

THE BOTHY

Written by

Gavin Boyter

S 07914 588 771

Gavin.Boyter@virgin.net

© Gavin Boyter, All Rights Reserved

EXT. ARETE - DAY

As early morning light breaks over the top of the arete, revealing a misty dawn, Raj wakes, woozily.

He finds himself in a tent and is momentarily confused. An earwig crawls across his face. He bats it away with his free hand.

He lifts his head and the pain returns with a vengeance.

Craning his head, he sees that his hand has gone purple and his wrist and forearm are swollen and ruddy in colour.

Raj tries to manoeuvre himself towards the tent mouth to look out. The searing pain in his bandaged leg stops him.

Later: Raj is trying to turn his body and undo his fly. Every movement causes tears of pain to fill his eyes.

He can't get his zip undone with his free hand. It's stuck.

Weeping with frustration, he pees himself as he lies, the stain discolouring his jeans.

Then he hears a noise. Rocks tumbling over one another.

Despite the agony, Raj manages to reach back and pull open the tent entrance then crane his head back to look out.

Upside down and angled oddly, he's shocked to see a hulking FIGURE in grey-green rags lumbering up the slope towards him.

The figure is heaving himself up steep rocks with the aid of a carved wooden staff. His hair is long, dirty and matted.

The visitor looks up and his deformed and bearded face contains eyes of startling blue with an almost animal intelligence behind them.

RAJ
(to himself, delirious)
Bogle.

To weak to hold his head up any longer, Raj slumps onto his back, moaning in fear and pain.

A head thrusts itself into the tent.

Raj is face to face with the Bogle. The smell is horrific and Raj chokes convulsively.

The Bogle has a long blade between its teeth, carved from flint with a bone handle.

The Bogle sniffs at Raj, takes the blade from its teeth and grins evilly at Raj.

Raj tries to push the Bogle away with his good hand but the creature picks up a rock nearby and smashes him in the head.

Still just conscious, Raj tries to yell out but the air in his chest is constricted as the Bogle knees across his chest and reaches down under the boulder towards his trapped hand.

From a distant vantage point, Raj's sudden, agonised screams can be heard echoing across the valley.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Adam and Norman are making good time back up the mountain towards the arete.

NORMAN

What I don't get is why you let Raj do this in trainers?

Adam treats it like the rhetorical question it isn't.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

And how come he was so far behind you when he fell? Isn't there some sort of mountaineering code about letting your companions fall behind?

Adam grits his teeth and ignores him.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

I just don't see how something like this could happen to a guy who's conquered Anapurna?

Adam turns, furious.

ADAM

What the fuck Norman! I never climbed Anapurna, okay? I got altitude sickness a half mile out of base camp and was sent back. Happy now?

Norman doesn't know how to respond.

They do the rest of the ascent in silence.

EXT. ARETE - DAY

Norman and Adam walk, cautiously, along the arete and after a fair bit of searching, spy the tent below them, half-hidden by rocks.

As they reach it, they see that it is torn to shreds, pieces of canvas flapping in the wind.

They scramble down.

Raj is nowhere to be seen.

His severed hand remains under the boulder, however, attached to three inches of wrist.

Adam vomits at the sight.

Norman tries to think it through. Can't come up with an explanation.

Wiping his mouth, Adam ventures another quick look at the ragged stump.

ADAM

Do you think he... you know, like that Danny Boyle film? About the Aussie mountain-biker?

NORMAN

You think he sawed his own wrist off? That dude waited five days... But then Raj was always a bit impatient.

Adam is reaching.

ADAM

I don't know. Maybe he was delirious. Maybe it's gone numb and he couldn't feel it. Or maybe mountain rescue...?

Norman laughs, sourly.

He bends to examine Raj's wrist like a forensic scientist.

NORMAN

I know a bit about mountain rescue. They do not just hack people's arms off. With something primitive. And then slice up their tents for good measure. I assume you didn't leave it like this?

Norman points at the flapping canvas. Adam shakes his head.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

There's someone out here with us. Or something, as crazy as that sounds. We'd better get back to the girls.

ADAM

What about Raj?

NORMAN

You lost him. You find him.

Adam looks at the rocks around, finds some blood.

ADAM

(hurt but determined)

I will then.

Adam starts down the slope, following the trail.

NORMAN

(shouting)

Meet you at the bothy!

