

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

PATIENTS, of varying ages, sit in the waiting room of the private practice. A PATIENT, a male in his upper 40's, CRASHES through the doors from the exam area, falling onto the ground yelling unintelligibly. Several NURSES, varying ages, work to restrain the Patient as DR. ROBERT REMPES, mid 30's, emerges from the doors and shouts to the head nurse, AMANDA MULLENS, late 30's.

ROBERT

Amanda, get a mobile unit here,  
immediately! We need to get him to  
the E.R.!

The other patients look on in terror and confusion as the man continues to thrash about and convulse.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Sir, you're going to be okay. Can  
you hear me? Sir?... Sir!

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Robert sits at his desk shuffling through papers. He skims over a few and then throws some aside. His wife, BARBARA REMPES, late 20's, enters the room.

BARBARA

Babe, you should come to bed. Get  
some rest.

ROBERT

You know I can't do that. People  
are trying to sue the practice,  
patients getting sick left and  
right. I have to figure out what's  
going on.

BARBARA

It's not good for you to work  
yourself so hard over this.  
Everything will work out.

ROBERT

I can't take that chance. People's  
lives and jobs are on the line.

Robert looks down at the papers on his desk again.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I have to find out why these people  
are getting sick.

BARBARA

Well, at least take some time off then. You've been at the office all day and then you come here and close yourself off in this office. Look at yourself.

Barbara lifts his head in her hands and points it towards a mirror. He sees his eyes, dark and slightly sunken in appearance. He tries to blink away what he sees.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

You can't help anyone if you wear yourself out in the process.

ROBERT

I'm sorry. I'll let Dr. Hudson know that she's in charge while I'm out.

BARBARA

See, that wasn't so hard.

ROBERT

I'm going to need to buckle down and give this 100% of my focus. I won't stop until I have answers.

He starts to organize his papers from the desk into folders and put them away.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I'll be in the room shortly, dear. Thank you, for always worrying about me. Sorry that I make you do it.

BARBARA

Well, you have your job and I have mine.

Barbara kisses him on the forehead before leaving the office. Robert turns back to the mirror, examining his face again.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Robert is sitting at a table with laptop, a tablet and a few folders. He is on the phone with DR. DALPHINE HUDSON, black woman late 20's, while navigating his devices.

ROBERT

And the blood and tissue results don't show anything strange either?

DALPHINE (V.O.)

No, nothing at all. Other than the things we already know about the patients, everything is normal.

ROBERT

Well, there has to be something wrong.

DALPHINE (V.O.)

I've always admired your determination Dr. Rempes. It's just that...

ROBERT

What is it Dr. Hudson?

INT. DR. REMPES'S PRIVATE PRACTICE - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Hudson is handing a nurse at the front desk a file and walking back to her office.

DALPHINE

I don't really want to say. I know how much you make fun of my mumbo jumbo at times.

ROBERT (V.O.)

It comes from a place of love, Dalphine. Besides, nothing else is working, maybe I need to look into a bit of the mumbo jumbo.

DALPHINE

In my village back in South Africa, there is a shaman. He is the one who piqued my interest in medicine.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Yeah, I remember you telling me about that when I interviewed you.

DALPHINE

Well, there were times when, no matter how much I looked and looked at a patient as his apprentice, sometimes I just couldn't figure out what was wrong.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Sounds familiar.

DALPHINE

He told me that if the ailment of a man is not physical, then the illness must be treated through his spirit.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

ROBERT

So, you're saying that I need to fly in a shaman?

DALPHINE (V.O.)

What I'm saying, is that the problem may not be what you're looking for, but what you're seeing.

Robert pauses for a moment and then begins frantically typing on his laptop.

ROBERT

What did you say the name of that village was?

DALPHINE (V.O.)

It is a small village in the Hwange district, located near Victoria Falls. The name of the village is Mandaza.

ROBERT

I thought you were from somewhere that started with a D or something like that.

