

Movie: Jeepers Creepers (2001)

Synopsis

Jeepers Creepers is a 2001 horror film written and directed by Victor Salva that takes its name from the 1938 song first premiered by Louis Armstrong. The film is inspired by actual events (Unsolved Mysteries). Since this blog was started on Easter Sunday 2015, it was exactly 25 years ago that Ray and Marie Thornton were terrorized by a motorist while playing “the license plate game” in Cold Water, Michigan. Also, like their counterparts in the movie, the Thorntons later came across the van and discovered a bloody sheet. While the Thornton’s experience remains unsolved, the 2001 horror movie it inspired depicts the fate of siblings Trish and Darry Jenner on their travels home from college during spring break in the Florida countryside.

On their way home, a mysterious driver attempts to run Trish and Darry off the road with his truck. After barely escaping a second time, Darry convinces Trish to double back to investigate what they saw earlier at the “psycho version of the Sistine Chapel.” The two find an old woman (an oracle) who tells them of “The Creeper,” a demonic keeper of a “house of pain” who hunts every twenty-third spring for twenty-three days by striking fear into its victims in order to smell if there’s something it likes. It then feasts on the terrified victims’ body parts to reconstitute and strengthen itself.

The eponymous “Creeper” is the reincarnation of Spring-heeled Jack, a supernatural entity of English folklore of the Victorian era (sightings were especially prevalent in London). The cyclical nature of his hunting sprees parallels that of other geographically isolated mythical characters such as the Mothman (West Virginia) and It (Maine).

How it relates to the field of psychiatry

Beyond the role urban legends play in the psychology of a culture, *Jeepers Creepers* is useful in reviewing the harmful effects of two drugs: alcohol and phencyclidine (PCP). In the opening scene, Darry recounts the cautionary tale of Kenny and Darla (class of ’78), a prosocial warning of the dangers of drinking and driving on prom night (*Weird New Jersey’s* Annie’s Grave in Totowa and The White Lady Tree in Branch Brook Park).

Later in the movie, Darry and Trish are trapped in the police station when the Creeper’s rampage is reminiscent of the scene from *The Terminator*. Similar to the cyborg portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Creeper demonstrates the behavioral (belligerence and agitation) and physiologic (diminished pain response when it’s described as wearing body armor by police) manifestations of PCP intoxication.

It's only right that the final thought in this blog parallels the final scene in the film. Co-occurring use of alcohol and PCP may lead to suicidal behaviors and other symptoms including (ironically) rapid eye movements (nystagmus), eyes rolled to the back of the head, and a vacant stare.

Key Words: Florida, Jeepers Creepers, the Creeper, Louis Armstrong, Unsolved Mysteries, Ray Thornton, Marie Thornton, Mothman, Stephen King's It, Spring-heeled Jack, alcohol, Phencyclidine, PCP, The Terminator

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Next week's movie: Laid to Rest (2009)

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