

## Unlucky Days: A Tribute to the “FRIDAY THE 13TH” Series, Part Six

Written by Professor A. Griffin  
Friday, 04 March 2011 13:54

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Melissa had enough. This entire day was turning into a nightmare. She was tired of playing games, tired of being ignored and tired of having to play second fiddle to the mental case from next door. Nick was supposed to be hers, unable to resist her charms. She flirted, teased, made out with other guys in front of him and practically threw herself at him. What happened? She was ignored. Ignored and mistreated. And for who? That crazy bitch from next door. Nick and Tina were now obviously playing some kind of practical joke on her now. Trying to scare her, begging her not to go outside.

Whatever.

Melissa was better than all this. She was better than Nick, better than Tina and too smart to fall for all these bullshit warnings. To prove her defiance, Melissa reached for the door, ready to leave Nick to his little virgin headcase. Nick and Tina screamed for her not to (and she had to admit, they were pretty convincing), but never mind. The door opened...and Melissa's last sight was a massive man, covered in slime and mud, wearing a hockey mask, with an ax raised high over his head. She thought she saw one red eye blazing with rage, then nothing.

The impact of the ax crushed her skull and broke her neck instantly. She didn't hear Nick and Tina scream in terror, she didn't notice her head bobbing and lolling from side to side from the weight of the ax imbedded in her, she didn't feel the creature hoist her limp body up into the air and hurl it behind the television set. It all happened so fast, she didn't even have time to be surprised or annoyed at the indignation of it all.



John Carl Buechler, the special makeup FX artist who created the creatures for TROLL, GHOULIES and the very entertaining DEATHSTALKER, is handed the directing reigns in the next chapter of the FRIDAY THE 13TH saga, FRIDAY THE 13TH, PART VII: THE NEW BLOOD (see previous Unlucky Days essay [here](#) ).

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The NEW BLOOD story centers on Tina Shepard (Lar-Park Lincoln), who is a teenager with a Carrie White-type gift of telekinetic powers. In a rage as a child, she drowned her father on the dock of Crystal Lake. (Yes, it's Crystal lake again...perhaps there was a Crystal Lake Historical Society that protested the name change?) Years later, Tina, her mother and her therapist decide that a visit back to Crystal Lake would be just what the doctor ordered to help Tina deal with her guilt and panic. Little does anyone know, but Dr. “Bad News” Crews (WEEKEND AT BERNIE's comical corpse Terry Kiser) has ulterior motives for working so close to Tina. He recognizes the gift she has and wants nothing more than to trigger it, unleash it at full power and exploit it.

What has all this got to do with our boy Jason? Really, nothing at all but as fate would have it, Tina unleashes her power at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Tina's psychic abilities accidentally awaken Jason from his dormant state and release him from his watery prison as she irrationally tries to raise her father from the dead. Well, no, it doesn't make much sense, and because of it, the film takes on a science-fiction angle that doesn't quite fit. Still, things pick up very fast after Jason emerges from the lake, and boy, is he pissed!

The influence of special FX artist Buechler is seen mostly in the new look of the undead Jason Voorhees. Spending several years chained to rock at the bottom of Crystal Lake has done nothing for his appearance. Any resemblance between this monster and the bald, hermitlike, man-child from the past stops at the hockey mask. Buechler's Jason is all power and supernatural rage with rib cage heaving, exposed mandible gnashing and moldy green-gray skin dripping with rot... his appearance is amazing!



Still sporting the chain around his neck and his clothes in tatters, this undead beast is beyond reasoning. He rises from the lake and resumes his old habit of brutally murdering anyone who happens to cross his path. There is no reasoning with him, no talking to him, no hope if you

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encounter him. He sees you and immediately kills you. End of story.

Meanwhile, speaking of story, Tina’s therapy is interrupted by several distractions, some engineered by the scheming Dr. Crews and others from the handsome Nick who has rented the cabin next door with some friends for a party. Sound familiar?

