

Valerie On The Stairs

A Treatment

Part Two

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In his room now, Rob, stripped down to his briefs, examines his face in the mirror. He's a mess. He pulls a loose tooth out of his mouth and sets it down on the sink. Then he bends over to very tenderly wash the blood off his face. He stops after a moment, however, and dabbing the blood-stained water off his face he goes to his desk. He starts to write.

“His face hurt after the beating, every little throb a reminder of his humiliation.”

Rob's voice takes over on the track, telling us:

“I wrote that night the way I'd always imagined real writers wrote, not forcing every word out like it was some test at school when you didn't know any of the answers, but writing down the words that came bubbling up through a tear in my...yes, in my soul...that had never been there before. Or if it had, I'd never noticed. I wrote 'til dawn, and I went to sleep not happy, fuck happy, but...but...content. Like a jug feels content when it's been emptied. Like it's done it's job. I'd done mine, and I slept. And dreamt, of course, of Valerie.” In sleep, he's fucking the bed. “Which lost me a load of that precious creative juice Sweetland had been talking about. But what the hell? It was for Valerie.”

In his room Bruce gathers up the pages of his manuscript, muttering to himself.

“I'll...teach you...to get your...fucking blood...on our...little gold-mine.”

He stops. He hears something. The lamp flickers.

“What the hell...?”

A light – the same that spills from the secret door at the top of the stairs – appears behind him, and then goes out again.

He stands up. The light flickers out. And Valerie is there, naked, as ever, lit by an invisible moving source of light, her hair blown up from her head so that she looks like some beautiful sorceress. She is pointing at Bruce.

“What are you doing here?” he says. “You can’t be here.”

“I just wanted you to know, before you get your hands on me again, that I’m tired of your cruelty. I want happiness. I deserve it, don’t I? After all I’ve suffered?”

“This is lunacy,” Sweetland says.

She steps aside. “Make him suffer too.” she says.

The Demon comes out of the darkness.

“But silently.”

The Demon reaches into Bruce’s mouth, digging its claws into the root of his tongue. Then he pulls. Blood squirts from Bruce’s mouth as his tongue is torn out. We move in on Valerie, as the Demon goes to work on Bruce.

“You spineless little man.” Valerie says.

The Demon smiles, inspired. He reaches into Bruce’s neck and with a supernatural show of viciousness literally pulls the spine out of him, throwing it against the wall.

In her room next door, Patricia is distracted from her writing by the noise of Bruce’s spine hitting the wall. She slams her fist on the wall.

“Shut up, Bruce. You’re disturbing my concentration.”

She goes back to writing. The words she writes are:

“...poor, innocent Valerie...”

Cut to Valerie, splattered with Bruce Sweetland's blood. She looks disappointed. Bruce is lying on the floor. The Demon scoops out one of his eyes. Offers it to Valerie. She shakes her head.

"I'm disappointed."

"Why?" The Demon growls. It looks sorrowful now, rather than monstrous.

"That's the last thing I'd want you to feel."

"It was too quick. I said I wanted suffering."

The Demon comes to Valerie's feet, and starts to lick the blood off her perfect skin. "I'm sorry. I'm very, very sorry. The next time –"

"Don't talk about blood. Talk about love."

"I love you. I adore you. I wash you with my tongue. I eat everything that comes from you, don't I? Don't I?"

"Yes. Yes, you do. But sometimes blind adoration isn't enough. Sometimes –"

The Demon rises up now, and for the first time we really see how much bigger than Valerie he is. He stands fully two feet taller than her, his head, with its black-green reptilian skin, its Paul Newman blue eyes, its massive, sensual mouth, twice the size of Valerie's head. And now it's aroused. It lifts her up, its hands behind her knees, and slowly, inch by inch by inch by inch etc, lowers her onto it. She closes her eyes, giving in to the bliss...

We fade out on their glorious fuck.

Morning. There's a banging on the door of Rob's room. He's asleep on his back, the sheet tented over his groin in the most happy of spectacles, the morning woodie.

"Mr. Hanisee? Will you please open this door?"

Rob gets up, naked.

“Mr. Hanisee. I want you out of this house.”

We hear her key in the lock. Rob smiles, though it pains him to do so. He glances down at his groin. Yep, still standing proud.

“Mr. Hanisee –”

Nancy opens the door. Her eyes go straight to his groin, and she actually smiles. “Oh Good Lord! It’s so swollen. Your *face*, I mean. You should put some ice on that. I’ll get some. You wait right there.”

“I’m fine, really.”

“Well, if you need anything taken care of you know where to find me.”

“That’s very kind of you, Nancy. And may I say how grateful I am for your attention to my problem.”

Bloom retreats. Rob closes the door, laughing. Then he looks down at his hard-on.

“I know. I know. We have to find Valerie, right? She’s the woman of our dreams. Just nod your head for yes.” A pause. “Thought so.”

Later, he knocks on Everett Neely’s door.

Neely opens the door a crack, and peers out, a much chewed cigar in between his teeth.

“What do you want?”

“I came to apologize, Mr. Neely. And to tell you that of course you were perfectly right. No real writer would have done what I did in Mr. Sweetland’s room. I was wrong, pure and simple. That’s all.” He turns away.

