

DEATH WARD 13

By
Todd Nunes

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by Todd Nunes

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Dedicated to my Mother,

Who never censored me and let
my imagination run wild.

PROLOGUE

THE BASEMENT

Nurse Marsha woke on the basement floor with blood in her mouth and the certainty that someone had tried to kill her.

Cold concrete pressed against her cheek. Her uniform was soaked through. Somewhere beneath her, blood spread in a slick, sticky pool, still warm against the freezing floor.

For a few terrible seconds, she couldn't remember anything at all. Her mind had gone empty in the worst possible way, as if something inside her had slammed a door and bolted it shut. No name. No place. No reason for the blood in her mouth or the cold concrete under her cheek. Only fear, huge and shapeless, beating through her like a second heart.

Then the pieces began to come back.

Her name was Marsha. A nurse at Stephens Sanitarium. Twenty-eight. The date was October 30, 1972.

At least she thought it was.

The uncertainty of that last part frightened her almost as much as the blood.

Then pain found her.

It came all at once, with no warning and no mercy. It ripped through her body so violently that black spots burst across her vision. For a second, it felt as if something inside her had been torn open all over again. She heard a thin, broken moan and realized, distantly, that it had come from her.

Don't lie here, the thought came from somewhere deep and raw. *Don't lie here or you die.*

She tried to push herself up. Her arm buckled and slapped back against the floor. Panic rose hot in her throat. Was the person who did this still nearby? Standing in the dark, watching? Waiting for her to move?

A shadow of unspeakable horror lingered at the edges of her memory, something so gruesome, so shocking, she refused to let herself look at it.

Then another rush came instead.

Her husband laughing in the kitchen.

Her little girl taking two clumsy steps and falling into his arms.

Her son in a paper shepherd's costume at his Christmas pageant, singing too loudly and too proudly.

A hidden reserve of determination surged within her. Gritting her teeth, Marsha forced herself to sit up. Pain shot through her body in hot, blinding flashes, its exact source still unclear. Even so, she made a silent vow to escape this nightmare, no matter the cost.

Trembling, she somehow found her feet and reached for the intercom box mounted on the wall. Catching her reflection in its shiny metal surface, she winced at the sight.

For a moment, she didn't recognize herself.

Her blonde hair was glued to her skull with blood. One side of her face was already swelling. A bruise had risen angry and dark across her forehead. Only her eyes looked familiar, wide and green and terrified.

She hit the button.

"Warden Masters," she whispered, then louder, "this is Nurse Marsha. I've been attacked." Her voice shook so hard she barely sounded human. "Please. I need help. Can you hear me?"

Only static came back. No voice. No footsteps. No help.

Above her, a single bulb flickered weakly, throwing strips of light across stone walls furred with mold, rusted cabinets, broken equipment, and boxes collapsing under their own age.

Then she saw the stairs.

And suddenly remembered the keys. The exit keys were in her pocket.

Hope flared so sharply it almost hurt.

Marsha lurched toward the stairs and grabbed the railing.

A white-hot bolt of pain tore through her middle. She folded over with a gasp. When she looked down, she saw it.

A deep, jagged wound split across her abdomen. Blood slid from it in slow, dark sheets, soaking the front of her uniform.

For one awful second, she nearly gave in. Then she gritted her teeth and climbed. One step. Then another.

Each one sent a fresh wave of agony through her body. Her legs shook. Her breath came in broken little sobs. Tears blurred her vision, but she blinked them back.

Tears wouldn't get her out alive. She had to keep fighting.

At last, she reached the top.

Marsha eased the basement door open and peered into the hall beyond.

Darkness waited for her there.

The corridor stretched long and narrow, swallowed in black except for a thin wash of moonlight spilling through a barred window farther down. She stepped out carefully and stood still, listening so hard it made her ears ring.

For a moment, there was nothing.

» 4 Death Ward 13

Then laughter slithered through the sanitarium. It came from somewhere deep in the building, high and cracked and wrong, bouncing through the stone halls like something loose inside the walls themselves. It rose, broke apart, and faded, leaving behind a silence that felt somehow worse.

Behind her, the basement door slammed shut.

The bang tore through her like a shock. Marsha jerked forward with a cry trapped in her throat, one hand flying to the wall to steady herself. Then she forced herself on, hunched over, her palm dragging along the cold stone as she moved deeper into the corridor.

Every doorway looked like a mouth.

Every patch of darkness seemed to breathe.

A sudden movement beside her made her stop cold.

A lurking figure, elongated and distorted, mirrored her movements.

Her heart thudded so hard it hurt.

Then lightning flashed through the barred window and showed her the truth.

Only her shadow.

Marsha let out a thin, shaky breath and pushed herself onward.

When she rounded the next corner and saw the front entrance at the far end of the hall, hope hit her so hard it almost dropped her to her knees. For one wild second, she thought she might actually make it. She could already imagine the night air on her face, the rain, the road, help.

Then she heard the footsteps behind her.

Slow. Heavy. Deliberate. Not running. Coming.

Marsha lunged for the doors, her trembling hand digging into her pocket for the keys. They nearly slipped from her blood-slick fingers as she shoved the first one into the lock and twisted.

Wrong.

She tried another.

Still wrong.

A cold grip tightened around her chest.

The footsteps kept coming, steady as a hammer.

"Please," she whispered, barely aware she had said it aloud.

Another key.

Nothing.

Now the sound was close enough to fill the hallway, close enough that she could feel it in her chest.

