

Elusive Delusions  
(Short)

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**FADE IN.**

**EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY**

BRUCE LODGE stands outside the front door of a house with a "For Sale" sign out front. Lodge is a large, muscular man who you wouldn't want to meet in a dark alley.

He talks to JOHNNY NELSON, a weasel of a man and real estate agent.

NELSON

The paperwork is complete.

He looks down at a clipboard.

NELSON (CONT'D)

The final inspection is done. Here you go. It's all yours.

Nelson hands Lodge a set of keys.

LODGE

Thank you, Mr. Nelson.

NELSON

The pleasure is all mine. This is an expensive place and I hate that it's been on the market for so long.

Lodge pockets the keys.

LODGE

You know, I'm in real estate myself.

Nelson is puzzled.

NELSON

Yeah? Where?

LODGE

Here. Bruce Lodge Realty.

Nelson shrugs.

NELSON

Never heard of it.

He smiles and waves to the property around him.

NELSON (CONT'D)  
Well, you didn't have THIS  
property.

Lodge doesn't smile.

LODGE  
I do now.

NELSON  
Touché.

The two men stare at each other awkwardly for a moment.

#### **INT. HOUSE - LATER**

Lodge unpacks. He puts books on the shelves, mostly popular stuff, nothing too strange. He puts away his clothes, which are clean and stylish, but not too expensive or flashy. None of his possessions would stand out. He fits in.

#### **EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT**

Finished unpacking, Lodge walks out the door to stare at the property. His eyes focus on the barn. He shuts the front door to the house and walks to the barn. He opens the door and walks inside.

#### **INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER**

The barn is mostly empty, except for a workbench and a wall full of tools. Upon closer look, it isn't just tools, it's weapons: knives, machetes, axes, hammers, pitchforks, saws, chainsaws, etc. All are dusty and unused.

Lodge checks out the various tools and weapons and finds a small box among them. The box somehow isn't dusty. He picks up the box and it glows briefly with a faint green energy.

Lodge opens the box. Inside is a white face mask that resembles that of a Mexican Luchador. Except the mask is smeared with blood. It's not completely red, the blood was clearly smeared on by hand, and finger marks can be seen, as can the white underneath in various places.

He stares at the mask for a moment and then pulls the mask over his face. Once it's on, his eyes turn black.

He looks at the wall of weapons and chooses a large knife. He practices stabbing with it. He nods when he's satisfied this is the right weapon.

**EXT. LARSON HOUSE - DAY**

The Larson house is modest, but the exterior is perfectly manicured.

**INT. LARSON HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY**

DEBORAH LARSON, early 40s, paces back and forth in deep concentration across the room. The house is immaculately clean and is decorated like it's straight out of a 1950s sitcom like "I Love Lucy." Deborah dresses like the stereotypical 50s housewife. Calf-length dress with a flare, perfectly-styled hair, pearls. Notably she does NOT wear an apron. A clock on the wall says it's 5:25.

An alarm goes off in the kitchen. It blares for a few seconds before it snaps Deborah out of whatever is occupying her mind. She rushes towards the kitchen.

**INT. LARSON HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

The kitchen is even more clean and perfect than the rest of the house. Nothing is out of place. The alarm on the stove blares.

Deborah turns the alarm off and takes a casserole dish out of the oven. She turns the oven and alarm off.

**INT. LARSON HOUSE, DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Deborah sets the table for two. She includes wine glasses. She brings the casserole in from the kitchen and sets it in the middle of the table.

She looks at the clock. It's 5:30 on the dot. Deborah looks at the table setting and sighs.

She opens the bottle of wine and pours herself a full glass of wine. She drinks half of it in one gulp.

From nowhere we hear the voice of Deborah's deceased mother, JANEANE.

JANEANE (O.S.)  
Drinking alone is a sign of  
alcoholism.

Deborah takes another sip.

DEBORAH  
I'm not alone. I have you.

JANEANE (O.S.)  
You know where he is.

DEBORAH  
He's on his way home from work.

Janeane laughs so loudly, it hurts Deborah's head. She drinks more wine.

JANEANE (O.S.)  
You know he's not alone.

The phone rings. Deborah swallows the rest of her wine and answers.

DEBORAH  
Hello?

JAMISON (O.S.)  
Hey, it's me.

