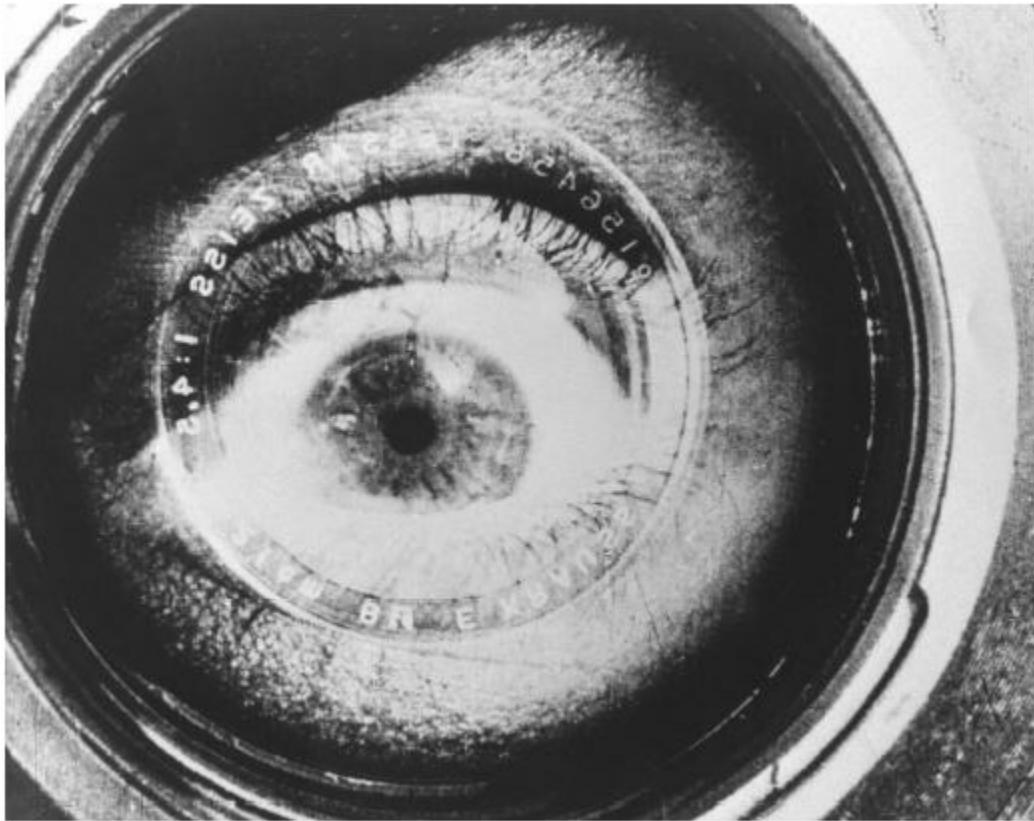


When you have to believe everything that you see...

THE CAMERA EYE



By Randall Brooks

The television was blaring so loud that it was giving Alice a headache. She had been watching her favorite soap opera when the phone had rang, thus distracting her for a few minutes, making her miss out on most of the program. And that's when she had first started tensing up, causing her head to throb as a result.

She was an avid fan of that particular soap, and had been ever since she was a teenager in middle school, and had followed it faithfully over the years, not missing an episode - until today.

Alice Griffin had come from a single parent home, raised by her mother, and had left as soon as she finished high school, moving into her first apartment, a small one bedroom efficiency with utilities included in the rent.

She wasn't a very bright person, only making grades well enough to coast by on during her school years, but she was vibrant and beautiful, something she discovered early on that she could get by on very easily. She had long, wavy blonde hair, and sky blue eyes, and a body that was built for sin, as the old saying goes to describe a woman like her.

And even though Alice was such a fiercely beautiful woman, she hadn't had many boyfriends over the years, and that was one of the main reasons she succumbed to watching soap operas most of her life. Well, that and plus she felt like she was living in a soap opera most of the time; and plus she fantasized about her life hopefully being more like some of the women on the show.

