

"DEADLIGHTS"
(WORKING TITLE)
by
Steve Johnson

FIRST DRAFT
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EXT. FARM/CORNFIELD - NIGHT

FADE IN:

We see a remote, three-storey farmhouse. The house is surrounded by fields of corn (maize) and, beyond that, the horizon is dominated by trees. A single, dirt road connects the farm to the main road, two miles away. Apart from the farmhouse, the site has a stable and a large barn.

A group of paranormal investigators are standing by the cornfield, looking at some odd lights that appear to be moving about in the crop. They are ART, the team leader, STEVE, TOMMY, RACHAEL and BECKY. STEVE and BECKY are carrying camcorders and recording the event.

STEVE

(whispering)

What the fuck are they?

ART

Is it somebody screwing around with a flashlight?

RACHAEL

(shouts)

HELLO?

ART

Jesus, Becky! What are you doing?

RACHAEL

If it's somebody messing with us, I want to know.

TOMMY

(smiling)

And they'll just shout hello right back, eh, Rach?

RACHAEL gives him a stern look.

RACHAEL

Well, what do you want to do, brainiac?
Go out there?

TOMMY

Sure...

TOMMY sets off into the cornfield, but as he does, the lights dart up into the sky and disappear.

STEVE

(looking up and pointing his
camcorder skyward)

Fuck me!

ART

I don't think it's somebody screwing
with us.

THEY ALL set off after TOMMY, who is now ahead of them in
the corn.

BECKY

(to STEVE)

I think this is a bad idea.

STEVE

You kidding? This is amazing. We came
here to catch this shit on film and
we've done just that.

BECKY

I know, but I have a bad feeling about
all this.

STEVE

(smiling)

Thanks, Obi Wan.

They soon catch up with TOMMY. He is standing in the corn,
looking around.

TOMMY

I think they were here. Can you smell
it?

ART sniffs the air.

ART

Yeah, there's a kind of sulphur smell.

STEVE

Stinks like one of Tommy's farts, if you
ask me.

TOMMY

(smiling)

Smartass. No, seriously. This is great stuff.

(he looks around the ground between the stalks of corn.)

It could be somebody playing games, breaking stinkbombs and running away.

ART

How do you explain the lights moving into the sky?

TOMMY

Paper lanterns? I don't know.

Suddenly, RACHAEL points towards the farmhouse.

RACHAEL

Look!

THEY ALL follow her outstretched arm and see more lights close to the farmhouse. They appear to be between the house and a stand of trees behind. They are shimmering multicolours and much brighter the ones they saw only a minute or so before.

STEVE

You think it's somebody screwing with us now? How the hell did they get over there so quickly?

ART

Come on.

THEY ALL set off back towards the farmhouse.

FADE OUT.

EXT. FARM - NIGHT

FADE IN:

THE GROUP arrive back at the farm and make their way to the back of the house. The lights can be seen dancing in the woods not far away. There is a slight buzzing sound in the air, hardly discernible.

As they approach, the lights blink out and the buzzing stops.

ART

For crying out loud! Cut us a break, here.

TOMMY

(shouting towards the trees}
Come out here, assholes! We know you're
in there.

(no response for two or three
seconds.)

Dickheads!

TOMMY, STEVE, RACHAEL and BECKY begin talking to each other, but we cannot hear them. We are focused on ART, who has seen something. He strains his eyes and peers into the trees. He can see a red light, very faint, in the woods.

TOMMY

(in the background)
This is bullshit, guys.

RACHAEL

(in the background)
We're being paid to check this place
out, Tommy. People went missing here!

ART sets off by himself and steps into the treeline, leaving the others to their argument. He makes his way through the trees

TOMMY

(very faintly)
People disappear all the time. Doesn't
mean aliens took 'em!

ART can now see the red light ahead of him. It is hanging in the air and pulsing slowly, like a giant, glowing heart beating. There is also a low, deep thumping sound, again, like that of a heart beating. He steps closer, his feet cracking the underbrush. Suddenly, the object begins pulsing more rapidly and the thumping also increases in rapidity. ART is enveloped by a red glow and he stands stiffly with his arms at his side.

