

Valerie On The Stairs

A Treatment

Part Three

Presented exclusively by
Revelations
www.clivebarker.info

© Clive Barker
January 17, 2006

“Don’t touch anything!” Nancy says. “The police – ”

“Fuck the police. I want Valerie.”

He goes to the *Valerie on the Stairs* manuscript. Picks it up.

The banging in the walls is still going on when Rob emerges from Sweetland’s room. He lifts up the manuscript.

“This is a big book. It’s called *Valerie on the Stairs*. And it took three writers to construct it. One was Sweetland. One was Neely, and I know what he contributed: The Fiend. But what about you, Patricia?”

“Don’t go blaming me for this.” Patricia says. “There’s no rules saying we can’t collaborate.”

“How long have you all been working on this?”

“Seven, eight years.” Patricia says.

“More like eleven.” Neely admits. Then: “What’s that hammering?”

“It’s your creation, Neely. It’s trying to warn us, all of us, that it’s fed up with being behind the walls.”

As he speaks, Rob climbs the stairs.

“I think between all three of you working on your secret masterpiece you brought some of it to life.”

“Ridiculous.” Patricia says.

“Why?” says Rob. “Think of all the lost dreams that have been dreamed in this house. Think of the energy that must be stored here. Creative juices, never released. Imagination trapped in here. All it needed was a focus. And you three gave it one.”

Valerie and The Fiend, The Beauty and The Beast. The house finally had somewhere to put all those frustrations. It made the words flesh.”

“I’m leaving.” Patricia says.

“You don’t believe this bullshit, do you?” Neely said.

“I don’t know. I just want to get the fuck out!” She goes back into her apartment.

We go into Patricia’s place as she packs. Outside, Rob and Neely are still talking.

We hear the dialogue as Patricia packs.

“I just want Valerie,” Rob says.

“She belongs to the Fiend, Hannisee.” Neely replies.

“Why?”

“Because we wrote her that way – ”

Patricia freezes. She hears something in the shadows of her apartment. She looks up, very slowly.

“Oh Christ Almighty.” she says.

Valerie is there. “One kiss, before you leave.”

“I was the one that made you beautiful.”

“I know.”

“You were the only woman who could never say no to me. And all the others did.”

“One kiss?”

Patricia melts. This is her dream-woman; the bewitching creature she wanted in her life for real, but never had. She opens her arms to her.

Valerie kisses her.

“Oh my sweet Valerie.” Patricia said, “The times I’ve imagined that.”

“So why let me be punished, over and over? Me and all the other girls?”

“Because I was just a sad, sour bitch nobody wanted to love. Hanissee’s right. I poured all my rage into that damn book. And all my love.” There are cathartic tears moving down her face now.

“If it means anything now, I’m truly sorry.”

Outside, the drumming has stopped. Rob is almost outside Patricia’s room.

“Hey, Patricia?”

“Leave us alone.”

“Us?”

He goes inside. Valerie is kissing Patricia properly now, turning her around as she does so. Now Patricia’s back is to the darkness in the recesses of her room. Rob studies the shadows.

“Patricia? I think you should get out of here.”

“Oh I know what you want, lover-boy. But you can’t have her. She’s mine. Isn’t that right, Valerie?”

Very slowly, Valerie shakes her head.

Angered, Patricia takes hold of Valerie’s wrist, attempting a more reasonable tone.

“Patricia.” Valerie says very quietly, “For your own good, take your hands off me.”

A long beat of silence. Then the Fiend appears out of the darkness.

“Let her go!” Rob yells.

But Patricia is too enamored of her creation to even realize her danger.

The Fiend raises its hand above Patricia's head. Rob races to save her. But even now, seconds from death, Patricia is still gazing at her dream-girl, her beautiful Valerie.

The Fiend drives his fingers down into Patricia's skull. Her eyes bleed, then pop out of her head, rolling down her cheeks still attached to the optic nerve. Blood spatters Valerie. She smiles.

"Valerie! Run!"

The Fiend throws Patricia's body at Rob. *She's still alive.* Her hands snatch at him, cling to him. He's horrified, backing out of the room with her still clinging to him.