It had been her mother on the phone calling to remind her to come to Thanksgiving dinner two days from now, something Alice had known about for a whole month now, and was even more-so flabbergasted at her mom for calling to remind her as if she was some brain dead bimbo who would forget her head if it wasn't attached to her body.

Since she had missed the show, Alice decided to jump in the shower and start getting ready for work, seeing that she had to be at work in less than 2 hours. She worked part time at a Shoney's restaurant nearby, within walking distance to her apartment. She wasn't too crazy about the job, but she didn't really have to work too hard, and she made good tips, which paid the rent, and that was all that really mattered to her.

As she walked into the bathroom, she thought she heard a noise coming from outside her bedroom window, but then dismissed it, thinking it was surely only the wind blowing a limb across the window pane, since there was a tree very close to the apartment building. It didn't take Alice long to undress and step into the shower since she was only wearing a bathrobe, with nothing underneath. She let the warm water run over her body for a few minutes, basking in the thrill of having her body massaged and washed, the water trickling down and driving into her with a lot of force.

A heavy steam built up all around the shower stall, the glass door completely covered, making it pretty much impossible to see the bathroom from where she stood, but she was loving every minute of it, closing her eyes so the warm water could wash over her face, as she reached down and placed her hand inside her vagina and began to gently rub back and forth.

There was a loud crashing sound that came from outside the bathroom, startling Alice a little, but then she remembered she had let her cat out earlier, and it was probably coming back in, and had more than likely knocked a plant over in the process. So, she ignored the noise, and returned to pleasuring herself, gently rubbing her finger along the inner layer of her right thigh, sighing deeply from the pleasure it brought her.

She kept at it until she reached a climax that was so rewarding and pleasurable, that she cried out, her moan echoing off the tiled walls of the shower stall. She reached up and turned the water off and grabbed the towel hanging on the shower stall door, and proceeded to dry off.

When Alice slid the glass panel open, what she saw startled her, taking her breath away. A man was standing there, dressed completely in black from head to toe, his hulking presence huge and powerful, holding a large knife. He immediately started stabbing Alice before she even had time to move or react, slicing her arm in a few places, deep and to the bone, making her cry out in pain and shock.

The knife rose and fell a few more times, coming down in a new spot every time, cutting into Alice from different angles, stabbing into her breasts and chest area.

“Cut!” A voice called out suddenly, causing everyone in the room to freeze in place. “This is such shit! I didn’t realize we were remaking ‘Psycho’ when I read the script. We’re going to need to take a break and rewrite this,” Director Steve Parks said, his voice resounding all around the studio, sounding louder than normal because of the huge bullhorn he used.

“Ok, people, you heard the man, that’s a wrap for now,” a technical advisor on the set called out, and then the lights on the set went out and everyone walked off.

It was a cold, dreary night, with the threat of snow lingering, temperatures dropping way down into the low 30’s. It was times like this that filmmaker Steve Parks was most inspired, some of the best ideas he’d ever had coming to him from out of the blue; or so it seemed. And he was hoping to have one of those moments now, seeing that the latest script he was in the midst of filming was in dire need of some revisions, and needed to be reworked all-together.

Steve sat at his desk, leafing through so many scripts he had long since lost count, when an idea came to him so suddenly, it made him sit upright in his chair and toss the screenplays in the trash can, with a look of defiant jubilation on his face.

He had been making films for almost 15 years, starting when he was just 20 years old, breaking into the industry with a low budget thriller financed by him and his friend Damian McCampbell, and had continued his streak of making a hit horror picture every year since. But his last two pictures hadn’t done so well, the latest one was even considered an out-and-out flop. Critics threw out words like “Worst movie of the year!“, “Awful!“, “Parks is now a HACK!“, “Derivative!“, and “Time for Parks to retire!“ They had completely ravaged him, calling him washed up and out of touch all over one or two recent misfires. And Damian had stayed right by his side, acting as producer and art director on every movie he made during that tenure, forging a very formable and trustworthy business relationship between the two men deepened by their life-long friendship.