“Wait.” says Neely. “You’d better come in.”

“I don’t want to bother you if you’re working.”

“Ha! That’s the saddest joke in Highberger House. Working? We all just look at empty sheets of paper all day. Or worse, pages we’ve written on but are absolutely *shit!*”

Rob steps into complete chaos. The room of a hoarder, whose kept every last page he’s written on, every last newspaper he’s ever read.

“Wow. This is quite a collection.”

“Sit. Sit.” Neely says. “Let me give you some advice, which you can take or leave. Get out of here. It’s not a good place. Not for someone as young as you. I mean, you can do anything you want. Fuck writing. Nobody reads anymore anyway. I mean, do you think if they ever told our pathetic story people would *read* it? No, it’d be on screen, and we’d be shabby comic little caricatures.”

“What’s the movie poster for?”

“Oh, it’s a piece of my past.”

Rob stands up and looks at the poster more closely. It’s a horror film, with a screaming girl being menaced by two hands that are reaching out of the darkness towards her. Scaly black-green hands. The Demon’s hands. The movie’s called *The Terror From Below*. And the girl...well, it’s not Valerie – this girl’s a Hollywood bimbo with a fake look of terror on her face. But still...

“This is weird. Those hands. I know those hands.”

“Maybe you were the one who saw the damn movie. Piece of shit that it was.”

Rob reads from the credits. “Adapted from his novel by Neal Everest. Neal Everest, Everett Neely. Not exactly subtle.”

“So my guilty little secret’s out. Yes, I wrote a very bad horror novel in my youth, and they made it into an even worse piece of celluloid. I keep it up there because it was my little claim to fame. Isn’t that pathetic? That’s why I’m telling you, get out, get out, and never look back. Are you straight?”

“Yeah...why?”

“No, it’s good. It means you can do something really creative: make kids, shape them, give them so much love they won’t grow up with the hole inside them that everyone in this damn place has got in their guts. Ridiculous. Like you can ever fill a hole with words.”

“The monster – ”

“Oh are we back on that? You want the poster? Take it. Just please don’t tell that bitch Bloom that I’m a published author or I’m out on my ass.”

“I’ll keep quiet. I’m good at that. I had a Dad who liked to whoop me if I laughed too loud.” A pause. “Or laughed at all.”

“All of us. Big holes inside.”

“The monster in the movie. What was he called?”

“Othakeye, the Blood-Fiend from Hell. That was the title of the novel, so that was the first thing to go.”

“Your fiend is here. In the walls. I saw him.”

“No.”

“It’s got this girl in its control. And it looks like the beast in your movie.”

“It isn’t. Because it doesn’t exist. Whatever hallucinogenic you’re taking, my friend, you should cease before you fry your brain beyond – ”

“What happened in the story?”

“It doesn’t matter! They’re old wounds, almost healed.”

“Just tell me. Was it just a blood-fest?”

“No. Of course not. I’m not a panderer. The Fiend killed all the girls but one.

And this one he tormented but he couldn’t let her die.”

“Why her?”

“Enough. Out!”

Neely opens the door.

“And if you say one fucking word I will come in the night – you listen, you clever little fuck because I’m serious – I will come in the night with a very big knife and stop you from ever procreating. Do you understand me?”

“Everybody in this place is crazy.”

“What do you expect, we’re writers. Even the bad ones suffer, Mr. Hanisee.

That’s the pity of it.”

He shoves Rob out of his room and onto the stairs.

Rob listens. He can hear various noises from different rooms. Curses, a little typing, somebody playing a violin, badly.

He looks up into the great vault of the house, then he puts his head to the wall.

Nothing.

“Okay, Rob. Get out while you can.”

Cut to Rob in his room, madly shoving clothes into his suitcase, and books into his backpack.

His packing is interrupted by a scream.

Rob goes to his door. Nancy Bloom is standing at the open door of Bruce Sweetland's room.

"What happened?" Rob says.

"I let myself in." Nancy replies. "I had a strange feeling something was..."

Rob races down the stairs to Sweetland's room. He steps past Nancy, and sees the carnage.

"Jesus Christ."

"Don't touch anything." Nancy tells him. "Will somebody please call the police?"

Now there are people appearing from all the rooms, asking what's happened.

"There's been a murder." Nancy said. "Nobody leave! The police'll want to talk to everybody. This is terrible, terrible."

"Well that's the end of that," Patricia growls to Neely.

Back in Sweetland's room Rob is looking at the bloody footprints on the bare boards. There's the Fiend's footprints, and there's the petite prints of a young woman.

"Valerie..." he says softly.

Then he follows the prints to the wall, where they disappear. Again, he can't see any sign of a door. He puts his head to the wall. There's a long silence.

Then, *bang!* Something slams against the wall from the other side.

He stumbles back. The noise comes again, and again. A furious tattoo from inside the walls.

Cut to the rest of the residents, all around the house. They hear the banging just as loudly. Rob goes back to the door and looks at Nancy.

“Nothing behind the walls, huh?”

“Some things are just better...”

“All my imagination, was it?”

“...left alone.”

“I don’t think *my* imagination has anything to do with it.” He goes back to the pile of papers that has Sweetland’s secret project. The one with Valerie in it. He starts to leaf through it.