Her vision blurred. Panic made her clumsy. She wiped her hand against her uniform, grabbed another key, and jammed it into the lock.

A click.

Relief tore through her as she yanked the heavy door open and stumbled out into the storm. Cold rain struck her face. Wind rushed around her, wet and wild and glorious.

For one breathless second, she thought she had made it.

Then a massive hand buried itself in her hair.

Marsha screamed as she was ripped backward off her feet. The assailant slammed the heavy metal door against her face repeatedly.

Pain exploded across her face in a blinding white burst.

Then again. And again.

Blood splattered outward as the force caused her eye to bulge and her forehead to fracture under the relentless assault. It hauled her shrieking back into the asylum, back into the dark, and the heavy door crashed shut behind them.

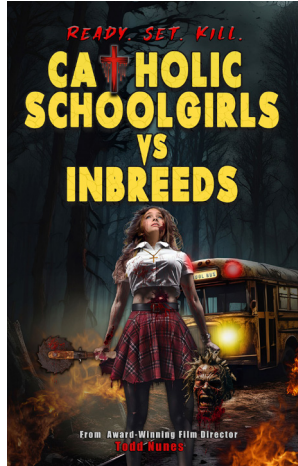
Outside, rain battered Stephens Sanitarium and lightning flashed across its black windows, but the old building stood unmoved, as if it had swallowed Nurse Marsha whole and was already hungry for more.

» 6 Death Ward 13

KEEP READING

Check out other books in the Slasher Universe series.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLGIRLS VS INBREEDS



In 1972, deep in the Appalachian wilderness, a bus carrying Catholic schoolgirls and their nun chaperone, Sister Lucy, is lost and stranded in the foreboding woods of West Virginia. The travelers are cut off from civilization, isolated in hostile terrain. The forest harbors dark secrets, and they are not alone.

A clan of cannibalistic mountain men, grotesquely disfigured by generations of inbreeding, lurk in the shadows. Driven to the brink of extinction by their own sterility, they hunt for outsiders to sustain their bloodline, focusing on the busload of young women they believe can save them.

The girls, unprepared and terrified, must rely on Sister Lucy's guidance to survive. As the clan launches a brutal attack, the girls are transformed from helpless innocents into fierce survivors. With the relentless cannibals closing in, the battle for survival turns the forest into a blood-soaked battleground where the line between prey and predator blurs as each side fights desperately for their family

KEEP READING

Check out other books in the Slasher Universe series.

THE DUKE



They ran from one war... straight into a bloodbath.

With the draft closing in and secrets threatening to tear them apart, a group of rebellious teens load into a stolen RV and make a break for Canada in 1973. Peace, freedom, survival—that's the plan.

But in the rotting woods of Humboldt County, California, something else was waiting.

Something not quite human.

He was once a boy. Sold like garbage. Raised in isolation. Shaped by cruelty. Now, he wears a rusted mask of metal and hunts like an animal—fast, brutal, and silent. Locals whisper about The Duke. But no one survives to spread the truth.

As the bodies pile up and the group turns on itself, Elizabeth must confront the twisted origins of the killer—and the dark legacy that binds them both. Because this isn't just a fight for survival...

It's a showdown with a nightmare carved from cruelty, wired to kill, and too brutal to die.

A savage descent into carnage, cult horror, and iconic kills, *The Duke* delivers a blood-soaked throwback to the slashers of the '70s—gritty, relentless, and unforgettable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Todd Nunes



Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Todd Nunes began writing and directing at an early age. While still in high school, he produced and directed his own horror-related stage and video productions, and immediately after graduating, founded the theatrical production company Benicia Stage Productions. In Los Angeles, Todd studied screenwriting at UCLA's Writers' Program and produced an original two-act play at UCLA's Theater Underground.

After graduating with honors from The Los Angeles Film School, his thesis film, *Two Brothers*, was accepted by The Short Film Festival of Los Angeles and chosen as the festival's Official Selection. An avid and lifelong fan of horror films, Todd's impressive collection and deep knowledge of the genre inspired him to write more than six feature-length horror screenplays.

For six years, Todd wrote a Halloween Haunted House attraction in the Los Angeles area, and in 2013, he completed his first horror feature, *Scary Larry*, as writer, director, and editor. In 2015, Todd wrote and directed the award-winning Santa slasher *All Through the House*. The film received 21 festival nominations and six awards, including Best Director (Hardcore Horror Fest, Chicago, IL); Audience Choice Award, Best Editing, and Best Slasher (RIP Film Festival, Hollywood, CA); and Best Local Feature (Another Hole in the Head Film Festival, San Francisco, CA).

Todd is also the author of the Slasher Universe book series, including *Death Ward 13*, *Catholic Schoolgirls vs. Inbreeds*, and *The Duke*, which showcases his love for the horror genre. His commitment to horror storytelling continues to inspire fear and thrill in audiences around the world.

Todd has also been a featured guest at San Diego Comic-Con, where he showcased his Slasher Universe books, connected with fans, and celebrated independent horror alongside the genre's most passionate creators and readers.

Most recently, Todd's screenplay for *Catholic Schoolgirls vs. Inbreeds* has received widespread acclaim on the festival circuit, winning top honors at seven competitions: The Film Basement Horror Film Awards; Diabolical Horror Film Festival; Frights! Camera! Action! Horror Screenplay Contest; Hollywood Horrorfest; and the Hollywood Blood Horror Festival, where it also earned Best Action/Horror Screenplay. Additionally, his writing was awarded Best Unproduced Screenplay at the prestigious Crimson Screen Horror Film Fest.