Damian had even served as best man at Steve’s wedding to his lovely wife, Caroline, and Steve had done the same in return when Damian had married his beautiful fiancée, Maryann, just a year later, making both men married and starting families by the time they were 25.

The idea that Steve had was to go out and film some footage somewhere, and see what he could capture, and then either use it or re-enact it if he caught anything worth using. He knew all too well that there were plenty of real life horrors in the world, and all someone

would have to do is have a camera placed in the right place at the right time to capture some of them. Plus, it seemed to be all the rage lately for horror films to have a look of coming from home made videos, with shaky camera images, giving the presentation in more of a point-of-view perspective, creating the illusion of a faux documentary.

Steve hated to cave in and give into recent trends, especially when he had considered himself a major trend setter in the art of filmmaking for so many years, but with studio pressure reigning down on him lately, and the pressure to have a hit movie and reinstate himself as a viable trusted prominent filmmaker who is in demand again drove him to consider things he wouldn't have even humored thinking about just three years ago.

And seeing that his ideas had all been correct before, and had worked in his favor, and in the favor of the studios he made films for, he didn't think he could go wrong with his latest brainstorm.

"Yeah, great idea!" Steve said aloud, speaking to no one but himself. He was so excited about his new idea, he called both Damian and his wife Caroline and ran it by them, who in return told him what an artistic genius he was, and that was probably one of the best ideas as a filmmaker that he'd had in a long time.

"I'll even see how I can fit whatever you film into the script you're currently filming," Caroline had offered. She was a script doctor on most of the films Steve had filmed over the years, and was currently working with her husband on the movie he was in the process of making, and was excited by her husband's idea on how to change the shower sequence that she as well had had a problem with ever since she had first read the screenplay.

"And, I'll let everyone know production has been halted temporarily, but not to worry because we will be back to work very soon," Damian said, also offering to be as helpful and assistive as possible. "Plus, this will give me time to get some new set designs made up."

Steve had them all on three-way calling, so he was able to talk to both Damian and Caroline at the same time, and they were able to talk to each other, and everyone involved be able to hear what was being said without having to relay messages later.

"I'm just so proud of you, Steve! Every time the studio has tried to consider you down and out, you have bounced back with a vengeance," Caroline said, trying to console her husband, knowing the exact right words to say to help boost his ego, and also honestly feeling like her husband was going to make a huge comeback with his latest film.

"Well, thanks you guys, I really do appreciate all the positive words, and the feedback. Now, I must go try to get some work done, and plus I want to think where and how to get some of this new footage I'm talking about. I'll call you later and let you know when I think of something." Steve clicked his phone off and set it down on his desk. He sat back in his chair and thought about the conversation he had just had, and started to chuckle a little. He loved his wife and his best friend dearly, and trusted the opinions of both, but he had the feeling they were just being nice and trying to help cheer him up.

Plus, the more he thought about it, the idea he had came up with earlier just didn't sound so great after all. Especially when he gave it more thought and started realizing just what the odds would be of him actually coming across some horrific scenario or crime and be able to capture it on film. He laughed even harder as he sat straight up in his chair and reached for another script on his desk.

Well, it's at least a thought, Steve found himself thinking, and who knows? Who knows?

Steve noticed the time and remembered he had to run a few errands and take care of some business, his memory was getting so bad lately, and realized he better get started before the day got completely away from him. He got up and walked over to the closet in his office and grabbed his leather trench coat, and walked out the door.

He was gone for maybe two to three hours, he wasn't too sure, again his memory being so bad lately, he just knew that he had been gone longer than he planned, and he had no recollection of all that he did, his memory very vague on the whole afternoon. When he walked into his office, the first thing he noticed was three DVD's placed on his desk, the labels with handwritten titles on them. He had no idea how they got there, or who would have placed them there. All he knew was what was written on the labels: "Homemade Horror". Each one was numbered, Volume 1, 2, and 3.