"Neely?" Rob yells. "Your fucking Fiend is in there! Look for yourself! And will somebody get this woman off me?"

Neely goes back into his apartment.

"Neely, you fuck! Help me!"

Patricia, meanwhile, releases her hold on Rob, and falls back down the stairs, her open skull spilling blood as she rolls down the steps. She lands at Nancy Bloom's feet.

"Valerie..." she says, with the faintest of smiles on her face. Then she dies.

The rest of the writers do what they've done repeatedly: they slam their doors and lock them.

Only Neely reappears, with a gun in his hand.

"All right," he says, climbing the blood-slickened stairs to where Rob is standing. "I guess I'm a believer. Show me my Fiend."

"Not a good idea." Rob says. "Just give me your gun and go. It's killed the other two and you'll be next."

“But why?”

“It wants to be free. I think they both do. They don’t want you writing the ending. They want to live it for themselves. Give me the gun, Neely.”

“No. I want to see. I made the Fiend. I want to see it in the flesh. Not some guy in a rubber suit. The real thing.” He pushes the gun into Rob’s belly. “Get out of my way.”

Rob acquiesces.

Neely goes into Patricia’s room.

It’s dark and silent. Rob comes after him.

“Nothing.” Neely says.

“There!” Rob replies, pointing to a place where the eerie light from *inside* the wall is spilling out. He pushes past Neely, racing across the room. Patricia’s copy of the immense *Valerie on the Stairs* manuscript, piled high on her desk, topples as he knocks against it.

The pages fly everywhere. We see the words written in Patricia’s neat handwriting. *Valerie screamed* on one page. *Valerie felt the hot blood splash her naked body* on another.

Rob has reached the place where the light from inside the walls spills out. This time he’s fast enough to block the closing door with his body.

“Wait!” Neely says to Rob, who holds the door open until Neely gets to him. The space behind the walls is a lot more than a crawlspace, as Nancy had described. Yes, there are plenty of pipes and electrical wires, but there’s also a very steep weaving

stairway that leads down towards the source of the thickening light. To either side of the stairway it falls off into darkness.

“What’s down there?” Rob says to Neely. “Come on, you wrote it! *What’s down there?*”

“The Hell-Hole. The Fiend’s Private Torture Chamber.”

“You sick fucks.”

“The torture stuff was mostly Sweetland. He was a big de Sade fan. *Don’t look at me that way!*”

“Keep your voice down.”

“What for? He knows you’re coming. It was bound to happen sooner or later. Somebody with more balls than brains – ”

“Meaning me?” Neely makes a iron-committal face. “Go on.” Rob says.

“Somebody with more balls than brains – ”

“Would come down here to rescue her. That’s the way it was always going to end.”

“So why didn’t you just finish the fucking thing and try to find a publisher?”

“I don’t know about the others – I guess I’ll never know – but for me it was because I was addicted to it. Every night, picking up the threads where Pat or Bruce had left off and running on, letting the story get darker and darker, as the body-count mounted.”

“I thought there was only Valerie.”

“She’s the only one alive. But there were plenty of others. Sweetland would pick them up. Runaways, whores past their sell-date. Girls who’d never be missed.”

“And what, you fed them to him?”

Neely’s writerly sensibilities are offended. “God Almighty, Hanisee. We weren’t chopping them up and chucking the pieces into the Hell-Hole. Bruce would just get them high, then he’d fall asleep. And they’d be gone. No questions asked. Well that’s not really true. Bruce used to ask a lot of questions. Getting the girls’ stories. A lot of sad stuff.”

“Which you put in the book.”

“Of course.”

“So while the Fiend was torturing them to death down there – ”

“Now you’re making suppositions. I don’t care to think too much about what happened to them.”

“I bet you don’t.”

“Maybe he played with them and let them go. Anyway, they’re immortalized now, in the book. Names changed to protect their reputations.”

“You are a despicable piece of work, Neely. Who were you kidding? Hey? Who?”

Neely’s eyes fill with tears. “I wasn’t in my right mind. I know I should have done something to stop it, but it was my last chance to make something that would last.”

“*Valerie on the Stairs.*”

“That was my idea.”

“You sound proud, you ass-hole.”