Adam does not turn or reply.

Norman climbs back up to the top of the arete.

EXT. SHEEP PATH - DAY

Dianne walks arm in arm with Jenny. Both of them are crying now as they lug their packs.

DIANNE

I should have let him take the
dope. It might have helped with
the pain.

Jenny squeezes her arm supportively.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

I don't know why we came here.
This was so not our kind of
holiday.

She looks up at the mountains all around her.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Fucking mountains!

Jenny joins in.

JENNY

(shouting too)

Fucking Scotland the fucking brave!

Despite herself, Dianne laughs.

DIANNE

What a holiday. All this scenery
and no actual people.

She slumps down on a boulder, exhausted, head in her hands.

Jenny waits a little but Dianne is not moving.

JENNY

Come on Di. We'd better keep moving.

DIANNE

Must we?

Jenny looks at her watch.

JENNY

I guess we can stop or a bit. I've got the stove. Fancy a cuppa?

DIANNE

Oh god yes. Tea makes everything better.

She takes out Raj's stash and begins skinning up.

JENNY

Are you sure that's a good...

She doesn't finish the thought, seeing Dianne's expression.

A little later, they sit with tin mugs of tea.

Dianne passes the joint to Jenny, who refuses at first then relents and takes a spluttering draw then passes it back.

The mountains are as silent as the grave.

EXT. ANOTHER MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Adam is still heading down the mountain when he sees a figure in the distance, traversing a rocky plain.

He's about to shout out when something stops him.

Ducking low instead, he starts to spider-crawl down the few remaining feet to the valley floor.

He's now out of sight of the Bogle but getting closer.

A little while later he stands in the plain, bemused.

Adam's quarry is nowhere to be seen.

ADAM

What the fuck?

He hesitates, then raises his hands to his mouth.

ADAM (CONT'D)

RAJ!

The word echoes ominously round the valley.

Nothing.

Adam gets out his map and begins to look at routes towards the bothy, which is circled in red pen.

Following one route with his finger, he nods decisively and folds the map away.

As he walks off he's scared, looking around sporadically.

He doesn't see a rock just behind him unfurl itself into the shape of the Bogle, his coat having acted as camouflage.

Beneath the Bogle is Raj's unconscious body. The Bogle leaves Raj and prowls, almost catlike, after Adam.

A little later, Adam has walked a mile or so further.

He stops, confused. He turns, looks at two valley mouths to his right, consults his map and changes direction.

This time another rock unfurls at the periphery of his vision and Adam spins just as a spear thumps into his chest.

Adam falls to his knees, clutching at the spear. He quickly goes into shock, eyes rolling.

Blood is gouting out of the wound and running down the length of the shaft.

EXT. VALLEY MOUTH - DAY

Sometime later, the Bogle plods along the valley floor, the spear across his shoulders.

Adam is skewered on one end and Raj tied to the other.

The almost seven-foot tall Bogle carries them with ease as their feet drag and bounce over rocks.

Darkness is falling.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR - NIGHT

Norman scrambles down the side of the mountain behind the girls, dimly visible ahead by the light of their torches.

Norman catches up to them, making Jenny shriek.

DIANNE

Norman! What the fuck? Where's
Adam and Raj?

Norman puts his finger to his mouth.

NORMAN

(quietly)

Keep quiet and listen to me.
There's something out here with us
and it's to be avoided.

JENNY

What do you mean 'it's'?

DIANNE

Did you help Raj?

Norman shakes his head.

NORMAN

He's gone. I reckon we can be at
the bothy in about thirty minutes.
It's round the next bend. Adam's
going to meet us there. With Raj
if he can find him. Come on.

He stomps off, torch lighting the path ahead.

DIANNE

He's gone? What are you talking
about? Norman!

The girls rush after their grimly determined friend.

EXT. VALLEY WITH BOTHY - NIGHT

The Bothy stands in its own valley, at the junction of two
mountains by a small corrie.

The basic stone hut is illuminated by moonlit and swathed in
mist. As well as the main building there's also a small
separate woodstore tacked onto the side.

The Bogle drags his grisly cargo through a gurgling river and
down towards the Bothy.

EXT. BEND IN HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Dianne gets frustrated, grabs Norman by the shoulders.

DIANNE

Stop fucking around and tell me.
what happened to Raj?

NORMAN

You don't want to know.

