

HOME DEADLY HOME

Written by

Robyn Opie Parnell

US Copyright Registration #1-7562024039

531 Church Road
Warnertown SA 5540
Australia
Phone: +6186300100
Mobile: +61435339345
Email: robyn.opie.parnell@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

An overview of a cemetery basked in moonlight. A slight wind stirs. The scene is peaceful yet eerie. There are no signs of life, though it's impossible to know what's lurking in the shadows.

A path leads to...

...a funeral home. The exterior is surrounded by rose bushes. We approach the glass door as if we're about to enter...

INT. FUNERAL HOME - ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

From the front door, we sweep along the moonlit entry until...

...we reach a white pedestal adorned with a large vase of red roses.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

A close up of a red rose.

As we pull back, we see a single red rose on the chest of a prone figure. Next to the rose is a photo of two women, one younger, one older. The resemblance suggests mother and daughter. They're arm-in-arm, smiling at the camera.

We pull further back to see the mother, ROSE NORMAN (44), lying in an open casket as if peacefully sleeping. She's beautiful, immaculately groomed, sophisticated yet undeniably maternal.

Rose's eyes snap open in alarm. She bolts upright and screams.

ROSE

No!

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - BEDROOM - SAME

A girl bolts upright in bed, as if waking from a nightmare. We recognize her as the daughter from the photo, ASHLEY NORMAN (21). With long blonde hair and a make-up free face, she appears fragile and innocent. Ashley sits, trembling.

TOM (O.S.)
(sleepily)
What?

TOM BALLAD (23) frowns at Ashley. In contrast, his dark looks give the impression of someone worldly and experienced. He turns on a lamp to reveal an old, cheaply decorated room in need of a feminine touch.

TOM (CONT'D)
You okay?

Ashley rubs her face. She's not okay.

ASHLEY
God, it feels like a nightmare...
It's real, isn't it?

She gives Tom a teary, doe-eyed look. He sits up and puts his arms around her.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I still expect her to walk through
the door.

TOM
No way. She doesn't know where I
live.

Ashley pulls away, offended by his insensitivity.

TOM (CONT'D)
Ash, I was just trying to make you
smile.

She lays down, teary-eyed, her back to him.

A look of annoyance crosses Tom's face. He quickly hides it behind a mask of sympathy -- and cuddles up to Ashley.

TOM (CONT'D)
Shit. I know it's hard.

ASHLEY
You know? When was the last time
you saw your parents?

Ashley's words sting. Tom rolls over, away from her.

INT./EXT. TOM'S CAR - DAY - TRAVELLING

Ashley stares out the window, lost in thought. Her eyes reveal her sorrow. Her hair is scooped up in a bun. She's wearing a formal black dress, perfect for a funeral.

Tom drives. He's dressed in black trousers and a white shirt with a red tie. He could be going to his sales job at Bob's Electrical Super Store.

Ashley sees something off screen through the window that distresses her.

ASHLEY

Oh no.

They approach an accident, two cars totalled, with an ambulance in attendance.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Looks bad.

TOM

Then don't look. It'll only upset you.

Ashley sighs, her heart heavy.

ASHLEY

I wouldn't want to be upset the day of my mother's funeral.

TOM

I didn't mean...

Words are useless on a day like today. Still Tom tries...

TOM (CONT'D)

Let's talk about something else.

ASHLEY

Something cheery?

TOM

Why not?

They leave the accident behind.

Ashley closes her eyes...

...and leans her cheek into a soothing caress. She appears to draw comfort from the caress. Then...

...her eyes snap open and she looks at Tom.

His hands grip the steering wheel. He's focused on driving.

ASHLEY
Not while you're driving.

Tom frowns, confused.

TOM
What?

ASHLEY
I'm okay. Please concentrate on the road.

TOM
Isn't that what I'm doing?

ASHLEY
You touched me...

TOM
I'd like to take credit but--

ASHLEY
It wasn't you?

Tom shakes his head.