DALPHINE (V.O.)

It was renamed after the current shaman, who was trained under the same apprenticeship. He eventually took the lead as the current head shaman.

ROBERT

Prepare some vaccinations for me. Looks like I'll be taking a trip to open my eyes a little bit.

EXT. DR. REMPES'S PRIVATE PRACTICE - DAY

Robert and Dr. Hudson exit the rear of the office to the parking area, each holding a bag as they walk to his car.

The head nurse, Amanda, stands at the bottom of the stairs, smoking a cigarette.

ROBERT

Not only is that bad for you, but  
you know I run a smoke-free  
practice, inside and out.

Amanda extinguishes her cigarette. Scowling and exhaling a cloud of smoke as she passes the doctors, heading up the steps.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Y'know I've heard McDonald's has  
recently raised their minimum wage,  
nurse.

AMANDA

I'll definitely be sure to look  
into that, doctor.

Amanda slams the door as she enters the building.

DALPHINE

I don't know why you don't fire  
her.

Dalphine hands Robert his bag that she was carrying.

DALPHINE (CONT'D)

So listen, this is important. When  
you get to the village understand  
that the shaman is a sacred person  
and they will not let just anyone  
in. You have to tell them I sent  
you.

ROBERT

Right, so tell them Dr. Dalphine  
Hudson sent me.

DALPHINE

No. There is another name they will  
know me by. Tell them that Princess  
Endiku sent you.

Robert stares blankly at Dr. Hudson.

ROBERT

You're kidding, right? Wasn't  
Endiku a guy?

DALPHINE

So was Thor.

Robert climbs into the car, tossing his bags on the passenger side and closes the door. He rolls down the window.

DALPHINE (CONT'D)

Just remember it and call me if you need me.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Robert sits, typing away on his laptop and looking over notes. He cringes in pain and shakes his hand before looking at it with his fingers outstretched. As he closes his hand, the CREAKING of his joints can be heard. He continues to stare with a look of confused concern.

EXT. MANDAZA VILLAGE - DAY

Robert goes from person to person, asking for the shaman. Each person points him in a general direction as he proceeds until he is directed to a small building. He looks as the people he pass appear to become ill, stumbling, coughing, and some vomiting. A temple GUARD grabs his attention.

GUARD

What is your business here?

ROBERT

Uh, Princess Endiku sent me.

The guard looks Robert up and down, steps into the shack-like temple, and appears again in the doorway, waving Robert in.

INT. MANDAZA SHRINE - CONTINUOUS

As he steps in, the SHAMAN ELDER, late 60's, is seated and the current shaman, MANDAZA, mid 30's, stands next to him. Robert stands before them.

ELDER

The princess told us of your visit. So you have been afflicted by that which you cannot see. But, I see it clearly, doctor.

ROBERT

What do you see?

ELDER

Do you see it, Mandaza?

MANDAZA

I see... something. Have you ever seen it before?

ELDER

I've not seen it, but I heard tales of it in my youth. It is a curse.

ROBERT

A curse? Who would bother to curse me? Why?

MANDAZA

I've seen the aura of a curse before. This is different. What is it?

ELDER

No man, alive, has cursed you. You are cursed by destiny. A destiny that your family and bloodline have carried with you for over a thousand years.

The elder walks over to a large shelf of books. He looks them over before pulling one out and returning to his seat.

ELDER (CONT'D)

This book explains that destiny.

Robert takes the book and reads over the page. He mumbles through some points and reads others aloud.

ROBERT

Balance the darkness.

Pause.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Deliver the living through the veil.

Pause.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

And become... death.

He looks up from the book to the shamans.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Is this serious? This is a joke, right?

MANDAZA

This is not a place for joking, my friend. If the elder has provided you with this information, it is true and very serious.

ROBERT

This doesn't explain why people have been getting sick at my practice. How do I fix that?