Jason Voorhees begins wasting the partygoers in classic fashion. The deaths are gruesome, but once again, not graphically depicted. As awesome as Jason looks, it seems that the MPAA has still not returned his old cajones. Still, there are some memorable deaths. When the bitchy, stuck up rich girl Melissa gets an ax imbedded in her skull and tossed across the room like a rag doll, although bloodless, it’s brutal fast and shocking. Finally, when Jason has disposed of all the other “naughty children” just as his mommy would have done, he is faced with a very different adversary. Tina.

The battle between Tina and Jason is well worth the wait. Tina drops porches on him, binds him with roots from the earth, electrocutes him (bad mistake as this probably only powered him up again...remember his resurrection?), fires nails at him, hangs him with wire, drops him three stories into a cellar, rips his mask in two, doses him with gasoline and sets him on fire!!! Jason gets the tar beat outta him! It’s fabulous to watch Jason’s expressions in dealing with Tina, both before and after his unmasking. His head tilts to one side and he stares at her for long periods of time trying to figure out how she does these things. When he is unmasked, his massive jaw grinds in aggravation and his one good eye stares with wonderment and frustration at Tina and her amazing powers. It’s a titanic battle and credit for making these scenes really work should go to one man. The man who finally claimed Jason Voorhees as his own, the actor who will forever be identified as the Sultan of Slaughter, Kane Hodder



Hodder started his career as a stuntman/stunt coordinator working in films like HOUSE, HOUSE II and Wes Craven’s THE HILLS HAVE EYES PART II. His acting credits include obscure listings such as Thug 1, Gorilla, Security Guard and Older Geek. But in 1988, Hodder was cast as the one and only Jason Voorhees. True, playing Jason did nothing for the careers of the previous four actors who played him, but at 6-foot 3-inches tall, Hodder certainly stood above all the rest. (The actor has joked that at 11 pounds, 9 ounces, he was the largest baby ever to be born in Auburn, California.)

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Hodder embraced the role of Jason, going back and working out character motivations and backstory for him. He was determined to make Jason a character and not just a role that any BODY could fill. For Hodder, it is indeed NEW BLOOD, for the next 13 years (ironically) up to and including JASON X in 2001, no other actor would portray Jason Voorhees. Hodder had claimed the part.

At the film’s conclusion, Hodder’s Jason has been through a war with Tina, but has once again proven his invulnerability. Jason seems to have the upper hand on poor Tina and is about to deliver the killing blow (knowing how angry he was, probably SEVERAL blows), when Tina’s long dead father jumps out of the lake, wraps a chain around Jason’s neck and drags him back down under the water! This seemingly ridiculous ending actually makes slight sense as Tina has been trying to raise her father from the beginning, but apparently didn’t have the power to do it. In that last moment, as death loomed near, her fear and anger and pain finally accomplished her goal and daddy saved the day. It was still a silly ending, rivaling FRIDAY THE 13TH PART III.

Audiences loved this film, however. Jason was mean, gruesome and slimy and used some very unique weapons in NEW BLOOD. A gas-powered hedge trimmer ended Dr. Crews’ miserable life, while a party horn (!) was shoved into the eyes of another victim making a squeaking sound as it did so. There were nice atmospheric touches. Jason often standing in the dark, still and quiet in the same room as his victim, illuminated only briefly by the flashes of lightning.



At the theater that I managed, the Jason costume got more elaborate, sporting a rubber rotting chest piece with exposed ribs, a modified skull mask, shredded clothes, rotting hands and a near perfect customizing of an actual hockey mask. A patron approached me and offered me \$300 for my Jason costume. I politely refused. It meant more to me than money; it was a memory I’ll long cherish. Seeing my buddy, decked out by me as Jason Voorhees, chest heaving, carrying an ax down the center aisle about to give someone the big scare from behind, makes me smile with pride to this day.

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The next film in the series did nothing but embarrass me. It was the closest I ever came to giving up on being a FRIDAY THE 13TH fan. It drove people away in droves and stunk up theaters all over the country. FRIDAY THE 13TH, PART VIII: JASON TAKES MANHATTAN.

TO BE CONTINUED...

{comments on}