Dear horror fans—what scares you? Tis the season for terror, and in honor of my favorite month I figure I'd drop the angry rants for a post and talk about something different: the scenes in horror movies that have truly chilled me to the bone and that have made me such an addict of the genre.

After quite a lot of thinking, I've managed to come up with the top three scenes that have made my skin crawl the most since I started watching horror movies as a toddler. Oddly enough, when I examined what really got to me, I figured out a deep fear I have—the fear of being watched. All of these three scenes involve someone finding out they've been spied on for a long time without realizing it, and I guess it's something in my subconscious that really makes me uncomfortable.

Keep in mind this is solely MY list, no one else's. I hope fellow readers (and staff members) will share as well. Also, while you can find all the scenes I'm about to discuss on YouTube, I have decided not to link to them, simply because I feel watching the scenes in question without the build-up of the rest of the movie robs them of much of their power. Besides, you should go out and check these flicks out anyway.

WARNING: SPOILERS AHEAD!!!

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS (2003)—The Kitchen Sink

Brrr. Now I'll be the first to say that I'm not a big fan of the "Asian ghost girl" films. Sure, RINGU was good for the time (I actually enjoyed the remake more), but as far as I see it, this trend is about as played out as teenybopper slasher flicks were to us in the late '90s.

However, of them all, A TALE OF TWO SISTERS is by far the best (and creepiest) of the bunch, with a moment that literally made me jump out of my chair and had me uncomfortable for quite a while later. The film deals with a young daughter, Su-Mi, being brought home from a stint in a psychiatric ward. Coming home, she finds family tensions are just as bad as they've ever been, and now, there's something else…

The scene that got to me occurs about halfway through the film. The family is having dinner with some relatives when one of the guests begins having a seizure. She falls to the floor, thrashing violently as they run over and try to stop the episode. As they do this, we realize her eyes are fixated on the dark space under the sink (the sink starts a foot off the ground), and she won't stop staring, absolutely terrified at whatever she sees.

The scene ends and we cut to her and her husband are driving home. After a conversation about the seizure, she says (in near shock):

" I saw something strange in that house."

"What?"

"There was a girl under the kitchen sink."

The quick flash of the deformed girl crouched up under the sink nearly made me jump out of the room I watched the movie in. The moment is absolutely terrifying for several reasons, partly because of the strange timing (the film pauses a few seconds after she says that line before showing you) and also because the image itself is so frightening to me, along with the fact that up until this scene, any ghost shenanigans have been in a dream sequence. It's a powerful moment in general, and the subconscious realization that this family is being watched at all

times from every dark crevice in the house got under my skin like few other movies.

THE INNOCENTS (1961)—Singing at the Lake

Another ghost movie? Yes, and also one of the best. THE INNOCENTS is a surprisingly underrated ghost story based on the novella THE TURN OF THE SCREW and is without a doubt one of the most nerve-wracking and creepy films of its ilk, right up alongside THE HAUNTING.

Taking place in an 18th century castle, we follow actress Deborah Kerr as Miss Giddons, the new governess to two very strange children in the English countryside, and it contains one of the flat-out most terrifying scenes I've ever witnessed.

Early in the movie you find out about the ugly deaths of the children's previous caretakers, and how the children were hit hard since they were so close. Halfway through the film Ms. Giddons and the little girl she's taking care of are sitting and playing by a lake. The little girl tells the story about how one day her brother was out on the lake and thought he saw a hand just below the surface (brrr). She then starts to hum a very sad lullaby (the theme of the movie), which is eerie enough on its own…but then you realize someone else is humming it too.

Ms. Giddons looks up only to see a woman, dressed completely in black, hovering above the reeds over the lake, completely motionless, staring directly at the both of them, humming the tune.

It's absolutely bone-chilling, and even more effective because it happens during the day, completely throwing you off kilter for the rest of the movie. Even knowing what happens I still tense up every time the scene approaches, and it's by far one of the most unsettling ghosts in cinema history.

BLACK CHRISTMAS (1974)—The Eye

If you've seen this film, you know the scene I'm talking about. Pre-dating (and in my opinion, out-doing) HALLOWEEN by a few years, this slasher film revolves around a group of sorority girls getting murdered on Christmas by a psycho living in their attic. If it sounds like lo-rent schlock I wouldn't blame you, though it's honestly one of the most subtle and psychological slasher flicks ever created.

And it has one of the most spine chilling scenes ever filmed.

It occurs toward the very end, when the protagonist Jess realizes that the killer is in the house. She races to her friend's room to grab her, only to open the door and find three of her sorority sisters horribly butchered. Horrified and overcome with grief, she slumps down next to the door, crying.

And then you hear someone whisper.

She turns, and in the crack of the door, a mere inch or two from her face, you see the killer's deranged eye, and realize he's been barely a hair's length away for the past five minutes, simply watching her cry.

It's by far one of the most terrifying things I've ever seen, and if never fails to make me (or the audience) shudder.

So those are my top 3. Are there things I've missed? Sure. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention CHILD'S PLAY, which was the first horror movie I ever saw at the ripe age of 5 (my parents are sick people). The film barely clocks in at 90 minutes, but I can tell you it took me over three hours to watch it because I kept pausing the film and running behind the couch for long stretches of time while I waited for myself to calm down.

Joking aside, there are some other great moments that just didn't get mentioned. For my money, the blood test scene in THE THING and the hallway scene in EXORCIST III rank as the best jump scares ever made (they just didn't really stay under my skin long enough to make it to the list). Lastly, THE CHANGELING was another near miss for it's unbelievably unsettling séance scene (though it wins the award for most pissed-off wheelchair ever).

So now you know what freaks me out. What about you? Killer Klowns from Outer Space? Humanoids from the Deep? Gremlins? Let me know.

{jcomments on}