Deborah smiles.

DEBORAH  
You almost home? Dinner's on the table already.

Silence for a moment.

JAMISON (O.S.)  
Actually...

Deborah pours more wine.

JAMISON (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I had to fly to New York for work.  
Short notice.

Deborah drinks from the wine glass.

DEBORAH  
And when did they tell you about this trip?

JAMISON (O.S.)  
Uhh... a few weeks ago.

JANEANE (O.S.)  
I was right about him...

DEBORAH  
Why didn't you tell me? I made dinner. For you.

JAMISON (O.S.)

I... uh...

Loud laughter comes through on the phone. It's not Jamison.

DEBORAH

Are you at a bar?

JAMISON (O.S.)

Uh... yeah... at the airport bar.

Deborah finishes her glass of wine. She pours the last of the bottle.

JAMISON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You there?

DEBORAH

For now.

JANEANE (O.S.)

That's the spirit.

JAMISON (O.S.)

I'll call you when I get to New York.

She hangs up the phone.

DEBORAH

I could kill him sometimes.

JANEANE (O.S.)

Maybe you should.

Deborah takes a smaller sip of wine. She savors it.

DEBORAH

Mother, he's my husband.

JANEANE (O.S.)

Didn't stop me.

Deborah finishes the last of the wine and carries the casserole back to the kitchen.

#### **INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS**

JAMISON sits at an airport bar. Jamison is in his 40s, wears a suit and a bolo tie and a big black cowboy hat. He hangs up the phone.

JAMISON

All's not quiet on the home front.

The CAMERA stays close on him and doesn't show the person he's talking to.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Yeah, but as I was saying, it's called "The Beast Within."

Jamison finishes off his glass of whiskey and signals the BARTENDER for another.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

It's on Amazon Prime. We did good enough in season one that we've been renewed. I've got a 12-person staff now. It's just amazing.

The bartender refills his drink. He takes a sip.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Sure, it's just video of me mountain biking, but the branding REALLY makes it pop. Quick editing. Heavy music. It's just frenetic.

He takes another sip. The CAMERA moves back and reveals that Jamison is talking to a man in a suit, STEVE OVERTON.

STEVE

Sounds pretty interesting. "The Beast In You"?

Jamison chuckles.

JAMISON

"The Beast Within." On Amazon. I'm the Beast.

Jamison reaches out his hand to fist bump Steve.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Jamison in real life.

Steve reaches out to shake hands and fumbles a bit when he sees that Jamison holds out a fist.

JAMISON (CONT'D)

Sorry, stopped shaking hands because of the pandemic and never really went back.

Steve shrugs. Then he returns the fist bump.

STEVE

Steve. Steve Overton.

JAMISON

Nice to meet you, Steve.

STEVE

Man, that pandemic. I HATED wearing those masks. Couldn't breathe. You wear masks?

Jamison takes a drink and shakes his head.

JAMISON

No. Masks aren't my style.

He holds up his drink and Steve toasts with him. They drink.

**EXT. BARN - NIGHT**

CLOSE on Lodge's face as he stands in the barn doorway. Muffled sounds are heard from within.

He puts on the Carnage mask.

He shuts the barn door behind him. The muffled screams from within are silenced once the door closes.

**INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS**

Near the back wall of the barn, Johnny Nelson sits tied to a chair. He struggles to break free, but he's weaker than the zip tie around his wrist. He screams as he struggles, but the gag in his mouth keeps the screams too quiet to be heard outside.

Carnage walks directly to Johnny and towers over him.

CARNAGE

I'm going to remove your gag. If you scream or make any loud noises, the pain will begin.

Johnny nods. Carnage undoes the gag and throws it on the work bench. Johnny screams.

JOHNNY

Help!

Without hesitation, Carnage brings a brutal right hand cross down on Johnny's cheek. The screaming stops. The blood starts flowing from the wound.



CARNAGE  
Do you think me false?

Johnny shakes his head.

CARNAGE (CONT'D)  
I am Carnage. I am the bringer of  
blood. I am the pain-maker.

Johnny's eyes grow wider. He shakes. Drool drips from his lip  
and mixes with blood.

CARNAGE (CONT'D)  
This place does not belong to those  
like you. It belongs to me.

JOHNNY  
The barn?

