

Creepers

By

Alex Davies

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A small apartment, lit by cheap table lamps and hundreds of tea lights. Thin velvet curtains blow slightly in the draught from ill fitting windows. Dime-store laughing Buddhas litter dusty shelves, dream-catchers are tacked on to walls.

A fire hisses in the grate as IDENTICAL TWIN GIRLS sit, holding hands, on a couch. They look around nervously. Nineteen and dressed in knee-length skirts and sweaters, the only difference between the two is one has waist-length chestnut hair, and the other is completely bald.

DARK-HAIRED TWIN

It's your decision.

A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN enters the room, carrying a tray of herbal tea. She sets it down on the table and sits opposite the girls.

MEDIUM

Honey or lemon?

BALD TWIN

We'll do it.

The woman smiles. She stands up and flicks off each lamp in turn, so the room dances in flickers and shadow. She crosses the room, sweeps the curtains, and stands behind the sofa.

MEDIUM

Ok, just relax.

She rests her hands on each twin's head, and closes her eyes. The twins hold each other's hands tighter and shut their eyes too. As the Medium chants, the dark-haired twin starts to cry.

MEDIUM

Spirits! Oh benevolent and wise masters of the underworld, we call on you to take mercy on our beloved sister, Rosemary, when her time has come, and allow her to continue her life's journey with her host and most beneficent sibling, Sophie. Let not the flames of life extinguish as Rosemary's candle dies, but allow her to burn brightly within her twin until death reunites them in the everlasting.

The Medium peeks her eyes open. Both girls are sobbing now. She changes her hands over, swapping heads, and continues.

MEDIUM (CONT.)

Most mighty spirits, grant our
sister continuing life through her
host. Allow her to see the world
through her eyes, feel the ground
through her fingers and hear the
sweet sounds of life through her
ears.

She chants a strange, eerie gibberish, rocking back and forth on her heels.

In the corner of the room, hidden in shadow, a WOMAN slouches in an armchair. Bored and incredulous, she rolls her eyes and huffs. Her exhalation extinguishes a candle. Amazed, she sits bolt upright. She blows directly at another. It flickers, but doesn't go out.

MEDIUM (CONT.)

For your most mighty gift cannot be
snuffed by the mere presence of
death, but continues to burn as a
light negates shadow. Thank you,
most benevolent spirits, for your
mercy and understanding. Praise be.

The Medium lifts her hands from the twins' heads and drops her arms to her sides, exhausted. The two girls hug each other, crying and laughing, relieved it's over.

The woman in the chair sits staring at the extinguished candle, a thin trail of smoke dissipating on the breeze. Although hidden in shadow she is the exact double of the Medium.

The Medium crosses the room and snaps on an overhead light. Its fluorescent glare makes them all blink. The woman in the corner is gone.

MEDIUM

How d'you feel, sweetheart?

TWIN 1

A bit groggy.

MEDIUM

To be expected dear. Have some tea.

She looks pointedly at the twin with the long dark hair and beckons her outside. They go into the corridor and speak in hushed whispers.

MEDIUM

She'll feel a bit strange for a few days. But it's definitely worked, I can feel it. I hope it will give you some comfort.

TWIN 2

I don't know how to thank you... what you've done...

MEDIUM

I think we agreed 200...?

TWIN 2

Oh, yes.

She fishes in her handbag and counts out some notes.

TWIN 2

Thank you.

MEDIUM

It's my pleasure. I'm sorry for your loss.

The dark haired twin retreats into the living room and sits beside her sister, stroking her arm as she drinks her tea. The Medium watches from the hallway, fingering the crisp notes. She smiles.

TITLES.

2

INT. MODERN KITCHEN - DAY

Stainless steel, bleached wood, sunshine through blinds. MICHAEL MORRISON, early forties, fit, happy, fixes breakfast. He boogies round the room, opening and closing drawers in time to the breakfast radio, cheerfully making a mess. A long eared spaniel patters into the room. Michael drops a piece of bacon at his paws, where it's eagerly devoured. The dog looks up with adoring eyes.

Michael cracks eggs into a thick Pyrex bowl. The yolks split as he drops them with a flourish. He picks a piece of shell out with his finger. The last egg goes in - it has two yolks. Michael picks up a whisk and beats the hell out of the eggs. He slops them into a butter-fizzing frying pan, slams thick slices of bread down in the toaster and shakes the dog off his foot.

MICHAEL
Honey! Breakfast!

A TIRED LOOKING WOMAN enters the kitchen in slippers and dressing gown, a tiny baby asleep on her shoulder.

JAMIE
Sshh. He's only just gone back to sleep.

MICHAEL
(stage whisper)
Sorry!

He serves the breakfast on to a plate and sets it down on the table in front of Jamie. She grimaces.

JAMIE
You English. What's wrong with a simple cup of coffee?

MICHAEL
I want you to eat it all. None of your 'Mr Manners' crap. You need your strength.

He bends down to kiss her hair, then smothers the baby with kisses all over.

MICHAEL
Daddy's off to bring home the bacon. Yes he is, yes he is. See you tonight sweetheart.

