closing the door behind them.

78

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

78

NOTES NOTES NOTES(same resort, years before-just one secluded cabin).

(EXT FB-DAWN) Lake.

Marjorie leads her son to the lake. She begins to paddle in the water. Her son is scared but she pulls him in with her. He begins to panic as she pulls him deeper and deeper. She begins to tread water. He can't. In the panic he becomes entwined in reeds and begins to drown. Marjorie releases his hand and swims to shore.. Peter's last view is of his mother watching him drown.

(EXT FB) Lakeside.

Peter's cries have alerted the attention of the farmer who owns the cabin. He emerges from the woods and tells Marjorie that he saw her kill her son. After a struggle Marjorie dashes him over the head with a large rock, knocking him out. She drags him to the cabin.

(EXT FB) Cabin rear.

Behind the cabin Marjorie finds a large barrell marked flammable. She does not realise that it is formaldehyde, used by the farmer as a disinfectant for cattle. She drags the barrell to the front of the cabin, spilling most of the contents into the lake and polluting it. She then pours the remainder into the cabin and onto the farmer's body and sets fire to both. She jumps into her car and drives away, the cabin and grassland burning and eliminating her tracks.

79 EXT - NATIONAL TRUST CASTLE ROOF - DAYTIME

79

* NOTES NOTES NOTES*

In VOICEOVER Marjorie explains that her husband had to go and that she framed his death as a burglary gone wrong. And then years later, there was the historian who had been helping Beryl...

(EXT FB) Castle ramparts.

Marjorie pushes the historian from the ramparts (pre-credit sequence, but this time the killer is clearly a smiling Marjorie).

80 INT - BOATHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

80

MARJORIE

You see Beryl had been working with that silly little man, and I knew that she had uncovered secrets that were better off hidden. I chose this resort for the weekend as I'd planned for Beryl to meet with an accident. That lake would have held another secret.

Gladys has had enough.

GLADYS

I already bloody knew all that you silly cow. Beryl told me!

PETER's embrace of MARJORIE suddenly begins to stiffen. Her talk of another murder in the lake has enraged him - he has remembered his own death at the hands of his mother. He squeezes tighter until the embrace turns murderous. He begins to wail and literally squeeze the life out of MARJORIE. Her screams join with the sound of bones violently cracking and snapping. The screaming stops. He drops the broken female frame and kicks the crumpled and bloody body into the lake through the hole in the wall. Ignoring GLADYS he turns to the door and removes the oars. He leaves, his revenge complete.

81 EXT- BOATHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

81

PETER slowly walks back towards the jetty and the relative peace of his watery grave. GLADYS emerges from the boathouse behind him. She is enraged and bloodied. The once timid woman has been pushed to the point of murderous rage by the deaths of her friends. She brandishes the chainsaw and howls. Catching up with him, she thrusts the chainsaw

(CONTINUED)

violently through his decayed midrift. He looks down blankly and finally falls.

GLADYS

I am not having this anymore!

She drops the chainsaw and collapses from exhaustion next to him.

82

EXT - CABINS - EVENING

82

BARRY's bus pulls up outside the cabins. He honks the horn. There is no reply. He waits a moment then climbs out.

BARRY

Helloo! Ladies, Glad, it's Barry.
I'm here to take you home.

He walks to the front of the cabins.

BARRY

Glad, Beryl, where are you?
(he looks in their messy
cabin)
Well, where the chuff have they got
to? Must have been a wild one.

He moves to ROSE's cabin where he is met by SOPHIA's blood-drenched body in the doorway and the sight of ROSE's melted body in the kitchen.

BARRY

Bloody hell!

He steps back from the doorway & into GLADYS.

BARRY

Jesus christ! What the bloody hell
has gone on here?

GLADYS

Just get me onto the bus Barry.

BARRY

What about the others?

GLADYS

There are no others.

BARRY shakes his head & helps GLADYS to stagger towards the bus. They are about to board when the sound of a chainsaw rings out behind them. PETER is running towards them, a gaping hole in his midrift, and the chainsaw above his head.

(CONTINUED)

GLADYS
(turning)
Oh, for fuck's sake!

Gladys sighs and pushes BARRY down a bank towards the lake. She hobbles onto the bus.

83 INT - BUS - EVENING 83

A tired yet determined GLADYS turns the keys & pushes the gearstick into reverse. She swerves violently, her foot to the floor.

84 EXT- CABINS - EVENING 84

She hits PETER full-on and he is dragged under the wheels. His body collapses and gore gushes from underneath the coach. The chainsaw flies to the side, still running.

85 INT - BUS - EVENING 85

GLADYS moves to first gear, drives forward and then reverses sharply again. The bus bumps upwards as it crushes PETER's body again. Without emotion she repeats this once more until there is no bump & PETER is pulverised. GLADYS finally stops. She looks in the mirror and uses BARRY's handkerchief on the dashboard to wipe a streak of blood from her face. She looks down. A 1st Place rosette has propelled from underneath a passenger seat and landed in the aisle. She picks it up & resignedly pins it to her chest. She puts the bus back into first gear and drives off into the sunset.

86 EXT - LAKESIDE - EVENING 86

BARRY
Glad! Glad!
(he emerges dirty and soggy
over the brow of the lakeside
bank)
Bugger, she's gone without me!

He climbs up to the path where he finds what's left of PETER. He gingerly prods the mess with his foot & then quickly wipes his shoe on a patch of grass.

BARRY
She wasn't messing about.

He bends down and picks up the still-running chainsaw. He tries to work out how to switch it off. Behind him the moonlight reflects off the lake. All is now peaceful aside from the chainsaw. The water gently ripples.

The rippling begins to increase near the boathouse. The gentle roll is disturbed by movement under the water. Violently a hand thrusts from the lake, the moon shimmering from the pearls on the wrist...

Appendix 18: *Knitters!* Full Draft - Mid Process

EXT - NATIONAL TRUST CAR PARK - DAYTIME

A car pulls up at the front of a grand National Trust castle. A smartly dressed male historian with an unfortunately obvious toupee is stood upright in the open doorway. He strides to the car to greet the unseen driver who opens the door.

HISTORIAN

I'm so glad you made it. With that ridiculous new bypass at Tedbury you can find up to 8 cars queued at the roundabout at this time of day. Of course I objected from the outset. I might as well have shouted into the ether...Regardless, strictly speaking we're closed today, and the paperwork involved, but ...

(adopts grand tone)

Let the tour commence!

He spreads his arm to present the immense castle facade. The visitor remains in the car unseen.

INT - NATIONAL TRUST CASTLE GROUND FLOOR STATE ROOM

VISITOR'S POV. The unseen visitor follows the striding expert through a downstairs state room, glancing side-to-side at elaborate, grand antique furniture and wall-length painted portraits.

HISTORIAN

This is where Sir Melyvn would have conducted much of his business. Land planning, agricultural documentation, sewer regulation. All thrilling affairs, I'm sure you'll agree!

The visitor's POV remains fixed on the historian. After an awkward silence the enthused historian continues.

HISTORIAN

And of course available in the gift shop is my pamphlet 'Sanitary regulations at the turn of the century: Were the Peasants Revolting?'
(awaits an acknowledgement of the pun-there is none)
Still, there seems to be very little interest in the sanitary arrangements of our forebears. Why people aren't

interested in the 19th century
thunderbox I've no idea. Heavy wooden
commode to enclosed chamber pot.
Genius!

(Making a second attempt at a joke)
But perhaps, as I said to my former
assistant Gladys, we don't want to
flood the effluence market, do we?

He snorts. There is an awkward further silence. The visitor
walks on.

HISTORIAN

(aside)

No, she wasn't intelligent enough to
appreciate my humour either.

He quickly follows and stops to extend theatrically his arm
to the doorway and corridor beyond the state room doorway.

HISTORIAN

Shall we?

He leads on. The VISITOR looks pointedly at the clock on the
mantle and walks on. The HISTORIAN follows, quietly seething.

INT - CASTLE GROUND FLOOR HALLWAY - DOORWAY TO LARGE ARCHIVE
ROOM

VISITOR'S POV. The pompous historian stands proud outside two
imposingly large wooden doors. He thrusts them open.

HISTORIAN

And may I introduce you to the single
largest archive in the East Midlands
region. Records of every birth and
death from Sir Melvyn onwards.

A huge archive of wooden shelving stretches in front of them.
Rows of shelves span the large room. Each shelf is packed
with boxes of files, some yellowing with age.

HISTORIAN

And all under my care. With my own
discreet archive of course. A complete
survey of every Derbyshire household's
sanitary arrangements from 1880 to
1900. Let's delve, shall we?

He strides forward. The VISITOR's perspective swings quickly
into the hallway behind him/her, to a sign leading up the

staircase 'Ramparts & Castle Roof'. The VISITOR's gloved hand reaches out. He looks at the gloved hand on his arm, surprised. The visitor points to the sign.

HISTORIAN

(disappointed)

Well, I suppose we could get that out of the way while the weather holds. Plenty of time for diving in later. A lot of interest in the archive recently...non-sanitary alas.

They leave the room and stride towards the expansive ascending stone staircase in the hallway.

EXT. CASTLE ROOF/RAMPARTS

VISITOR POV. The huffing, dishevelled, historian reaches the top of the staircase with his companion following. They walk to the edge of the ramparts and look out at the spacious secluded grounds.

HISTORIAN

Glorious, isn't it? Takes a lot of tombolas and tea dances to raise enough to keep it in this condition. Still, keeps the old dears busy. Although I probably shouldn't say that.

He looks awkwardly at his VISITOR. The VISITOR looks away. Beneath them is a chapel wing. On it sit smaller turrets with a tall, sharp spire rising from the centre.

HISTORIAN

Ah yes, the old chapel. Site of Henry Mantle's pioneering first dry earth water closet. A real cause for worship. No wonder it was in a church.

The awkward silence continues as the HISTORIAN's attempt at humour again fails to provoke a response. The VISITOR stares. He makes his final attempt at a joke, pointing at the spire.

HISTORIAN

But I suppose
(snorts)
...with a spire like that, we're absolutely getting to the point of the tour now, aren't we?
(allows himself a small chuckle)

Another awkward silence. Followed by a sudden, unexpected push from the VISITOR's gloved hand. The HISTORIAN is knocked from the rampart and plummets down, backside first onto the lethal chapel spire. The spire pierces his anus, travelling through his stomach and chest and out of his mouth. Blood and gore shoot and splutter from the torn, gaping cavity which once was his mouth. As he slides backwards down the spire his toupee slips from his head, hanging behind him from one piece of adhesive tape. He raises a blood-soaked arm and points at the visitor, wide-eyed. He gurgles out.

HISTORIAN

You!

CUT TO CREDITS

INT. GLADYS' SEMI-DETACHED COUNCIL HOUSE BEDROOM - DAYTIME

GLADYS is Assistant to the Chair of the Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild. She is a short plump, artificially blonde-haired woman in her early 70s who has a penchant for animal sanctuary sweatshirts. She has been married to her overly dependent husband DEREK for 58 years and has 3 daughters and 4 grandchildren. She is distractedly packing a battered suitcase on a double bed populated by 3 large slumbering dogs.

DEREK

(from downstairs)

Glad!

She pulls a fleece jacket from under the largest dog, throws it into the overflowing case and attempts to shut it.

DEREK

Glaad!

After bouncing up and down on it a couple of times, she secures the clasps, and drags the heavy case from the bed and across the floor dodging a slumbering dog.

DEREK

Glaaaaad!

INT. GLADYS' KITCHEN

DEREK's large posterior dominates the room which is largely decorated with photos of children, grandchildren and dogs. He is peering head first into the freezer.

GLADYS
 (dragging the suitcase)
 Keep your wig on! What's the matter
 love?

DEREK
 How many nights are you going for?
 There are only two frozen dinners in
 here.

GLADYS
 I'm going for two nights love

DEREK
 But what about lunch?

GLADYS
 There's bread in the cupboard and ham
 and cheese in the fridge. And there's
 milk and Coco Pops for breakfast.

DEREK
 Couldn't you make the sandwiches
 before you go - you know what I'm like
 Glad.

GLADYS
 Well the coach will be here any minute
 and you know how Marjorie is about
 timekeeping.
 (he stares, sad-faced. She drops
 the case with a sigh)
 Oh go on then.

Gladys prepares two ham and cheese sandwiches for Derek who
 watches her at the kitchen table.

DEREK
 Thanks love. I'll miss you you know.

Gladys is silent. She completes the second sandwich and a
 loud horn sounds outside, prompting barking from the dogs. As
 she puts the plated sandwiches into the fridge she is nearly
 knocked over by 5 large dogs who bound through the closed
 kitchen door and over to the window.

GLADYS
 You lot! Look after dad while I'm
 gone. Doris will be in tomorrow to
 walk them and sort out their food.

She fusses over each dog, ruffling and kissing their fur. Picking up the case, she drags it to Derek.

GLADYS

Take care love.

She kisses him on the cheek and drags the case to the door awkwardly opening and closing it without letting any dogs escape outside. DEREK looks on, as forlorn as the animals who bark at the window.

EXT - ROADSIDE GLADYS' HOUSE

A mid-sized 'luxury' coach is parked outside. The door swings open and BARRY appears. He is mid-40s with a disheveled shirt & tie which reflects the condition of both his business and bus - although he is trying. The coach's faded 'Barry's Executive Travel' logo indicates he is the company owner.

BARRY

Morning! Are you Mrs Pemberton?

GLADYS drops her case and shakes Barry's outstretched hand.

GLADYS

Glad. Hello Barry, thanks for helping us out at such short notice. When Shawcross' let us down last week I thought the trip was off. Lucky you had that cancellation.

BARRY

Er, yes...Here let me help you with that bag.

He takes the suitcase.

BARRY

Blimey, what do you Townswomen take to Craft Activity Weekends in the Lake District? I thought it was all cross stitch and knitting. Have you got a potter's wheel in here?

GLADYS

(touching her nose and laughing)
You'd be surprised Barry! We're though to the regional finals of the Townswomen's Competitive Knitting Competition, so we're getting ready for the battle. Our Chair Marjorie's

quite feisty when she puts her mind to it...in fact when she doesn't put her mind to it...in fact all the flippin' time. Actually, we better get going, she'll kill me if we're late. You reckon about 3 hours from Derbyshire to the Lakes Barry?

BARRY

With a good wind behind us Glad.

They both climb onto the bus. The doors shut and it pulls off. Four dogs bark at the kitchen window. DEREK stands forlorn behind them.

INT MARJORIE'S STATELY DETACHED HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAYTIME

MARJORIE is the Chair of Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild. She is mid-70's, slim, dressed in a smart twinpiece with pearls on her wrist. Her grey back-combed hair gives her a Thatcher-esque appearance. She is stood at the window of her large, ornate, and immaculately-dressed living room looking pointedly at her watch.

MARJORIE

Oh where is she?

She reaches down to an antique glass table and picks up the local newspaper, The Potter's Bluff Bugle. The front page headline reads 'Inspire-ing Historian Dead: Fatal Accident at Haddonfield Hall'. It is accompanied by a photograph of the HISTORIAN.

MARJORIE

How indelicate.

Her reading is interrupted as Barry's coach pulls through the immaculately maintained garden and spacious drive and screeches to a halt. The door swings open & a blustering GLADYS emerges followed by BARRY. They hurry to the front door. MARJORIE replaces the paper, lifts the suitcase, and leaves the room.

EXT MARJORIE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Marjorie emerges from the front door and closes it behind her.

GLADYS

(hurrying up to her)

Oh, Marjorie, I'm so sorry. We got

stuck in the traffic from that new roundabout at Tedbury.

BARRY
(reaching out)
Let me take your case, Marjorie. I'm Barry, your driver.

MARJORIE looks BARRY up & down.

MARJORIE
Indeed.