“It’s the only thing – ”

“I know, I know, you’re searching for immortality.”

“Is that so bad? It’s not like I saw them murdered in front of me.”

“But you knew. In your heart, you knew.”

“It wasn’t as simple as that – ”

“You’re telling me you don’t know the difference between something you imagined and something that’s real?”

“Is there any? Really. They’re all in my head. The life I lived yesterday and the dreams I dreamed last night and the words I wrote this moment, all in here – ” He points his gun at his temple, makes a circular motion “—mixed up together.”

“You’re crazy.”

“What about you? You’re the one going after a girl who only exists because Bruce and Patricia and me wrote her into existence. Explain that.”

“I’m doing your job for you.” Rob says. “I’m finishing your fucking novel.”

This impresses Neely.

“Of course you are. That’s why you’re here isn’t it? To bring it all to a close, finally. Maybe we imagined you, Mr. Hanisee? Ever thought of that?”

“Bullshit.”

“Maybe if you live through all this and try to step out of the house, you won’t be able to.”

“No. No. No. I had a life before I came here – ”

“Backstory’s important.”

“And I’ll have one when this is over.”

“Will you? Will you indeed?”

“You need fucking therapy.”

“No, I need a fucking best-seller. So give me my ending and we’ll all be happy.”

They go on down the stairs, and with every step they take it becomes more obvious that they have left the relatively sane world of the House behind them and are descending into an Expressionist nightmare. The stairs are no longer connected to a structure but seem to hang in the darkness, like unreliable stepping stones over a smokey abyss.

“Did you write about this place?”

“No, it was mostly Sweetland who wrote the scenes down here. He had some experiences, with drugs...”

A naked female body swings into their path, the skin tore in strips from her body so that she looks like a human zebra.

“Christ!” Rob almost falls off the step he’s on. Down below in the darkness serpentine forms slither, like a vast nest of mating anacondas. Neely grabs him.

“What the fuck are they?” Rob says, looking down into the pit below.

“Some of his children.”

“Children? How the hell – ?”

He’s about to get his answer, as the dead woman’s head starts twisting around violently. Her spinal cord separates from her skull. The flesh around her neck tears open; black viscous fluid pours out. Rob backs up a stair or two. The whole corpse is shaking now, and there’s a noise of excited hissing and whispering from the pit of the Fiend’s Children.

The woman’s head separates from her neck, and hits the stairs, lying there staring up at Rob. And then, out of the severed neck comes a flood of birth fluid and then,

writhing out of the open wound, the head of the Fiend Child. It looks like something from a deep-sea trench.

“That is the ugliest motherfucker I have ever seen.”

Neely smiles. “Thank you. That was the intention.”

The Fiend-Child doesn't have its father's coloring yet: its flesh is translucent, showing the intricacies of its jaws and eyes.

“Stay back, Hannisee.” Neely advises. “It's hungry. They're all hungry. He'll feed them the mother's corpse later.”

The Fiend-Child has seen Rob. It curls back its lips like a rabid dog.

“Metal teeth?”

“That was one of Patricia's little contributions. She was good with the details.”

“You sound *proud*.”

“I...I suppose I am.” Neely confesses. He laughs nervously at the admission. “I know, it's sick, it's perverted. But how often does an author get to see the thing he wrote about right in front of him?”

Neely is mesmerized by the grotesque beauty of the thing. He reaches past Rob, pointing at the thing.

“See the markings on its head – ”

In a heart-beat the creature lunges, biting off three of Neely's fingers. He screams.

We cut outside, into the house, as Neely's screaming echoes around and around. In Sweetland's room the pile of manuscript pages blow around in a gust from the open window. Some land in Sweetland's blood. We see his typed words:

“Snap! The Fiend-Child bites off his fingers – ”

Blood soaks through the paper, obliterating the words.

And we’re back on the stairs again, as Neely watches blood spurting from the stumps of his fingers. He’s stopped screaming.

“I wasn’t supposed to be here. This wasn’t supposed to be me.”

Rob takes the gun from Neely’s other hand.

“You said it was all the same in the end, right?”

“Not like this! Not like this!”

Rob raises the gun. The Fiend-Child bites on the muzzle. Rob fires.