ELDER

You have developed death's touch. It isn't that strong, since you have not completed your transformation, but anyone touched by your fingers will feel its effect.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - FLASHBACK - DAY

The sick patient from the opening scene is well and greeting Robert as they shake hands.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - FLASHBACK - DAY

A woman, ELIZABETH STAUNCH, early 30's, is in the exam room with Robert.

ELIZABETH

I've been feeling kinda clammy and cold lately.

ROBERT

You do have a temperature, and your skin is off in coloration.

Robert removes his glove and touches the woman's neck and head.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - FLASHBACK

A CHILD lies on the exam table with Robert standing next to them as a nurse prepares to draw blood. The child holds out their hand, which is greeted by Robert's gloved hand and they grip his fingers tightly.

RETURN TO SCENE

Robert's eyes dart about as he struggles to accept the reality of what he is being told.

ROBERT

What about my wife? She hasn't been ill and I have the most contact with her.

ELDER

When you marry, in true love, your spirits become one. Your souls are intertwined. Touching your wife is no different than touching your own hand.

ROBERT

W-why is this happening now?

ELDER

It could be a number of reasons. The current reaper may be in distress.

INT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

Barbara is purchasing a home pregnancy test at the register.

ELDER (V.O.)

It could also be that a new generation is in place to continue the bloodline, and the timing is right for your transition.

EXT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

Barbara walks happily down the sidewalk.

INT. MANDAZA SHRINE

ROBERT

What do you mean the reaper is in distress? Isn't the Grim Reaper this immortal entity? Like God?

MANDAZA

Death is not immortal. It would defy its very nature if that were true. Everything must die.

ROBERT

This is too much! How am I supposed to just accept this? It's ridiculous.

ELDER

You may take the book with you. It may offer more helpful details when you have more time to look through it. Now, I must ask that you leave this place.

Robert centers himself and humbly bows toward Mandaza and the Elder.

ROBERT

Thank you, elder. Thank you, shaman Mandaza.

They return the gesture and Robert turns to leave.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Robert is leaving the airport with his bags in tow while talking on the phone.

ROBERT

How have the patients been doing?

DALPHINE (V.O.)

They have all made full recoveries. Even the two that were in comas are up and about since you've been away. It looks like whatever made them sick was a passing thing.

ROBERT

Do me a favor. Look up Elizabeth Staunch and a pediatric patient, Henry Jenkins. They both came in a little over a week ago. Were those two ill?

Pause.

DALPHINE (V.O.)

I see that Elizabeth complained of illness, but Henry doesn't have any report of being ill.

ROBERT

I made them sick!

DALPHINE (V.O.)

What? Dr. Rempes, what are you saying?

ROBERT

The shamans gave me a book, from England, that details a portion of my families history to just post A.D.. I am cursed to become a bringer of death. That's why the patients got better when I left.

DALPHINE (V.O.)

Wow, Robert. That's a lot, even for me, to take in. You sound terrible and a bit out of it. You just need to take some of your time off to actually rest. Come into the office after you rest at home and we'll run some diagnostics.

ROBERT

OK. Barbara is at work now, so I will stop at home and then come right over. In the meantime, check on Elizabeth and Henry to be sure.

INT. DR. REMPES'S PRIVATE PRACTICE - NIGHT

Robert enters the building with a bag of his documents and the book from the shamans in his arms. He heads down the hall into Dalphine's office.

ROBERT

Were you able to get a follow-up on those two patients?

DALPHINE

Yes, Henry was just fine and didn't get sick at all.

Robert drapes his jacket across a chair and sits down.

ROBERT

Yeah? Okay, and Elizabeth?

DALPHINE

Elizabeth- Elizabeth is... dead.

Robert drops his head into his hands.

ROBERT

I'm a danger to everyone around me.

DALPHINE

But, we don't know what killed Elizabeth yet. Besides, Henry is fine.

Robert sits upright leaning towards Dalphine.