She reluctantly hands over the case. BARRY straightens his tie with his free hand, self-conscious. They walk to the coach.

GLADYS
There's no rush is there? We'll pick up a bit of time en route once we've collected the others.

BARRY offers MARJORIE his hand to board the coach. She shoos it away and looks dismissively at the faded exterior sign.

MARJORIE
Not very 'executive' is it?

She boards the coach and BARRY and GLADYS share an exasperated glance behind her.

INT. BERYL'S STONE TERRACED HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAYTIME

BERYL is a short, sprightly, rebellious 78 year old. Her short grey hair is streaked with purple and she favours ethnic clothing. She is politically active and a staunch feminist. BERYL is the Guild's Social Secretary & Gladys' best friend. She is on the phone in a hallway so full of plants it resembles an overgrown tropical garden.

BERYL
Yes, I saw it in the newspaper. What a way to go though, and to think I only saw him last week.
(pauses)
Are you sure no one was with him?
(listens)
I see. Well, I'm sorry I can't come to the service but bloody Marjorie's got us trolling off to the Lakes on sodding knitting retreat. I'll be over

when I get back. There's something I think we should talk about. Take care love. Bye.

She puts the phone down and reaches to one of the ethnic fabric bags at her feet. She removes a piece of paper and secretes it in her generous bra.

BERYL
Safe keeping.
(taps her breast)
Now...

She climbs half way up the stairs and opens the lids of numerous ethnic pots on a shelf above the staircase.

BERYL
...where the bloody hell did I put it?

After lifting the fourth lid she extracts a small plastic bag.

BERYL
You can't hide from me!

It is marijuana. She sniffs it deeply & grins. A loud horn honk breaks her smile.

BERYL
I'm coming, keep your wig on
(pauses)
Bad choice of words.

INT BERYL'S KITCHEN - DAYTIME

BERYL fills three large bowls with cat biscuits.

BERYL
There you go El Gato. See you on Sunday!

She strokes a purring black cat. The horn honks again, longer.

BERYL
Alright, alright. Bloody Marjorie.

She lifts up a mixture of carrier and ethnic fabric bags, juggling them with her hands and knees, and leaves the kitchen.

INT - COACH - DAYTIME

MARJORIE has the 'executive' front seat. GLADYS joins BERYL on the seat across the aisle behind BARRY.

MARJORIE

Wonderful. And now we're 10 minutes late.

GLADYS & BERYL exchange an exasperated glance. BERYL opens her handbag just enough for GLADYS to see a flask of whiskey inside. She widens her eyes & checks MARJORIE isn't looking. BERYL winks. The bus moves off.

GLADYS

Ber, this is Barry the driver.

BARRY raises one hand from the wheel to wave, and looks into the rearview mirror.

BARRY

Nice to meet you Beryl

BERYL

You too love.

GLADYS

Rose & Sophia are getting picked up at June's house, Barry. Should save us a few minutes.

(BERYL looks at MARJORIE pointedly & BARRY gives a thumbs up)

I see you've got the ramp for Daphne's wheelchair thanks. Once we've collected her and the others at the Village Hall we'll be on our way to the sunny Lakes.

BERYL

Sunny!? Have you been to the Lakes Glad? My teepee got washed away in the rain at the Women's Retreat last Spring. And there's no burning bras when you can't keep your matches dry love.

BERYL winks and MARJORIE frowns and looks away, her face creased as though she has encountered a bad smell.

EXTERIOR JUNE'S FLAT - DAYTIME

JUNE is younger than the other Guild members at 59. She is glamorous & has heavy make-up and bleached hair. She joined the Guild when she met BERYL at a yoga retreat. She was appointed Treasurer as she has her own mobile hairdressing company and is used to accounts. She waves frantically as the bus pulls up and boards with fellow Guild members ROSE & SOPHIA who are waiting with her and a mound of luggage.

INT COACH - DAYTIME

JUNE drags an enormous suitcase behind her along the aisle of the bus. BARRY hurries up the steps and long the aisle behind her.

BARRY

Let me help you with that.

JUNE

(stopping in her tracks & turning to get a good look at him)
Well Barry, it's not every day you meet such a gentleman is it?
(looking overtly for a non-existent wedding ring)
And a single one at that.

BARRY

Just divorced. A bit like just married...but more fun.

JUNE

Oh a lot more fun I should think Barry...And a lot more of a gentleman than that last one I met on the Silver Fish website. Dull as dishwater. Spent the whole night going on about 18th century lavs then left me with the bill. Pompous prat.

BARRY scurries off back down the bus. The women take their seats and a bemused BARRY drives off. MARJORIE quickly changes the subject.

MARJORIE

Gladys have you printed out the schedules? Shall we remind ourselves why we are here.
(She looks pointedly at JUNE)
We're not letting those awful women

from Wisbrey Dell take our prize again this year.

GLADYS

Yes Marjorie. The ink's running out a bit on my printer, but you can see most of it.

She pulls a handful of papers from her handbag and unfolds them, straightening out the creases. She passes the first copy to MARJORIE.

MARJORIE

Really Gladys. It's barely legible.

BERYL

Give her a break Marjorie. With that husband of hers and the dog sanctuary, she barely has two minutes. You've got your own printer, couldn't you have done it?

MARJORIE

May I remind you that it is the role of the Assistant. To assist the Chair with administrative duties...You're the Social Secretary, Gladys is the Chair's Assistant. We each have our role. Mine is just more...senior.

BERYL is raising up for an argument. GLADYS interrupts, ever the peace keeper.

GLADYS

Don't worry Ber, I had two minutes when Derek was at the chiropodist the other day. It's fine. That printer needs sorting anyway.

BERYL shakes her head and smiles at kind-hearted GLADYS. The coach slows as it pulls into the car park of Potter's Bluff care home.

EXT - CARE HOME CAR PARK - DAY

DAPHNE is slowly lifted on an electric platform into the bus. At 85 she is the Guild's oldest member. She is grinning blankly - a near-permanent feature since her mental health has declined. She is followed onto the bus by twin sisters BARBARA and BLANCHE and their friend ETHEL. The Potter's Bluff Townswomen are now all onboard.

INT - COACH - DAYTIME

DAPHNE is being wheeled down the aisle by BARBARA immediately followed by her twin sister BLANCHE. She sits legs astride in her chair, a pair of bloomers peeking out from under her dress.

DAPHNE

(shouting)

Hello everyone! Hope you've packed your rubber rings. It's an age since I've been to the seaside. And I've brought my daughters with me!

She gestures to the twins behind her.

BERYL

I don't think you'll be able to use your rubber ring in the Lake District Daph, but you never know.

(aside)

Still thinks she's mum then girls?

BARBARA & BLANCHE nod and raise their eyebrows simultaneously. They are used to being mistaken for DAPHNE's daughters & rarely correct her.

BLANCHE

Wouldn't change it Ber!

BARBARA

(the twins always repeat each other)

Change it Ber!

BARRY secures DAPHNE's wheelchair in place. JUNE smiles coyly as he passes. He hurries back to his seat.

BARRY

(shouting)

Next stop the Lake District! I always start my journeys with a sing-song. What'll it be ladies?

The bus jolts forward & they are on their way.

MARJORIE

Very executive, I don't think. Gladys, pass out those schedules to the others & we'll debrief on the full weekend schedule.

BERYL

We're just leaving Potter's Bluff Marjorie, can't we do it when we get there? And you know she gets motion sickness on coaches. Remember the Bridlington Half Barf-athon?

MARJORIE stays silent. BERYL reluctantly takes some leaflets from GLADYS and passes them back begrudgingly.

MARJORIE

There is a purpose to our weekend Beryl, and that purpose is primary. If it hadn't been for blatant inside voting last year, we would have been the current Regional Townswomen Knitting Champions...Derbyshire branch. We have secured a prime location for the weekend, away from distractions, so that we can focus on honing our skills and winning the prize that I should have had last year.

(catching herself)

We should have had.

MARJORIE lifts the leaflet and stands cautiously to address the whole group.

Gladys and Blanche, you will represent us German style, Sophia, speed knitting: mega hooks, Barbara and Ethel cartridge rib belt, Beryl, Irish Cottage, June the controversial knocking method.

(dismissive)

And Rose will be competing in the sub-category baking competition.

BERYL

And Daphne is team mascot.

(a cheer erupts from all but

MARJORIE)

Rose, I've invited a very special guest to help with your baking. She's an old pal from my Greenham Common days. Hush hush til morning the morning, when she's coming to give us a demo.

(she touches her finger to her nose)

Let's just say there'll be no soggy bottoms!

GLADYS

I spoke to the Thompsons today and the cabins are all ready. They're going to meet us on the roadside. Apparently it's a devil to find and we'll be the first guests to stay after the renovations. But they seemed very eager to please.

MARJORIE

Excellent, then we should expect a high standard of accommodation and a trouble-free weekend. I, of course, will be supervising.

BERYL raises her eyebrows at GLADYS who frowns.

MARJORIE

Right ladies, Point 1 on your schedules...

A voice from the back of the coach begins to sing 'I've got a louverly bunch of coconuts'. The women turn to see DAPHNE grinning & singing. BERYL seizes the opportunity & joins in loudly. JUNE joins her, & one by one the women begin a rousing chorus together joined by BARRY. MARJORIE huffs and reaches into her hand luggage.

MARJORIE

Well I suppose we couldn't read them properly anyway.

She removes ear plugs & an eye mask which she puts into place. She folds her arms. GLADYS finally joins in with the sing-song once she knows she is unseen/heard by MARJORIE.

EXT - COUNTRY LANE - DAYTIME

A rousing chorus of 'I've got a louverly bunch of coconuts' rings out as the coach travels down a country lane towards its destination.

EXT - ROADSIDE LAKE DISTRICT LOG CABIN RESORT - EVENING

SU & PAUL THOMPSON stand at the roadside entrance to their secluded log cabin resort surrounded by forest. They are both in their mid-40's and dressed in country casuals.

PAUL
(both well spoken)
What time are the biddies arriving?

SU
Don't call them that Paul! They're our first customers and we need as many of them as we can get after all the money we've ploughed into the renovation.

PAUL
But why do we have to stand by the road in the bloody freezing cold?

SU
I've told you already. Until the sign goes up nobody knows we're here. We're in the middle of bloody nowhere Paul. We don't want them getting lost, the next house is miles away. We're not in the city now, you know.

PAUL
I wish we were.

SU
You should have thought about that before you lost your job then. We had to get rid of that money fast and putting it into renovating this place was our only option at the time. They were desperate to get rid off it.

PAUL
I'm not surprised. Cabins that hadn't been used for 30 years with a lake officially deemed hazardous because of chemical waste. Prime estate.

SU
Oh shut up Paul. Thanks to you we had no choice and we're not in the clear yet. Make the most of it...
(softening, coy)
And don't forget we've got visitors coming tonight, so we haven't left all of the old lifestyle behind.

PAUL
(deflating)
If they can bloody find it...

The headlights of a coach appear in the road. SU jumps into the road and waves her arm and lamp frantically in front of it. BARRY slams on his brakes.

INT COACH - EVENING

The sleeping women are all thrust forward and woken with a jolt. DAPHNE's wheelchair comes free from its lock and she sails down the coach's aisle. BERYL reaches out and grabs one of the handles as she is about to sail past and out of the front windscreen. DAPHNE grins broadly.

DAPHNE

Weeeeeee!

BERYL

Bloody hell Barry! There are at least 12 replacement hips on here. Are you going for a full house? You alright Daphne love?

DAPHNE

(oblivious)

Are we at Brid? Can you see the Tower?

BARRY

Sorry Beryl. She jumped out into the road.

He points at SU who is making a large gesture of ushering him in through the gates with the lamplight. He turns into the hidden driveway.

GLADYS

That'll be the Thompsons.

MARJORIE

(removing her eye mask and looking at DAPHNE confused)

Well, as the Chair I should be the first to greet them. Gladys, bring the paperwork.

GLADYS scrabbles in her bag and BERYL shakes her head. BARRY pulls the coach onto a patch of land behind the cabins.

EXT - COACHSIDE - CABIN RESORT - EVENING

SU

(extending her hand to MARJORIE)

Hello, you must be Gladys. So nice to

meet you.

MARJORIE

(affronted)

Madam, I am Marjorie, the Chairwoman of Potter's Bluff Townswomen's Guild. THIS is my assistant Gladys.

GLADYS

Hello Mrs Thompson. Lovely to meet you.

A surprised SU shakes GLADYS' hand.

GLADYS

I know you're not quite ready to open yet, but Marjorie was insistent. We needed somewhere that could accommodate us all and our activities for the weekend. And we didn't want any Wisbrey Dell spies stealing our weft and warp methods. Marjorie seemed to know of this place, so here we are!

SU

Oh, don't worry. We're nearly there. We may be a bit rough around the edges, but your cabins are all ready and there's plenty of sites around the lake for your workshops. This is Paul by the way.

She reaches behind her and tugs PAUL forward by his arm. He has been skulking behind her.

PAUL

(engaging a charming tone)

Good evening ladies.

He shakes MARJORIE's hand with a barely perceivable bow.

SU

And the one thing we can guarantee you is no spies from Wisbrey Well. In fact no spies at all. We're miles from anywhere and nobody really knows we're here yet. There'll just be you and us up at the big house.

She points to a large, well-lit farmhouse on the other side of the lake through the forest.

SU

Oh, and no mobile phones or internet connection.

PAUL

Reception's a bugger round here and wifi...no chance. We got rid of our mobiles. Real country living. But there's a landline in the house if you need it.

GLADYS

I don't think that'll be a problem with this lot. Daphne's daughter bought her a mobile and she tried to use it to change the channel on the telly. And Beryl's convinced most of the others that they're all tapped by the CID. And as for wiffy as Ethel calls it...

(shakes her head)

SU

OK ladies, so you're all set. Keys are in doors and there are print-outs with information in each cabin. If you need us, we're just over the other side of the lake.

MARJORIE

Can we bring the bus closer to the cabins to disembark? It's quite a walk from here...and the mud!

(shakes her head disapprovingly)

PAUL

Why not. You can pull up next to the cabins on the lakeside. We haven't finished renovating the pathway yet, so you may find it a little muddy...

MARJORIE

Go and tell Barry to get closer, Gladys.

SU

(raising her eyebrows at PAUL
unseen)

If there's anything we can do just pop in. Have a lovely weekend ladies. Bye for now.

They head back towards farmhouse across the lake.

PAUL

(under his breath)

Well she's a barrel of laughs. And
what the hell is weft and warp?

SU

Sshhh.

GLADYS has returned to the doorway of the bus and is pointing BARRY to the lakeside. She and MARJORIE climb back onboard.

EXT - LAKESIDE - EVENING

BARRY steps down from the coach which is parked on a very muddy lakeside.

BARRY

(shouting back into the coach
doors)

Glad, we'll have to be fairly quick.
It's going to flippin' sink in this.
You might all have to push me out.

MARJORIE

(appearing first down the steps
followed by GLADYS)

Some of these ladies are infirm. You
can't expect them to walk that
distance. We'll unload and then you
can be on your way.

The ladies slowly emerge from the coach and step tentatively into the mud.

BARRY

You go ahead ladies, I'll bring your
luggage.

The women all emerge from the coach and gingerly cross the mud to the cabins. MARJORIE's face is scrunched again, apparently victim of another bad smell. DAPHNE emerges last, and slowly, down the automated wheelchair ramp. She is still grinning.

EXT - OUTSIDE CABINS - LATE EVENING

The Townswomen assemble in front of a row of compact yet quaint log cabins which overlook the lake and woodland. BARRY dashes backwards and forwards dropping off luggage at each cabin. GLADYS distributes cabin occupants from a list.

GLADYS

Marjorie, you've got the double with the en suite as requested. Beryl you're in with me. Daphne you're sharing with Barbara and Blanche as usual. June you're with Rose, and Sophia's with Ethel.

