

# Synopsis *The Night Outside*

South Africa

Written by Elan Gamaker | Produced by Bridget Pickering and Mark Overett

95 mins | Supernatural Thriller/Political Drama

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South Africa, 1986. Times are bad. But all would-be singer PATIENCE DUMISA (29) wants is stardom. First, she's going to have to survive the night...

She must stand in for her mother in a wealthy Cape Town suburb to babysit the children of the Willow family. Patience arrives at a house in mourning: the eldest son BEN (18) has been killed in the Angolan bush war six months earlier. She explores the succession of barriers set up to keep the house safe, then meets the children: conniving, inquisitive ANNIE (12) and sensitive, bedwetting JORDAN (6).

As dusk sets in and TREVOR and DOMINIQUE, the children's parents, leave, Patience, determined to do as little as possible, sends the kids to bed without bath or dinner. Against the Willows' wishes she kicks out the family dog, and indulges in the luxuries of the house.

Then it all starts to go wrong. There is a strange presence in the garden, and Patience starts to believe someone – or something – is on the property and wishes them harm. She tries to call the police but, preoccupied with the national state of emergency, they have no time for her. The children, meanwhile, begin to act erratically, seemingly guided by a mysterious external force, convinced that their dead brother Ben has returned and is trying to connect with them.

When children then apparently disappear, Patience turns to the help of the gardener, REGISTERED, who searches the grounds. When Patience finally encounters Ben's ghost, she flees the house. But with no help available in the neighbourhood, she must return. When she discovers that Registered has been murdered, she realises what she thought was an intrusion beyond the physical world is in fact the real Ben.

Injured, traumatised and dangerous, he is still alive and has absconded from the army to protect his home against the invaders he has been trained to attack. His supposed haunting of the house was a result of his father Trevor – hiding the shame of his son's desertion – telling the family that he had been killed in action.

When the damaged and unstable Ben begins to threaten the children, and has them trapped inside the self-made security fortress that is the Willow home, Patience must find a way back into the house to rescue the children. Now terrified, the kids must stick together and for the first time trust Patience, the maid for whom they have thus far had little respect.

Drawing on an incident some years earlier during which she – as a younger babysitter – and the adolescent Ben shared a moment of forbidden intimacy, Patience puts her body on the line to free the kids and, finally, to entrap Ben: a prisoner in his own home, trapped like a caged animal.

She leaves the property with the children, walking through the night to take them to the relative safety of the black townships...