The glow fades until it is gone and ART is alone in the dark woods. We close in on his face. His eyes are closed. As we zoom in, his eyelids snap open. His eyes are blazing red! He blinks several times and his eyes return to normal. He smiles, turns around and heads back towards the farm

FADE OUT.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

FADE IN:

THE TEAM are sitting around the large, wooden kitchen table of the farmhouse. They are still arguing about the lights they have seen, except for ART, who is sitting quietly.

STEVE

C'mon, Tommy, I know you know it wasn't some idiots with flashlights and paper lanterns.

TOMMY

How do we know it wasn't? What's more likely, this crappy farm being a target for aliens from God-knows-where, or some snot-nosed, little motherfuckers want to shine us on?

STEVE laughs and throws his hands in the air in defeat.

RACHAEL

What do you think, Art?

ART seems not to notice here question.

RACHAEL

Earth to Art? Hello?

ART's eyes blink and he comes out of his reverie.

ART

Sorry, Rach. What?

RACHAEL

Do you think we're wasting our time here?

ART

Definitely not. In fact, I think we should split into groups. That way, we can cover more ground.

(he scans the table)

Steve, you and Rachael can check out the house. Tommy and me will scope out the barn. Becky, you can stay on the porch and see if the lights return.

ART (CONT.)

Okay?

THEY ALL nod and split into their groups. ART and TOMMY head out of the house through the kitchen door, followed by BECKY, while STEVE and RACHAEL head upstairs.

CUT.

EXT. FARMHOUSE/PORCH - NIGHT

BECKY leans against the porch railing and watches ART and TOMMY enter the barn. She then turns on the camcorder and begins filming the area.

CUT.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

The inside of the barn is dark and musky. ART and TOMMY are using flashlights, their beams illuminating bales of hay and various farmyard tools hanging on hooks around the structure.

TOMMY

Why are we looking around an old barn?

ART

Why are you should a fucking drag,
Tommy?

TOMMY

(laughs)

What?

ART moves around TOMMY towards an array of sharp tools on the wall of the barn.

ART

How long have we been friends? Five
years?

TOMMY

Something like that. What are you
getting at, Art?

TOMMY watches ART in the beam of his flashlight. He is smiling, but there is something about his friend's demeanour that unsettles him.

ART

You helped me set up this group, yet you
don't believe in anything paranormal.

TOMMY

I'm a skeptic. Big difference.

TOMMY resumes scanning the barn with his flashlight. In the darkness, we dimly see ART take something from the wall.

ART

Exactly. You're a fuckin' drag and I
think it's time we started clearing
house.

TOMMY turns around to protest. His flashlight catches the glint of metal as ART slashes a sickle across his friend's throat. Deep, red blood pours from the wound and TOMMY's hands clutch at it feebly. He sinks to his knees, his breath nothing more than a gurgling rasp.

ART drops the sickle and heads out of the barn.

CUT.

EXT. FARMHOUSE/PORCH - NIGHT

BECKY watches as ART exits the barn and begins walking towards her. She senses that something is wrong and lowers the camcorder. She sees blood on his clothes and hands and a shocked, terrified expression appears on her face. She runs into the house and slams the door shut.

CUT.

EXT. FARMHOUSE/YARD - NIGHT

ART watches as BECKY enters the house and stops several yards from the farmhouse. He looks at his hands and clothes, looks towards the house and smiles.

CUT.

INT. FARMHOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

STEVE and RACHAEL are in one of the bedrooms of the farmhouse. STEVE is recording with the camcorder when they hear the loud bang of the front door slamming shut.

STEVE

What the hell?
(he crosses to the window and looks
out)
Hey, Rachael. Check this out.

RACHAEL joins him at the window and we see their POV. ART is standing in the farmyard, smiling towards the house. Suddenly, he is bathed in brilliant, white light, a light that, seemingly, has no source. It is just there, surrounding him. His body arches and he appears to be convulsing.

RACHAEL

Christ! (beat) ART!

STEVE begins recording the event.

RACHAEL

Never mind the fucking camera, Steve. Go help him.

Footsteps behind them can be heard as BECKY thunders into the room, panting.

BECKY

Something's wrong, so fucking badly wrong.

She slumps onto the bed.

RACHAEL

(leaving STEVE filming at the
window)
What's going on, Becky?