Carnage drops another punishing blow on Johnny's face. Johnny  
shuts up.

CARNAGE  
This world is broken. It's not  
supposed to be like this. I am here  
to fix it.

Tears run down Johnny's face.

CARNAGE (CONT'D)  
But no one says I can't have a  
little fun while fixing it.

He smiles a smile of chaos and evil. Johnny starts shaking  
and bouncing in his seat. He can't stay still.

On the wall across from the weapons, Carnage has set up a  
large board filled with squares, each a little bigger than an  
8 x 10 photograph. In each square is a short descriptive  
phrase. Carnage obscures a lot of the board, but the ones  
that can be clearly seen say: "Straight white man," "Pregnant  
woman and baby," "Bus driver," "Ship captain," "Tough  
Mudder," "Born in Atlanta."

CARNAGE (CONT'D)  
I call it the Murder Board.

At the top of the Murder Board is one last square, beneath  
the words "Current Target."

Carnage stands before the board, holding Johnny's wallet. He  
goes through the pictures until he finds one with Johnny and  
his WIFE. He takes the picture and pins it to the spot that  
says "Current Target."

JOHNNY

Y-you're not going to kill my wife  
are you?

CARNAGE

Is she here?

JOHNNY

N-no? She's not, is she?

CARNAGE

She's not on the board.

Carnage walks to the wall of weapons and takes the large  
knife.

CARNAGE (CONT'D)

But you are.

Johnny stares at the board, frantically looking from square  
to square.

JOHNNY

Where? I don't--

Carnage stabs him in the face. The blade glances off his  
skull, slicing open his cheek. Johnny screams. Carnage stares  
at the knife.

He stabs downward again, this time burying the blade in  
Johnny's shoulder. Johnny screams again.

Carnage works the knife free. Then switches the handle around  
so he can jab with the blade. He stabs Johnny a few times in  
the chest before sticking the blade into his heart.

Johnny twitches a few more times and then dies.

Carnage wipes the blade on the mask, adding a fresh line of  
blood.

Then he throws the knife against the weapon wall. It clatters  
off and falls to the floor.

Carnage walks to the board. He takes Johnny's picture from  
the "Current Target" slot and moves it to cover one of the  
squares on the board, the one with the word "Asshole."

**EXT. LARSON HOUSE - NIGHT**

The lights are on inside. Deborah can be seen pacing back and  
forth through the windows.

**INT. LARSON HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Deborah paces back and forth. She's clearly trying to decide something internally and can't come to a conclusion.

JANEANE (O.S.)  
Just do it.

Deborah goes to a cabinet and pulls out a bottle of whiskey. She pours herself a double.

JANEANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You'll feel better if you do.

DEBORAH  
No, I won't.

She drains the double and pours another.

JANEANE (O.S.)  
You've always felt better when you did it in the past. It's your heritage.

Deborah drains the second double and throws the glass into the sink. It shatters.

**FLASHBACK TO:****INT. LARSON HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY**

The flashback is in BLACK & WHITE.

SUPER: Years ago

JANEANE stands in the same kitchen. Everything looks the same. Deborah has kept her mother's house almost identical to when she was alive.

Janeane looks into the dining room and doesn't see anybody. She grabs a bottle of cooking sherry and takes a BIG gulp. She puts it away and picks up a small, round birthday cake, with a lone candle on top. She carries it into the dining room.

JANEANE  
Here it comes. Get ready!

**INT. LARSON HOUSE, DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A younger Deborah sits at the table. She's 18. No one else is here for the birthday party.

The room is still decorated with the full party pack: streamers, balloons, table cloth, napkins, etc.

Janeane carries the cake to the table and sets it in front of Deborah. Janeane lights the single candle.

JANEANE

I'm not singing. Blow it out.

Deborah is used to her mother's attitude by now. She blows out the candle.

JANEANE (CONT'D)

Eat up.

Janeane hands her a glass of milk. Deborah digs in. Janeane smiles, but there's no humor in it.

Deborah washes the cake down with the milk. She takes another bite.

Then she starts to feel woozy. She sways and her vision gets blurry.

DEBORAH

Mom?

Janeane sets a finger-sized white box on the table in front of Deborah.

JANEANE

It's your heritage.

Janeane sits down and places a finger box on the table. Deborah is on the verge of passing out. She fights to stay awake.

