

THE FRAME OF THE OPEN DOOR  
by  
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FADE IN:

INT. COTTAGE - MORNING

ANN HOOD(28) stands in a narrow hallway, outside of a small bedroom. She leans through the open door where

BETH HOOD(25), in bed, starts to wake up.

ANN

I'm taking down the protection spell.

Beth rubs her eyes, stretches in bed, mumbles...

BETH

Oh... it's too early in the morning...

Beth peeks out from the covers, sees Ann has left -- groans, pulls the blanket over her face.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Small neat room, sloped ceiling, window above the sink shows beautiful green and purple hills outside.

Windowsill holds a vase with sprigs of dried lavender, tied with a string.

Ann strikes a match, takes the lavender to the sink, burns it, quickly.

ANN

"Let our powers touch all, without separation, dark and light, welcome."

Sudden wind roars, outside.

Ann starts a pot of tea.

Beth, dressed but sleepy eyed, shuffles into the kitchen.

BETH

Who do you suppose came to me in a dream, last night?

ANN

All the Knights Of The Round Table?

BETH

Harry Dell.

ANN

Harry Dell, why? Didn't he kill himself in early winter, some time?

BETH

Yeah, first snow. I was thinking I'd bring flowers by that place on the cliff where he jumped.

ANN

Fresh air'll be good for you.

Beth switches on a radio (sound of static) then sits at the kitchen table.

Outside the walls, howling wind.

BETH

So, why undo the spell? In case demons rip out my heart, just so I know, for my own curiosity...

Twinges of doubt on Ann's pretty face, she looks more age-worn than before.

ANN

I woke up thinking about a tidal wave somewhere south, don't ask me where, but bad, maybe an earthquake.

BETH

Well, quit thinking it.

Voice from the radio, suddenly loud and clear.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Earthquake, off the coast of South America, expected to be devastating --

Radio drops off to quiet static.

Ann taps on the window --

ANN

There's Mary...

EXT. HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

MARY HOOD (22) walks, happily, toward the cottage -- pleasant, sunny day, no sign of tumultuous windstorm.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ann waves through the window to Mary, approaching.

ANN

What's Mary's favorite, black tea or camomile, I can never remember...

Beth, at the table, puts her head down in pain, wipes blood from her forehead and scalp.

BETH  
Bleeding headaches...

ANN  
Nobody gets Crown Of Thorns headaches like you except Jesus, rest his soul.

Beth starts to laugh.

ANN (CONT'D)  
What'd I say... oh, Jesus! What am I talking about... Jesus, rise from the dead, then rest your soul.

BETH  
Got that, Son of God? Hope you're writing that down --

ANN  
God loves a fool. Here's our tea.

Ann sets mugs on the table, then rinses a cloth in the sink, applies it to Beth's forehead.

Beth squints in pain, nods, appreciatively, places the damp cloth over her collar. She moves the mugs to the side of the table, and carefully brushes crumbs from the table.

Ann opens a wooden box from a shelf, takes out a scarf-wrapped bundle, hands it, carefully, to Beth.

Beth unwraps the bundle, reveals a deck of tarot cards, she smooths the scarf across the table, sets the cards on top.

ANN (CONT'D)  
South America, that fellow on the radio said, earthquake...

Beth nods, blood shows on her forehead, she studies the scarf, (it shows an orange-peel type map of the world).

BETH  
All's I know about South America... "the coastline of Chile is long and narrow" or is that Argentina...

They both laugh, smears of blood show through Beth's hair.

Ann opens the kitchen door, sun pours in, it's a quiet, pleasant day.

Ann calls outside, toward Mary.

ANN

Hey, there, prettiest girl in town!

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Mary smiles, waves toward the cottage, calls out --

MARY

Hey, there, prettiest girls in town!

INT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

ANN

Come in and join us for breakfast.  
We're working on an earthquake.

Beth concentrates as she cuts the tarot deck into three piles, then smiles, joyfully, at the cards.

Ann steps back into the shadowed kitchen, coughs violently, suddenly, goes to the sink, retching blood.