BECKY

(breathless)
I watched Tommy and Art go into the barn. Then Art came out covered in blood. I think he killed Tommy.

STEVE

(over his shoulder)
What? Are you fucking nuts?

Light is still streaming in from outside.

BECKY

I know what I saw, Steve. Something's controlling him. He's been acting weird ever since we came back to the house.

RACHAEL

She's right, Steve. I think we should get the hell out of here.

The light blinks out and STEVE turns from the window.

STEVE
He's coming.

CUT.

EXT. FARMHOUSE/PORCH - NIGHT

ART climbs the steps of the porch and turns the front door handle. BECKY has locked it. He grips the handle more tightly and pushes. The door slides open easily, as though his grip somehow released the lock. He steps inside.

CUT.

INT. FARMHOUSE/HALL - NIGHT

The interior of the farmhouse is deceptively homely. The lights are on and the only clue that nobody lives there are the white sheets over most of the furnishings.

ART walks to the foot of the stairs and gazes, without emotion, up into the darkness above.

ART
Guys? You there?

CUT.

INT. FARMHOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

STEVE, RACHAEL and BECKY are huddled in the bedroom, terrified.

ART
(O.S.)
Hello? You guys up there?

They don't reply.

ART
Okay, ready or not, here I come.

STEVE
Shit! He's gone fuckin' Jack Nicholson
on us!

STEVE and RACHAEL get to their feet, while BECKY peers out of the door. She sees ART slowly climbing the stairs. He looks straight at her and smiles. She shrieks and slams the door shut.

BECKY
Oh, fuck! Oh, fuck!

STEVE
The window! We can climb out onto the

porch roof. Come on!

STEVE crosses to the window and opens it. He peers out and brings his head back in, gesturing for RACHAEL and BECKY to come to him. RACHAEL joins him at the window, but BECKY is rooted to the spot, holding the door closed by the handle.

We see the handle turn and she grips it tighter.

BECKY

(panicked whisper)

Shit, no.

RACHAEL

Come on!

BECKY

I can't. If I let go, he'll get in. You two go. I'll be right behind you.

STEVE

Rebecca!

BECKY

(shouts)

GO!

STEVE and RACHAEL clamber out of the window, leaving BECKY alone in the bedroom.

The door handle turns again and the door opens slightly. She puts all her weight against it, forcing it shut once more. She whimpers pathetically.

ART

(O.S.)

Becky? What's wrong? Why won't you let me in?

BECKY

Go away, Art!

ART

(O.S.)

I know the others have gone out the window. They left you all alone. Open the door and we can talk.

BECKY

They're right here, Art. Come in and Steve will kick your ass.

ART chuckles and, after a pause, we hear a bang on the door. BECKY screams in terror.

ART

(O.S.)

Let me in, Rebecca. Or I'll huff and
I'll puff...

BECKY

(whispering to herself)

You gotta be fucking kidding.

Suddenly, the door bursts inwards and we see ART standing there. His eyes blaze red for an instant before returning to normal.

BECKY tries to run to the window, but ART grabs her by the hair and flings her onto the floor. She bangs her head on a chest of drawers and blood begins to flow down her forehead.

ART

Now look what you made me do.

BECKY

(trying to scramble away)

What's the fuck wrong with you, Art? Why
are you doing this?

ART stops and looks wistfully around, as though in thought.

ART

Actually, I don't know. I have these
thoughts in my head and I don't know if
they're mine or somebody else's.

BECKY

What are you saying?

ART

I'm not saying anything. They are saying quite a lot, though.

(he points towards the ceiling and

BECKY looks at him quizzically)

You know? Them? The lights?

BECKY

The UFOs?

ART laughs and kneels down in front of BECKY. She is against the wall by now and cannot escape.

ART

UFOs. You know, I used to believe all kinds of dumb shit about ghosts, UFOs, Bigfoot and, you know what? None of it matters because none of it is true.

BECKY

(tears streaming down her face)

What do you mean?

ART

I don't know, Rebecca. I don't know what I mean. I just know it's all wrong, yet it's all right, at the same time. Stand up. Come on. Stand up.

ART gets back to his feet and BECKY slowly climbs up to stand in front of him. She is shaking like a leaf, absolutely petrified.

