

DAVID BAIN'S GRINDHOUSE QUINTUPLE FEATURE!!!



*STORIES INSPIRED BY
B-MOVIE CINEMA!*

**David Bain's All-Nite!!!
Grindhouse Quintuple Feature!!!
by
David Bain**

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**Introduction:
Welcome to The Strand...**

There's more of a crowd than you'd anticipate! It's good to know you're not alone in your tastes for the far-out. Maybe, like you, the other freaks and geeks saw the ads on Twitter or Youtube, or maybe they just heard about David Bain's All-Nite Grindhouse Quintuple Feature via word of mouth, but no matter what brought you, tonight we're all one, gathered here outside The Strand, a dedicated collective braving the seedier side of the city in anticipation of a night of unashamedly grade B - *well, okay, grade X* - smart-but-schlocky genre-jumping cinema. Tonight we'll see bank robbers on the run in a haunted car, chicks with magical powers dueling it out behind bars, a spaghetti Western with a Cthulhu twist, sword and sorcery that don't need no stinkin' CGI, and a slightly psychic detective racing time through a hurricane.

Our grand old theater stands dilapidated yet dignified, disheveled yet hipper than hell, just like its customers, one step from a shambles, yet a steadfast monument in defiance of mainstream multiplex mediocrity. Bikers wait in line alongside teens who'd otherwise obviously be playing D&D. A couple pimply film geeks wait behind a forty-three-year-old balding English teacher in a Miskatonic University t-shirt. The preppy guy and gal at the end of the line are far too pretty for a place like this, but your money says they're just looking for a dark place to make out - and from the looks of it they're getting a good start before they've even bought their tickets.

You plop down your \$2.99 - so *cheap!* You shell out significantly more than that for your monster-sized popcorn slathered in a viscous pseudo-buttery syrup, a vat of Diet Coke and enough Junior Mints and Mike & Ike's to give Godzilla a Tokyo-sized sugar buzz.

The soles of your sneakers sticking to the gooey floor as you walk into the cavernous theater make sucking sounds, as if The Strand wants to make sure you never leave. The felt on your fold-down seat feels somehow mossy - except for the patch of dried gum. Still, you couldn't be happier, more in your element as the lights go down and the first previews come on.

There are previews for awesome movies like GRAY LAKE (teens and meth heads and a demon queen with a gravity-defying car battling it out in a small town), POWER BREAKERS (starring tabloid favorite Rafe Johnson), UNDER AN INVISIBLE SHADOW (a zombie apocalypse with a Lovecraftian climax) and WHILE THE CITY SLEEPS (named after the

classic movie but actually an anthology flick promising eight short features about small town ghosts and thugs).

The lights dim a final time.

Our first feature is about to begin...

Sample file

Cauldron Car



David

Bain

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CAULDRON CAR

by
David Bain

Dedicated, with thanks, to Ken Abner:
for taking a chance on a new writer
and including this story in the hardcover
Terminal Frights anthology.

1. Fugitives, Lying Low

The junkyard where Whit had stopped for the night had infiltrated his dreams. In his mind's eye he was deep within a huge, cold, moonlit desert littered with gigantic car chassis that looked more like dinosaur skeletons, all rusted the uniform brownish-red of the surrounding sands. Something very large and alive was patrolling the outskirts of the junkyard, something he could never quite catch a full glimpse of.

Something in the real world was agitating his left eyelid. His left eye didn't want to open just yet, so he eased his right one open and saw the abandoned car yard. It was a clean, clear morning. The cars were just plain old junkers, not dinosaurs.

Slowly, Whit opened his left eye - and found it was looking down the barrel of a .357 Magnum.

Shit. Someone had found out who he was.

Then he focused on the old man behind the gun. Hardly worth my trouble, Whit thought. Old yellow-gray hair flowing ratty past the dude's shoulders. Top of his head bald as the tip of Whit's pecker. Dude had a teardrop tattoo below his squinted left eye. Only a mother or a whore could love his leathery, too heavily mustached face. His denim vest and bell-bottoms were threadbare. And he stank.

"Look, man," Whit said. "I don't need this, and you don't wanna mess, okay?"

The man grinned. At least he has *some* of his teeth, Whit thought.

"I don't wanna mess, huh?" Dude said. "You got balls for someone could be a ghost in about two seconds."

Whit returned the grin. "Sorry. Don't believe in ghosts. But listen, old man. Sure. I'll give you the time of day. State your case."

"You want the car, don't you, punk?" The guy trying to be Clint Eastwood. "How you find out about it? Who told you?"

A car? Interesting. He needed new wheels. Every department and agency in the country was looking for a fugitive on a vintage Indian.

"How'd I find out?" Whit said, watching the Magnum's nose following as he worked his way to a standing position, his back up against a wall of crushed cars. "Hell, it was easy. I have my ways. We all have our ways."