Then who? Now Ashley is confused.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - CHAPEL - DAY

The large room resembles a church with rows of pews facing a pulpit. The pews are full of MOURNERS. Standing at the pulpit is Ashley. Next to her, the closed coffin is adorned with a large spray of colorful flowers.

Ashley's face is tear-stained. She's barely keeping it together.

ASHLEY
...She was also my best friend. I can't imagine my life without her. I hope she's still looking over me. My guardian angel.
(beat)
Thanks, Mom, for everything. I miss you to the moon and back.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - CHAPEL - DAY

Ashley makes her way through the mourners, some of whom stop to offer condolences.

Her mother's sister, AUNTY CHRIS (42), hugs Ashley.

AUNTY CHRIS
You spoke beautifully, love. Your
mother would be very proud.

Ashley smiles, in a daze.

ASHLEY
Thank you, Aunty Chris.

More mourners hug and grope Ashley as she heads to the exit. She somehow manages to smile and nod at the kind words she barely registers.

A tall, slim, red-haired girl, EMMA GREEN (21), comes to Ashley's rescue. Emma is Ashley's best friend. The girls have known each other forever and there's nothing they wouldn't do for each other. Emma grabs Ashley's arm and makes a beeline to the exit.

EMMA
How you holding up?

Ashley looks at Emma. Enough said. It's a miracle Ashley's still standing.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Dumb question.

A COUPLE attempt to offer their condolences to Ashley.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Sorry, folks, Ashley needs air.

Emma whisks Ashley away.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Ashley and Emma sit on a bench surrounded by lawn, trees, and headstones. They lean together, holding hands, comforting each other in silence, until...

EMMA
It was a beautiful funeral. Your
mom would've loved it. I bet she
was there.

Ashley blows her nose. She's struggling to hold back tears. She needs a moment.

ASHLEY
I might have felt her.

EMMA
Really?

ASHLEY
I'm not sure.

ROSE (O.S.)
(whispers)
Ashley.

Jolted, the girls look around.

There's not a soul in sight.

They stare at each other, wide-eyed.

AUNTY CHRIS (O.S.)
Ashley.

The girls nearly jump out of their skin. Emma grabs Ashley's hand and pulls her off the bench.

EMMA
Come on.

She drags Ashley away from Aunty Chris but Ashley abruptly stops.

ASHLEY
Wait. We can't walk over the graves.

EMMA
Why not?

ASHLEY
It's disrespectful.

EMMA
I get it but I'm sure they won't mind.

AUNTY CHRIS (O.S.)
Ashley, where are you?

EMMA
Or we can stay. Go back to the funeral.

Reluctantly Ashley follows Emma. As they hurry over the grass-covered graves, Ashley's high-heels sink into the soft ground and get stuck. She stumbles out of her shoes. Emma catches her. They stare at the shoes stuck in a grave.

Ashley pulls out the shoes and looks at the headstone.

Egor Humphries

13.7.1853 to 29.10.1897

Rest in peace

ASHLEY

Sorry, Egor Humphries. Seriously,
that's a name?

The wind suddenly picks up, swirling loose leaves and buffeting nearby trees. Then, just as suddenly, the wind drops.

The girls are spooked.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Like the rest of the apartment, the living room is compact and cluttered -- a mishmash of old, second-hand furniture and all the latest electrical equipment.

Ashley sits on the couch, staring at the urn on the coffee table in front of her. She's dressed in pajamas and a robe, her hair tied up in a messy ponytail, her face make-up free.

Tom sits next to her. He's freshly showered and ready for work in black trousers, white shirt, and a red tie -- the same clothes he wore to the funeral.

TOM

You know I've tried to be a good
guy, right?

Ashley reaches for the urn and hugs it.

TOM (CONT'D)

I've been patient, right?

Ashley rubs the urn as if there's a genie inside. Tom recoils.

TOM (CONT'D)

Jeez! There's something wrong with
you!

Ashley looks at him, hurt. He regrets his outburst.

TOM (CONT'D)
Shit! I didn't mean... Shit!

He stands up. Ashley is teary-eyed, her usual state nowadays.