JUNE

Come on, we're bunking up Rose. Hope you don't snore.

(suggestive)

Barry, you don't snore do you?

He scurries past with MARJORIE's case, avoiding the question.

DAPHNE

(shouting)

I hope you've got bunk beds for the girls. They'll only ever sleep in bunk beds you know.

BARBARA and BLANCHE smile and all the women gradually disappear into their cabins. GLADYS & MARJORIE remain outside. BARRY drops off the last of the luggage.

BARRY

That's it then ladies. I'll be back to pick you up at 6pm sharp on Sunday. I hope the weather's good to you.

GLADYS

Lovely, thanks Barry. Have a safe journey back.

MARJORIE

And don't be late on Sunday.

BARRY

Absolutely not.

(he doffs an imaginary cap behind her back and bows)

Bye ladies, have a good one.

GLADYS

Bye love.

BARRY traipses back to the bus through the mud, shaking his head.

MARJORIE

Well I think we should all retire.
It's 8.30pm already and we've a busy
weekend ahead of us. 8am prompt
tomorrow!

GLADYS

Of course Marjorie.

MARJORIE

And make sure they all read those
schedules...if they can make head or
tail of them.

GLADYS

(ignoring the insult)
Will do. Goodnight Marjorie.

MARJORIE retires to her cabin. GLADYS knocks on the other
cabin doors & says goodnight to the women in turn. She peers
into DAPHNE's cabin where she is already fast asleep in her
wheelchair.

EXT - LAKESIDE - EVENING

BARRY circles the muddy ground surrounding the coach and
shakes his head.

BARRY

What a monster...how she expects me to
get 15 tonnes of coach out of this, I
don't know.

He climbs into the coach leaving the doors open. He starts
the engine, engages first gear and puts his foot on the
accelerator. The engine growls and the wheels spin wildly in
the mud. There is no movement. He reaches behind his seat and
re-emerges with two large pieces of cardboard which he puts
behind the coach's back wheels. He reboards and puts his foot
firmly on the accelerator. The coach jolts backwards as the
tyres slip on the damp card. He brakes sharply just before
plunging into the lake. The rear wheels slip in the mud and
the coach veers left and the back of the bus collides with an
electricity pylon.

INT - COACH - EVENING

BARRY's mobile phone rings, distracting him. The screen shows
'Ex (about bloody time)'. He puts the bus in neutral and

picks up.

BARRY

Bloody hell. The usual brilliant timing.

(listens)

I've signed the bloody forms!

BARRY balances the phone between his ear and shoulder and begins to drive forward. He failed to notice the collision. He drives away, shouting into his phone. The wooden pole leans precariously at an angle over the water in the rearview mirror.

INT - BERYL & GLADYS' CABIN - EVENING

BERYL & GLADYS sit at a small kitchen table with a bottle of whiskey. BERYL is pouring generously. Their unopened cses sit beside them.

BERYL

You can't let her speak to you like that Glad, you're not her bloody slave you know.

GLADYS

I know Beryl, but it is my job.

BERYL

To be spoken to like dirt? It isn't. You know it's OK to stand up to her, don't you?

GLADYS

Oh you know me Ber, don't like to rock the boat.

BERYL

I know Glad, and that's why folks walk all over you. That Derek of yours, he's the same. You're so kind hearted, but you need to stand up for yourself love.

GLADYS

Well we'll see what happens this weekend, but I'm not making any promises Ber.

BERYL

Give it some thought Glad. You can't

let people keep walking over you. It was the same story when you worked with that historical society at Haddonfield.

GLADYS

(lowering her voice)

Did you hear what happened Ber?

BERYL

I spoke to his wife just before I left. Awful business.

GLADYS

Slipped on moss I heard.

BERYL

That's the story.

She lifts the bottle as if to pour another generous measure.

BERYL

Anyway love. It's Marjorie who we've got to worry about this weekend, and I've got some courage in a bottle with your name on it...

GLADYS

(putting her hand over her glass)

Oh no, Beryl, it's 10 already and we've got your special guest first thing.

(puts her finger to her nose)

BERYL

I suppose a bake off nod off would be a bit rude.

GLADYS

Then it's workshops all day. Speed, knocking, Irish cottage and German method. I'm shattered just thinking about it. Definitely time for bed.

BERYL

Spoil sport. Alright then, I suppose we should save some for tomorrow. Night love and think on.

GLADYS hugs her best friend.

GLADYS
 You're my best friend Ber and I
 promise to try, but folks don't change
 over a weekend. Sleep well love.

BERYL takes the glasses to the sink and necks the contents.
 GLADYS disappears into the bedroom with her suitcase.

MONTAGE - CABINS - NIGHTTIME

- INT - MARJORIE'S CABIN

MARJORIE is fast asleep wearing her ear plugs & eye mask.

- INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN

All three women are asleep. The twins are in bunk beds (the only room available for three). DAPHNE is still smiling broadly in her sleep.

- INT - BERYL & GLADYS' CABIN

GLADYS is fast asleep and snoring gently. BERYL is lying in bed, an arm holding an empty whiskey bottle is draped to the side. The bottle falls. She grumbles and falls back deep asleep, snoring heavily.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT - LAKESIDE - NIGHTTIME

A storm rages. Rain pelts the lake and wind howls through the woods. Lightening illuminates the water as the hillside rumbles with thunder. A sharp close thunderclap is followed by a splintering lightning bolt which lights up the lakeside and strikes the dislodged pylon. It crashes heavily into the lake. A blaze of sparks sear across the water's surface, crackling electricity.

INT - JUNE & DOROTHY'S CABIN - NIGHTTIME

JUNE stirs. She lifts her 'wrinkles away' eye mask & looks across at ROSE who is fast asleep.

JUNE
 (quietly)
 Must have just been me who the earth
 moved for then. These dreams'll be the
 death of me.

She puts her eye mask back into place, smiles and falls back asleep.

EXT - BOTTOM OF LAKE - NIGHTTIME

The pylon sinks and falls to the bottom of the dirty lake water. As it thumps to the murky bed, a dark figure begins to stir in the thick reeds next to it. Entangled in reeds and pond weed, the dark bulking shape begins to rise. Electricity surges through the foul water and the figure begins to fight itself free.

EXT -LAKESIDE JETTY - NIGHTTIME

FROM BEHIND. A ravaged humanoid hand emerges from the water onto the moonlit jetty. A dark hulking figure slowly and ominously rises, water-ravaged and covered in pond weed, from the lake.

EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

Oil lamps light up the exterior of the 'big house'. Two Range Rovers are parked outside. Shrieks & laughter come from inside.

INT - BASEMENT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

SU & PAUL have a secret in their basement. They are the owners of the Lake District's best equipped S&M dungeon. They are hosting an S&M party with another couple who are also swingers, in the heavily candle-lit basement. All are dressed in leather S&M gear & engaging in well-equipped S&M play. The room is filled with devices of sexual torture and pleasure combined.

EXT -LAKESIDE JETTY - NIGHTTIME

FROM BEHIND. The hulking mutated figure emerges fully from the lake, little more than an ominous shape in the moonlight. It stops on the muddy lakeside. The sounds of shrieks at the 'big house' ring out. The creature looks towards the sound and blunders from the lakeside into the heavy windswept woods.

INT - BATHROOM - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

MOONLIT. A downstairs bathroom window sits open. The figure emerges through the window and climbs into the bathroom. It stops and listens. There are shrieks from the basement. Lumbering, it opens the bathroom door and walks towards the sound. A small hidden door lies open to a staircase to the

basement. It steps forward towards the door and slowly descends.

INT - BASEMENT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

FROM BEHIND. The creature descends the stairs and lumbers into the doorway of the candlelit dungeon. It pauses at the scene of sexual debauchery. Both couples are engaged in S&M activities, but after a moment PAUL looks up.

PAUL

(pausing his erotic activities)
Well hello. We weren't expecting another guest tonight. Did you find us through the forum? I bet Neil sent you, didn't he?

There is no reply. PAUL strains to see the unexpected visitor clearly in the candlelight.

PAUL

Strong silent type then. And quite the costume....Pongs a bit though.
(waving his hand in front of his face)

The figure stands motionless & surveys the scene. SU also temporarily ceases her bondage play.

SU

Paul, have you been on that awful forum again? I told you no horror play this time. That night with Freddy Krueger still brings tears to my eyes.

All the participants are now half looking at the figure but more interested in resuming their activities.

SU

(to her bondage partner)
Get on with it then!

PAUL

Thought it was just these two tonight, and God knows how you found it, but since you're here...You might as well get stuck in old chap!

He gestures the figure forward and resumes his activities. The figure surveys them all before stepping forward. He kills

the female guest by dashing her against the wall in the leather 'sleep sack' into which she has been zipped by PAUL. SU & her companion are diced as the creature wraps the harness swing which they are enjoying around them both and squeezes. A howling PAUL scrambles into a corner. His exit is blocked by the imposing figure. PAUL scrambles back against the wall and knocks into his male guest's hanging coat. A mobile phone falls out of the pocket. He picks it up. There is one reception bar.

PAUL

I don't bloody believe it. In the basement!

He scrabbles to ring 999. The phone slips from his lubed hand and to the feet of the figure. He crawls towards it but the creature has already bent to pick it up.

PAUL

Look, if this about the money I swear I'll pay it back.

The figure batters PAUL round the head with the phone. Bloodied and battered he continues to plead.

PAUL

Please! Who sent you? I'll pay double!

The figure rams the phone into his mouth, down his throat and into his intestines. The phone is lost in PAUL's internal organs, the figure's gore-soaked hand emerges from his rectum. The figure shakes the lifeless, savaged body from his arm onto the bondage table and leaves the bloody room.

INT - 'COSTUME ROOM' - BASEMENT - NIGHTTIME

FROM BEHIND - FACE STILL UNSEEN. The figure passes a costume room filled with rubber and leather S&M gear. It is drawn by a mirror. In murky candlelight, it surveys the image, a hand on what remains of the face. It is huge with distorted limbs. Years of decay at the bottom of the lake have ravaged its skin. It is dressed in disintegrating workman's overalls fowled by reads and mud. It howls at the horrific image then reaches for a rubber gimp mask slung over the mirror's corner. It pulls the mask on and turns away from the mirror. MASKED FACE SEEN FOR THE FIRST TIME, it crumples to the floor howling.

EXT - REAR OF CABINS - MORNING

BERYL, GLADYS, SOPHIA & JUNE are exploring an outbuilding

behind the cabins.

BERYL

So you heard the pylon fall June? I must have been spark out...long journey.

GLADYS

Yes, something like that
(she winks)

JUNE

Well I definitely heard something go bump in the night, but I was dreaming about Barry, so...

SOPHIA

You need to raise your standards love. Of all the men you could dream about...

GLADYS

Beryl, look over here. Is this it?

BERYL

Aha, yes, they've got a back-up generator for the cabins. Didn't think they'd rely on the mains out here. I'll get this running and then pop over to the big house later to find out what's going on.

GLADYS

Good plan. We'd better not be late, or Marjorie'll kill us. What time's your special guest arriving Ber?

BERYL

Should be half an hour love, but if she went out last night, who knows...

EXT - LAKESIDE - DAYTIME

GLADYS is frantically running round setting out chairs. A large table with cooking equipment stands prominent at the front. The women are all assembled.

MARJORIE

Come on Gladys, she'll be here in a minute. She's one of our secret

weapons in securing victory against
Wisbrey Dell.

(snide)

Even if it is only baking. We need
everything ship-shape and up to the
standard to which she's accustomed.

GLADYS

If you could just put a couple of
chairs at the back there it would be a
big help Marjorie.

MARJORIE

I'm the welcoming committee Gladys. I
have to be in position roadside to
meet and greet. Sophia can help.

GLADYS

Never mind.

SOPHIA

It's no problem Glad.

She picks up a chair from the ground and unfolds it.

SOPHIA

Daphne's had one of her turns so we've
left her in her cabin with her radio.

She takes two folding chairs from GLADYS' shoulder and sets
them down.

EXT - ROADSIDE COUNTRY LANE - DAYTIME

MARJORIE stands looking at her watch. She continually pulls
at her clothing and smooths her hair. BERYL emerges from the
lakeside. She is dirty from setting up the generator.

BERYL

Oh keep your wig on Marjorie. If she
said she'll be here, she'll be here.

(aside)

What condition she'll be in is another
matter...

MARJORIE

Beryl, you can't greet her like that.
You're filthy!

BERYL

Listen Marjorie, me and Mary go back

more years than you've had
 hot...expensive dinners and she's seen
 me in much worse states than this.
 There was that weekend in 1981 when
 acid first arrived at Greenham Common.
 Neither of us knew which way was up
 for 3 days. We spent 6 hours trying to
 get out of a tent.

MARJORIE holds her hand up and frowns. A taxi approaches,
 slows and pulls in. The car door opens and a disheveled MARY
 BERRY emerges. She is clearly hungover and possibly still
 drunk from the night before. A cigarette hangs from her
 mouth. Her hair is a mess and her clothes are crumpled.

MARJORIE

(fawning)

Ms Berry! Oh what an absolute pleasure
 to meet you and thank you so much for
 being here today. I can't tell you how
 much it means to us all.

MARY BERRY

(ignoring MARJORIE)

Ber! Sorry if I'm a bit late, was out
 with Pete Doherty and the chaps last
 night. Haven't been home yet. Pissed
 as a fart.

They embrace.

MARY BERRY

Not fit for this demo yet Ber. Let's
 sneak off for a crafty smoke to
 straighten me out before we get into
 it, shall we.

She produces a spliff from behind her ear.

MARY BERRY

(to Marjorie)

My stuff's in there...

BERYL guffaws and follows BERRY towards the woods.

MARJORIE

(horrified)

GLADYYSSS!

MARY BERRY

Is she the one you warned me about?

BERYL nods and raises here eyebrows and they disappear into the woods.

EXT - LAKESIDE - DAYTIME

The version of MARY BERRY more familiar to television viewers is giving a baking demonstration to the ladies. Her hair and clothing are perfect and her tone is refined.

MARY BERRY
 (holding a perfect flan aloft)
 And so ladies for a fabulous flan you
 must remember the three
 c's...consistency, consistency,
 consistency.

The women, led by MARJORIE sitting front and centre, politely clap.

MARJORIE
 (fawning)
 Bravo!

MARY BERRY
 But, of course, if you really want to
 perfect your pastry and Rose, give
 those ladies from Wisbrey Dell a good
 run for their money, then my new high-
 powered, 6-bladed Mary Berry Blender
 is what you really need.

She reaches under the table and produces a packaged battery powered blender. She opens the packaging and switches it on. The sound is akin to a jet engine taking off.

MARY BERRY
 (shouting)
 You can give them a real roasting with
 this ladies. Look at the 6-blade
 folding action. And at and RRP of only
 £189.99 it's a real bargain. I do take
 cards.

The ingredients whir wildly in her bowl. The excessive noise sends the birds flying from the trees. It also draws the attention of the creature. It emerges suddenly and ominously from the thick woods behind MARY BERRY, the sun reflecting off its rubber mask. The women scream but BERRY cannot hear them above the blender sound. The figure lunges from behind her, grabs the blender and rams it into her face. Flour mixes with blood as her face is ripped apart. BERRY eventually

slumps to the ground dead, covered in a bloody congealing flour mixture. The horrified women jump from their seats.

BERYL

Mary! What the hell? Into the woods
everybody!

They all begin running, but at their age some cannot move very fast. The figure catches ETHEL easily. He suffocates her by ramming BERRY's piping tube down her throat and squeezing. The bloody contents ooze from her mouth as she sinks to the ground, dead.

GLADYS

(looking back)
(Ethel!)

BERYL

It's too late Glad, we can't save her.
Run! Head for the big house.

The women disappear into the woods. MARJORIE stops momentarily and looks back, horrified, before following them.

EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

JUNE and SOPHIA bang on the front door. The others gradually catch up and join in. To the side of the house there are two wrecked Range Rovers. The creature has smashed them to pieces.

GLADYS

Su, Paul, Mary Berry's dead! Let us
in!

The frantic knocking gains no response.

BERYL

(barging to the centre)
Has anyone tried the bloody door?

She turns the handle and the door opens. They all run inside and slam the door behind them.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

JUNE

Su, Paul....Where are they?

GLADYS

(shouting)
Mr Thompson...Mrs Thompson?

The shaken women lock the door and gather, shaken, in the hallway.

MARJORIE

Well they must be here. There were two cars down the drive.

SOPHIA

But did you see the cars?! Whatever the hell killed Ethel must have smashed them up.

GLADYS

They said there was a landline in the house. We need to find it.

JUNE

What on earth is going on? What was that thing? And why did it kill Mary Berry?

BERYL

I don't know, but I think we'll need to barricade ourselves in because it could be coming back.

GLADYS

You're right, Ber. Let's check all the doors and windows are locked.

BERYL

It'll take more than that. Any wood you can find, break it down. We'll have to board the windows. I doubt a few locks will hold that thing.

MARJORIE

We can't destroy their property Beryl!

BERYL

Look Marjorie, if you want to try to rationalise with that...whatever, good luck. But I'd rather we protect ourselves. We're in the middle of bloody nowhere and the cars are wrecked. Our only chance now is to find the phone, call for help, and stop that thing from getting in before it comes.

GLADYS
She's right.

MARJORIE sulks. The women shout for the Thompsons and begin to disappear into the rooms off the hallway searching for their hosts.

SOPHIA
Poor Ethel.

MONTAGE - INT - SU AND PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

- INT - LOUNGE

SOPHIA is holding the phone.

SOPHIA
It's dead. Nothing. The line must have gone down with the power cables.

BERYL and GLADYS are wrestling to turn over a sofa and barricade the window.

BERYL
Bloody hell! Let's get this place secure and regroup.

- INT - DINING ROOM

BLANCHE and BARBARA are breaking the legs off a large wooden table. BERYL, GLADYS and JUNE join them.

BARBARA
Here, help us.

BLANCHE
Help us.

The five women lift the table in front of the window.

BERYL
We'll need some nails for this or it'll get in easy. I saw a hammer and nails in the hall.

SOPHIA enters the room with the tools.

SOPHIA
Here Beryl, we used them in the office. They won't be using their desk again I'm afraid.

BERYL takes a nail and the hammer and sets to work.

BERYL
Arts and craft this!

She smashes the table repeatedly venting her frustration. Her final blow is so hard that the head flies off the hammer and smashes a delicate vase in the fireplace.

BERYL
Never was one for Waterford anyway

INT - DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM

MARJORIE and ROSE remove a twee family portrait of a grinning SU & PAUL from the bathroom wall.

ROSE
That should cover it.

She holds it up to the window. MARJORIE nods. BARBARA and BLANCHE appear barefoot with nails and a shoe each to hammer them in with.

EXT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

The sound of Barry Manilow's 'Bermuda Triangle' rings out loud through the woods and lakeside. DAPHNE's disharmonious singing accompanies it. The trees behind the cabin begin to vibrate and the creature emerges, drawn by the disharmonious sound. It stops in front of the cabins and surveys the screeching.

INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

DAPHNE is sitting in her wheelchair with her back to the door. She is grinning and singing. The door opens slowly behind her and the creature steps in. It looms up slowly behind her and stops. She is oblivious. It reaches out to her neck to strangle her.

DAPHNE
Is that you Arthur. I've told you no
funny business while the girls are
here!
(she looks around)
Oh, they're not here. In that case...

She reaches up and puts her hand on the creature's ravaged hand. It recoils.

DAPHNE

This always happens when we come to the seaside, doesn't it. That sea air! Give us a kiss!

The creature reaches for the nearest available weapon - a pair of DAPHNE's oversized frilly bloomers lying on the bed next to her. It wraps them around her face and suffocates her.

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

The women are assembled in the hall arguing.

BERYL

Marjorie are you seriously suggesting that we leave Daphne out there with that thing? She's a sitting duck in her wheelchair.

MARJORIE

If we go out there we could all end up savagely murdered and what help will that be to Daphne. We should stay here.

DOROTHY

And do what? The phone lines are down and we're miles from anywhere.

MARJORIE

Somebody will come. The Thompsons. They'll have to return at some point.

BERYL

No, I'm not leaving Daphne out there on her own. Sisterly solidarity. Who's with me?

BLANCHE and BARBARA raise their hands immediately. MARJORIE shakes her head.

MARJORIE

It's suicide.

GLADYS

Sorry Marjorie, but I can't leave her out there. Beryl needs help.

She raises her hand.

MARJORIE

Ridiculous. I hope the rest of you
have got more sense.

The other women stay quiet. BERYL goes into the kitchen and reemerges with the kitchen knives. She goes to the front door. The 'rescue party' follow.

BERYL

We're coming to get you Daphne.

She unlocks the door and peers cautiously out holding the knife in front of her.

BERYL

Alright, let's go!

The women dash out of the front door and MARJORIE promptly locks it behind them.

MARJORIE

Well I doubt we'll be seeing them
again.

JUNE

Come on Marjorie. They're just trying
to do the right thing. You wouldn't
want to be left alone out there would
you?

MARJORIE

If you feel so strongly why didn't you
go with them June?

June looks down.

SOPHIA

Ladies, please. There's no point
arguing, we need to stick together.

MARJORIE

If they'd have listened to me we'd
still be together!

JUNE

Sssshhhhh!

MARJORIE looks affronted. JUNE puts her hand out to stop her. A muffled mobile phone ringtone sounds.

JUNE
We're saved!

MARJORIE
But they said there was no reception.

JUNE
Well clearly there is. Where's it
coming from?

The women look frantically around them.

JUNE
It's coming from underneath us.

MARJORIE
But this is the ground floor.

JUNE
Well there must be another floor. Find
the door!

They hurry into the different rooms. The phone rings off.

ROSE
(returning to the hallway)
Oh please call back.

A long pause and then the phone rings again.

JUNE
It's here!

She points to the outline of a hidden door in the hallway.

MARJORIE
What on earth?

JUNE pushes the door and it swings open to reveal a dark
descending staircase.

JUNE
Oh blimey! That doesn't look good.

SOPHIA
We need that phone. Beryl took the
knives. What's left in the kitchen
that will do as a weapon?

JUNE disappears and reappears in a hurry with a fish slice, a
pan and two pairs of tongs.

MARJORIE

Marvelous. Rose, you stay up here and keep guard.

She nods. There is a long pause

MARJORIE

Well I'm not going first.

After a short wait JUNE sighs and goes first and they disappear down the stairs.

INT - BASEMENT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

The three women stand motionless in the doorway to the S&M dungeon. Most of the candles have blown out. It is murky and barely legible, but the women can see enough to witness the Thompson's unique interests.

JUNE

Well I'd read about it in books, but I'd never quite believed it!

SOPHIA

(lifting a leather S&M contraption)
What on earth are you meant to do with this?

JUNE

I don't think you want to know.

They take a step further into the room and the murky sight of carnage emerges. SOPHIA faints. MARJORIE takes a tissue from her pocket and covers her mouth and nose.

JUNE

Sophia, come on love. Have you got your smelling salts?

She delves into SOPHIA's pocket. MARJORIE enters further into the room. As she approaches, inside PAUL's body the phone rings. She is startled and drops the pan. It falls into a pile of viscera. She does not retrieve it.

MARJORIE

Leave her. She'll come round. We need to retrieve that telephone while we're still able to hear it.

JUNE
 (resting Sophia's head gently on
 the floor)
 Well where is it?

They follow the sound. In the murky light both look at what is left of PAUL and then look at each other. JUNE lowers her head above his body and listens.

MARJORIE
 Is it underneath him?

JUNE reluctantly takes her fish slice and lifts PAUL's torso. As he moves upwards the sound moves with him.

JUNE
 Oh no Marjorie, you don't think...

MARJORIE nods. JUNE moves her fish slice to PAUL's blood-soaked mouth and flinchingly opens the gaping wound. The light of the screen illuminates Paul's internal organs. Light also radiates from the gaping wound at the other end of his torso. The phone stops ringing.

JUNE
 Oh God, I don't know which end's worse!

MARJORIE
 You've got the fish slice, it's longer and that *ahem* end's harder to reach.
 (she points to his rectum)

JUNE
 You have the bloody fish slice then!

MARJORIE
 Come on June, we must retrieve that telephone!

The women take their positions at either end - MARJORIE at the top and JUNE at the bottom. As JUNE tentatively begins to delve into PAUL's intestines and MARJORIE stalls, SOPHIA wakes up. She screams at the sight in front of her and faints again. The shock of the scream causes MARJORIE to knock PAUL's body to the floor from the bondage table. The phone rings briefly, dwindles and dies. The women look at each other. JUNE is covered in gore and the phone is dead.

JUNE
 Wonderful. And I'd just had a new do!

INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

The door opens and BERYL appears first holding her knife.

BERYL

(whispering to BARBARA and BLANCHE)

How did you manage to lose that knife
in the woods? We've only got two now!

They mime pushing through branches and dropping it, too afraid to speak. BERYL pushes the cabin door open and they cautiously head inside. The radio blares out 'Psycho Killer' by Talking Heads. GLADYS switches it off. The women move cautiously towards the back of the room. BLANCHE and BARBARA see DAPHNE's lifeless body first.

BLANCHE

Oh Daphne!

BARBARA

Daphne!

DAPHNE is lurched forward in her wheelchair, her spare bloomers wrapped round her face.

GLADYS

We're too late.

BERYL comforts a distraught BLANCHE and BARBARA while GLADYS gently removes the bloomers. DAPHNE is still grinning.

BLANCHE

You know I would have loved it if she
was my mum. Such a kind heart.

BARBARA

Mum. Such a kind heart.

BERYL

I'm so sorry, I know how close you
were.

She rests her hands on their shoulders. GLADYS puts down the knife she has been clinging to and embraces them for a moment.

BERYL

But it's not safe here loves. That
thing could still be about and we're
safer at the big house for now. The
Thompsons will be back soon if they're

not already there. The police could already be waiting for us.

GLADYS

She's right. And we should get back before it gets dark.

The shaken women gently encourage BLANCHE and BARBARA away from DAPHNE's body. They cautiously head for the door. As BERYL passes BLANCHE's case she spots a pair of knitting needles sticking out. She picks them up. This time GLADYS is first to peep out of the door.

GLADYS

All clear!

The women hurry out. BLANCHE and BARBARA turn and smile at DAPHNE. They hurry out holding hands. The knife sits on the cabin floor.

EXT - WOODS - EARLY EVENING

It is getting dark and the cover of the woods adds to the gloom. The women furtively creep towards the 'big house'. Every animal noise and branch crack alarms them. The shadows of the trees stop them in their tracks. They whisper.

BARBARA

What on earth do you think it is?

BLANCHE

It is?

BERYL

I don't know but I think it's got a taste for Townswomen.

GLADYS

(stopping abruptly)

Bugger Ber. I've left my knife. I'll have to go back.

BERYL

No way Gladys. That house is our only stop. It's our best bet for tonight.

GLADYS

(carrying on)

Do you really think the police could be there already?

BERYL
Well the Thompsons could have come
back.

GLADYS
But the cars Beryl.

BERYL
I know.

GLADYS
Do you think they're still here
somewhere?

BERYL
If they are, then there's a good
chance they're not going to be able to
help. Unless they're hiding.

GLADYS
What it did to the women...

BERYL shakes her head. Suddenly a hulking figure steps out into a gap in the trees 100 yards in front of them. The early moonlight reflects from its rubber mask. It is holding MARY BERRY's mangled head. It howls and throws the head at the women, narrowly missing GLADYS who ducked in the nick of time.

BERYL
Bloody hell. The Great British Head
Off. Run like hell girls!

They obey BERYL's command and run as fast as they can in the opposite direction. BERYL stops, turns and throws the knife haphazardly at the creature. It lands in the tree trunk next to it.

BERYL
Bollocks!

She runs after the women into the woods.

EXT - BARN - EVENING

BARBARA
(shouting and pointing)
There - the barn!

BLANCHE
Barn!

The outline of an old barn house looms just beyond the edge of the woods.

BERYL

Yes, go!

The exhausted women crash against the doors. They are heavy and BERYL and GLADYS struggle to open them.

GLADYS

Where is that thing. It was right behind us.

She looks behind them. The dusk light makes it hard to see.

BERYL

Come on ladies, put your back into it.

With a concerted heave the women prise the doors open and they all fall inside.

INT - BARN - EVENING

BLANCHE and BARBARA slam the doors. BERYL picks up a broom from the floor and slides it between the door handles.

BERYL

It won't hold for long. We have to hope that it didn't see us come in here.

GLADYS reaches into her fleece pocket and retrieves her trusty dog walking torch. The barn is pitch black apart from the torch light.

GLADYS

Look at this.

She is pointing the torch to the wall of the barn which is lined with gardening tools including a scythe, sheers, strimmer, and a chainsaw.

BLANCHE

Bloody hell!

BARBARA

Bloody hell!

Simultaneously the barn doors swing open with an enormous crash. The creature stands in the doorway, backlit by moonlight. The women flee behind two enormous bales of hay

and attempt to hide.

BERYL
 (whispering)
 Turn that bloody torch off Glad! It's
 like Blackpool illuminations back
 here.

BLANCHE
 (hissing)
 Turn it off Glad!

BARBARA
 Glad!

GLADYS
 I'm trying, it's stuck!

The women wrestle with the torch sending light beams wildly
 across the ceiling.

BLANCHE
 Give it to us, we'll do it.

BARBARA
 Do it.

They step out from between the hay bales. Like lightning a
 large pair of sheers emerge from the darkness and cut BLANCHE
 in half. BARBARA screams and darts out from the other side of
 the bale attempting an escape. The figure pulls the strimmer
 from the wall and begins to shred her from behind before she
 reaches the door. Blood and viscera fly in all directions.
 BERYL and GLADYS shriek.

BERYL
 Now Glad, it's our only chance. Go!

She pulls a knitting needle from her pocket and thrusts it at
 GLADYS. She wields the other needle.

GLADYS
 I'm not sure now's the time for
 knitting Beryl.

BERYL mimes a stabbing motion and GLADYS nods in recognition.
 The women run past the figure busy strimming BARBARA. It sees
 them and lifts the strimmer. It is blocked with Townswoman
 and grinds to a halt.

GLADYS

Go!

It drops the trimmer and reaches the women just outside the doorway. It reaches out inches away from BERYL. GLADYS turns and stabs it in the eyehole of the mask with the knitting needle. It staggers backwards. The women flee.

EXT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - EVENING

GLADYS and BERYL bang on the door screaming to be let in. SOPHIA eventually opens the door and the blood-soaked women run inside. MARJORIE looks on, almost disappointed, from the hallway.

INT - SU & PAUL'S LOUNGE -EVENING

The group of mainly blood-soaked women assemble on the surviving chairs. The house is lit by candles and oil lamps.

BERYL

She saved my life, you know. It was right on me. It came from nowhere and it had us trapped in that barn. If it hadn't been for Glad...

GLADYS

But Blanche and Barbara...I've never seen anything like it in my life. And Daphne...

(wipes away a tear and shudders)

BERYL

(comforting her friend)

Come on love. They died together and they died trying to save Daphne. It's what they would have wanted. Solidarity in life, solidarity in death.

MARJORIE

Is this really time for your Marxist propaganda?

BERYL bristles, ready for a fight.

JUNE

(sensing tension and interrupting)

You wouldn't believe what we found in the basement. 50 Shades of Grey has got nothing on these people...Had nothing...