BETH

Alright, there, Annie girl?

ANN

Touch of the plague. Galloping  
consumption. Same old same old.

Ann shudders with dry heaves. Sound of wind, outside.

ANN (CONT'D)

Tell me what cards you see...

BETH

Ah, all love; The Two Of Cups...

Beth touches a card that shows a young couple offering each other chalices -- touches the next card; the full moon watching a weary figure retreat from eight stacked chalices --

BETH (CONT'D)

The Eight Of Cups --

ANN

Dreamy... love overload...

Beth holds her hand above the third card; three swords piercing a pink heart, covered in driving rain.

BETH

And the brave Three Of Hearts.

ANN

"Earth's the right place for love,"  
said Robert Frost. Welsh, was he?

BETH

Maybe he was, part. Anyway, love's  
in the air, for sure.

Ann slowly moves back to the table, sits.

Mary knocks on the frame of the open back door, Ann rises,  
goes to greet Mary.

In the doorway, Mary looks young and beautiful, Ann, in  
sunshine, also looks young and beautiful.

Sound of howling wind, outside the cottage.

Mary shudders, looks to Beth (pale, worried), at the table --

MARY

Uh-oh, what's stole our gold and  
left us for dead?

BETH

Earthquake, tidal wave, anything  
else you want.

MARY

No protection spell, I see. The  
wind sounds like freight trains,  
where's it coming from, south?

Mary takes a crystal on a string from her pocket, holds it  
over the table, Beth smooths the scarf map of the world across  
the table, crystal hovers over South America.

BETH

What's that, Peru? Peru...

MARY

Always wanted to go there.

ANN

Beth was just going out to where  
Harry Dell jumped from the cliff.

BETH

Maybe I shouldn't go, after all.

MARY

Sure, go. I'll hold down the fort,  
here, with Ann, 'til you get back.

Beth reconsiders, finds a rosary in her pocket, kisses the cross, wraps the beads around her neck like a scarf.

BETH  
Then, I'll go.

MARY  
Look how she puts it around her neck.  
Well, if a demon tries to choke you --

BETH  
He'll have to choke me with my own  
rosary, and just let him try.

Big gust of wind outside, rattles the walls. Beth departs the cottage, she looks pale and stoop shouldered.

EXT. HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Beth looks young, beautiful again, walks quickly, easily.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mary washes her hands at the sink, returns to the table, shuffles the tarot cards, cuts three piles -- smiles, joyfully, at the cards: Chariot, Tower, Two Of Swords.

ANN  
Yea, upheaval, for sure --

Mary holds her hand over the Tower (of Babel) card, her hand trembles, her nose and eyes bleed.

MARY  
Where's Peru at, on the map, exactly.

Ann reaches across the table to tap on the scarf map.

Big gust of wind sounds outside, Ann is thrown from the chair, back against the wall, her body goes rigid and then slides to the floor as if shattered by the impact.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Tidal wave and earthquake in Peru --

Ann's voice, weakly, from the floor...

ANN  
So I understand!

Ann struggles to stand, her face is bruised, bleeding, her right arm hangs at an angle as if broken.

Mary keeps her eyes on the cards, reforms the tarot deck.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Potentially devastating floods!

ANN  
Mary, look at the beads, all over!

Unstrung rosary beads appear, scattered across the table.

Mary starts to speak, her teeth shine, red with blood. Ann sits back at the table, moving with difficulty.

ANN (CONT'D)  
Like rubies. And pomegranate seeds...

Mary pushes her chair away from the table.

MARY  
Oh, bleeding teeth. Ann, the beads...  
Does it mean Beth's soul passed on?

ANN  
(weakly)  
We can't say for sure, with the  
earthquake and all...

Mary struggles to get to the sink, rinses her face, brings a clean damp cloth to Ann to soothe her face and neck.

ANN (CONT'D)  
It's a comfort, you being here...

MARY  
I want to help those poor people in  
the earthquake, what's wrong with  
me? I'm drawing a blank --

Ann and Mary both flinch in sudden, violent pain.

