

TO DUST ALL RETURN

Written by

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EXT. HOUSE TRAIL - DUSK

1710 New England. The sun lingers on the horizon. Golden light washes over a dirt path.

The silhouette of a girl walks towards a saltbox house. Her dark hair blows softly under her white coif.

EXT. DOORSTEP - SAME

The girl approaches the doorstep with a lantern illuminating her face. She is about 15. Her name is AMITY.

Peeking out of her sleeve is a black string. She enters the house.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DUSK

A simple, quaint room. The large hearth yields a small fire. In front, a table with a quill, paper, and pitcher of water.

Amity hums, resting her lantern on the table.

She kneels to the fire, moving the coals with a red hot firepoker. Her coif shifts, revealing a red burn mark on her cheek.

She pours water into a pot hanging over the flames.

Carefully, Amity pulls out from her sleeve a small black bag. She dumps the bag's contents into the pot.

Next to the fireplace mantel are cups, a spill holder, and a line of identical bags. Amity places the new bag next in line. It is different than the others.

Amity sits down at the table, picks up the quill, and begins writing with her left hand.

AMITY (V.O.)

Dear mother, I hope this letter finds you in safer and better spirits. I am taking care of everything the best I can, but wish for you to return home soon. When I rose today, I felt that everything good, everything light, has been snuffed out. There is nothing left but to miss you terribly. I will see to it that you return.

Amity lingers on those last words.

Then: A KNOCK at the door.

Amity slides a blank paper over her letter and heads to the door.

INT./EXT. DOORSTEP - DUSK

She opens the door, revealing a tall man draped in an impressive black coat. He exhales white breath into the cold air. It's ENOCH ADLEY.

 AMITY
Oh, well hello Mr. Adley!

 ENOCH
Hello Amity, how do you fare?

 AMITY
Very well, thank you. What -

 ENOCH
May I come in?

Amity hesitates. She looks back into the house.

Reluctantly, she creaks the door wider and gestures Enoch inside.

He briskly by her.

INT. COMMON ROOM - SAME

Enoch slides his coat off his shoulders and onto a chair seated at the end of the table.

He turns to Amity, still at the doorway.

 ENOCH
 (gesturing to the opposite
 chair)
Please.

Amity holds his gaze as she approaches the chair. She sits.

Enoch smiles and sits.

 AMITY
May I ask what brings you here Mr.
Adley?

 ENOCH
How are you and your father?

AMITY
Very well thank you.

ENOCH
I've not seen him, or you, for some time.

AMITY
I'm sorry, Mr Adley. Father's been tired. Each day more than the last.

ENOCH
He giveth power to the faint.

AMITY
Yes...we will make every effort to attend this Sunday's fellowship.

Enoch nods. His eyes investigate the room.

ENOCH
Your mother has taught you well.

Amity fidgets.

AMITY
Thank you. Is there something I -

ENOCH
You must miss her.

The fire crackles.

AMITY
Yes.

ENOCH
But it is for the best, you must know. Your father thought carefully about this.

Amity nods, turning her gaze to the fire.

Her burn mark glints. Enoch takes notice. He changes, smiling at her with pity.

ENOCH (CONT'D)
You are a wonderful daughter to Mary and John. She will come back to you in better shape than which she left.

Amity gets up to stir the pot.

AMITY

And how is your wife Mr. Adley?

ENOCH

Oh very well. It's as though she never left. These treatments have a way of driving the Devil out for good.

Amity tenses.

ENOCH (CONT'D)

Is your father out for long?

AMITY

Yes.

ENOCH

Then you should not remain here all alone. Danger is everywhere, evil is ever present.

Amity eyes two cups next to the fireplace.

AMITY

I can protect myself. I fare well on my own.

ENOCH

Perhaps Mrs. Adley can make space for you to stay while we wait for John's return.

Amity pours the mixture into the cups. She places his cup in front of him.

AMITY

Perhaps, Enoch.

She sits.

ENOCH

Please, tell me, when will your father be back? Besides his friendship, I am in need of his blacksmithing.

AMITY

I believe he will be back tomorrow...or the day after. He's out hunting north of Dartmouth.

As Amity answers his question, the CAMERA MOVES past the wall, into the adjacent room, revealing: Amity's father JOHN slumped over in bed. He's alive, but barely.

AMITY (V.O.)
Since the cattle died, he's almost never home. Always hunting. At least he enjoys it.

ENOCH
Oh, yes. Of course.

We are back with Amity and Enoch.

AMITY
It has been difficult, but God always provides.

Amity smiles and takes a sip from her cup. Enoch watches.

ENOCH
Amen.

Enoch follows suit, sipping his own.

His eyes catch the words "Dear Mother" peeking through the covered letter. He thinks on this...why would she remain in contact with a "sick" woman?

He pulls out a long clay pipe.

AMITY
Mr. Adley, is there anything else I can do for you?

Putting his pipe in his mouth, Enoch gets up and reaches for the spill holder on the fireplace mantel.

With one swift motion, he grabs a spill, holds it to the flame, and lights his cigar.

He puffs and stares into the fire.

ENOCH
When did you say your cattle died?

Amity fidgets.

AMITY
About a fortnight ago.

ENOCH
Every last one?

AMITY

I...don't know why. Must have been
a sickness.

Enoch watches the flames dance.

ENOCH

For what happens to the children of
man and what happens to the beasts
is the same. As one dies, so dies
the other. They all have the same
breath...and man has no advantage
over the beasts, for all is vanity.

The fire roars.

Amity sweats.

ENOCH (CONT'D)

All go to one place.

Enoch's heart beats fast.

The flames are burning hot.

Tears well in John's eyes.

ENOCH (CONT'D)

All are from the dust, and to dust
all return.

Enoch, dripping in sweat, finally pulls his face away from
the fire, frantically looking about the room.

His eyes meet Amity's.

She is completely still.

ENOCH (CONT'D)

Child. You have invited death into
this house, have you not?

Amity stares at him behind glassy eyes.

Enoch stares back.

AMITY

(hushed)

I'm sorry.

Amity's fingers reach back into her throat. Pulling a chamber
pot to her mouth, she throws up in it.

Enoch's eyes are wild. He rushes to her.

He staggers, grabbing hold of her.

She faces him, locking her eyes with his.

Understanding washes over, numbing him.

He hacks a deadly cough.

He falls into the table and to the floor, knocking the cup of poison to the ground with him.

Enoch is dead.

Amity continues coughing. She grabs the pitcher and guzzles the water inside.

Now breathing easier, she picks up the cup of poison left on the table.

INT. FATHER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Warm light pours onto John's eyes as Amity enters the room. They track her slowly, the rest of his body completely paralyzed.

Amity tips the cup to his dry, cracked lips. The poisonous mixture passes through.

Only his eyes can scream.

She breathes a sigh of relief.

AMITY
Welcome home, mother.

CUT TO BLACK.

END.