



*Windows
into
Memory*

DES BRADY

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Windows into Memory – Des Brady



Sam Adler lived through the lens of his camera, capturing what others overlooked, what he sensed they couldn't see. He called his images *Windows into Memory*. In his cramped darkroom, surrounded by photographs of decay and abandonment, he was fashioning something of substance. Of meaning. Some might have called it obsession.

Yet he realised it was about Sarah as well. He remembered her standing in the kitchen, watching from the doorway, fawning over his prints. She'd half smiled, teasing him about his compulsion, though her eyes often held a soft sadness he refused to acknowledge.

Their exchanges turned sharp, deep. Arguments that left her pale and quaking, fearful as Sam's hands gripped the sink, white-knuckled, a look on his face she didn't recognise. Her parting words still lingered with him, voice quavering, filled with apprehension.

*'You discard everything, Sam, even me. But maybe that's what you want.
A soulless existence.'*

Dismissing her complaints as wounded theatrics, he knew this was the end. Forever. Her memory, like everything else he discarded, would be buried deep. The darkroom would take care of the rest. Now, his only partner was his work.



The excitement around his forthcoming exhibition, *Detritus: The End of the World*, was palpable, promising to vindicate his obsession. This batch of photos, flawless shots of discarded objects outside Alwick House, held such promise. Their perfection shone like a beacon, beautifully illustrating his underlying theme: *the eternal decay of life and memories*. Cementing his position as the master photographer of the macabre.

He felt compelled to remove these items, to include them with the exhibition's photographs, feeling it to be an inspired creative choice. Yet, Sarah had warned him against it at the time.

'That place is evil, Sam... possessed. That mad Baron drowned his wife in the pond, you know.'

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Branding her concerns as childish folklore, he'd insisted they married perfectly with their ghoulish setting, adding to his show's sinister allure. He celebrated the choice as a mark of his brilliance.

Working feverishly in his darkroom, he extracted the prints from the developing bath. Yet his breath caught when unsettling images shattered his composure.

In the first print, beyond a child's doll, its face dirt-smudged, eyes unnervingly wide, a hunched shadow appeared where there was none before. In the second, an amorphous shape loomed over the ivy-covered tricycle. When he saw the last print, he staggered back, his chest tightening as if seized by something unknown. He could only stare at the image before him, his face ashen.

A woman had materialised, her skin gaunt and leached of colour, dress covered with rotting lilies, water pooling at her feet, lurking behind the image of a cracked plate. Her unblinking eyes locked on his.

And those eyes. God, those eyes were Sarah's, yet not. It seemed a look of dying hope, of something he could not touch, rendered human in silver halide. The chilling aspect wasn't simply the figure's sudden appearance. It was the mixture of sorrow and terror in her eyes which struck to his heart.

It was Sarah's sorrow enlivened, her voice whispering from some deep crevice of memory:

'You don't really love me, do you, Sam? Just love until it's inconvenient.'

He ran. From the darkroom. From her memory and something coerced. For that woman held the same expression as Sarah in the final moment.



For days, this apparition haunted, face appearing in every photograph, every mirror. Sleep offered no reprieve, nor did his work, which unleashed a torrent of scathing accusations. Forensically analysing his photographs, desperate for clues, something unsettling struck.

Were these objects the source of this aberration?

Was Alwick House speaking directly to him?

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He understood now - these demonic tokens would destroy him unless returned. That night, he climbed back to the accursed house, seeking his release. Yet, the moment he crossed the threshold, the building inhaled around him, alive and angry, seizing his will and dragging him toward buried truth.

Wrapping him in a deathly shroud, air choking with the stench of decay, countless portraits bore witness to this inevitable descent into madness. Then, through the miasma, a ghostly figure appeared at the top of the stairs.

Sarah.

Resurrected from her watery grave, lilies clinging to her rotted dress, she hissed the secrets he'd tried to bury. Knees buckling, his vision warped as those horrific moments returned, as though conjured from the past.

The pond. His hands locked on her throat, nails raking at his arms, stagnant water filling her mouth. Her eyes, wide and drowning in terror, met his in a final plea for mercy. This vision hammered down, that dreadful gurgling clawing at his ears, screaming her name one last time. Begging for forgiveness.

All fell silent until her wraithlike voice echoed through the room, enveloping him. It took a moment to recognise that chilling lullaby, the tune he'd so sadistically cooed as he felt her vitality slip through his hands. Those words, now turned upon him in a cruel curse.

Hush, hush, sweet Sammy, baby don't cry,

Hush, hush, sweet Sammy, love you till you die.

As his mind fractured, those talismans slipped from his grasp and fell like detritus to the floor. He tried to breathe, but the air was water now. It had become inevitable.

The End of His World.

Lost in the halls of Alwick House, his image joined the pantheon of those terrifying portraits. Eyes frozen in eternal terror, forever staring at the long-dead Baron's rotted grin. The gallery had claimed another soul... another window into memory. Consigning him to its macabre library for eternity.

For some collections grow not through acquisition, but through transformation.