ROBERT

I didn't touch Henry!

Robert slumps back in his chair.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I touched Elizabeth's face with my bare hand because she said she was clammy. I had my gloves on when Henry grabbed my hand.

Robert stands and paces around.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

The patient who freaked out in the lobby, he shook hands with me before his exam. My touch will kill people!

Dalphine stands in front of him.

DALPHINE

It's okay. Let's go do your check-up and see if anything comes up. It might just be stress.

Robert nods.

INT. DOCTOR REMPES'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Robert sits in the desk chair of his office and Dr. Hudson goes over his results.

DALPHINE

Everything came back normal, although I can admit that you look a bit on the unwell side. I'm pretty sure that's due to exhaustion since you've been running rampant. Hmm...

ROBERT

What? What is it?

DALPHINE

Nothing too serious right now, but it appears that your bone density from the CT scan and MRI is extremely high. They also appear slightly elongated. But, again, nothing to worry about except the possibility of kidney stones due to high mineral concentration.

ROBERT

Maybe I'm worried about nothing. Go ahead and call it a night. I'm going to look over some more information and then go home. I'll have Amanda lock up after I leave, if she's still filing reports.

DALPHINE

Are you sure?

ROBERT

Yeah. I'll be fine. Thanks.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Barbara comes in from work, she can be heard down the adjoining hall.

BARBARA

Robert! Sorry I'm late, I was trying to pick up something to eat. I know when you're busy simple things like eating to stay alive slip your mind.

She walks into the room, bags in her hand. She looks and notices Robert's bags on the floor next to the desk and his computer is on.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Robert!... Honey!

She walks over and looks at the computer screen. The screen has an ancestry website on it with a tracing of Robert's ancestry.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Thomas Rempes... Jacob Rempes... Herschel... Reaper? Must be a typo, they got two of the letters wrong... but all of these before say Reaper.

She reaches into her purse taking out her phone and placing a call.

INT. DR. REMPES'S PRIVATE PRACTICE - NIGHT

A cell phone ringtone can be heard down the hall. The ringing stops and resumes shortly after. Footsteps are then heard echoing down the hall.

AMANDA

Dr. Rempes, your phone is going off! Doctor!

Amanda stops at the doorway to doctor's office. The lights are off and the silhouette of the doctor's body can be seen in the chair in front of the computer monitor. Amanda waves her hand in front of the light's motion sensor, turning them on.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

He must have fallen asleep in here, again. Doctor!

Amanda approaches and places her hand on his shoulder and immediately withdrawing it.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Doctor.

She pulls at the back of the seat, spinning the chair around. She screams at the sight of the lifeless mass in the seat. She fumbles in her smock for her phone. She finds it and is intensely focused on dialing. A dark, hooded figure rises behind her, raising their cloaked arm with black fabric draped across their limp wrist.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello! Yes, there is a dead body...

As Amanda continues, the hand extends forward exposing grimy, skeletal digits. The index finger is the most erect, pointing.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

...I think it's Dr. Rempes. He was the only one here with me. It doesn't look like he has any bones!

The hand continues toward the nurses shoulder and just before making contact the screen goes black.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Barbara sits in Roberts chair with the lights off, wiping away tears as she cries. Only the light from the hall creates a narrow channel of light through the doorway, illuminating her and leaving the rest of the room dark. The television can be heard in an adjoining room, over the sound of rain.

TELEVISION (O.S.)

Investigators are still looking into the death of a local doctor in his office. Officials say that two bodies were found. One of Dr. Robert Rempes and Nurse Amanda Mullens. Mullens's death was deemed as natural causes, having apparently suffered a heart attack during her 9-1-1 call. Dr. Rempes, however, appeared to have had his bones removed...

The sound of rain continues, mixed with the sound of the broadcast. A flash of lightning illuminates the rest of the room. A closer look at one corner and a second flash reveals the cloaked figure with half of his skeletal face shown by the light.