JANEANE (CONT'D)

Open it.

Deborah struggles to move. She flops her hand onto the table. She grabs ahold of the box, but struggles to get the top off. She opens it to see:

A severed human finger.

Janeane smiles. Warmly. She opens her own box and it also contains a severed human finger. Both fingers are clearly male.

Janeane picks up the finger and takes a big bite. Deborah's eyes dart back and forth in fear and disgust, but she can barely move.

JANEANE (CONT'D)  
Eat it.

Deborah's eyes go wide.

JANEANE (CONT'D)  
It's your heritage.

Deborah shakes her head as much as she can. Janeane picks it up and forces it into Deborah's mouth.

JANEANE (CONT'D)  
You're an adult now. The hunger is already in you.

**FADE TO BLACK.**

**END FLASHBACK.**

**INT. LARSON HOUSE, KITCHEN - PRESENT**

Deborah puts the whiskey away. She walks towards a door that leads to the basement. She opens the door and steps inside. She takes an apron from a hook on the wall and puts it on. She shuts the door behind her. And locks it from within.

**INT. LARSON HOUSE, BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER**

Deborah walks downstairs and heads directly towards a large freezer. She pulls out a long cylindrical object wrapped in butcher paper. She sets it on a table and opens it.

Inside is a human arm, severed at the elbow. The hand is still attached.

She grabs a large meat cleaver. She chops off the thumb. She takes it and wraps it in a paper towel and sticks it in a microwave mounted above the table. She hits reheat.

She goes back to the table and chops off the other four fingers. She wraps the arm back up in the paper and puts it back in the freezer.

From under the table, she brings out a cardboard box. Inside are a bunch of finger-sized boxes. She takes out four of them and a roll of ribbon.

Deborah takes one of the severed fingers and puts it in one of the boxes. She puts the top on and wraps it in a bow.

The microwave goes off and Deborah relaxes.

DEBORAH

Finally.

She takes the finger out. She blows on it a bit and then takes a big bite. It's the most delicious thing she's ever eaten.

**INT. POLICE STATION - DAY**

The police station is nice. Out of date and a little shabby, but nice. Captain JACKIE ANDERSON, 40s, gives a press conference. Standing next to her is Detective GREGORY CARTER, 40s. Reporters take pictures.

Det. Carter sits in the front row, next to two other detectives, CHRIS JACOBS and ANN BAILEY.

ANDERSON

Thank you Det. Carter for your years of distinguished honor. I'll see you out there on the links.

She points to him and everyone laughs politely.

Jacobs is 30, average height and build. His face is unshaven and his clothes are sloppy. Bailey is 25, an African-American woman in uniform.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

We have about 10 minutes for any questions.

Almost the entire REPORTER CORPS, which is full today, tries to get the first question.

Anderson drops her head and sighs. She collects herself and points to a reporter in the front row, MILLIE, 20s.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Millie.

MILLIE

Do you have any more information about the disappearances? That's the NINTH--

ANDERSON

We have no comment at this time.

She walks out of the room. The reporters erupt. Pictures are taken.

The reporters turn and crowd the three detectives.

BAILEY

Quick.

She politely pushes Jacobs and Carter towards the door Anderson used. Jacobs holds up his coat, half to keep his face out of the pictures, half to keep the bright lights from triggering his hangover.

**EXT. LODGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

It's been dark for a while and the road is mostly empty. An older car putters along and stalls near Lodge's house. A man in his 20s, BOBBY LEE, puts the car in park and looks at the gas gauge, which is empty.

BOBBY

Dammit.

He gets out of the car and looks around. The closest house is Lodge's. By a lot.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Okay. This is going to be okay.

He takes a deep breath and walks through the dark towards the front door.

**EXT. LODGE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Bobby knocks on the door and waits for a moment. Eventually Lodge opens the door and glares at him. Lodge is dressed normally and doesn't express any aggression, but he's scary anyway. Bobby flinches.

BOBBY

Hey... uh...

LODGE

Yeah?

BOBBY

Sorry... my car just ran out of gas... and my phone's dead... could I use yours?

He holds up his driver's license.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Here's my ID to show you it's not a scam or anything...

Lodge looks up and down the road, it's empty and dark.

LODGE  
You from around here?

Bobby shakes his head and holds up the ID a little more. It's a Florida license.