Jamie raises her hand in goodbye, too tired to speak.

3 EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

An old fashioned Ivy League university, red brick and pristine grass. Michael steps out of his ancient navy blue Rover and jauntily strides up the path to the College doors.

4 INT. OFFICE - DAY

Michael enters his messy but homely office. Bookshelves line every wall, a rubber plant looms in the corner. Photos of twins adorn every surface - some framed, others tacked on to walls - of all different ages and nationalities. Sat in the chair in front of Michael's desk is SOPHIE, the dark-haired twin.

SOPHIE
Morning Professor Morrison. I hope
you don't mind I came right in.

MICHAEL
Not at all. Michael, please.

He dumps his briefcase on the floor, flicks the kettle on
and sits down.

MICHAEL
How are you?

Sophie shrugs, then bursts into tears. She furiously wipes
them away with a tissue, hiding her face.

SOPHIE
Sorry.

MICHAEL
No need to apologise. What is it
now - three weeks?

SOPHIE
Yesterday. I'm so...

MICHAEL
I know.

He gets up and pours boiling water into two mugs.

MICHAEL
Tea. Cures all ills. Coughs and
colds. Broken bones. Broken hearts.

Sophie dries her eyes and picks up a silver framed photo of
two seven-year-old boys, their arms wrapped around each
other. She uses it to check her mascara hasn't run. Michael
hands her a mug of tea.

MICHAEL
Wasn't I a handsome young fella?

SOPHIE
(shyly)
Is this Lance?

MICHAEL
(surprised)
Yes. I suppose I do talk about him
a lot.

SOPHIE
Do you miss him?

MICHAEL
Every moment.

SOPHIE
(crying again)
I feel so totally alone.

MICHAEL
I know. It gets better.

They sit in silence, staring at the photo.

5 INT. MEDIUM'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

The Medium, in a threadbare towel, brushes her teeth. As she goes to spit, she glances up at the mirror. A barely-there, ephemeral reflection of herself stands over her shoulder. Smiling. The Medium pauses, mid-spit. She rinses her brush under the tap and takes a mouthful of water. She straightens up and looks into the mirror again. There is nothing there.

6 INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Michael strides purposefully down a linoleum-lined corridor, a bunch of daffodils in his arms. He holds a door open for a nurse and smiles brightly as he enters a private room.

MICHAEL
Hey Dad.

MICHAEL'S FATHER sits in an armchair, staring out the window. A frail, wizened, man of 80, he doesn't acknowledge his son's presence in the room. Michael sets the daffodils down on the table.

MICHAEL
Jamie says hello. And the baby.
Still a nameless little bastard. We
can't decide. Any thoughts?

Silence.

MICHAEL
Right.

He drums his fingers on the table, sighs. Thinks of something.

MICHAEL (CONT.)

Did I tell you I'm speaking at
Princeton? Some conference. Should
be good, lots of fellow geeks.
Course, Jamie's not happy about me
going, leaving her with the baby. I
suppose I could take her with me.
Maybe not.

Father and son both stare out the window.

7

INT. NURSING HOME - LATER

Michael stands outside his father's room, talking to a YOUNG
NURSE.

MICHAEL

Same old, same old.

NURSE

You might not see it, but I think
he enjoys your visits. Most days he
doesn't get out of bed.

MICHAEL

Hmm. I don't get the impression he
hears a word I say.

NURSE

Give it time. Is there anyone else
who could come see him? Friends?
Other family members?

MICHAEL

Nope. Just me.

He gives her a cheerful smile.

MICHAEL (CONT.)

See you next week.

8

INT. CAR - EVENING

Michael drives slowly through rush hour traffic. He has the
radio on quietly, a classical station, and is talking to
himself.

MICHAEL

Sometimes I think maybe I catch a
glimmer of recognition, but then
it's gone. Depends what I talk

(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)
about of course. He's not
interested in the baby. He
certainly doesn't like it when I
mention YOU. But, I don't know, if
I talk about Ma, sometimes,
perhaps, there's this little spark,
this tiny bit of communication.
I...

He is cut off his monologue by his phone. It's Jamie.

MICHAEL
Hey gorgeous.

JAMIE (O.C.)
Can you pick up some coffee please?
The good stuff. For tonight.

MICHAEL
Tonight?

JAMIE (O.C.)
I knew you'd forget. It's Friday.
We're having people round?

MICHAEL
Oh hell.

JAMIE
Yes, I'm really looking forward to
it too. Your idea though. Coffee -
lots of it.

MICHAEL
OK. Anything else?

CUT TO:

9 INT. MORRISON HOUSE - DINING ROOM - SAME

Jamie stands by a beautifully laid out dining table, the
baby on her shoulder, phone in hand. The baby starts crying.
She closes her eyes.

JAMIE
Some sleep please.

10 INT. MORRISON HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

About a dozen people sit around the dining table - all couples - talking, laughing, drinking. Jamie looks beautiful in a black cocktail dress and is in her element. Michael sits inbetween a couple talking animatedly, bored.

At one end of the table they are discussing baby names.

