

#### **Destination 4:** Jacob's Well, Texas

Located just northwest of Wimberley, Tx, there is a karst landscape formed from the dissolution of soluble rock with underground sinkholes and caves. This landscape is found in Cypress Creek and has claimed the lives of no less than 8 divers since 1964. This cryptic landscape is called Jacob's Well. From the opening in the creek bed, Jacob's Well descends vertically to a depth of 120 feet before breaking off into 2 underwater passageways. One passageway measures approximately 1,000 feet and the secondary one extends 4,500 feet.

**Related Film:** *The Ring* (2002)

#### **Synopsis**

*The Ring* is a remake of *Ringu*, a 1998 Japanese horror film that draws on the folk tale, Banchō Sarayashiki. As legend tells it, there was once a beautiful servant named Okiku who worked for a samurai, Aoyama Tessen. Okiku often refused his amorous advances. Despite his trickery, Okiku remained solemn. Aoyama became enraged and threw her down a well to her death. It is said that Okiku became a vengeful spirit (*Onryō*) who tormented her murderer.

In the 2002 American adaptation, a group of teens watch "a video tape that kills you when you watch it." After watching the tape, the phone rings, and a voice on the other end utters "seven days." Exactly one week later, you die. The film depicts Rachel Keller, an investigative reporter, who is looking into her niece's death when she discovers the urban legend.

The American adaptation focuses on Samara's lair; giving rise to the alternate theory is that *The Ring* was inspired by The Tragedy at Road Hill House. In June 1860, 3-year-old Francis "Saville" Kent disappeared from his home. His body was found in a privy on the property. While the boy's nursemaid, Elizabeth, was initially arrested, Francis's sister, Constance Kent, would confess to the murder five years later.

A third perspective comes from the study of the corporeal undead. Also known as "utburd," mylings are phantasmal incarnations of the souls of unbaptized children who are forced to roam the earth until they could persuade someone to bury them properly. Mylings – translated as "that which is taken outside" – refer to the practice of abandoning unwanted children (usually in the woods where death is almost certain). The disclosure that Samara's biological mother, Evelyn's, pregnancy was unwanted is the plot focus in the third film in the Ring franchise, *Rings* (2017). Specifically, it is discovered that Samara was the product of rape and that Evelyn's imprisonment in a hidden chamber beneath a church's bell tower while pregnant is proof of Samara having been unbaptized and abandoned; in a word, a myling.

Interestingly, another Asian (Tai) horror film depicting a "floaty girl" continues this narrative. Written and directed by Banjong Pisanthanakun, *Shutter* (2004) illustrates how mylings chase lone wanderers at night and jump on their backs, demanding to be carried to the graveyard so they can rest in hallowed ground. In *The Ring*, Rachel discovers Samara's body, and she's given a proper burial in 7 days. While proven unsuccessful, Rachel's plan is confirmed in *Rings* as a copy of the video is found to contain extra images including a mysterious woman who tells Julia that she must cremate Samara's physical remains (we won't tell you if Julia succeeds where Rachel has failed).

## How it relates to the field of psychiatry

Two taglines from the movie highlight teaching points in psychiatry. First, "she never sleeps" hallmarks both insomnia as well as the inevitability of death. Interestingly, a story with the same moral, *Appointment in Samarra*, shares its title name (synonym) with *The Ring's* evil antagonist. Second, "she only wants to be heard" represents a major theme in patient-centered medicine, with patient histories - and the need for patients to convey them in a milieu of unconditional positive regard (Carl Rogers) - being a critical component of healthcare.

Another teaching point focuses on whether Samara is "pure evil." *The Ring* is a fictional case study of a "bad seed" (see Damien from *The Omen*, 1976) in the 'nature versus nurture' discussion of the etiology of Antisocial Personality Disorder.

Finally, a third psychiatric teaching point focuses on the nonverbal communication of horses. In *The Ring*, the horses at the Morgan ranch go mad and drown themselves, a fate similar to the horse on the ferry on the way to Richard Morgan's island home. The animal's intuition is scientifically based. As prey animals, horses have hearts 5x the size of humans'. Their electromagnetic pulse (torus) results in a coherent heart rate that synchronizes with humans (or mylings). Institutions of higher education such as Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School take advantage of the coherent heart rate of horses by partnering with equine centers (Spring Reins of Hope, <http://www.springreinsofhope.com/>) to run innovative curricula that use horses to teach medical students nonverbal communication to improve bedside manners.

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