He sat at his desk and stared at the discs, pondering on how they came to be in his office, letting his curiosity get the better of him, wondering if the studio had maybe finally sent over some outtakes from his last picture like he had asked them to do. The phone started ringing, but Steve ignored it as he proceeded to pop in one of the DVD's and sit back and watch what was on it.

The girl had long, sandy blonde hair that grew down past her waist, and a very slender figure, which was scantily clad in only blue jeans and a halter top, exposing two huge breasts. At first glance she appeared to be in her early to mid twenties, but at a closer range, she was obviously only 17 or 18 years old. She looked kind of haggard for her age, her complexion rough from drug abuse and possibly prostitution.

She slowly climbed into the van that had stopped to give her a ride. She had been hitchhiking for several hours, starting out sometime around 6:00 AM, walking along the deserted highway, almost freezing in the extremely cold weather; and it was now close to 11:00.

"Which way are you headed?" she asked, as she climbed into the utility vehicle, adjusting herself in the passenger seat, noticing it was bare in the back, metal walls and floor.

"Where do you need to go?" The driver asked, the voice monotone and flat.

"I was hoping to get all the way to Hollywood Boulevard if possible," the girl said, then asked if she could smoke. "Oh, and my name is Debbie." She rolled down the window on her side of the vehicle and proceeded to light a cigarette she had pulled from her purse.

The driver leaned forward and turned on the stereo, turning the volume as loud as it would go as the van pulled back onto the road and drove off.

There was hardly any traffic at all this time of day, the van passing maybe one or two cars at most in the next mile or two of travel as it picked up speed, hurrying along almost frantically, the driver starting to dramatically weave the vehicle from one side of the highway to the other.

"Whoa, what's the rush?" Debbie called out, trying to be heard over the loud music to no avail, feeling a hint of panic set in. She reached down and noticed there was no handle on the passenger door, and the feeling of panic grew stronger.

Suddenly the van swerved as if to avoid an oncoming car that wasn't there, and turned into a dark alley, not slowing down any, causing Debbie to hit her head on the passenger door window.

"Ouch, damn!" Debbie yelled out, her voice taking on a more aggressive tone, beginning

to get defensive and scared.

A gloved fist raised up and hit her in the side of the head, hard, knocking her out cold. When Debbie awoke about a half hour later, she found herself in the back of the van, bound and gagged, lying on the cold metal bed, her clothes stripped off of her, and her legs spread eagle wide open. She had a ball of some sort crammed in her mouth, held in place by a couple straps of duct tape, and her hands were tied together behind her back by a heavy chain.

The driver of the van was sitting to one side of her, fiddling with something that Debbie at first didn't know what it was, then slowly was able to make out that it was a tennis racket with a dildo strapped onto the end of it, with a heavy layer of Vaseline coating. She watched in a mortified state of mind as the driver poured salt all over the Vaseline, letting it soak in, then pouring even more.

Debbie's eyes grew the size of silver dollars as she watched what was happening next. The person who had been driving the van turned toward her and proceeded to ram the dildo into her vagina hard and fast, ripping and tearing its way inside her, the salt stinging like hell as it wore its way into her fresh wounds.

She tried her best to scream, but only resulted in causing herself to gag and almost choke to death on the ball she was gagged with. The pain was immense, almost too much to bear, as the dildo was driven further and deeper inside her, harder and faster with each stroke.

The horror of all horrors in Debbie's opinion was when she was rolled over involuntarily, and then the salt covered dildo was then driven deep into her anus, again ripping and tearing its way inside her, again stinging like hell as the salt ate its way into her sore flesh. While the driver was busy doing that with one hand, the other hand came toward Debbie holding a big knife, cutting into her breasts, slicing off a nipple, causing her entire body to convulse with pain and terror.

A single tear slid down Debbie's cheek, mingling with some blood on her bare breasts. She had long since lost all track of time, and had no idea how long this torture had been going on, though it felt like eternity at this point.