TOM (CONT'D)
When was the last time you got dressed?

Ashley shrugs.

TOM (CONT'D)
When?

ASHLEY
I can't keep wearing the same thing.

Tom raises his eyebrows. They both know she's been wearing the same pajamas and robe for days.

Tom leans over to kiss her on the lips. He stares in her eyes.

TOM
This zombie impersonation has to stop.

Ashley watches Tom walk away. He passes a photo on the TV cabinet of the smiling couple in happier times. The real Ashley and the photo Ashley look so different. Are they really the same girl?

Ashley turns to Tom, as he reaches the front door, about to leave for work.

ASHLEY
What if it's not an impersonation?

Tom laughs, and leaves. He thinks she's joking. Her expression reveals she's deadly serious.

EXT. ASHLEY'S HOME - FRONT YARD - DAY

A well-maintained, split-level 1950s home. Steps lead to a wooden front door. Surrounding the front door are two thin windows, both shielded by lace curtains.

The idyllic home is complete with white picket fence. Ashley and Emma stand on the pavement.

EMMA

You okay?

Ashley puts on a brave face.

ASHLEY

I'm not a zombie.

EXT. ASHLEY'S HOME - FRONT YARD - LATER

Emma walks out the front door -- alone -- a large canvas bag in one hand. She shuts the door and heads down the front steps. Her eyes are red from crying.

Emma exits through the picket gate to find Ashley sitting on the pavement, leaning against the fence. Ashley's hands cover her face.

EMMA

Hey.

Ashley looks at Emma, her face tear-stained.

ASHLEY

I am a zombie! God, Em.

Emma drops down beside Ashley.

EMMA

No, you're not. That was the worst thing I've ever done. I kept expecting your mom...

Emma can't finish her thought. The teary-eyed girls hug each other.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom and Ashley sit on the couch. They're eating pizza, though Ashley is only picking at hers. She's made an effort with her appearance. She looks more like the girl in the photo.

TOM

How was it?

ASHLEY

Good. Yummy.

Ashley takes a bite of her pizza and nods.

TOM

I mean going back to your house.

ASHLEY

Oh...

Ashley swallows as if the pizza is cardboard.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Okay.

TOM

You look great.

(beat)

What are you doing with the house?

Ashley shrugs and stares at the pizza in her hand. She isn't ready for this conversation.

TOM (CONT'D)

How about moving there?

ASHLEY

I don't know...

TOM

You thinking of selling?

ASHLEY

I... I haven't thought about it.

TOM

You can't keep avoiding this stuff.

He gestures to the urn, now sitting on top of the stereo. The pizza is forgotten. It's going cold, like this conversation.

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm not thrilled about this -- her --
- being here.

Ashley shoots him a dark look.

ASHLEY

But it's alright for you to move
into her house?

TOM

Your house. She can come too.

ASHLEY

That's very generous of you. It's
her home!

Ashley is having a hard time keeping her cool.

TOM
Hey, I'm trying to help you deal--

ASHLEY
(interrupts)
I am dealing!

She gestures to herself.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Look, I got dressed.

Tom nods encouragingly.

TOM
And you went to your house.

Ashley looks away, guiltily. She sighs.

ASHLEY
I don't know what to do. We never
talked about... I didn't think... I
don't know what she wants.

TOM
Ash, she's dead. She doesn't want
anything.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tom stands outside the bathroom. He talks to Ashley through
the closed door.

TOM
I've never believed in life after
death. You know that. Do you want
me to start lying to you now?

No response.

TOM (CONT'D)
I know I don't always say the right
things. Shit, I'm a guy.

Silence.

TOM (CONT'D)
What do you want me to say?
(beat)
I love you--

CRASH -- off screen interrupts him. Tom turns, frowning, then
hurries away to investigate. The bathroom door opens...

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom and Ashley crouch on the floor, their backs to us. They're looking at something. We move in closer to see...