"Yeah, that's right. We do all have our ways. Ha, you think you're funny, warlock? Huh? Fuckin' comedian. But you didn't *find* the car, did ya, punk? Bet you'll find her a lot easier if I pull this trigger, huh? Bet you'll come right to her if I push the right button after I shoot, eh?"

What the hell was the geezer talking about?

"Let me ask you something," Dude said. Then shouted "BANG!"

Dude was trying to show how a guy on the business side of a gun scared easy. Not fooled for a minute, Whit whipped his head to the side, simultaneously thrusting his leg up hard in a cross between a karate and field goal attempt kick into the guy's balls. Now a shot rang out - a real one - but Whit didn't stop to see if he was hit or not. He kept his leg securely in the guy's crotch and used his free leg to knock Dude's leg out from under him in a sweeping dive-kick. Yeah, Whit had more than a little martial arts training. Dude fell hard, was bigger and weighed more than Whit had thought, but still was no match for him. Whit scrambled, was on top now, delivering one lightning punch across Dude's jaw, then dropping an elbow hard to his ribs. At the same time, Whit shot out his left hand and clamped tight on Dude's wrist. A hard squeeze, and Dude let go of the gun. Whit quickly snatched it up. He stood and pointed it at the prostrate geezer's chest.

Jesus, Dude had a big old swastika with wings tattooed across his withered pecs. It had been covered with the denim vest which had torn open in the scuffle. Whit couldn't stand Nazi types. Some of his best friends back in Kentucky were black.

"Man, I ought to shoot you just for that piece of shit on your chest, but give me the keys to the car and I'll think about letting you live."

"Hell, no!" Dude said, then threw his head back and started yelling. "*Haaaarley!*" he bellowed. "*Haaaarley!* Come quick, Harley!"

"Man, shut up or I'll have to shoot!"

"*Haaaarley!* Where the hell are you, boy?"

Whit noted that, as he yelled, Dude was slowly reaching toward his boot, surely for a shiv or some girly little snubnosed, trying to be sneaky about it. Shit, Whit thought and shot the bastard.

Had to.

Right through the swastika.

Why were people so god-damned stupid about these situations? Now there was just a nice big red hole for the rotten soul to fly out as it left Dude's ugly, reeking old body.

It had been a knife in Dude's boot. Cheap shit. Whit chucked it into the junkyard. But there was a set of keys in his jeans - filthy, ragged, stinking bellbottoms, with ... Jesus, really? Yup, cum stains. Whit cringed as he reached into the pockets.

He hid in a musty, crumbling '68 Mustang chassis and watched for Harley's approach. Good God, the same position he'd been in just a couple days ago ... hiding in a hole with his gun ready.

He surveyed the landscape. All he saw in a 360-degree radius was cars, distant cornfields and a shack up on a central hill. No Harley.

A glint of light caught Whit's eye, up by the shack. Dude hadn't been lying about a car - no sir! He'd stick out just as bad in it as he did on the Indian, but what the hell. Dude had the damn thing sitting right up there on top of the hill, out in the open, right by the shack, twinkling in the sun. Why had he thought it'd be so damned hard to find?

His new gun still drawn, Whit headed up the hill.

Whatever it was, it was cherry red. Some '50s model something-or-other with huge-ass fins. Funny, he knew about cars, but couldn't place it even once he got close. Chevy maybe? There was plenty of cold, glittering chrome, but no words anywhere.

Whit saw something flash across the rear window. His gun was immediately on it. A face, smeared by the small, clear plastic window in the rear of the closed convertible hood. Now the distorted face mouthed something to him, but Whit couldn't make it out.

He went quickly to the passenger door, opened it, and motioned with the pistol.
“Get out, Harley.”

Harley - he was dressed in a Standard Oil gas station attendant’s uniform and his name was stitched on a patch over his heart - looked emaciated, skeletal, his skin taut around his cheeks and hollow eyes.

“*Kiiids?*” Harley asked. He sounded like he was pleading.

Whit was thrown for a moment. “Huh?”

Harley looked forlorn. “*Mmmm....* You don’t brink kids? How ‘bout Verl?”

“Verl? You mean that old dude? He’s dead, Harley.”

Harley looked more forlorn than ever. The man was obviously simple. “Verl? Dead?” Harley asked, cocking his head as if he couldn’t quite comprehend the idea. “Who you? You bring kids?”

“No, I ain’t bringing no kids, Harley. And the car’s mine now. You got to get out.”

“Get out? Where you want me to go?”

“Umm.... How ‘bout into the shack?”

Harley suddenly grinned broadly. His teeth seemed too wide. He started to giggle. “Into the shack? Yes! *Heh heh!* Into the shack!” The man, suddenly quite animated, practically leapt out of the car. Tall and gangly as an ostrich, he half-ran, half-stumbled toward the rickety structure, leaping and bounding, shouting, “To the shack! *Yes! Yes!* To the shack!” as he went.