Ann struggles with one hand to shuffle the tarot deck, three cards slide from her hand, across the table.

The Eight Of Swords, Judgment, The Five Of Pentacles. Ann smiles, as if the cards had the answer to everything.

ANN  
"Release from indecision!"

Smoke swirls around their heads, Ann and Mary gag, gasp.

MARY  
Smells like vengeance!

ANN

Clair Dell, Harry Dell's mother. She blamed our Beth for Harry pitching himself over the cliff.

Mary gets back to the sink, retches violently, rinses the sink, splashes water on her own face.

MARY

That's terrible to blame poor Bethie --

Mary retches, again, at the sink, Ann looks very ill --

Sudden blinding light hits the kitchen -- angry, stark white figure of CLAIR DELL (60) appears in the kitchen.

ANN

Well, make yourself at home, Clair, why don't you --

Clair narrows her eyes in hate-filled rage.

MARY

What can we do for you, Clair...

CLAIR

I've come from my grave for vengeance!

Ann and Mary gasp, cough, struggle to breathe.

ANN

I'll pour you a cup of tea, Clair, would you like some milk with it?

MARY

And a biscuit for Clair, if it's not too much trouble, Annie.

ANN

For Clair? No trouble at all.

CLAIR

I'll plague this house and that sister of yours until I have my revenge!

ANN

Sit down, Clair, you wouldn't hurt our poor Bethie, now, would you?

Clair stomps her foot, unstrung beads fly around the room.

Back door slams shut then flies open -- Beth, in the doorway looks healthy, young, beautiful -- doesn't see Clair, yet.

BETH  
 Forgot money, for roses.

Clair stretches out ghostly arms, Ann, Mary and Beth cough.

CLAIR  
 Didn't stay long at my Harry's death  
 site, did you? Couldn't stomach  
 your own crime, could you!

BETH  
 (gasping)  
 I forgot my wallet --

Clair flings crystal beads in the air, they slash Ann, Mary  
 and Beth across their faces.

CLAIR  
 My son died for your cruelty! Because  
 you never had time for him!

BETH  
 It wasn't like that!

ANN  
 Clair, don't you remember there was  
 the terrible fighting in the Holy  
 Lands, then, it was all we could do  
 to keep the world in one piece --

MARY  
 We can only do so much at one time --

Beth gasps, stumbles toward Clair.

BETH  
 Too many balls in the air at once --  
 I'd never hurt Harry on purpose...

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
 Probable death toll rising from the  
 floods as well as the earthquake --

ANN  
 Don't you want Beth to buy lovely  
 flowers for Harry...

Clair's wrath fades, her strength wanes, her ghostly form  
 sits at the table, wearily.

MARY  
 We'll get a fresh cup for tea --

CLAIR

(confused)

If I hurt those people in the earthquake, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to --

MARY, BETH AND ANN

Well, sure, we know...

CLAIR

Beth, were you really going for flowers from the florist? Roses?

BETH

I'll go right now, if you like --

CLAIR

Thank you, oh, dear, I'm sorry --

Clair fades away, mumbling apologies.

MARY, BETH AND ANN

Oh, it's all right...

Clair is gone, returns momentarily, touches Beth's hurt arm, which seems to heal. The slash marks on Beth, Ann and Mary's faces fade.

Clair's gone, again.

MARY

Could it be Clair that made the earthquake and all that?

Ann rolls her eyes at the improbability.

BETH

I'm going. You two alright?

ANN

Sure, and Clair's took that stench away. She always kept a clean house.

Beth leaves. Ann empties the mugs into the sink, starts to make fresh tea.

Mary shuffles the tarot deck, turns up three cards; The Fool, The Ace Of Pentacles, and a juggler balancing two pentacles in a figure-eight.

MARY

Ace Of Pentacles! That's luck. And my favorite, the juggler.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
(excited)  
New reports, earthquake damage may  
have missed the populated areas,  
we're trying to get confirmation --

Mary scoops up some loose rosary beads from the table.

MARY  
And welcome, Mr. Announcer Man. And  
balls in the air to you, too.

FADE TO BLACK