This doesn't impress Dianne. She slaps him.

Norman rubs his face, although the blow was more symbolic
than forceful.

He tries to avoid explaining it. Can't.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
 We found his hand and wrist,
 trapped under a big rock. The rest
 of him is gone. Taken. Or
 wandered off. Adam's gone to try
 find him.

JENNY
 What? You let him?

NORMAN
 I could hardly stop him, could I?
 Plus I'm not going to leave you two
 alone, knowing that it's out there.

JENNY
 You keep saying it but this is a
 person, right? Did you see him?

Norman shakes his head and encourages the girls to keep walking.

NORMAN
 No but trust me, we don't want to
 encounter it. Him. The Bogle.

Dianne laughs, then stops laughing when she sees Norman's expression.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
 Told you you wouldn't want to know.

He turns and storms off, torch lighting the way.

The girls exchange frightened looks and dash to catch up with him.

EXT. BOTHY - NIGHT

Adam lies in the grounds of the bothy, the spear through his chest driven into the cold earth. He's conscious... just.

A rabbit skin flaps like a totem at the top of the spear.

A hulking figure blocks out the light from the bothy window briefly. Adam's vision blurs as he watches.

Sounds of shuffling feet from inside.

Adam grabs the spear with both hands and tries to pull it from the ground but it's wedged too firmly.

He looks up at the top of the spear.

Gritting his teeth Adam begins to pull his body up the shaft of the spear as it slides through him.

Every inch is an agony.

As he gets to the top of the spear he pulls the rabbit skin off and has a nasty surprise waiting.

The homemade flint blade of the spear is there, wider and sharper than the shaft.

Try as he might, there's nothing Adam can do to dislodge the spearhead.

He looks like he might faint any moment as he takes a deep breath and begins to draw his wound over the spear head.

It's too painful - Adam cries out and a moment later an axe slices through the base of the spear and Adam is freed but grabbed just as quickly by the strong claws of the Bogle.

The Bogle drags Adam over to a wooden tree stump used for log-cutting. He thumps Adam's head down on the stump, eyes down.

The Bogle raises the axe high. Adam turns his head just in time to see the blade descending.

Thomp! Adam's severed head rolls off the stump, a skein of blood pumping from his neck.

INT. BOTHY - NIGHT

Raj is awoken by the sound of the axe descending.

He looks around to find he's tied up on a small wooden platform inside the bothy.

The interior is more than rustic. Log roof, slate floor, stone walls. Basic wooden furniture has seen many winters. A large hearth blazes away, an iron pot suspended over it.

A guttering oil lantern is the only other source of illumination, throwing frightening shadows around.

Raj sighs in relief. He's not under the boulder anymore.

There's a jolly whistling sound and the Bogle enters through a door to his left, carrying something in a sack and holding his ceremonial staff.

The Bogle throws the sack into the corner of the room and grins malevolently at Raj.

Raj tries to speak through parched lips. Nothing comes.

The Bogle stirs soup in the pot over the fire. He tastes it with a wooden spoon. It is thick and reddish in colour. The Bogle crushes some leaves from a pouch and tosses them in.

Tasting the broth again, the Bogle nods, satisfied.

He pours some into a tin cup and turns to Raj, offering it to his dry lips.

Raj is scared but hopeful. Maybe in its brutal way, the Bogle is trying to help him?

He moves to take the cup in his hands but he can't.

He's been tied to the platform.

The Bogle kneels over him, forcing the scalding liquid into Raj's mouth.

Raj tries to turn his head but cannot and must gulp down some of what he now realises is blood.

The Bogle gets off him and Raj turns his head to the door, noticing as he does so his bloody stump tied to an upright.

The sight of it brings the trauma back and Raj faints.

The Bogle looks almost disappointed as he rips Raj's shirt open and begins to inscribe a pentangle on his chest with his fingers, using the blood soup as paint.

As he's doing so, the Bogle hears a noise.

Distant voices.

He moves to a window, sees torchlight flickering on the hillside.

Alarmed, he pours the rest of the soup onto the hearth, extinguishing the flames.

Then he snuffs out the lantern too.

EXT. VALLEY WITH BOTHY - NIGHT

Norman is peering through the darkness using the zoom lens of his SLR camera.

NORMAN

Thought I saw a light out there but
it's gone now.

Jenny shines the torch around, finding a small stream.