RACHAEL

(O.S.)

Becky! Come on! BECKY!

ART crosses to the window and looks out.

ART

She'll be right down. Just having a quick word.

He comes back inside.

ART

Now, where was I? Oh, yes, the exposition. There's a darker universe out there, Rebecca. Darker, deeper and more twisted than any human can imagine. It is also hungry. Christ, is it hungry, but it's also picky. It won't eat just anything or else, we'd all have been gobbled up long ago. No, it needs to feed on terror.

BECKY

(edging towards the window)
I don't know what you mean. It?

ART

It! The universe. Or rather the dark heart of the universe. The deepest, darkest part that binds the cosmos together. The universe could not exist without it. Life could not exist without it. And it needs that life to sustain itself. And that life needs to be afraid.

BECKY

(by the window now)
I don't understand, Art. Are you talking about Hell? Demons?

ART

(turns away from her)
Oh, Rebecca. I don't really know. What is Hell? What are demons? Are they aliens? Maybe. Maybe not. Who gives a fuck anyway? All I know is what they are telling me right now.

BECKY

What are they telling you?

ART

(turns back to her with blazing red eyes)
They're starving!

ART launches himself at BECKY and his teeth clamp around her throat, tearing it out in a swift, single motion. He backs away and watches as she drops to the floor. Blood oozes from the wound, staining the carpet black. Her eyes are open, but we see the light slowly fade from them as she dies.

ART

Yummy.

(he goes to the window)

Sorry, guys. Becky decided to stay for dinner.

CUT.

EXT. FARMHOUSE/YARD - NIGHT

STEVE and RACHAEL watch as ART, his mouth smeared with blood retreats back into the bedroom.

STEVE

(screaming)

You motherfucker! I'll fucking kill you!

STEVE begins to head back towards the house, but RACHAEL grabs him.

RACHAEL

No, Steve. He'll kill you. We need to find Tommy and get the hell out of here.

STEVE

Tommy's fucking dead, Rach. You saw what he just did to Becky.

RACHAEL

We don't know for sure if Tommy's dead.

They head towards the barn and STEVE pulls open the door. They step inside.

CUT.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

STEVE flicks on the light on his camcorder and scans the barn for any sign of TOMMY. They walk slowly inside, RACHAEL clutching STEVE's arm tightly.

STEVE

(whispering loudly)

Tommy? (beat) Tommy!

RACHAEL gasps and STEVE follows her gaze.

STEVE

Oh, fuck, no.

TOMMY is lying in a pool of blood, a deep, even wound across his throat. STEVE kneels down beside his friend and closes TOMMY's eyes.

STEVE

Sorry, dude.

(stands back up)

I guess we get the fuck out of here. Get out of here and call the cops.

RACHAEL nods, tears streaming down her face. They turn to leave, but stop when the barn is bathed in light from outside. A deep, bass rumbling can be heard and all the implements in the building begin to rattle and shake.

Suddenly, a pitchfork flies from the wall and embeds itself in STEVE's leg. He cries out in pain and falls to one knee. RACHAEL pulls out the pitchfork, causing STEVE to cry out again. He tries to stand, but falls down again. He shakes his head.

STEVE

It's no good. You go. Get to the car and get out of here.

(he grabs the pitchfork)

I'll be fine. If that fucker tries anything on me, I'll skewer the son of a bitch.

RACHAEL

I can't leave you here by yourself.

STEVE

You think I fuckin' want you to? Go before he gets here!

RACHAEL staggers to her feet and heads out of the barn. As soon as she does, the lights go out and all is in darkness again, except for the light from STEVE's camcorder.

CUT.

EXT. FARMHOUSE/YARD - NIGHT

RACHAEL looks around, sees nothing and races towards the MPV parked in front of the stables. She gets to the vehicle and pulls the door open. She climbs into the driver's seat, but there is no key in the ignition.

RACHAEL

Shit! Art has the keys. Fuck!

She bangs the steering wheel and, after a moment, opens the door and gets out.

STEVE has dragged himself to the barn door and is looking out. His face contorts with horror at what he sees.