MALE GUEST

What about 'Maximilian'?

FEMALE GUEST

'Maverick'!

MALE GUEST

'Morrissey'?

JAMIE

(laughing)

Morrissey Morrison?

FEMALE GUEST

I love it. It's decided.

JAMIE

Well, whatever we decide on we better do it quick. The christening's next Saturday.

FEMALE GUEST

Don't you have any ideas?

MICHAEL

Excuse me.

He gets down from the table and takes some plates through to the kitchen. The breakfast things are still on the side, a portion of congealed scrambled eggs welded to a plate. He dumps the dinner dishes on top and walks into his study and shuts the door.

Silence. Relief. He crosses to the bureau and pours himself a large single malt.

11 INT. MORRISON HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

FEMALE GUEST

He wants to call him what?

JAMIE

I know.

FEMALE GUEST

But honey, that's not healthy.

JAMIE

You don't need to tell me that.

FEMALE GUEST

Has he ever talked to anyone about it? Like a therapist?

JAMIE

Michael's British. They don't DO therapy there.

FEMALE GUEST

Still...

Jamie's sister, Nita, wanders into the room, wobbly on heels in the plush carpet.

NITA

Who's Michael talking to?

JAMIE

What?

NITA

In his study. He's talking in there. At first I thought it might be the baby...

They wander into the hall and stand outside Michael's study. Faintly we can hear Michael monologuing. Jamie sighs.

JAMIE

Goddammit.

They move away from the door.

JAMIE (CONT.)

He's talking to Lance.

NITA

Lance?

JAMIE

He... talks to him. Like he's still here. I don't know, I guess it's his way of coping.

NITA
Jesus, Sis, you really know how to
pick 'em.

12 INT. MEDIUM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Medium sits in bed, reading. She folds the corner of the page over and sets the book down on the night stand. Just before she flicks off the light she glances across the room and sees herself sitting on the edge of the bed. She turns the light off.

13 INT. SUBWAY - DAY

The Medium rides the subway to work. The light in the carriage blips on and off intermittently. She reaches her stop and gets up. Her scarf drops on to the floor - she doesn't notice.

She squeezes her way out on to the platform when she realises her scarf is gone. She turns back to look through the carriage window. She sees herself, sat in the same seat. A man picks up the scarf from the floor and hands it to her. She smiles and nods. The carriage pulls away.

14 INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Michael addresses a half-empty lecture theatre. Students sit in small groups, some doodling, others taking notes. Some texting. Sophie sits at the front, bolt upright, all ears.

MICHAEL
'Vanishing Twin Syndrome' is a term
that has been used since the 1980s
to describe the phenomenon whereby
one of the fetuses in a twin
pregnancy spontaneously aborts,
usually during the first trimester.
It's estimated that one in eight
pregnancies begins with twin
fetuses, whereas in actuality only
one in 70 live births is a twin.
The so-called 'vanishing twin' gets
absorbed...

The bell rings. The students leap from their seats,
chattering, laughing.

MICHAEL
 ... by the placenta or the
 surviving twin. And now I'm talking
 to myself.

Sophie gathers up her books and approaches the lectern.

SOPHIE
 That was really interesting,
 Michael.

MICHAEL
 Glad someone was listening. In
 Oxford we didn't have bells. Meant
 we could finish what we were saying
 before the stampede.

SOPHIE
 Do you want to go grab a coffee?

MICHAEL
 Oh, I'm sure you have better things
 to do.

SOPHIE
 No, really. I'd like to know more.
 Anything to do with twins interests
 me.

MICHAEL
 A girl after my own heart.

He blushes. Possibly not the most appropriate thing to say.

MICHAEL (CONT.)
 Lead on MacDuff.

15 EXT. STREET - DAY

Michael and Jamie hurry along a busy street, baby and baby
 paraphernalia in arms.

JAMIE
 Pretty sure it's just down here.

MICHAEL
 So, we're decided then. A hundred
 per cent Christopher.

JAMIE
 A hundred per cent.

MICHAEL

Only there's still time. We can
still talk about it. Even just as a
middle name...

Jamie stops. She looks Michael square on.

JAMIE

Michael. We're not calling our son
Lance. I'm sorry, I just can't do
it. It's weird. It's creepy.

She carries on walking.

MICHAEL

Don't I get a say?

JAMIE

Yes, you said Christopher!
Christopher's good.

MICHAEL

I just...

JAMIE

Let it go, Michael! Look,
everyone's here.

She hurries off to greet the small crowd of family and
friends who have gathered outside the church. Michael
reluctantly follows.

16 INT. MEDIUM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Medium has fallen asleep in front of the TV. Her double
sits next to her on the couch. She gets up and turns the set
off. The Medium stirs. They look at each other.

MEDIUM

Who are you?

DOUBLE

You. Now.

She crosses over to the couch and bends over the Medium.
Slowly, and without a sound, her body collapses and
disintegrates into nothing. The Medium gasps and squeezes
her eyes tight shut. She shudders, then is still. A long
moment. Then, she opens her eyes and looks around. And
smiles.