...their framed photo, lying smashed on the floor. Tom flinches as he picks up the shattered picture frame and glass. A spot of blood appears on his finger.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ashley sits on the couch, reaches under a cushion to pull out a sealed envelope. Nervously, she turns the envelope over in her hands. Printed on the front is the name and address of Donald Wilson, Estate Attorney.

Ashley considers the envelope for a moment, then shoves it back under the cushion. She gets up and heads to...

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ashley picks up a glass from the sink, turns on the tap, and fills the glass with water. She stares absently out the window at...

...the apartment building opposite. The view reveals that Tom's apartment is on the fourth floor.

Glass in hand, Ashley returns to...

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She stares, in surprise, at...

...the coffee table and the letter from the Estate Attorney.

Her hand shakes, water spills, as she deposits the glass on the table next to the letter. She picks up the envelope and looks around. How...?

She shoves the envelope under the cushion.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - BEDROOM - DAY

Ashley opens the door and steps inside.

ASHLEY

Tom?

There's no sign of Tom or anyone else.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - BATHROOM - DAY

Ashley looks inside.

ASHLEY

Tom?

Not a soul in sight.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ashley stands in the middle of the room.

ASHLEY

Hello? Tom? Anybody?

She smiles, relaxes. She's about to dismiss the incident when...

...the color drains from her face. Rattled, she stares at...

...the envelope on the coffee table. Impossible!

She searches under the cushion. No letter. She sits on the couch, dumbfounded.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

God, I'm a mess. Grief sucks.

She takes a deep breath, then picks up the envelope. Her hand shakes. She pulls out an official letter and reads:

ASHLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Dear Ashley, I am pleased to announce that the probate process has finally concluded and the will of Rose Yvonne Norman is now ready for execution. As the sole beneficiary, you have inherited property...

Unable to read any more, the letter spills from Ashley's fingers.

INT. ASHLEY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A neat, cosy, bright room. A couch with two matching chairs sits opposite a mantelpiece, below which is a fake log fire. Pot plants are plentiful. Ashley and Emma stand, looking uncomfortable in the familiar surroundings.

ASHLEY

She's here. In everything.

Emma nods, feeling it too.

Ashley walks around, anxiously touching things.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I can't go into her bedroom.

EMMA

You don't have to. Give yourself time.

ASHLEY

Oh God!

EMMA

What's wrong?

ASHLEY

The plants. They need watering.

EMMA

Ash, honey, hasn't your neighbor been looking after the plants and Jessie?

ASHLEY

Yes. That's right. Marjory looked after things when Mom went away. Remember the fridge magnets Mom used to collect everywhere she went?

Emma nods with a smile.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(wails)

I'll miss those fridge magnets.

INT. ASHLEY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ashley uses a watering can to water the plants.

EMMA

Have you thought about moving back in?

Ashley stops watering. She gazes blindly out the front window.

ASHLEY

I love this place. I always felt so safe. Tom wants to live here.

EMMA

But? It's too soon, right?

Ashley deposits the watering can on the coffee table.

ASHLEY

Maybe it's best if I sell...

EMMA

This is your home! You have so many memories here.

ASHLEY

Yeah. But what if the memories haunt me?

Emma hurries over to comfort Ashley.

EMMA

You'll make new memories. You just need time.

ASHLEY

I could start afresh somewhere else. Or I could stay here.

EMMA

Whatever you want.

ASHLEY

Mom would want me to stay.

EMMA

She just wants you to be happy.

Ashley glances around, catching sight of the mirror above the mantel. She freezes. In the reflection, Rose Norman is seated on the couch.

Ashley spins around. The couch is empty.

She looks at the mirror again. No Rose. Just her imagination playing tricks on her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Ash? Is everything alright?

Ashley nods. She's lying and they both know it.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Perhaps we should go.

ASHLEY
I'm fine. I'm not a zombie.

She smiles bravely.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ashley sits on the couch, laptop on the coffee table in front of her.

ON THE SCREEN

A real estate website featuring local properties for sale.

The telephone rings. Ashley walks to the cordless phone and answers.

ASHLEY
(into phone)
Hello?

No response.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hello?

Silence.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Is anyone there?
(to herself)
Apparently not.