(she examines the gore on her clothes)

SOPHIA

And we came so close to getting a phone. We've checked the house and that was the only mobile. A phone but no line and no mobiles...anymore.

ROSE

And the Thompsons definitely won't be coming back.

GLADYS

So we're trapped in here with that thing on the loose?

BERYL

We definitely can't go out there in the dark. We've got no chance. But if we can get back to that barn in daylight we can at least arm ourselves.

SOPHIA

The house is as secure as it can be. Is our best bet to spend the night?

GLADYS

We can set up a lookout system and sleep in shifts. Ber, you up for the first shift with me?

BERYL nods.

MARJORIE

I'm on medication that should render me exempt.

BERYL

(deadpan)

Of course. And the rest of us aren't. Shake any of us and we'll rattle. Come on Glad, let's take up position. Sophia and Rose, why don't you bed down in the lounge and we'll wake you up in a few hours to take over.

MARJORIE

Good idea. June and I will take the

bedrooms upstairs. Come on June.

JUNE shrugs her shoulders apologetically and the women leave the room.

BERYL

Even in a life or death situation.
It's all about her. We lost some of
our best friends today and she's
barely raised an eyebrow. I was right
about her all along.

GLADYS

Ignore her Beryl. Let's just do our
best to save the rest of them, shall
we.

INT - SU & PAUL'S KITCHEN - NIGHTTIME

BERYL and GLADYS enter the room. They have been exploring the scene in the basement.

BERYL

Well, that reminded me of Glastonbury
in '78. The Thompsons were quite the
dark horses.

GLADYS

(following, shaking her head)
Why did we go down there, Ber? Oh no,
no. Who expected that on a knitting
weekend! My nerves are shot.

She slumps at the table while BERYL explores the cupboards behind her.

GLADYS

If only we had a drop of that whiskey.

BERYL

Why have whiskey when you can have
Remy Martin?

She reaches out and pulls a bottle from a well-stacked alcohol rack.

GLADYS

Purely medicinal.

BERYL

For the shock.

GLADYS grabs two glasses from beside the sink and pours two generous measures.

GLADYS
Honestly Ber. Do you think we'll make it?

She slugs her drink and pours another.

BERYL
The odds can't be good Glad.

GLADYS
The thought of never seeing the girls again...

She takes another hearty swig.

BERYL
And old El Gato.

They contemplate their drinks in silence for a moment. BERYL shakes her head.

BERYL
Listen Glad, there's something I've wanted to tell you for a while, but it's been too risky til now. But...well...I'm not sure there's much to lose anymore.

GLADYS
What Ber?

BERYL
You know I've been working for the Potters Bluff Historical Society over the past few months?

GLADYS
(nodding)
Yes, I gave you that awful man's name after he sacked me as his assistant. Not that he was ever paying me.
(pauses)
But then you shouldn't talk ill of the dead. Must be the brandy gone to my head.

BERYL
I've been working with him in the

archives and I think we've uncovered something quite unpleasant close to home...

She chugs her drink and pours another. GLADYS looks confused. BERYL reaches into her bra and pulls out a yellowing piece of paper.

BERYL

You see I don't think what happened at the Hall last week was an accident. It was murder. And I think there have been others...

INT - SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

MONTAGE

- (INT) MASTER BEDROOM

Marjorie is asleep in the kingsize bed. She is dreaming fretfully and visibly writhing.

MARJORIE

(in her sleep)

Peter!

- INT - GUEST BEDROOM

JUNE is fast asleep, gore still in her hair.

- INT - LOUNGE

ROSE & SOPHIA sleep, draped in armchairs.

- INT - KITCHEN

The 'look-outs' are asleep on the kitchen table, an empty bottle of Remy Martin in front of them with a lone candle. As they slumber unaware the door slowly opens behind them. An unseen figure appears in the doorway and stops. A large sharp piece of glass from the broken vase in the lounge glistens in his/her hands. The unseen figure steps forward into the kitchen, moving towards BERYL with the glass weapon. As the shadowy assassin is about to step into the candlelight, there is a crash down the corridor. The figure quickly disappears backwards into the shadows of the hallway.

- INT - DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM

A mangled fist punches through SU's face in the twee family portrait nailed across the bathroom window. Another arm rips through the frame followed by a horrifying masked face with a knitting needle for a right eye. The creature climbs into the house.

INT - SU & PAUL'S KITCHEN - NIGHTTIME

BERYL & GLADYS continue to slumber at the kitchen table unaware that a different dark figure is stood in the doorway watching them. It moves its head side to side slowly, surveying them. A toilet flushes upstairs. The figure looks up and leaves the room. The women slumber on.

INT - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

The sound of running water is followed by the door opening. MARJORIE emerges from the bathroom and hurries to her room, cursing. Candles illuminate the hallway.

INT - GUEST BEDROOM SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

JUNE jolts awake. She reaches out and grabs the bedside lamp. Realising it was only the toilet flushing, she puts it down.

JUNE

Now I need to go!

INT - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

JUNE opens her bedroom door and comes face to mask with the creature. She screams and slams the door into it, pushing the needle further into its eye. It howls and falls backwards. She flees into the nearest room, MARJORIE's master bedroom.

INT - MASTER BEDROOM SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

JUNE rushes in and slams the door.

JUNE

We need to barricade the door!

MARJORIE

What on earth is going on?

JUNE

Quick, the chest of drawers. Help me Marjorie!

MARJORIE helps JUNE to drag the oversized drawers in front of the door. One drawer falls open and spills a variety of sex

toys to the floor.

MARJORIE

Good lord what was wrong with these people?

The killer easily breaks through the barricade, spilling the contents of the other drawers. The women cower in the corner and JUNE picks up an enormous black dildo which has spilled from the drawer. She brandishes it in front of herself, the only weapon available. The figure stops and picks up a killer black stiletto from a pair neatly placed by the doorway. It slowly approaches.

JUNE

For God's sake someone help us! Get back or I'll use this on you!
(she waves the dildo)

The figure moves closer. He lashes out with the stiletto heel. In a split second MARJORIE pulls JUNE in front of her. JUNE's throat is severed, blood arcs across the white walls of the bedroom. She looks at MARJORIE in disbelief as she falls to the ground, blood spurting from her neck. The creature also looks at MARJORIE. Up close, it pauses. It lowers the stiletto. She takes the opportunity, hits the creature with an empty drawer and flees the room. JUNE lies dead, a large shard of glass lies on the floor behind her amidst the strewn contents of the drawers.

INT - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY SU & PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME/EARLY MORNING

MARJORIE bumps into ROSE & SOPHIA as she runs into the hallway.

MARJORIE

Go, now!

SOPHIA

Where? The doors and windows are all barricaded. It'll catch us before we can get them off.

GLADYS

(hissing, from the kitchen)

IN HERE!

INT - SU& PAUL'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

BERYL & GLADYS lean out from the open door of an integrated utility cupboard.

GLADYS
(whispering loudly)
In here! Quickly...

ROSE and SOPHIA run toward them.

MARJORIE
What on earth are you doing in there?
We need to leave now.

BERYL
The doors are boarded up - we're
trapped.

MARJORIE
Well we need to remove the boards.

She grabs a hammer from the kitchen table and starts pulling and hammering at the board blocking the kitchen door. Pieces crack and crash loudly.

BERYL
Shut up Marjorie, you'll bring that
thing in here.

MARJORIE
You can stay here and die. I'm
leaving.

GLADYS
Please shut up!

The figure appears in the kitchen doorway. The women's hiding place is exposed. In panic ROSE shuts the doors and the women latch them from the inside. MARJORIE removes enough wood to expose the kitchen door handle. She unlocks it and runs outside.

INT -SU & PAUL'S KITCHEN CUPBOARD - EARLY MORNING

SOPHIA
(whispering)
Do you think it's got her?

ROSE

I don't know. It's gone very quiet.

GLADYS

I heard the door.

BERYL

So did I.

GLADYS

Maybe he's gone after her.

The cupboard doors rattle violently. The creature is outside and has them trapped. The early morning sun filters in through the slats on the door. The creature's shadow looms over them.

BERYL

We're bugged.

GLADYS

Look!

She points to a handheld hoover with a long pipe in the corner of the cupboard.

BERYL

I'm not sure now's the time for
hoovering Glad.

GLADYS makes a poking gesture. BERYL cottons on and nods.

SOPHIA

What?!

The doors swing violently open and the figure looms over them back-lit by the rising sun. GLADYS thrusts the vacuum pipe into the zipped mouth hole of the mask, tearing it.

BERYL

Now!

She switches on the hoover. It sucks the air out of the mask crushing the decayed bones in its face. She thrusts the vacuum at the creature and it falls to the ground wrestling the domestic appliance crushing its face. The women run out of the back door screaming.

ROSE

Where to now?

BERYL

The barn. We need those weapons.

INT - BARN - EARLY MORNING

The women stare at an empty wall.

BERYL

Well where the hell are they?

GLADYS

It must have taken them. And the twins
by the looks of it.

(the bodies are gone)

ROSE

What time's Barry coming to get us?

GLADYS

Not until 6. We'll never make it until
then. What about Mary Berry. Wasn't
someone coming to collect her?

BERYL

No, she was coming back to mine for a
few days.

SOPHIA

Let's make a run for the road?

GLADYS

We're in the middle of nowhere and it
goes on for flipping miles. Did you
see another car on the way here?
Besides which I don't fancy our
chances of outrunning that thing.

BERYL

Ladies, it's taken Ethel, Daphne,
Blanche, Barbara and June...And Mary
Berry...And hopefully Marjorie. We're
losing here. We've only got one thing
now and that's to fight back. It's
four against one.

SOPHIA

One what? And how can we fight back
without any weapons? Look at us, we've
all had bus passes for more than a
decade.

GLADYS

We'll just have to improvise. That hoover trick worked pretty well, and we gave it a good fleshwound with that knitting needle.

BERYL

(suddenly enthused)

That's it Glad! Knitting! We need to get back to the cabins - I've got an idea. If we can hold it off until 6 Barry'll be here with the coach and we're rescued. Until then we'll have to teach it not to mess with the Potters Bluff Townswomen's Guild champion knitters. Come on!

Perplexed, the women hurry out of the barn behind BERYL.

INT - BARRY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

The sound of deep rumbling snoring fills a sparsely decorated bedroom in which a figure lies prostrate under a sheet, a naked leg hanging over the side of the bed. A radio alarm clock suddenly blasts out 'Holding Out For A Hero' by Bonnie Tyler. There is a groan and a hand reaches out from under the sheet and presses snooze. The snoring resumes. Moments later the alarm rings again - this time blasting 'Hero' by Enrique Iglesias.

BARRY

Alright Enrique!

He slams the off button and slowly sits up, dishevelled and bleary-eyed. He stares into the distance, immobile, for a minute then slowly climbs out of bed. Dressed in y-fronts and socks he walks slowly out of the door scratching his backside and yawning. A moment later there is the sound of a flush from the bathroom.

EXT- LAKESIDE CABINS - MORNING

The Townswomen peer round the corner of the end cabin and run inside.

INT - MARJORIE'S CABIN - MORNING

MARJORIE is inside waving a mobile phone in the air. A packed suitcase is beside her. She looks surprised as the women

suddenly enter the room.

GLADYS

What! You had a mobile phone all this time?

MARJORIE

It's not working. There is no reception.

BERYL

But there is in the basement. You nearly got us killed back at the house, you selfish bitch!

MARJORIE

I had to get to the telephone.

BERYL

And if you'd got reception what then? Go back. Call Barry? Would you have waited for us?

MARJORIE

Of course.

BERYL

(snorting)

That packed suitcase suggests otherwise. I'm onto you Lady Muck and if we get out of this, I won't be the only one who is...

SOPHIA

Beryl! Come on. We're fighting that thing not each other. And it could be right outside now.

GLADYS

You're right, we've got to kill it. But how? Five septuagenarians against the creature from the black lagoon.

BERYL takes the phone from MARJORIE, still simmering.

BERYL

Bloody useless out here anyway.

(She throws it down)

Alright ladies. You know last year when we came second in the knitting competition?

(they nod)
 And we vowed never to be beaten again?
 Well, we're going to make bloody sure
 we're not beaten now....with an
 unfortunate life or death element.

The women look confused.

BERYL

Sophia, you're our mega speed knitting
 and crochet champion, right?

SOPHIA

Yes, but I don't see how whipping up a
 lovely Fairisle will help in this
 situation.

BERYL

What equipment did you bring with you
 star knitter?

SOPHIA

Well, I've got the mega needles,
 crochet hooks, scissors, pin cushions,
 picking knives...

BERYL

Rose, you won that baking Gold medal 6
 years running. You're lethal on a
 stove. Do you think you could rustle
 us up a piping hot pot of that award
 winning jam?

ROSE

(starting to grasp the link)
 Of course Beryl.

BERYL

Glad, your German style is the stuff
 of legend. Pretty nasty those bespoke
 needles and what about the stitch
 holders. Didn't your Derek nearly have
 his eye out with one of those?

GLADYS

Nice choice of words. Don't forget the
 metal wire string and shears I brought
 for the flower arranging social.

BERYL

(smiling)

The weapons in the barn are gone so we make our own. When it comes back we show it what an award-winning regional Townswomen's knitting team looks like. Right?

ALL EXCEPT MARJORIE

RIGHT!

BERYL

It'll take more than a knock-off Jason Vorhees to beat us.

ROSE

Who's Jason Vorhees?

BERYL

Never mind.

MONTAGE - CABINS - MORNING

INT - SOPHIA'S CABIN

SOPHIA rifles through her luggage. She finds a bag of particularly long, thick knitting needles (mega needles). She lifts them up and smiles.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

ROSE stands at the cooker stirring a boiling hot pot of homemade jam. She lifts the spoon and the piping hot thick mass falls into the pan.

ROSE

Lethal!

BERYL bustles next to her. She is pouring flour haphazardly into a large bowl.

BERYL

You couldn't attend a women's lib demo in the 70's without a flour bomb or two.

She puts on ROSE's apron and gets to work on making flour bombs.

INT - GLADYS' CABIN

GLADYS empties out her suitcase and retrieves the fallen tools from the mess. She takes a vicious-looking stitch holder and thrusts it into a ball of wool.

GLADYS
(misappropriated)
Take that Jonathon Vorhees!

She takes the other weapons and puts them into the elasticated waistband of her skirt. MARJORIE is behind her looking in the wardrobe. She appears with a pair of metal coat hangers. BERYL enters.

BERYL
Well, it didn't do Jamie Lee Curtis
much good...But worth a try.

Marjorie looks confused. BERYL goes to one of her ethnic fabric bags and searches inside a hidden pocket.

BERYL
(holding up a penknife)
So you are still there! Never know
when you'll need to cut yourself free
from a roped sit-in.

She pockets the knife.

BERYL
Let's take all of this to Rose's
cabin. I've an idea how we might
protect ourselves a bit.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN

Two pans of jam bubble away on the stove. BERYL starts stripping cushions from the sofa. She grabs SOPHIA and uses a knitted scarf to wrap one of the cushions to her chest. The women take the rest of the cushions and wrap them to each other using a pile of knitted scarves from GLADYS' knitting bag. MARJORIE looks horrified and declines the makeshift armour. Eventually the women are all armed and somewhat armoured. They stand in the lounge, floral cushions protruding awkwardly from their chests, makeshift weapons in hand.

GLADYS
What do we look like?

ROSE
A right set of plonkers!

The women take a brief moment from the horrors of the weekend to laugh at the humorous scene. The laughter subsides as the reality of their situation kicks in.

BERYL
Ready knitters?

GLADYS
As we'll ever be!

The women stand together in the cabin, makeshift weapons raised. MARJORIE skulks behind them.