JENNY

You said the bothy was near a small
lake or something.

(MORE)

JENNY (CONT'D)

Couldn't we follow this stream? It
might flow into it.

Norman's a little surprised the idea came from Jenny.

NORMAN

I haven't got a better idea. Let's
go for it. Watch your feet though,
its rocky.

The path they're following dissolves into a scree slope by
the edge of the stream, which steepens after a while to
become a small waterfall.

They make slow but steady progress down the mountainside and
into the Bogle's valley.

EXT. OUTSIDE BOTHY - NIGHT

Raj wakes to find he's being dragged by his feet towards a
shed that leans against the stone wall of the bothy.

His feet are tied together and his arms are tied behind him
at the elbows.

He begins to struggle but the Bogle, implacable, ignores him.

INT. WOODSTORE - CONTINUOUS

Raj is dragged into a shed stacked with logs and bags of cut
wood.

RAJ

(faintly)

No! What are you doing? Please
stop. Let me go.

The Bogle grabs him by the chest and stuffs a rag in his
mouth, tying it in place with a frayed piece of rope.

The rag is the sleeve of Adam's shirt.

The Bogle winds more rope round Raj and a workbench. He ties
it very tightly, his foot against Raj's side.

Without so much as a moment of eye contact, the Bogle leaves.

There's the sound of a length of chain being strung across
the door and a padlock being closed.

Raj yells through his gag but the cloth and the wooden door
absorb much of the sound.

The wind and gurgling river take the rest.

EXT. VALLEY WITH BOTHY - NIGHT

Norman and the girls reach level ground and see the bothy in the middle of the hidden valley, its inky tarn fed by the stream tumbling over rocks.

The bothy is a dark square with just a faint wisp of smoke emerging from the chimney.

Jenny claps her hands and Dianne groans in relief.

As they head for the bothy, all is silence except wind and stream.

EXT. OUTSIDE BOTHY - CONTINUOUS

The bothy has bags of sand and gravel piled outside it as well as a wheelbarrow full of old tools.

Dianne knocks on the latched front door.

DIANNE

Hello? Anyone home? Mr Bogle?

Nothing.

She swings the door open on its rusty hinges.

Dianne is first in, with her torch revealing the interior, Norman and Jenny behind her.

Jenny fumbles for an invisible light switch behind the door.

NORMAN

You'll be lucky. There will be a lamp of some sort.

Dianne walks over to the fire, puts her hands out. Residual heat.

DIANNE

Someone's been here. Not so long ago.

JENNY

Maybe that old couple? They looked shifty. Perhaps they ignored the sign too.

Norman has found the lantern and is lighting the wick with a disposable lighter.

The rustic interior is revealed by the guttering oil flames.

No sign of anyone.

Norman walks over to the sleeping platform, sees a few dark stains but thinks nothing of it.

DIANNE

What now?

Norman looks at the fire. It's full of logs that have only been partially burnt.

A little later a healthy fire blazes in the hearth and things feel a lot more convivial.

Three mobile phones lie on the sleeping platform as Norman tries swapping batteries. Two of the phones are dead.

He gets one to work only to find it has zero reception.

NORMAN

Guess I could go out and climb a mountain.

Dianne raises an eyebrow skeptically.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

You're right. Shite idea.

Jenny is looking at the map, also spread out on the platform.

Her finger follows a valley out to a moorland, a B-road and Braemar.

JENNY

We're not that far from civilisation.

Dianne looks over her shoulder.

DIANNE

About fifteen miles. Another day. We'll wait for Raj and Adam.

NORMAN

Adam knows where we are. We ought to wait. He'll be here soon.

DIANNE

With Raj, hopefully.

Norman nods encouragingly, but not convincingly.

JENNY

He climbed Anna Purdah after all.

Norman bites his tongue.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

On a different slope overlooking the bothy, the Bogle watches and waits.

He sees smoke piling from the chimney.

The Bogle frowns angrily and takes a crumpled photo from his bag. It shows two middle-aged mountaineers on top of a Munro grinning broadly.

The taller of the men two might be Norman's father.

The Bogle frowns, as if trying to make sense of something.

INT. BOTHY - NIGHT

Norman, Dianne and Jenny have cheered up a little. They're passing Norman's whiskey flask from hand to hand.

Even Jenny takes a swig now, wincing less than before as the liquid warms her throat.