Suddenly, the dildo was pulled out of her, and Debbie felt a small sense of relief, even though her entire body ached with terrible pain. She closed her eyes for a moment, hoping when she opened them she would realize this had all been a bad dream. A really bad dream!

Something cold and wet was slowly being poured over her entire body, and the smell of gasoline filled her nostrils, and she started writhing and trying to break free from the chain she was bound by, but had no luck. She could only watch in horror as a lit match was tossed in her direction and her entire body lit up like a bonfire.

Even with the ball-gag in her mouth, Debbie let out a scream that was so loud that it hurt the driver's ears, even though it was muffled, and the driver by this point had stepped outside the van.

There was a wicked laugh as Debbie slowly burned to death in the back of the vehicle.

Steve turned toward the waste basket beside his desk and vomited violently into it as he reached his right hand over and hit the off switch on the remote control. He sat in silence for a few minutes, contemplating what he had just witnessed. He had put in the DVD's

that was on his desk when he had returned earlier, and had watched all three of them, each one being only 15 minutes each.

This has to be the sickest fucking thing I've ever seen! he thought, turning and throwing up some more, his stomach turning violently over and over. I have done quite a lot of different type things to characters in my movies ranging from having someone hung and slashed up from end to end to being buried alive with an I.V. drip of cocaine in their arm, and all sorts of other type horrendous murders, but the one thing I will never direct is torture porn. I despise the whole concept, and refuse to even acknowledge its existence, especially in my own work. And this looks exactly like torture porn!

Very true that the reason that there are so few good horror films is because the target demographic is teens and young adults who aren't the brightest bulbs in the chandelier. Picture a theater filled with clones of Beavis and Butthead laughing stupidly and saying "that was COOL!" every time a limb gets chopped off. But, that didn't mean that he had to cater to them! Plus, Steve still believed that he had a fan base of more intellectually stimulated people; people who thrived more on psychological horror, not just your typical slice and dice feature that was a dime a dozen anymore.

And the DVD's he had just watched were of the worst variety to hit theaters in a long time: the dumbed-down, plot doesn't matter, gore-infested torture trash that he wouldn't step foot in a theater to watch, much less direct a film about to make his fans endure. But surely it was fictional! Steve picked up one of the DVD cases and turned it over and over seeing if there was maybe a name on it somewhere saying who made the film, or maybe what studio it belonged to. Nothing. Blank other than the words "Homemade Horror", Volume 1, 2, and 3, scribbled in longhand in black magic marker.

And something else that really troubled Steve was that he believed the film to be real. And he also believed he recognized the van that the murder had been committed in, but he wasn't sure.

Was this something I filmed during a drunken blackout that I don't remember? Steve found himself musing on some off-the-wall possibilities that just couldn't be possible in a million years, but still seemed plausible in his mind at the moment; especially given the fact that he suffered so many blackouts and blank spaces in his memory lately, even though he had quit drinking over five years ago.

He started to buzz his secretary and ask her if she saw who had dropped the DVD's in his office, then remembered she had the day off. He flinched at how bad his memory was getting.

Steve decided to phone Damian and see if there was any new progress on his end concerning the new script changes for the new film he was making, already forgetting he had spoken to Damian this morning. Plus, it was Caroline who was working on script changes, but Steve had already forgotten that as well. He felt like he needed a drink all of a sudden.

"Hey, Damian, it's Steve, did you ever get any progress on the new set designs today?"

"Still waiting to see what you do with the new scene first, plus didn't Caroline say something about rewriting that entire scene for you first, and you asked me to hold off until she had it ready?" Damian sounded totally befuddled at his friend's lack of memory of the conversation they had just had earlier this morning.

"Yes, you did, and yes she did, it's just I've had a hectic day today, and would forget my

name if you didn't call me Steve every now and again," Steve said, and chuckled nervously, his stress beginning to get the better of him. "I honestly feel like I'm losing my mind sometimes, man, like I'm part of the plot of one of my own movies. I can see the headlines now, 'Genius Filmmaker Who Made Psychological Mystery Horror Films Has Lost His Mind And Is Threatening To Kill...'" Steve burst out laughing, sounding almost maniacal, causing Damian to flinch a little on the other end and pull the phone away from his ear.