She returns to the couch. She sits in front of the laptop, opens a new document, and types...

ON THE SCREEN

If I sell the house???

Need agent
Clean house
Tidy garden
Pack belongings
Move
Move
Move
MOVE???

Frustrated, she stands up, grabs her handbag, and heads to the door.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Ashley sits alone on a bench. The park is quiet, just the way she likes it. Lost in thought, she stares at a bird walking across the grass.

ASHLEY

Mom, I don't know what to do.

She reaches into her handbag and pulls out the envelope from the Estate Attorney. Opening it, she withdraws a check for \$93,250.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(to the check)

I guess I shouldn't be carrying you around.

She returns the check to the envelope.

Suddenly, the bird turns to face her and squawks loudly. Ashley stares at the bird as it keeps squawking. Rattled, she shoves the envelope into her handbag and hurries away. The bird chases after her.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ashley stares at her laptop. The document she'd been working on is blank. She clicks "undo" but the document remains blank. She searches for her document in saved files. Nothing. She sits back, bewildered.

She hears a noise off screen and turns toward the kitchen.

ASHLEY

Tom?

Silence. Creepy. She rubs the goosebumps on her arms.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ashley loads the dishwasher. Tom stands nearby, drinking a beer.

TOM

If you sell your house, where will we live?

ASHLEY
I don't know. Here?

Tom laughs. His humor disappears when he realizes...

TOM
You're serious! You have this great house and you want to live in this dump?

ASHLEY
I don't know. It's a big decision.

TOM
You can't keep putting it off.

ASHLEY
I don't want to rush into anything.

TOM
Fat chance.

The phone rings. Grateful for the distraction, Ashley grabs the cordless phone from its cradle on the kitchen bench and answers.

ASHLEY
(into phone)
Hello?

No answer.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hello?

Silence. Ashley replaces the handset.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
That's the second time today the phone's rung but no one's there.

Tom picks up the handset.

TOM
Call the number.

Ashley uses her cell phone to dial the landline. The cordless phone rings. Tom answers.

TOM (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hey. Can you hear me?

ASHLEY
 (into phone)
 Loud and clear. Can you hear me?

TOM
 (into phone)
 You bet. Who's calling?

Ashley playfully swats him. Tom dodges out the way as he hangs up.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Probably just kids making prank calls.

ASHLEY
 Yeah. Probably.

She isn't convinced.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ashley shivers as she turns on the heater. She sits on the couch, picks up a DVD from the coffee table, and studies the cover.

We hear the sound of footsteps off screen. Ashley looks to the hallway door but no one enters. The footsteps stop.

Ashley jumps out of her skin when hands land on her shoulders. Tom leans around to kiss her cheek.

TOM
 Hey, you're jumpy. Is it because of those phone calls?

He sits next to her.

ASHLEY
 No, it's... I've got great news. I quit my job.

TOM
 That's great news?

Not the way Tom says it, it isn't. Ashley's bummed out by his reaction.

TOM (CONT'D)
 When did you decide?

ASHLEY
 A few days ago.

TOM

Wow. And now is the first I'm hearing about it. Anything else you're not telling me?

ASHLEY

That's not fair. I'm just trying to deal with stuff. It's what you want, right?

TOM

You don't give a rat's arse what I want.

ASHLEY

Yes, I do. I'm sorry. I...

TOM

Okay, then, let's get out of this dump. Let's move into your house.

The light goes out. They're pitched into darkness.

INT. TOM'S BACHELOR PAD - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ashley holds a flashlight in one hand and a light bulb in the other. She stands at the base of a ladder, shining the beam up to Tom who finishes replacing the bulb.

TOM

Okay. Turn the light on.

Ashley flicks the light switch. Nothing happens. They're still in darkness.

TOM (CONT'D)

Did you give me the new bulb?

ASHLEY

Yep.

TOM

You didn't give me the old one by mistake?

ASHLEY

Of course not.

Tom grabs the bulb from Ashley's hand. He climbs back up the ladder and changes the bulb.

TOM

Try it now.