Whit didn’t think he wanted to hang around to see what was in Verl’s little abode. He got in the driver’s side of the bench seat - smooth white vinyl - started the car up, and drove off into the Oklahoma morning, headed for the Texas state line, only a few miles away.

Verl’s Ride

The poor Indian he’d hidden in the dump would rot away amidst old family station wagons and shitkicker pickup truck. But it was almost worth it. This was one sweet ride. Quiet motor, smooth, silent shocks, acceleration built for a night at the drag strip.

Without looking, he randomly punched the program buttons until he found a dead-on appropriate oldies station, currently playing “I Fought the Law” by The Bobby Fuller Four. There was a little static on the radio, but Whit wasn’t going to let anything ruin this gorgeous day. Sun gleamed in the windshield and made the white vinyl interior glow. Bright green corn filled the land to the horizon. Whit grabbed the old man’s hand cannon, aimed across the passenger’s side, singing along and making the appropriate firing motions when the singer sang, “robbing people with a-” *pop-pop-pop, pop-pop-pop* “-six gun. I fought the law and the law won. I fought the law and the law *wonnnn!*”

Which was when he saw Verl sitting in the passenger’s seat. Or, rather, Verl was *forming* in the passenger’s seat. He was transparent, but slowly and steadily growing more solid.

“Keep yer damn eyes on the road, idiot!” Verl shouted. “Now, why’d you call me here? You musta known it’d be me!”

Dumbfounded, Whit only kept staring at the apparition. Verl was solid now. The swastika was back. The bullet hole was gone.

The road suddenly got *hella* bumpy. Whit glanced back toward where he thought the road would be. A good amount of corn crunched under the car before the churning, squealing tires finally clawed back onto the macadam.

“Whuh?” Whit managed to say once the car was under his control again. “You’re....”

“Yeah, I know. You shot me dead, and good riddance. Congratulations, punk. You got the car now. You happy?”

“What? Are you saying you’re a ghost?”

“A ghost? Jesus, what the hell kind of moron coven you come from, anyhow? Yeah, I *was* a ghost for about two seconds before you called me. Now I’m your first summonee, stupid! It *is* a cauldron car, after all. Or didn’t you know that?” Verl gave Whit a brief, quizzical look, then said, “Hey! Where’s Harley? What the hell’d you do with Harley, warlock?”

“Warlock? My name’s Whit, Verl. Ain’t no ‘Warlock’ here. And Harley’s safe. I sent him to the shack.”

Verl looked stunned. “You didn’t! He’s in *the shack*? By *hissself*?”

“Well, yeah, by *hissself*. What the hell, Verl? I thought someone’d find the simpleton there before too long.”

“Find him! Yeah, that’s just the problem, you jackass! Shit! You die and suddenly everything goes straight to hell! You honestly mean to tell me you left a summonee alone in my shack? And a simpleton summonee at that!” Verl slapped his forehead. “Son, you realize we gotta go back there, don’t you?” Verl squinted at him. “Don’t you? Jesus H. Christ! Why didn’t you at least do me the honor of burning down my shack? You owe it to me! It’s *the code!*”

Whit just looked befuddled and focused on the road, trying to decide whether or not he’d really woken up yet this morning.

Verl was peering at him one-eyed now as if Whit were an odd specimen under the lens of a microscope. “I’m startin’ to get the picture, son. Let me see if I’ve got this straight. You’re just an ordinary mortal, ain’t you. You don’t know *nothing* about The Old Ones of the Endless Wastes or The Flame That Must Be or The Battle Across The Multiverse or none of that shit. You have no fuckin’ idea what you’re gettin’ into, do you?” He glanced at a sign down the road. “Hey, my eyes ain’t so good no more. What’s that sign say? Where you takin’ us?”

“Says the Texas state line, Verl.”

“*Holy Jesus! Turn around! What the hell you doin’, you crazy mortal! Turn the hell around! Turn-!*”

“What?” Whit was saying. “The hell you say! Ain’t no way I’m turnin’ around, Verl! I stay in any one place too long, the cops’ll-”

But now Verl was screaming, making to wrench the wheel away from him. The car fishtailed and threatened to roll. Suddenly Verl’s screams became garbled, his body began crackling and fuzzing at the edges like a bad TV signal.

A few more garbled, crackling screams, and Verl blinked out of existence, right at the state line.

Then Whit was alone in the car, skidding almost sideways into the state of Texas.

3. The Terror of Punkett Strikes Again!

Whit regained control of the vehicle and pulled over to the side of the road. He sat staring at where Verl had been, trying to catch his breath. Elvis was on the radio now, telling Whit, “You’re So Square,” but that, hey baby, he didn’t care. The throbbing bass of the song matched Whit’s palpitating heart too closely, so he reached to change the station. Christ! He could listen to elevator music after this morning!