"I've had a few ideas today that I would like to talk to you about sometime, though," Damian said, thinking back on how he had spent most of his morning being productive, just not in the typical way, and not on the movie set. "I may go along with the idea you mentioned this morning when you called."

"So you think the idea I had earlier was really good, huh? That's what I thought you'd say, always know I can count on you, Damian, my good man." Steve was sounding like he was a bit tipsy, as if he had drank a few shots before he returned to work, and had no idea why he was sounding this way. "Well, I've got to go, so I'll check with you when I get home, or tomorrow from the office, ok."

Steve hung up the phone and decided to go ahead and head home early because he was feeling sick, and a weird feeling of fatigue was coming over him in waves. He almost felt like he was going to black out at any given moment. He just hoped that he could make it home safely.

He stepped outside right as a fight was starting in the alley behind his film studio between two rival gang members, and it all just looked so surreal to Steve, as if he was watching it all in a movie - seeing it through the camera eye.

Caroline Parks wasn't necessarily what most people would describe as being a beautiful woman, but she was a very attractive one, with an inner beauty that made her seem special to her husband Steve. She wore her mousy brown hair cropped very short, she had a typical hour glass figure, and weighed a healthy 150 Lbs.

She had first met Steve while they were both in college, him majoring in filmmaking, and she majoring in Creating Writing, making them a perfect pair for each other; especially since they both shared a love for the same genre of film: Horror.

When Steve started work on his very first film so many years ago, he had asked Caroline immediately if she would want to work along with him, doctoring the scripts, and even acting as a minor character from time to time, and she had agreed wholeheartedly. She had loved the whole art of filmmaking ever since childhood, and it thrilled her to be able to get involved in making movies any chance she could get. And when Steve had asked her to be involved with his films, she had jumped at the chance. And then offers from other filmmakers started pouring in over the years, but she always politely turned them down, citing commitment to her husband as the main reason. She would just say she was under contract and couldn't break it, and was already committed to other projects. It had only strengthened the bond between her and Steve over the years, the both of them growing to love each other more and more with each passing year.

They had both long since agreed they didn't want children, so Caroline had her tubes tied, an operation she has never regretted, and had even offered to get when they had first had the conversations about not wanting children so long ago. That was just one example of

how much she loved her husband, and the ways she liked to show it, and the things she would do for him to please him.

Other ways included engaging him in any sexual fantasy his heart desired, ranging from typical missionary position, to wild S&M driven sex fantasies beyond some people's wildest imaginations.

Matter of fact, Caroline had been in bed, undressed and in the mood for sex when Steve had arrived home this afternoon, and Steve was never the type to pass up having sex with his wife, no matter what the occasion. He had temporarily forgotten all about the film he had watched earlier in the day at work, as he allowed himself the pleasure of being with his wife, having sex until they were both tired and spent, falling asleep in each other's arms.

A couple hours later, Steve awoke, needing to use the bathroom, and feeling a little hungry since he hadn't eaten much during the day. He slowly made his way out of bed so as not to wake his wife, and once out of the bedroom, almost broke into a run toward the bathroom, his bladder feeling full.

After urinating for what seemed like an eternity, Steve headed for the kitchen for a late night snack. He found himself thinking about the film he had watched earlier today, and a chill traveled down his spine, and he started feeling a little nauseous, but continued making himself a sandwich anyway.

He noticed that it was just a few minutes past 11:00, so he walked into the living room and turned on the television and turned the channel to a local news station, and sat down and started eating the ham and cheese sandwich he had made for himself.

"A young woman was found murdered earlier this evening not too far away from Hollywood Boulevard, her body burned so badly that authorities are having trouble making any identification."

Steve dropped his sandwich on the coffee table and sat straight up, every nerve aware suddenly, the hairs standing up on the back of his neck.