INT - DISCOUNT SUPERMARKET - DAYTIME

A handful of Sunday shoppers wander slowly and aimlessly round a discount supermarket pushing trollies. A casually dressed BARRY is doing his weekly shop. Mainly dreary music rings out, interrupted by occasional monotone announcements. He pushes his trolley mindlessly down the household goods aisle.

ANOUNCER
(unseen, over tannoy, monotone)
And today only, two for one on carpet
mousse and j cloths. That's Aisle 3,
Homeware, two for one on carpet mousse
and j cloths.

The music returns - 'Rescue Me' by Fontella Bass. BARRY navigates the trolley to a large fridge cabinet. He picks up a packet of cooked ham and sniffs it. He puts it in his trolley and pushes it away. He stops. Returns to the fridge and puts the ham back. He pauses then picks up a cheaper brand and throws it into the trolley. He walks slowly to the next fridge and stops, consulting a crumpled list.

EXT - WOODS BEHIND DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

The sound of Barry Manilow's 'Copacabana' rings out full volume from the cabin, filling the woods. The injured creature has blundered from SU & PAUL's house & collapsed in the woods. It lies in the middle of fallen branches and moss. It's face is a hideous distortion of mask and crushed bones. At the sound of Manilow, it rouses. It sits bolt upright, stands and follows the sound of Manilow's crooning.

INT - DAPHNE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

GLADYS cranks up the volume on the radio and scurries out of the door.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

GLADYS enters. The women, dressed in their makeshift floral armour, stand together facing the cabin door with their makeshift weapons in hand. GLADYS joins them. They are ready for battle.

BERYL
First place ladies!

The scene is set for confrontation.

EXT - ROSE'S CABIN - DAYTIME

The figure lurches towards DAPHNE's cabin door. As it passes the first cabin it is hit by a fleet of flying knitting needles and hooks, from the window, followed by a flurry of balls of wool. Disorientated the figure lurches backwards as ROSE appears from the cabin door. She flings a flour bomb into its ripped mask & distorted face. The creature is blinded & stumbles, hands grasping its mutated face. SOPHIA seizes the opportunity & hurries up behind it with two hands full of mega knitting needles which she thrusts into its back. GLADYS follows. She leaps forward & stabs the creature in the chest with a fistful of foam strippers in each hand. BERYL takes the final swing & secures a particularly vicious handful of stitch holders in the creature's groin. It falls to the floor. The women retreat and stand on guard a safe distance away, few remaining weapons, raised watching it. It doesn't move.

ROSE
It's not moving. Have we killed it?

BERYL
I'm not sure. Rose go and get that jam just in case. It'll melt that rubber a treat.

GLADYS
(moving forward cautiously)
It's taken a good bashing but we can't take any chances.

She takes some metal wire from her waist band and creeps towards the creature.

SOPHIA
Careful Glad!

She creeps cautiously towards it. The creature is immobile. She edges nearer, mega needle in hand, and prods the creature gingerly with her foot.

BERYL
Glad, careful! What are you doing?

The creature remains immobile. She stops and looks for signs of breath.

GLADYS
It's not breathing, I think it's dead!

She thrusts the wire round the creature's neck, pulling as tight as she can and ripping at the rubber mask.

GLADYS
And that's for my friends, you...shit!

She kicks the unmoving figure again then catches herself. Surprised at her own bravery, she scurries away, less bold, to the other women.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN - AFTERNOON

As the women begin to celebrate a perceived victory outside, ROSE returns to the kitchen. She reaches out for the pan of boiling jam still heating on the stove. The jam has overheated. It explodes violently into the air and all over her face and body. Her skin melts horrifically. She screams and collapses to the floor, her skin still bubbling.

EXT - CABINS - AFTERNOON

The women abruptly stop celebrating and turn to face ROSE's agonised screams. As they run into the cabin door, the creature rises slowly, unseen behind them. It stands and pulls the makeshift weapons from its decaying flesh, wrestling the wire from its neck. BERYL, GLADYS and MARJORIE disappear into the cabin. A horrified SOPHIA stops outside the doorway, horrified at the sight of the melting ROSE. The creature looms up behind her and plunges a mega needle through the back of her neck and out through her throat. She spits and chokes violently on her own blood before falling to the floor.

INT - ROSE'S CABIN - AFTERNOON

BERYL and GLADYS try to revive ROSE. She is dead, her body melted hideously by boiling jam.

GLADYS

Come on Rose, you can't leave us as well.

BERYL

It's no good Glad, she's gone.

Unseen by BERYL and GLADYS, the creature is in the cabin doorway. It steps forward. SOPHIA, crawling on the floor, grabs its leg and gurgles a final death cry, trying to help her friends.

SOPHIA

(gurgling)

Run!

The women spin round.

GLADYS

Sophia! No!

The creature easily shakes SOPHIA's weak grasp away, lifts it's foot and explodes SOPHIA's head under it's boot.

BERYL

Sophia! It's still alive! Run!

MARJORIE

(who has been lurking in the background of the cabin while her friends fought)

Again?!

The terrified women fling open the back door and run for their lives, cushions falling from their bodies. MARJORIE follows them. So does the wounded creature who, for once, is slower than his aging victims.

EXT- BARRY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

BARRY, now dressed in slightly disheveled shirt with 'Barry's Executive Travel' logo, and tie, closes his front door and walks to the coach parked outside. He whistles 'Rescue Me' by Fontella Bass. He walks up to the door of he coach and spots a large mud stain. He takes a handkerchief from his pocket and licks it.

BARRY
 She won't like that.
 (mimicking MARJORIE's voice)
 Not very executive is it?
 (under his breath)
 Stuck up cow.
 (mimicking MARJORIE)
 Get closer to the lakeside!
 (normal voice)
 How they put up with that, I don't
 know.

He partially removes the stain, blows his nose on the dirty tissue, replaces it in his pocket, and climbs onboard the coach. The doors close slowly behind him. After a moment which seems too long given the urgency, the engine starts and the coach begins to move forward. It jars to a halt, the engine stops and the doors swing open again. BARRY gets out and strolls back into the house. He reappears through the front door with his sat nav.

BARRY
 What did we do without you? Middle of
 bloody nowhere.

He stops and retrieves a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket. Painfully slowly he taps in the postcode and presses enter. His first attempt fails and the screen flashes 'no results found'.

BARRY
 Sodding technology!

He reaches into his shirt pocket and retrieves a pair of glasses which he perches on the end of his nose to scrutinise the screen more closely. After another bout of painfully slow typing the screen produces a map and limited directions.

BARRY
 Close enough. Do the rest when I get
 there. They'll probably be sat by the
 road with their cases anyway if she's
 got anything to do with it.

He climbs back onto the bus and after another excruciating pause while he sets up the sat nav, starts the engine. The bus finally pulls off.

EXT - CABIN-SIDE WOODS - AFTERNOON

The women run blindly in the opposite direction to SU and PAUL's house through the woods.

GLADYS
(breathless)
Where do we go now?

BERYL
I don't know, but I can't run much more Glad. This new hip has hardly made me the bionic woman.
(she is struggling to keep running)

MARJORIE
There!

She points to a secluded, decaying boat house with a jetty ahead of them at the side of the lake. They keep moving forward as fast as they can, too afraid to look behind them.

EXT- BOAT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The exhausted women reach the boat house doors. Fortunately they are unlocked. GLADYS flings the doors open and they virtually fall inside.

INT - BOAT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

GLADYS & MARJORIE see a pair of oars on the floor and use one of them to wedge the doors shut. BERYL is exhausted and struggling. They lean against the walls, breathing heavily. GLADYS moves to comfort BERYL. Suddenly there is a pounding on the doors. The women freeze, holding their breath and staring at the oar protecting them from the creature outside. The pounding persists but the strong wooden oar holds. The pounding eventually stops. The women stand frozen and silent for a moment, ensuring that the creature has disappeared. GLADYS moves closer to BERYL.

GLADYS
Are you alright, Ber?

BERYL
(exhausted)
I think I'm done Glad. I can't run anymore.

BERYL slides down the wall to the floor. As she sits the penknife slides from her pocket across the floor of the boat house. GLADYS gingerly sits down next to her and puts her arm

round her best friend.

GLADYS

Come on love, keep going. If it weren't for you we'd all be gone by now.

BERYL

(defeated)

But look how many of us are gone. They all had families...kids, grandkids, husbands...I've run out of ideas Glad.

GLADYS

But we're still here and that's thanks to you. We're going to get out of this Ber. We haven't got long to hold on. Barry's on his way right now. We're getting on that coach and getting the hell out of here.

MARJORIE

(from the other side of the boat house)

Do you really believe that fool will save us? That thing will have killed the idiot before he's even parked.

BERYL

(Struggling to her feet. She has had enough)

Well, it takes one to know one, doesn't it Marjorie?

MARJORIE

(stiffening)

What do you mean?

BERYL

A monster.

MARJORIE

Are you delirious Beryl?

BERYL

Delirious? Not when there's evidence to back it up Marjorie.

(she reaches inside her generous bra & pulls out a slip of paper)

MARJORIE

What on earth is that?

BERYL

(she has nothing to lose anymore)
We're onto you Marjorie. And we've got
the evidence to prove it.

MARJORIE

What evidence? What we? What are you
talking about?

BERYL

(thrusting out the paper)
I think you know exactly what I'm
talking about...Peter Dandridge.
Geoffrey Dandridge. Your son and
husband. You killed them.

There is a pause. MARJORIE steps forward and reaches out as if to take the paper. Instead she quickly reaches to the floor and picks something up.

MARJORIE

Beryl, you dropped your penknife.

She straightens back up, penknife in hand, and lashes out suddenly at BERYL's throat, slitting it wide open. BERYL, stunned, reaches to her throat to try to stem the blood. It runs thickly between her fingers.

GLADYS

No!

BERYL slumps back to the floor, blood gushing from her throat. A record of births and deaths certificate falls from her hand. MARJORIE picks it up.

GLADYS

(falling to BERYL's side)
No! Beryl, hang in there. Barry's on
his way. We're getting on that coach!

She puts her hands to her best friend's throat, desperate to stop the bleeding. She uses one of the knitted scarves which is still round her waist, but it is soon soaked through with blood.

BERYL
You'll make it to the coach Glad.

BERYL chokes & coughs, blood running through her fingers.

BERYL
I'm done Glad. But it's been a hell of
a ride.

GLADYS shakes her head in denial.

BERYL
It's finally time for you to stand up
and give them hell love.

She dies, her head falling to the side against her friend.
GLADYS sits weeping next to her on the floor.

MARJORIE
(still standing holding the bloody
knife)
Well that's a shame. Beryl's death was
supposed to look like an accident. And
now it appears I'm going to have to
kill you too. And such a harmless
thing.

MARJORIE steps forward. The grinding sound of a motor outside
the door stops her. It is followed by the clatter of crashing
wood. The enraged creature emerges chainsaw first through the
wooden wall of the boat house narrowly missing GLADYS. Timber
flies across the room. MARJORIE steps back in horror & trips
on a tarpaulin sheet which falls to reveal the mutilated
bloody bodies of all the dead townswomen. Mis-footed she
falls into the gruesome pile. Scrabbling to her feet, she
steps on the scythe discarded with the other weapons from the
barn, and screams. It protrudes from her foot. The creature
looms towards her chainsaw-first.

MARJORIE
No!
(the figure lumbers forward)
No...Peter...no!

The figure stops. It lowers the still-buzzing chainsaw. It is
a very long time since it has heard its name spoken. MARJORIE
scrabbles and gets to her uninjured foot, slipping on blood.

MARJORIE
(gently)
It's OK Peter.

She moves towards him cautiously, dragging the scythe behind her, attached to her foot. PETER drops the chainsaw. Gingerly and disgustedly MARJORIE reaches out and engages PETER in a twisted bloody embrace. The recently enraged PETER becomes docile.

MARJORIE

There now. Mother's here.

GLADYS

(a combination of open-mouthed and
enraged)

What the bloody hell...?

INT- BARRY'S COACH - DAYTIME

BARRY is driving and singing along to Bon Jovi's 'Living On A Prayer' on the coach radio.

BARRY

(disharmoniously)

Ohhhhhhhh, we're halfway there, oh
oh...bloody hell.

He puts his foot on the brake and the coach grinds to a halt. There are a queue of cars in front of him.

BARRY

Which smart arse decided that that new
bypass at Tedbury was a good idea?

He taps his fingers on the steering wheel for a while. Then he reaches for a packet of crisps from a multipack in his glove compartment, balances them precariously on his knee and opens them, taking a handful.

BARRY

Eurgh. Prawn cocktail. He puts them
back.

The traffic slowly begins to move forward.

BARRY

And we're off again....We're halfway
there!

The coach lurches forward.

INT-BOATHOUSE - DAYTIME

MARJORIE is still locked in a gruesome, awkward embrace with

her undead son PETER. GLADYS looks on from the floor, baffled and horrified.

GLADYS

What the bloody hell is going on?

MARJORIE reaches up and gently removes the mangled rubber mask from PETER's face. The horrific sight underneath causes GLADYS to retch. MARJORIE flinches but tries to hide her disgust. PETER's face has been eaten away after years at the bottom of the lake, and combined with the injuries inflicted by the women, what is left of his mutated features is grotesque.

MARJORIE

(swallowing her revulsion)

Well, Peter's shall-we-say visit this weekend has proved to be somewhat of a surprise...

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

INT - MARJORIE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

In the centre of a cold windowless dark basement sits a bare grey cot. A baby, unseen under the thin grey blanket, cries. Nobody comes. The crying gets louder.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

You see I did indeed have a son. But he was not what any mother would hope for. He was born with significant...challenges. He couldn't have coped with the world outside and I couldn't have coped with the shame. We had a reputation to maintain. It was the best approach to keep him down there, hidden away from life's cruelties.

The baby thrashes and cries louder. The blanket slips to reveal a disfigured child of around one year old screaming in the cot. Nobody comes - the true cruelties are at home.

INT - MARJORIE'S BASEMENT - 10 YEARS LATER.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

And that's how we carried on for quite some time. Our little...secret.

The boy is now 11. He sits on a single bed with a thin sheet staring at a small black and white television in the bare cell-like room. He is excessively tall and well-built for his age. Growth has also made his bodily and facial deformities more prominent. MARJORIE unlocks the door and enters the room, locking it behind her. She thrusts a tray onto the bed. It holds a plate of food and glass of water. The boy does not react. He carries on staring at the television. MARJORIE pauses, looks on in revulsion, and leaves the room locking the door behind her. The boy continues to stare.

INT - MARJORIE'S BASEMENT - 7 YEARS LATER.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

But as he got older, my husband began
to have some doubts...

The 18 year-old PETER sits staring at the same black and white television on the same single bed. The door unlocks and timidly opens. GEOFFREY DANDRIDGE, his father, wearing a Christmas cracker hat, enters. He stares at the boy. From his pocket he produces a small gift-wrapped present. He places it next to PETER on the bed. PETER doesn't react and carries on staring at the television.

GEOFFREY DANDRIDGE

We can't go on like this lad.

(sitting on the bed)

It's not right. It's never been what I
wanted from the start.

PETER stares at the television.

GEOFFREY DANDRIDGE

We can't keep you down here anymore. I
think it's time we got you out of
here, don't you?

PETER looks at his father, moving his gaze from the television for the first time. Outside the basement door MARJORIE listens out of sight. She too is dressed in a Christmas cracker hat and there are sounds of celebration in the house above. She rips the hat from her head and screws it into a ball angrily.

MARJORIE

(voiceover)

He gave me no choice. The boy wouldn't
cope in the outside world, and I'd
spent so long protecting our

embarrassing secret. He'd ruin it all.
I had to act. Fortunately, I knew just
the place away from his father...

EXT - LAKESIDE CABIN -NIGHT

MARJORIE's car pulls into the same isolated Lake District resort. There is just one secluded cabin prior to the more recent renovation. She cuts her lights as she approaches. She gets out of her car and opens the post box next to the cabin. Inside is a receipt and keys. She unlocks the cabin door, looking over her shoulder. She then hurries back to the car and opens the back door. PETER is inside, covered by a blanket. She helps him out of the car unsteadily, closing the door behind him, and they disappear into the cabin. His unsteady figure towers over her.

