

# *Longing for a Nice, Warm Coffin*

By Robert Butterfield

*30 Days of Night*, David Slade, Dir. 2007.

I had not seen the graphic novel that *30 Days of Night* is based upon, so I had no preconceptions going in to this movie, except that the ads looked pretty good and I wanted to see a fright flick to get in the mood for Halloween (the holiday, not the movie). Yet I was a little ambivalent about going to *30 Days of Night* because, quite frankly, I have been pretty burnt out on vampire movies for some time now. Most vampire movies these days seem to be excuses for the male and female undead to pose throughout most of the films, looking more like fashion models with fangs and a penchant for black clothing than soul-less bloodsuckers. But when I saw that David Slade, who directed the riveting *Hard Candy*, was at the helm of *30 Days of Night*, I decided to chance it.

It turned out to be a perfect October fright flick. There is something about snow that is beautiful but frightening in and of itself. Combine a frigid, arctic environment with unending (well, month-long, anyway) darkness, throw in a bunch of predatory vampires, and you have a perfect environment for horror and mayhem. Of course, that is, unless the filmmakers screw it up. Fortunately for me (and for you), they didn't.

The story line is basically this: The townspeople of Barrow, Alaska, are completely cut off and trapped by the monsters who have systematically and efficiently invaded their town. The vampire leader (a very convincing Danny Huston) is brutal and unrelenting, and at one point wonders why his clan had not come to Barrow long ago (the month-long darkness and all, you know). There is, of course, a resistance by the few townspeople who survive the attack. Josh Hartnett does a fine turn as the town sheriff, the hero of the film. All the other survivors and vampires are well portrayed, with a standout performance by Mark Boone, Jr. as an eccentric snow plow operator.

But the real stars here are the undead. The vampires in this film combine old school creepiness with new cinematography. They dress badly, talk in what might be Romanian when they are not howling, and pretty much rip their victims to shreds when they feed. You would not want any of these vampires kissing you, believe me. At the same time, they move frantically and FAST, similar to the zombies (or werewolves) from *28 Days Later*, to actually imbue the viewer with a sense of fear.

And there is even a creepy cargo ship and an updated Renfield (another great turn by Ben Foster).

*30 Days of Night* has tons of gore, but there are also elements of genuine fright and suspense in the movie. The ending is (unsurprisingly) a bit of a letdown, but it pretty much works—and does not ruin the vibe of the rest of the film. All in all, this movie was a lot better than I had expected, which is something I can't say about many recent horror flicks.

***Necropsy: The Review of Horror Fiction, Volume XXVII (Fall 2007)***