RACHAEL gets out of the car, straight into the form of ART standing there, smiling beneath BECKY's blood. Before she can do anything, he clasps his hand around her throat and picks her up off the ground. Off-screen, we can hear STEVE screaming at ART to let her go.

ART lifts RACHAEL higher, his arm as high as it can go. RACHAEL kicks at him feebly, her fingernails clawing at his hand, drawing deep cuts across the skin. He does not relinquish his grip, though. A bright flash WHITES-OUT the screen and when we can see again, RACHAEL is gone. ART has his empty arm still stretched skyward.

He slowly lowers his arm and turns towards STEVE in the barn. Blood drips from the scratches on his hand as he slowly walks towards the barn.

CUT.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

STEVE watches in horror as ART slowly trudges towards him. He closes the barn door and retreats inside, using the pitchfork as a crutch. He reaches the back wall of the barn and leans against it, bringing up the pitchfork so its prongs are pointing out in front of him.

The barn door bursts open to reveal ART. Brilliant light casts him in silhouette, his matted, bloody hair giving the impression of small horns on top of his head.

ART

Steve, Steve, Steve. What am I going to do with Steve?

He steps inside the barn and the doors swing shut by themselves. The lights dim, but do not go out completely.

STEVE

Get the fuck away from me! You're a crazy bastard, Art. You need help.

ART

(smiling)

I need help? What makes you think I need anything from you?

STEVE

What?

ART

I don't need anything any longer. I've gone self-sufficient. (chuckles) I always knew I could go green. They provide for me now.

(ART points upwards with his finger.)

Whoever the fuck they are.

STEVE

Art, please. Don't hurt me.

ART

(mimicking)

Art, please. Don't hurt me.

ART moves towards STEVE and the pitchfork gets jabbed in his direction. He backs away, still smiling.

ART

Pitchfork. Nice touch. You know? We never talked, did we?

STEVE

Huh? We always talked.

ART

No, I mean really talked. Tommy and I talked a lot.

(he crosses to TOMMY's dead body and grabs his mouth, moving it like a puppet.)

'Yes, Art, we talked a lot.'

STEVE

(almost blubbering, both in pain and fear. Blood is streaming down his leg and he is growing pale.)

You sick fuck.

ART

Yeah. What can I do?

(he lets go of TOMMY's head and stands back up.)

Life's a bitch and then... you know the rest.

(he turns away from STEVE and raises his arms horizontally, as though mimicking crucifixion.)

Tommy and I talked a lot. We talked about ghosts. We talked about UFOs. We talked about fucking Rachael and Becky in a foursome. (beat) Never happened, though. Tommy and I were friends.

STEVE

You murdered Tommy.

ART

Semantics. I enabled Tommy to move on to the next level of consciousness. Same with Becky and Rachael. Death is just the beginning... as they say.

STEVE

(stepping forward a few feet)

You mean there's life after death? You know this?

ART

(still with his back to STEVE)

No. I lied. They're dead. Dead. Gone. Wormfood. Blah blah blah.

ART turns back to face STEVE and grimaces as the pitchfork is plunged into his gut. STEVE roars with hatred, newfound strength coursing through his body. He pushes ART towards a wooden post and thrusts hard against the fork handle.

The prongs penetrate deep into ART's body and exit out of his back and into the wooden post, pinning him there.

ART looks at STEVE, surprise on his face.

ART

Dude, you stabbed me.

Then ART slumps forward, seemingly dead. The lights go out outside and we see blood dripping from ART's mouth. STEVE sees the car keys hanging from ART's belt and grabs them. He staggers out of the barn, pain from his injured leg contorting his face.

CUT.

EXT. FARMHOUSE/YARD - NIGHT

STEVE falls against the car, his breathing laboured. He opens the door and climbs inside. He inserts the key into the ignition and turns it. The engine roars into life and he drives away from the farm, down the dirt road that leads to the highway.

CUT.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Our POV is from the passenger seat as STEVE drives away from the farm. He winces with pain and glances down at his leg. The bleeding appears to have slowed, but it still hurts like hell. Then he looks in the rearview mirror at the farm receding into the distance.

Suddenly, a pair of blazing, red eyes appear in the mirror. STEVE screams and we CUT TO BLACK, hearing the screeching of tyres and a huge crashing noise.

THE END

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