EXT - LAKESIDE - THE FOLLOWING DAWN

In the dim dawn light MARJORIE leads a confused, towering PETER from the cabin to the lake. He is dressed in overalls. Unfamiliar with the outside world and blinded by the little dawn light, he is reluctant, and groans. She wades into the shoreline water, smiling to reassure her fearful son. She splashes and laughs, all the time pulling her struggling son further into the water by the hand. He moans and writhes as the water gets deeper, but she pulls him further with her. She begins to tread water. He can't. Panicking, he flaps his arms and legs. He becomes entwined in reeds. His head sinks and she releases his hand. His head re-emerges from the water, his arms flail. She treads water backwards to the shoreline, watching PETER pulled further into the lake's murky depths. PETER's last desperate view is of his mother watching him drown.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

It was the kindest thing Gladys. He wouldn't have coped. And I had the family reputation to consider. Nobody could know.

(pauses)

The farmer, however, was unfortunate.
Not unlike you come to think of it.

PETER's cries and splashing alert the attention of the cabin-owning FARMER who is tending his cows in the nearby barn which would later be converted to the big house. He emerges onto the lakeside from the woods.

FARMER

(seeing PETER disappear under the
water and MARJORIE watching)

He's drowning. Do something!

He begins to pull off his wellington boots to swim out to the boy. MARJORIE comes up behind him and dashes him over the head with a rock. He falls to the bank. Frenzied, she hits him once, twice, three times, until she is sure that he is dead. She wipes the blood from her face and drags the FARMER's body to the cabin.

EXT - OUTHOUSE BEHIND CABINS - DAWN

MARJORIE is frantically searching. She finds a large barrel marked flammable. She does not see the label indicating that it is formaldehyde, used by the farmer as a disinfectant for cattle. She drags the barrel to the front of the cabin, accidentally spilling most of the contents into the lake and polluting it. She pours the remainder into the cabin and onto the FARMER's body and sets fire to both. The cabin erupts in a huge explosion of wood and chemical fire, and flames seer across the polluted lake. MARJORIE runs to her car, jumps in, and drives away, watching the fireball in her rearview mirror. The grassland behind her is engulfed with flames, eliminating her tracks.

MARJORIE

(voice over)

Fatal accident they called it. He'd accidentally spilled the chemicals and he was a notorious smoker, an accident waiting to happen...

EXT - CASTLE ROOF - DAYTIME

MARJORIE

And, of course, one murder begets another. My husband Geoffrey couldn't understand that it was for the best. He threatened to inform the police. So there was that dreadful burglary gone wrong at our home. He didn't stand a chance. I played the grieving widow to a tee. And then, much later, of course, there was the awful historian...

MARJORIE, disguised in wig and glasses, pushes the HISTORIAN from the ramparts. She removes her disguise as he slides down the church spire.

HISTORIAN
(gurgling)

You!

MARJORIE smiles down at him.

INT - CASTLE ARCHIVE ROOM - DAYTIME

MARJORIE searches frantically through a box file and flings it to the floor when she can't find what's she looking for, exasperated.

INT - BOATHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

MARJORIE
(still pointing the knife at
GLADYS and awkwardly embracing
PETER)

You see I found out that Beryl had been working with that pompous man. I feared that they had uncovered secrets that were better off hidden. I chose this resort for the weekend as I'd planned for Beryl to also meet with a tragic accident. Once I found the records were missing I knew for sure.
(pointing the knife at the lake)
That lake would hold another secret.

GLADYS begins to stand. She has heard enough.

GLADYS
I already knew most of that you bloody silly cow. Beryl told me!

PETER's embrace of MARJORIE suddenly begins to stiffen. Her talk of another murder in the lake has enraged him - he has remembered his own death at the hands of his mother. Her face begins to show signs of panic. PETER squeezes tighter until the embrace turns murderous. He begins to wail and literally squeeze the life out of MARJORIE. Her screams join with the sound of bones violently cracking and snapping. Blood runs from her eyes, ears and mouth. Viscera run to the floor as she literally has the life squeezed out of her. The screaming eventually stops. PETER drops the broken, bloody frame of MARJORIE and kicks the crumpled remains into the lake through the hole in the wall. Ignoring a cowering GLADYS he turns to the door and removes the oars. He flings them aside and leaves the boat house, his revenge complete.

EXT- BOATHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

PETER slowly walks back towards the jetty. Revenge has offered him the peace of a return to his watery grave. GLADYS, however, has revenge of her own in mind. The once timid Townswoman has been pushed beyond her limit. She runs screaming from the boathouse behind him, enraged and bloodied, pushed to the point of murderous rage by the deaths of her friends. She brandishes the chainsaw above her head and howls. Careering towards him, GLADYS thrusts the chainsaw violently through his decayed, mutated midriff. PETER looks down blankly, almost relieved, at the grinding metallic weapon protruding from his body, tearing a huge hole in his decayed flesh. He finally falls, the chainsaw still whirring at his body.

GLADYS

(screaming)

I am not taking your shit anymore!

She kicks PETER's body, screams, and finally collapses bloodied and exhausted next to him.

EXT - CABINS - EVENING

BARRY's bus pulls up on the lakeside outside the cabins. He honks the horn. There is no reply. He waits a moment then climbs out cautiously into the mudbath.

BARRY

(shouting)

Helloo! Ladies! Glad, it's Barry. I'm here to take you home.

He walks gingerly to the front of the cabins, keen to avoid the huge pools of mud.

BARRY

Glad, Beryl, where are you?

He peers into their messy cabin from the doorway.

BARRY

Well, where the chuff are they?

He moves along to the wide open door of ROSE's cabin where he is met by the sight of SOPHIA's blood-drenched body and ROSE's hideously melted body in the kitchen.

BARRY

Bloody hell! I had these Townswomen

all wrong!

He steps back, stunned, from the doorway & into GLADYS who has appeared, resolute and shell-shocked behind him. She is covered in blood and gore.

BARRY
(jumping and screaming)
Jesus Christ Glad! I thought you were here to do some knitting? What the hell?

GLADYS
Just get me home Barry.

BARRY
What about the others?

GLADYS
There are no others.

BARRY
I've never seen anything like it. It's like one of those Michael Vorhees films...

BARRY shakes his head, puts his arm around an exhausted GLADYS & helps her to stagger towards the coach. They are about to board when the grinding sound of a chainsaw rings out behind them. PETER is running towards them wailing, a gaping hole in his midrift, and the chainsaw above his head.

GLADYS
(turning slowly)
Oh, for fuck's sake!

GLADYS sighs and pushes BARRY to safety down a steep bank towards the lake. He slips and falls in the mud, and into the lake.

BARRY
(falling and confused)
Glaaaad!

GLADYS hobbles up onto the coach and closes the door.

INT - BUS - EVENING

An exhausted, yet determined GLADYS looks into the rearview mirror and sees PETER running towards the back of the coach, chainsaw raised and screaming. She turns the keys & pushes

the gear stick into reverse. She slams her foot to the floor on the accelerator and swerves violently.

EXT - CABINS - EVENING

The rear of the coach hits PETER full-on and he is dragged under the large wheels. His body explodes and gore gushes from underneath the coach. The chainsaw flies to the side of the bank, still running.

INT - BUS - EVENING

GLADYS moves to first gear, drives forward and then slams her foot on the accelerator again, reversing sharply. The bus bumps upwards as it crushes what remains of PETER's body again. Without emotion she repeats this process once more until there is no bump & PETER is pulverised. GLADYS finally stops, puts the bus into neutral and pulls on the hand break. She pauses, looks into the mirror and uses BARRY's handkerchief on the dashboard to wipe a small streak of blood from her face, making only a small impact on the blood and viscera covering it. She looks down. A First Place rosette has propelled from underneath a passenger seat and landed in the aisle beside her seat. She picks it up & resignedly pins it to her chest. She puts the bus back into first gear and drives off into the sunset.

EXT - LAKESIDE - EVENING

A confused, mud and water-covered BARRY over the brow of the lakeside bank. He keeps slipping in the mud as he tries to make his way to the top of the bank.

BARRY

Glad! Glaaad!

(looking around and seeing that
the coach has gone)

Bugger, she's gone without me!

He haphazardly climbs up to the path where he finds what's left of PETER. He gingerly and disgustedly prods the mess with his foot & then quickly wipes his shoe on a patch of grass.

BARRY

Who knew that knitting was such a
combat sport?

He bends down and picks up the still-running chainsaw. As he tries to work out how to switch it off, the first rays of moonlight reflect off the lake. All is now peaceful aside

from the still-buzzing chainsaw and BARRY's grumbles as he wrestles with it. Behind him the water gently ripples in contrast to the violent events which it has hosted over the previous two days.

Suddenly the rippling begins to increase near the boathouse. Bubbles fly up to the surface of the murky water, disturbing the gentle roll. A hand violently thrusts from the lake and twists, the moon shimmering from the pearls on the wrist...MRS DANDRIDGE wants her revenge!

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SELECTED CHRONOLOGICAL FILMOGRAPHY

FILM

1920s

The Cat & the Canary (1927) [DVD] Directed by Paul Leni. USA: Universal Pictures

1930s

The Old Dark House (1932) [DVD] Directed by James Whale. USA: Universal Pictures

Bride of Frankenstein (1935) [DVD] Directed by James Whale. USA: Universal Pictures

The Cat & the Canary (1939) [DVD] Directed by Elliot Nugent. USA: Paramount Pictures

1940s

The Ghost Breakers (1940) [DVD] Directed by George Marshall. USA: Paramount Pictures

Hold That Ghost (1941) [DVD] Directed by Arthur Lubin. USA: Universal Pictures

Arsenic & Old Lace (1944) [DVD] Directed by Frank Capra. USA: Warner Bros

Dead of Night (1945) [DVD] Directed by Cavalcanti/Charles Crichton/Basil Dearden/Robert Hamer. UK: Ealing Studios

Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948) [DVD] Directed by Charles Barton. USA: Universal International Pictures

1950s

Abbott and Costello Meet Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1953) [DVD] Directed by Charles Lamont. USA: Universal International Pictures

Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy (1955) [DVD] Directed by Charles Lamont. USA: Universal International Pictures

A Bucket of Blood (1959) [DVD] Directed by Roger Corman. USA: Alta Vista Productions

House on Haunted Hill (1959) [DVD] Directed by William Castle. USA: William Castle Productions

The Bat (1959) [DVD] Directed by Crane Wilbur. USA: Liberty Pictures

1960s

What A Carve Up! (1961) [DVD] Directed by Pat Jackson. UK: New World Films Ltd

Blood Feast (1963) [DVD] Directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis. USA: Friedman-Lewis Productions

The Haunting (1963) [DVD] Directed by Robert Wise. UK: Argyle Enterprises

Carry On Screaming (1966) [DVD] Directed by Gerald Thomas. UK: Peter Rogers Productions

Spider Baby (1967) [DVD] Directed by Jack Hill. USA: Lasky-Monka

The Fearless Vampire Killers (1967) [DVD] Directed by Roman Polanski. USA/UK: Cadre Films/ Filmways Pictures

The Gruesome Twosome (1967) [DVD] Directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis. USA: Friedman-Lewis Productions

Night of the Living Dead (1968) [DVD] Directed by George Romero. USA: Image Ten

1970s

Multiple Maniacs (1970) [DVD] Directed by John Waters. USA: Dreamland

A Bay of Blood (1971) [DVD] Directed by Mario Bava. Italy: Nuova Linea Cinematographica

Carry on at your Convenience (1971) [DVD] Directed by Gerald Thomas. UK: Rank Organisation/Thomas/Rogers Productions

The Abominable Dr Phibes (1971) [DVD] Directed by Bob Fuest. UK: American International Pictures

The Beast in the Cellar (1971) [DVD] Directed by James Kelly. UK: Tigon British Film Productions

Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things (1972) [DVD] Directed by Bob Clark. USA: Brandywine MotionArts Films

Death Line (1972) [DVD] Directed by Gary Sherman. UK: Harbour Ventures/K-L Productions

Dr Phibes Rises Again (1972) [DVD] Directed by Bob Fuest. UK: American International Pictures

Pink Flamingos (1972) [DVD] Directed by John Waters. USA: Dreamland

Flesh For Frankenstein 3D (1973) [DVD] Directed by Paul Morrissey & Antonio Marghereti. USA/Italy/France: Compagnia Cinematografica Champion

The Exorcist (1973) [DVD] Directed by William Friedkin. USA: Warner Brothers

The House in Nightmare Park (1973) [DVD] Directed by Peter Sykes. UK: Associated London Films

Black Christmas (1974) [DVD] Directed by Bob Clark. Canada: Film Funding Ltd. Of Canada/Vision IV

Blood for Dracula (1974) [DVD] Directed by Paul Morrissey. Italy/France. Compagnia Cinematografica Champion

Female Trouble (1974) [DVD] Directed by John Waters. USA: Dreamland

Frightmare (1974) [DVD] Directed by Pete Walker. UK: Pete Walker (Heritage) Ltd.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974) [DVD] Directed by Tobe Hooper. USA: Vortex

Young Frankenstein (1974) [DVD] Directed by Mel Brooks. USA: Gruskoff/Venture/Crossbow Productions/Jouer Limited

Jaws (1975) [DVD] Directed by Steven Spielberg. USA: Zanuck/Brown Productions/Universal Pictures

Monty Python & the Holy Grail (1975) [DVD] Directed by Terry Gilliam/Terry Jones. UK: Python (Monty) Pictures

Carrie (1976) [DVD] Directed by Brian DePalma. USA: Red Bank Films

The Omen (1976) [DVD] Directed by Richard Donner. USA/UK: Twentieth Century Fox

Desperate Living (1977) [DVD] Directed by John Waters. USA: Charm City Productions

The Hills Have Eyes (1977) [DVD] Directed by Wes Craven. USA: Blood Relations Co./Vanguard

Halloween (1978) [DVD] Directed by John Carpenter. USA: Compass International Pictures

Alien (1979) [DVD] Directed by Ridley Scott. UK/USA: Brandywine Productions

Tourist Trap (1979) [DVD] Directed by Bob Schmoeller. USA: Charles Band Productions Ltd.

