

Project Synopsis & Team Creative Vision

Logline

After 25 years, Jon Trusk returns to his hometown of Hope and becomes trapped in the ruins of the mental hospital, where he must face the evil that lurks there, and his own sordid past to get out alive.

Synopsis

Jon Trusk is forced to choose between returning home or getting a divorce. On the drive into town, Jon and his wife get into a fight. His wife checks in to a hotel, while Jon goes for a drink at the local pub. He meets some old high school friends who get him drunk, convince him to drive up to their cabin for the night and promise to return him in the morning. On the way there they pass the ruins of the old asylum that burned down years ago, killing several inmates. They slide off the road and everyone is killed except for Jon. He hears a little girl's voice coming from a tunnel that leads to the asylum. He's lured inside the asylum by the demon disguised as a little girl. The demon and ghosts terrorize, trick, distract and try to prevent Jon from leaving. They force him to relive the evil acts that caused them to be imprisoned there, and his own past. But the longer Jon stays, the weaker and more injured he becomes. His only way out is to separate reality from delusion - to forgive himself and let go before he succumbs to his wounds.

Creative Vision

Supernatural thrillers about ghosts and demons, if done right, scare the shit out of me. They also keep me on the right path. I think a little bit of fear is a good thing.

I have no interest in doing a film about gratuitous violence or a straight up slasher style horror, but supernatural thrillers about good and evil, heaven and hell, angels and demons, and ghosts, have always fascinated me. I want the film to do more offer escape or make people afraid. I want to leave them thinking about the ripple effect of the choices they make, good and bad.

In *Cornered*, a demon disguised as an innocent little girl, has terrorized the small town of Hope for years. The demon can move from person to person, and manipulate them into doing horrible things to damn themselves. John is, "the one that got away." The demon has been plotting John's return so it could get another chance at his soul.

Other than some of the setups and flashbacks, this film is mostly contained to one building, and happens through the night. I want to get us into the building quickly and keep the action going. As soon as he is inside, reality seems to slip away. The orderlies grab him like he's an escaped patient and strap him into a gurney. Neither our protagonist John, nor the audience really knows from then on what is real. Is he alive? Is he dead? Is he hallucinating? The asylum burned down when John was a teenager and many of the worst inmates were trapped inside and died. Or did they? Once inside, the building looks normal, but then he's back in a burned out building. In *Shutter Island*, Andrew Laeddis or Teddy Daniels (no one seems to be able to agree on who he is to this day) may or may not be the same person. He's as confused as we are watching while the story unfolds. It created a movie people still talk about today. My goal is for *Cornered* to keep people wondering, while also giving them something to think about once

they discover what really happened to Timmy, why John's soul was at risk, if he makes it out alive or dies, and if he loses his soul or not.

Through the film we learn about John's past, the relationship between John and Timmy, and why he is so unwilling to abandon the little girl that he knows might be something else.

I've enlisted the help of DP Michael Marshall, from the *Chucky* movies, and I want to give him as much freedom to work his magic as possible, while I focus more on driving the story and working with the actors. I am quite familiar with cameras and run and gun filmmaking though, and we are working with a small budget, so I want us to be able to work fast, keep our set ups small and work with as much available light and practical lights as possible, and also shoot day for night when possible. We will shoot in 4k, but I don't want to get bogged down with gear and crazy lighting setups that will cripple us during production. Story and actor performance is very important to me, as is staying on budget.

Of course this is a thriller/horror, and we will need to use visuals to convey desperation, fear, shame, pain and other emotions and states of mind. There are stunts and other iconic scenes and actions that will require creative use of cameras and rigs.

To keep things real and costs down, we'll use practical VFX where possible. There are a couple of scenes that require VFX, but I have a network of pros to call who owe me favors and will work at low cost. I have spoken with John Healy and Healy FX out of Vancouver about creating the practical FX including a puppet and prosthetics at reasonable prices.

Drawing from the inspiration of iconic films like *Sixth Sense*, *Fallen*, *Shutter Island*, and *Devil's Advocate*, as well as containment films like the *SAW* series, *Cornered* blends the psychological thriller, supernatural thriller and horror genres, and will appeal to a broad audience.