Oh my god, it was a snuff film after all, he suddenly realized, now knowing full well what had been dropped off at his studio and he had watched today wasn't some amateur film made by some unknown trying to maybe be discovered by the great Steve Parks, but an actual torture porn snuff film. Steve felt sick at his stomach, the part of the sandwich he had eaten wanting to come back up.

As much as he hated to, Steve made himself get up and go to his private studio inside his house and watch the DVD's again, this time with the sound turned off so not to wake Caroline. God forbid she come in and see him watching something like that!

He sat motionless the entire 45 minutes, taking in every single thing he saw, looking at every frame of film hoping that he had been mistaken, and that it was just some vile piece of fiction and not what he had come to suspect; and this time he recognized a ring the driver was wearing, so he thought he knew who the murderer was, and who gave him the film.

He now realized between the ring he had thought he recognized, and the van that had looked awkwardly familiar weren't just coincidence, and that it meant he more than likely knew who the killer was. He felt every hair on his back stand on end, along with the hairs on the back of his neck

He turned the DVD player off, and sat shivering for a full five minutes, hardly breathing,

before he made any decision about what to do next. He realized he needed to call Damian and let him know what he had just seen, and let him know that he would need to call the police, something he really didn't want to do; not in the least.

Steve got Damian's answering machine when he called, so he left a message explaining why he was calling, and giving a brief explanation about the film he had found in his office, and how he felt he needed to call the police now. He hung up reassured that he had made the right decision.

After he retrieved the DVD's from the player, he put them back in their cases, and put them in his wall safe in his study, and then walked back into the living room and stretched out on the couch to watch some more television, hopefully catching a good late night movie to help take his mind off things. It wasn't long before he drifted off again, falling into a deep sleep.

A loud crash awoke him, startling him, and making him practically jump off the couch. When he realized it was something in a commercial on TV, Steve allowed himself to relax and laugh a little. He decided to make himself another sandwich, so he got up and walked toward the kitchen, noticing that he had left the living room blinds open, and decided to now close them.

Steve closed one blind, and was in the process of closing the other one when he saw that there was someone sitting in one of the chairs on the front deck, facing the house, enshrouded in shadow, looking directly at him. His heart almost jumped out of his chest. He woke up on the couch, his entire body drenched in sweat, shivering almost uncontrollably. He realized he had fallen asleep and only dreamed about seeing someone on the porch staring in at him, and he felt himself relax a little. He wiped the sleep from his eyes, trying to awake himself more fully, so that he could get up and walk to the bedroom, and he noticed Caroline standing over him with a huge knife in her hands.

She had heard Steve on the phone leaving the message for Damian, and was now coming for her film.

THE END

“The Camera Eye” footnote:

Yet another story originally written many years ago, and reworked here. This was more of a Robert Bloch/Alfred Hitchcock/Brian De Palma style story, and I tried to keep that when I did a new treatment of it.

I wanted to make it the most shocking and most disturbing piece I've written yet. I included a small "torture porn" scene just so I could later have an expose on how terrible torture porn is. But, the way I did it, the reader won't know when the scene turns from fiction I am writing, into fiction they are reading inside the fiction I am writing. Hope that makes sense!

Originally, I had gone for more of an ironic ending, the dry irony being that Steve was filming violence instead of preventing it, or helping the innocent victim - so, in close, the reader wouldn't feel so sorry for him when he is murdered by his wife - he's a sicko, a pervert who loves to peek at death; so when he gets a taste of dying, it was almost like a sigh escapes.

However, in the new treatment, I made some minor changes (some major as well), turning it more into something that has Steve watching a film made and sent to him by someone else, meanwhile dropping small false clues that it could maybe have been him, seeing that he had such a bad memory and was blacking out from time to time.

This time I was trying to make every one of the three main characters mentioned (Steve, Damian, and Caroline) appear to be potential suspects, yet innocent bystanders at the same time. Hope I succeeded! :>)