Zombi 2 (1979) [DVD] Directed by Lucio Fulci. Italy: Variety Film

1980s

Friday the 13th (1980) [DVD] Directed by Sean S. Cunningham. USA: Warner Bros/Georgetown Productions Inc./Sean S. Cunningham Films

Motel Hell (1980) [DVD] Directed by Kevin Connor. USA: Camp Hill

An American Werewolf in London (1981) [DVD] Directed by John Landis. UK/USA: Polygram Pictures/Lycanthrope Films

Dead & Buried (1981) [DVD] Directed by Gary Sherman. USA: Barclays Mercantile Industrial Finance

Just Before Dawn (1981) [DVD] Directed by Jeff Lieberman. USA: Oakland Productions

Madman (1981) [DVD] Directed by Joe Giannone. USA: The Legend Lives Company

The Burning (1981) [DVD] Directed by Tony Mylam. USA: Miramax Films

The Evil Dead (1981) [DVD] Directed by Sam Raimi. USA: Renaissance Pictures

Basket Case (1982) [DVD] Directed by Frank Henenlotter. USA: Basket Case Productions

Creepshow (1982) [DVD] Directed by George A. Romero. USA: Creepshow Films Inc/Laurel Entertainment Inc/Laurel-Show Inc/Warner Bros

National Lampoon's Class Reunion (1982) [DVD] Directed by Michael Miller. USA: ABC Motion Pictures

Sleepaway Camp (1983) [DVD] Directed by Robert Hiltzik. USA: American Eagle Films

The Meaning of Life (1983) [DVD] Directed by Terry Jones/Terry Gilliam. UK: Celandine Films/The Monty Python Partnership/Universal Pictures

A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) [DVD] Directed by Wes Craven. USA: New Line Cinema/Media Home Entertainment/Smart Egg Pictures

Bloodbath at the House of Death (1984) [DVD] Directed by Ray Cameron. UK: Wildwood Productions

The Toxic Avenger (1984) [DVD] Directed by Michael Herz & Lloyd Kaufman. USA: Troma Entertainment

Fright Night (1985) [DVD] Directed by Tom Holland. USA: Columbia Pictures/Vistar Films

House (1985) [DVD] Directed by Steve Miner. USA: New World Pictures/Sean S. Cunningham Films

Re-Animator (1985) [DVD] Directed by Stuart Gordon. USA: Empire Pictures/Re-Animator Productions

The Return of the Living Dead (1985) [DVD] Directed by Dan O'Bannon. USA: Hemdale/Fox Films

Body Count (1986) [DVD] Directed by Ruggero Deodato. Italy: Overseas Film Group/Racing Pictures Production

Class of Nuke 'Em High (1986) [DVD] Directed by Richard W. Haines/Lloyd Kaufman. USA: Troma Entertainment

Critters (1986) [DVD] Directed by Stephen Herek. USA: New Line Cinema

Haunted Honeymoon (1986) [DVD] Directed by Gene Wilder. USA: Orion Pictures

Night of the Creeps (1986) [DVD] Directed by Fred Dekker. USA: Tri Star Pictures

Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2 (1986) [DVD] Directed by Tobe Hooper. USA: Cannon Films/Golan-Globus Films

Bad Taste (1987) [DVD] Directed by Peter Jackson. New Zealand: WingNut Films/New Zealand Film Commission

Evil Dead 2 (1987) [DVD] Directed by Sam Raimi. USA: DEG/Renaissance Pictures

Hellraiser (1987) [DVD] Directed by Clive Barker. UK: Cinemarque Entertainment BV./ Film Futures/Rivdel Films

Beetlejuice (1988) [DVD] Directed by Tim Burton. USA: The Geffen Company

Elvia Mistress of the Dark (1988) [DVD] Directed by James Signorelli. USA: NBC Productions/New World Pictures/Panacea Entertainment

Killer Klowns From Outer Space (1988) [DVD] Directed by Stephen Chiodo. USA: Sarlui/Diamant/Chiodo Brothers Productions

Waxwork (1988) [DVD] Directed by Anthony Hickox. USA: Palla/Vestron Pictures/Contemporary Films

Bride of Re-Animator (1989) [DVD] Directed by Brian Yuzna. USA: Re-Animator 2 Productions/Wild Street

1990s

Repossessed (1990) [DVD] Directed by Bob Logan. USA: Carolco Pictures

Army of Darkness (1992) [DVD] Directed by Sam Raimi. USA: Dino DeLaurentis Company/Renaissance Pictures/Universal Pictures

Braindead (1992) [DVD] Directed by Peter Jackson. New Zealand: WingNut Films

Noises Off (1992) [DVD] Directed by Peter Bogdanovich. USA: Touchstone Pictures/Amblin Entertainment

Cemetery Man (1994) [DVD] Directed by Michele Soavi. Italy/France/Germany: Audi Film/Urania Film/ K.G. Productions

Funny Man (1994) [DVD] Directed by Simon Sprackling. UK: Nomad Productions/Redman Entertainment

Serial Mom (1994) [DVD] Directed by John Waters. USA: Savoy Pictures/Polar Entertainment Corporation

The Mask (1995) [DVD] Directed by Charles Russell. USA: Dark Horse Entertainment/New Line Cinema

Mars Attacks (1996) [DVD] Directed by Tim Burton. USA: Tim Burton Productions/Warner Brothers

Scream (1996) [DVD] Directed by Wes Craven. USA: Dimension Films

Bride of Chucky (1998) [DVD] Directed by Ronny Yu. USA/Canada: Midwinter Productions Inc/Universal Pictures

There's Something About Mary (1998) [DVD] Directed by Bobby Farrelly/Peter Farrelly. USA: Twentieth Century Fox

Urban Legend (1998) [DVD] Directed by Jamie Blanks. USA: Phoenix Pictures/Canal+/Original Film

American Pie (1999) [DVD] Directed by Paul Weitz. USA: Universal Pictures

Guest House Paradiso (1999) [DVD] Directed by UK: Adrian Edmondson. Polygram Films International/Samuelson Productions

2000s

Me, Myself & Irene (2000) [DVD] Directed by Bobby Farrelly/Peter Farrelly. USA: Twentieth Century Fox

Scary Movie (2000) [DVD] Directed by Keenan Ivory Wayans. USA: Dimension Films

The Grinch (2000) [DVD] Directed by Ron Howard. USA: Universal Pictures

American Pie 2 (2001) [DVD] Directed by J.B.Rogers. USA: Universal Pictures

Freddy Got Fingered (2001) [DVD] Directed by Tom Green. USA: Regency Enterprises

The Happiness of the Katakuris (2001) [DVD] Directed by Takashi Miike. Japan: MBS

Calendar Girls (2003) [DVD] Directed by Nigel Cole. UK: Touchstone Pictures

Freaky Friday (2003) [DVD] Directed by Mark Waters. USA: Casual Friday Productions/Gunn Films/Walt Disney Pictures

Stuck On You (2003) [DVD] Directed by Bobby Farrelly/Peter Farrelly. USA: Twentieth Century Fox

Seed of Chucky (2004) [DVD] Directed by Don Mancini. Romania/USA/UK: Rogue Pictures/David Kirschner Productions/Castel Film Romania/La Sienea Productions

Shaun of the Dead (2004) [DVD] Directed by Edgar Wright. UK/France: Rogue Pictures/Studio Canal/Working Title Films/WT2 Productions

Midnight Movies: From Margin to Mainstream (2005) [DVD] Directed by Stuart Samuels. USA: Stuart Samuels Productions/IFC Canada/Movie Central Network

Black Sheep (2006) [DVD] Directed by Jonathan King. New Zealand: New Zealand Film Commission/Escapade Pictures/Singlet Films

Borat (2006) [DVD] Directed by Larry Charles. UK/USA: Everyman Pictures/Dune Entertainment

Fido (2006) [DVD] Directed by Andrew Currie. Canada: Lionsgate Films

Frit Vilt (2006) [DVD] Directed by Roar Uthaug. Norway: Fantefilm

Going to Pieces: The Rise & Fall of the Slasher Film (2006) Directed by Jeff McQueen. USA: Starz Entertainment/thinkfilm/Candy Heart Productions

Hatchet (2006) [DVD] Directed by Adam Green. USA: AriScope Pictures/High Seas Entertainment

Severance (2006) [DVD] Directed by Christopher Smith. UK/Germany/Hungary: Qwerty Films

Slither (2006) [DVD] Directed by James Gunn. USA: Gold Circle Films/Strike Entertainment/Brightlight Pictures

Murder Party (2007) [DVD] Directed by Jeremy Saulnier. USA: The Lab of Madness

Paranormal Activity (2007) [DVD] Directed by Oren Peli. USA: Solana Films/Blumhouse Productions

Trick'r'Treat (2007) [DVD] Directed by Michael Dougherty. USA: Warner Brothers

Martyrs (2008) [DVD] Directed by Pascal Laugier. France/Canada: Canal Horizons/CanalPlus

The Cottage (2008) [DVD] Directed by Paul Andrew Williams. UK: Steel Mill Pictures

The Strangers (2008) [DVD] Directed by Bryan Bertino. USA: Rogue Pictures/Intrepid Pictures/Vertigo Entertainment

Bruno (2009) [DVD] Directed by Larry Charles. UK/USA: Universal Pictures/MRC

Doghouse (2009) [DVD] Directed by Jake West. UK: Carnaby Film Productions

Dead Snow (2009) [DVD] Directed by Tommy Wirkola. Norway: Euforia Film/Barentsfilm AS/FilmCamp

2010s

Hatchet 2 (2010) [DVD] Directed by Adam Green. USA: AriScope Pictures/Dark Sky Films

The Human Centipede (2010) [DVD] Directed by Tom Six. Netherlands: Six Entertainment

Tucker & Dale vs Evil (2010) [DVD] Directed by Eli Craig. USA: Reliance Big Pictures/LoobyLou Productions

Video Nasties: Moral Panic, Censorship & Videotape (2010) [DVD] Directed by Jake West. UK: Nucleus Films

Harold's Going Stiff (2011) [DVD] Directed by Keith Wright. UK: Frisson Film

Inbred (2011) [DVD] Directed by Alex Chandon. UK: New Flesh Films/Split Second Films

The Cabin in the Woods (2011) [DVD] Directed by Drew Goddard. USA: Lionsgate

The Change Up (2011) [DVD] Directed by David Dobkin. USA: Universal Productions

Cockneys vs Zombies (2012) [DVD] Directed by Matthias Hoene. UK: Tea Shop & Film Company

Sightseers (2012) [DVD] Directed by Ben Wheatley. UK: Big Talk Pictures

Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13th (2013) [DVD] Directed by Daniel Farrands. USA: Hutson Ranch Media/Panic Ventures

Evil Dead (2013) [DVD] Directed by Fede Alvarez. USA: TriStar Pictures/FilmDistrict/Ghost House Pictures

Septic Man (2013) [DVD] Directed by Jesse Thomas Cook. Canada: Foresight Features

Creep (2014) [DVD] Directed by Patrick Brice. USA: Blumhouse Productions/Duplass Brothers Productions

Dead Snow 2: Read vs Dead (2014) [DVD] Directed by Tommy Wirkola. Norway/Iceland/UK/USA: Tappeluft Pictures/Saga Films/the fyzz

What We Do in the Shadows (2014) [DVD] Directed by Jermaine Clement/Taika Waititi. New Zealand/USA: Unison Films/Defender Films/Funny Or Die

The Scouts' Guide to the Zombie Apocalypse (2015) [DVD] Directed by Christopher Landon. USA: Paramount Pictures

Grimby (2016) [DVD] Directed by Louis Leterrier. UK/USA: Blue Sky Films/Big Talk Productions/Columbia Pictures

Prevenge (2016) [DVD] Directed by Alice Lowe. UK: Gennaker/Western Edge Pictures

Terrifier (2016) [DVD] Directed by Damien Leone. USA: Dark Age Cinema

The Final Girls (2016) [DVD] Directed by Todd Strauss-Schulson. USA: Groundswell Productions/Studio Solutions/Uterior Productions

The Greasy Strangler (2016) [DVD] Directed by Jim Hosking. USA: BFI Film Fund/Drafthouse Films/Rook Films

You're So Cool Brewster: The Story of Fright Night (2016) [DVD] Directed by Chris Griffiths. UK: Dead Mouse Productions

Attack of the Adult Babies (2017) [DVD] Directed by Dominic Brunt. UK: Mitchell-Brunt Films

Cannibals & Carpet Fitters (2017) [DVD] Directed by James Bushe. UK: Fascination Pictures/Pretty Dead Pictures

Eat Locals (2017) [DVD] Directed by Jason Flemyng. UK: Evolution Pictures/Reign of Blood

Happy Death Day (2017) [DVD] Directed by Christopher Landon. USA: Universal Pictures/Blumhouse Productions

Mayhem (2017) [DVD] Directed by Joe Lynch. USA: Circle of Confusion/Royal Viking Entertainment

Blood Fest (2018) [Online] Directed by Owen Egerton. USA: Rooster Teeth Productions [Viewed 11 February 2021]. Available from Amazon Prime

Girls with Balls (2018) [DVD] Directed by Olivier Afonso. France/Belgium : C4 Productions/Noodles Production

He's Out There (2018) [DVD] Directed by Quinn Lasher. USA: Screen Gems/Unbroken Pictures

Office Uprising (2018) [DVD] Directed by Lin Oeding. USA: Mind the Gap Films/Lydiard Productions/Rumble Riot Pictures

The House That Jack Built (2018) [DVD] Directed by Lars Von Trier. Denmark/France/Sweden/Germany/Belgium : Zentropa Entertainments/Centre National du Cinema et de L'image

Extra Ordinary (2019) [DVD] Directed by Mike Ahern/Enda Loughman. Ireland/Belgium/Finland/UK: Blinder Films/uMedia

Get Duked! (2019) [Online] Directed by Ninian Doff. UK: Highland Midgie/Material Pictures/Nowhere [Viewed 12 January 2021]. Available from Amazon Prime

Ready or Not (2019) [DVD] Directed by Matt Bettinelli-Olpin/Tyler Gillett. USA/Canada: Fox Searchlight Pictures

Shed of the Dead (2019) [DVD] Directed by Drew Cullingham. UK: 7DM Studios/Oceanform Films

The Dead Don't Die (2019) [DVD] Directed by Jim Jarmusch. USA/Sweden/South Africa: Animal Kingdom/Film I Vast

2020s

Borat Subsequent Moviefilm (2020) [Online] Directed by Jim Woliner. USA: Amazon Studios/ Four By Two Films [Viewed 13 November 2020]. Available from Amazon Prime

Shakespeare's Shitstorm (2020) [DVD] Directed by Lloyd Kaufman. USA: Troma Entertainment

Spree (2020) [Online] Directed by Eugene Kotlyarenko. USA: Dream Crew/Forest Hill Entertainment/SuperBloom Films [Viewed 2 February 2021]. Available from Netflix

The Babysitter: Killer Queen (2020) [Online] Directed by McG. USA: Boies/Schiller Film Group/Wonderland Sound & Vision [Viewed 6 November 2020]. Available from Netflix

Uncle Peckerhead (2020) [Online] Directed by Matthew John Lawrence. USA: Production Company Website [Viewed 27 November 2020]. Available from Netflix

TELEVISION

Monty Python's Flying Circus (1969-1974) BBC/Python (Monty) Pictures

The Golden Girls (1985-1992) Touchstone Television/Witt Thomas Harris Productions

Brass Eye (1997-2001) Channel 4/TalkBack Productions

The League of Gentlemen (1999-2017) BBC

Human Remains (2000) BBC/Baby Cow Productions

Jam (2000) Channel 4/TalkBack Productions

Dr Terrible's House of Horrible (2001) BBC/Baby Cow Productions

Monkey Dust (2003) BBC/TalkBack Productions/VooDooDog

Garth Marenghi's Darkplace (2004) Channel 4/Avalon Productions

Nighty Night (2004-5) BBC/Baby Cow Productions

Masters of Horror (2005-2007) Starz/IDT Entertainment/Industry Entertainment/Nice Guy Productions/Reunion Pictures

Snuff Box (2006) BBC/Channel X

Psychoville (2009-2011) BBC

Great British Bake Off (2010-) Love Productions

Lizzie & Sarah (2010) BBC/Baby Cow Productions

Black Mirror (2011) Channel 4/Zepotrone/Gran Babiaka

Inside No. 9 (2014-) BBC

Ash vs the Evil Dead (2015-2018) Starz/Renaissance Pictures

Scream Queens (2015-16) 20th Century Fox Television/Prospect Films/Brad Falchuck Television/Ryan Murphy Productions

Dragula (2016-) Amazon Prime/Ash & Bone Cinema

Camping (2016) Sky Atlantic/Baby Cow Productions

Blood Drive (2017) Syfy/Strong & Dobbs Productions/Universal Cable Productions

Murder on the Blackpool Express (2017) Gold/Jason Cook Films

Santa Clarita Diet (2017-2019) Garfield Grove/KatCo/Kapital Entertainment

Daybreak (2019) ASAP Entertainment/Lightbulb Farm

What We Do In The Shadows (2019-) BBC/FX Productions/Two Canoes Pictures/343 Incorporated

Truth Seekers (2020) Amazon Studios/ Stolen Pictures