Lodge smiles.

LODGE (CONT'D)  
Yeah! Come on in!

He waves exaggeratedly and Bobby visibly relaxes.

#### **INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER**

Lodge, wearing the Carnage mask, stands before the chair Bobby Lee is tied to. Bobby is gagged. He struggles to get up from the chair, but the zip ties don't allow it.

Carnage walks over to the wall of weapons and peruses them. He picks up the chainsaw and hefts it. He puts it back. He picks up a pitchfork and tries stabbing the air with it. He doesn't like it, either.

He pulls down a machete and swings it around. Lee starts screaming, but the gag keeps him quiet. Carnage nods at the machete.

He turns to face Bobby. Bobby struggles and starts rocking back in forth in the chair, but it's bolted down.

Carnage raises the machete and brings it down on Bobby's head. It lodges in the skull, but not very far. Bobby is still very much alive. He screams as much as he can.

Carnage yanks the machete back and he raises it to strike again and changes his mind. He stabs with it. Bobby struggles harder. Carnage is frustrated.

He turns to the side a bit and he brings the machete down at an angle. At Bobby's neck. That works. Bobby stops moving.

Carnage wipes blood off the machete and presses his bloody hand to the mask, adding a fresh layer. He throws the machete across the room and it crashes against the wall.

#### **INT. LODGE'S HOUSE - LATER**

Lodge has taken off the Carnage mask and his clothes are clean. The TV is on to the local news. Lodge chops vegetables for stir fry.



REPORTER

...police refuse to answer questions about the disappearances. Once again, our top story, we have confirmed that at least NINE area residents have disappeared in the last three months.

Lodge turns off the TV.

LODGE

Nine? Someone's been encroaching on MY territory.

He walks out the front door, slamming it behind him.

**EXT. LODGE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Lodge walks, almost runs, to the barn and goes inside. He slams this door behind him, too.

Bobby Lee's car is gone.

**INT. BARN - NIGHT**

Lodge walks back into the barn. The chair is empty, but next to it are several large garbage bags filled with Bobby's body parts. They look like regular trash bags, nobody would know they contain human remains.

The Murder Board now has six photos covering various spots.

Lodge pulls on the Carnage mask and walks to the wall of weapons. On the work bench before it is a set of blueprints. Plans for an underground maze.

Carnage pulls a large sledge hammer down from the wall. Once he touches it, the hammer briefly glows with a green light.

Instantly, the weapon seems at home in Carnage's hand. He swings it a few times. Then he swings the hammer directly at the CAMERA.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

**INT. LARSON HOUSE - NIGHT**

Jamison walks in the front door, carrying a large leather travel bag.

JAMISON  
Deborah? I'm home.

She quickly walks into the room and hugs him VERY physically. He almost drops the leather bag.

A driver's license falls to the floor. Deborah doesn't notice. Jamison does, though.

Jamison drops his heavy leather bag on top of the license with a thud. It startles Deborah and she leans away from him.

DEBORAH  
What?

Jamison pulls her back in for a BIG hug.

JAMISON  
I just needed both arms to give you  
a REAL hug.

She smiles and returns the big hug. He picks her up and spins her around. Sets her down away from the bag.

He leans in and they kiss. Passionately.

JAMISON (CONT'D)  
What do we have to eat? I'm  
famished.

She turns and walks towards the kitchen.

DEBORAH  
I have a casserole. Let me heat it  
up.

JAMISON  
That sounds amazing! Thanks. Love  
you. Mean it.

Once she's out of the room, Jamison picks up the bag and the license. He pockets it and walks towards their bedroom.

DEBORAH (O.S.)  
Love you, too. Mean it more.

JAMISON  
I'll be right there. Let me put  
this away.

He holds up the bag, then realizes she can't see. He goes into the bedroom and tosses the bag on the bed.

He goes to the closet and pulls a panel out to reveal a safe. He opens it and pulls out a shoebox. He takes the top off to reveal several dozen driver's licenses.

Jamison pulls the license out of his pocket and looks at it. The name on the front is "Steve Overton." He puts the license at the front of the box, in front of a license that says "Bob Andrews."

DEBORAH (O.S.)

Are you going to join me?

He closes the safe and puts the panel back.

JAMISON

It's about time I did.

**FADE OUT.**