Dianne starts singing The Proclaimers "500 Miles" in a cod-Scottish accent that makes Norman hide his face in his hands.

Jenny joins in with a surprisingly sweet harmony.

Eventually, even Norman adds a gruff bassline.

Nevertheless, there's something desperate about their performance, like the band playing on the Titanic.

Norman, tapping his feet, finds a tatty old guestbook that has fallen under a basket of old logs.

They stop singing and flick through it.

Entries include:

Great little shack and spectacular scenery. The REAL Scotland! Hank and Carole, Boston.

Wunderbar! The best mountain we have seen, the greatest week. Our son chopped a wood. Waldermar, Kurt and Leni, Stuttgart. 2002.

A little cold for us but soooooo beautiful. Cherry and Apple, Manila.

Norman flicks through the rest of the book, looks disappointed when he gets to the end and the last twenty pages have been torn out.

JENNY

Were you looking for something?

Norman shakes his head. He suddenly looks really sad.

Dianne squeezes his shoulder.

DIANNE

What is it?

Norman sighs.

NORMAN

I just thought maybe my Dad... but maybe he never stayed here. And he wasn't really the guestbook type.

The fire begins to splutter, the last of the logs being consumed.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

We need more firewood. There's a shed outside, isn't there?

Dianne nods. No-one seems keen to volunteer.

Jenny grabs three tiny pieces of kindling from the empty log basket.

They draw for the pleasure of going outside. Dianne loses.

EXT. BOTHY - NIGHT

Dianne steps into the chill air, inserting iPod headphones to keep warm and play some cheerful music.

Dianne carries the last flaming log from the fire to light her way. It offers only fitful illumination.

She locates the woodshed but sees that it's padlocked.

INT. WOODSTORE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, an increasingly weak Raj, hears sound from outside and groans.

EXT. BOTHY - CONTINUOUS

Listening to her music, Dianne can't hear a thing as she sees some chopped logs by a tree-stump.

She gathers them up in a bag.

Standing up, she slips in something and puts a hand down to stop herself. The log falls and goes out.

DIANNE

This whole country's a fucking bog.

Dianne feels her way back round to the front door and swings the bag of wood in before her.

INT. BOTHY - CONTINUOUS

Dianne wonders why the others are staring at her in horror.

Then she looks at her hand, which is wet and red with blood. Her boots have made bloody footprints too.

She shrieks.

DIANNE

It's not mine. It's not mine.

Jenny's screams and Norman's groan join hers.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

As screams pierce the night, the Bogle stands up from his perch looking down on the valley.

He raises his head and lets out a howling ululation of his own.

INT. BOTHY - CONTINUOUS

Norman shakes as he attempts to light the fire, hearing a distant howl.

INSERT: confused memory images - drifting snow... steaming climbing boots resting by a blazing hearth... a hand tattooed with a star at the underside of the wrist.

Norman shakes his head, struggling to get the damp, blood-stained wood to light.

Dianne is scrubbing the blood from her hands with T-shirt. She seems numb.

Jenny finds a sack in the corner of the room.

JENNY

Maybe there's firelighters in this.

He opens it and gasps, sickened, dropping the sack.

Adam's head, minus the top of his skull and brains, tumbles out and rolls across the floor.

They all go into shock responses.

Norman backs into a corner.

NORMAN

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

He repeats it like a mantra.

Jenny has curled up, rocking herself on her heels in the other corner.

Dianne is sobbing, unable to draw her eyes away from the head until she finally has the bravery to throw a towel over it.

Then Norman gets up, picks up the towel and head and puts it gently outside the door.

Looking up, he sees a bluish light a mile or so away through the gloom.

Norman runs back inside, slamming the door behind him.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

It's out there.

DIANNE

What about Raj?

NORMAN

He's dead Dianne. Bound to be. I saw the light. The blue light. It's getting closer.

He runs outside with his torch.

JENNY

Where are you going? Don't leave us here!

A moment later, Norman returns with a bloodstained axe and Adam's backpack.

Jenny takes the ice-axe from the back-pack and cradles it as if it's a fond souvenir of her boyfriend.

DIANNE

I don't have a weapon.

Norman reaches into a pocket and retrieves a three inch swiss army knife. Dianne takes it, dubiously.

Then she remembers something.

DIANNE (CONT'D)

I know what to do.