

Suitable Flesh is a 2023 American horror film written by Dennis Paoli and directed by Joe Lynch. Based on the 1937 H. P. Lovecraft short story "The Thing on the Doorstep", it stars Heather Graham, Judah Lewis, Bruce Davison, Johnathon Schaech and Barbara Crampton.

The film premiered at the 2023 Tribeca Festival on June 11. It was released in limited theaters and video on demand on October 27, 2023, before its streaming release on Shudder on January 26, 2024.

Plot

In a psychiatric hospital, Dr. Daniella Upton visits the morgue where the mortician is dissecting the body of an unseen figure, the victim of a brutal murder. Daniella visits the murderer, her friend Dr. Elizabeth Derby, who begs Daniella to destroy the brain of the corpse and begins to recount her story to explain why she must do so.

Psychiatrist Elizabeth Derby lives a near idyllic life with her husband Eddie, never being troubled by her patients. After a session with a patient, a young man arrives at her office and asks to talk to her; he introduces himself as Asa Waite and tells her that he believes his father is occasionally occupying his body. During the session, Asa receives a phone call from his father and appears to have a seizure before acting as if nothing happened, as well as behaving completely differently. Elizabeth is troubled by this development and that evening imagines Asa in Eddie's place while they are having sex. She goes to Asa's house, having remembered his address, and discovers his father Ephraim to be horribly sick, relying on pills to keep him alive; Ephraim wards Elizabeth off with a large knife after she spots a book with strange creatures and symbols drawn in it.

That night, Asa calls Elizabeth and she drives to his house, finding Ephraim dying on the floor; Asa refuses to let Elizabeth hand him his pills but Elizabeth defies his orders, though she isn't able to stop Ephraim's apparent death. Asa tells her that they must destroy Ephraim's brain because if he says an incantation a third time, he will take over Asa's body; Ephraim, revealed to be alive, utters the incantation and causes Asa to have a seizure before

<i>Suitable Flesh</i>	
 <div>Theatrical release poster</div>	
Directed by	Joe Lynch
Screenplay by	Dennis Paoli
Based on	"The Thing on the Doorstep" by H. P. Lovecraft
Produced by	Barbara Crampton <div></div> Bob Portal <div></div> Inderpal Singh <div></div> Joe Wicker
Starring	Heather Graham <div></div> Judah Lewis <div></div> Bruce Davison <div></div> Johnathon Schaech <div></div> Barbara Crampton
Cinematography	David Matthews
Edited by	Jack N. Gracie
Music by	Steve Moore

seemingly dying a second time. Asa, now more confident, has sex with Elizabeth and whispers an incantation in her ear which causes them to briefly switch bodies. He notices that Ephraim's body is missing, prompting him to take the elongated knife and chase after him. Ephraim begs Elizabeth to help him as he is actually Asa in Ephraim's body but the real Ephraim, now in Asa's body, stabs him in the neck with the knife before decapitating him.

The following day, two detectives stop by the Derby residence in order to question Elizabeth about a fire at the Waite house, with Ephraim being labeled as a missing person. Elizabeth talks to her friend, fellow psychiatrist, Daniella Upton, about the body-switch but Daniella doesn't understand what she means; later, Elizabeth admits to Eddie that she has had sex with Asa. Meanwhile, Ephraim (still in Asa's body) handcuffs himself to a pole in his cellar and calls Elizabeth, reading the incantation and causing the two to switch bodies. While in Elizabeth's body, Ephraim has sex with Eddie; Elizabeth discovers piles of flesh as well as drawings of a strange creature in the cellar. Realizing that the next body swap will be forever, Elizabeth attempts to jump out of a window at her office but Ephraim arrives and tells her that she can escape if she successfully kills him and destroys his brain. Upon distracting him, Elizabeth stabs him in the head with his knife before throwing him out of the window; realizing that he is still alive, Elizabeth runs Ephraim over repeatedly with her car before stabbing him to death. She is then apprehended by police officers.

In present day, the heavily mutilated corpse, now revealed to be Ephraim, awakens and utters the incantation one final time, causing him to switch bodies with Elizabeth. Elizabeth in the corpse's body begins to crawl through the hospital while Ephraim decides to switch bodies with Daniella, causing the two of them to fight. In Daniella's body, Ephraim begs a security guard named Mace to shoot Daniella but she manages to get his gun and euthanizes Elizabeth by shooting her in the head repeatedly. The two switch back and Ephraim shoots Mace to death before continuing to fight; Daniella gets ready to stab him with a scalpel as Ephraim recites the incantation again, before they are separated by police officers. Some time later, Daniella consoles Eddie in her office as Ephraim is revealed to be in control of her body while the real Daniella is trapped inside the body of a screaming Elizabeth.

Production companies	Alliance Media Partners Eyevox Entertainment
Distributed by	<u>RLJE Films</u> <u>Shudder</u>
Release dates	June 11, 2023 (Tribeca) October 27, 2023
Running time	99 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	\$22,751 ^[2]

Cast

- Heather Graham as Dr. Elizabeth Derby, a psychiatrist
- Judah Lewis as Asa Waite, Elizabeth's patient
- Bruce Davison as Ephraim Waite, Asa's father
- Johnathon Schaech as Edward Derby, Elizabeth's husband
- Barbara Crampton as Dr. Daniella Upton, Elizabeth's friend and colleague
- Graham Skipper as a pathologist
- Brett Newton as Professor Fisk
- Chris McKenna as Crawley
- J. D. Evermore as Detective Ledger
- Ann Mahoney as Susan

- Jonah Ray Rodrigues as Dave the orderly
- Joe Lynch as Ray the orderly

Production

Suitable Flesh was directed by Joe Lynch from a script by Dennis Paoli, which is based on H. P. Lovecraft's "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1937).^[3] It is a spiritual successor to Stuart Gordon's 1980s Lovecraftian horror films, *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond*.^[4] Barbara Crampton stars in the film and produces under her Alliance Media Partners banner.^[5] Principal photography began in Jackson, Mississippi in May 2022.^[6]

Release

RLJE Films and Shudder acquired the worldwide distribution rights to *Suitable Flesh* a few days before its world premiere at the Tribeca Festival on June 11, 2023.^{[7][8]} It premiered at Fantastic Fest on September 24, 2023.^[9] The film was released in limited theaters and video on demand on October 27, 2023, before its streaming debut on Shudder on January 26, 2024.^{[10][11]} It is scheduled to be released on limited edition VHS in March 2024.^[12]

Reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 84% of 70 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 6.9/10. The website's consensus reads: "Campy and creepy, *Suitable Flesh* delivers visceral, '80s-inspired horror topped off by game performances from Barbara Crampton and Heather Graham."^[13] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 64 out of 100, based on 12 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[14]

Meagan Navarro of Bloody Disgusting gave the film a score of four out of five and wrote, "Lynch captures the humorous, oft-sexy tone of Gordon's '80s/'90s Lovecraftian horror output while putting his own stamp on it through keen instincts and modern storytelling".^[15] Brian Tallerico of RogerEbert.com said, "*Suitable Flesh* is kind of tonally inconsistent—I kept wanting it to go "Full Gordon" and really go off the rails as much as it threatens to do so—but it's a fun horror flick, one I could imagine finding on VHS in 1989 and losing my mind over. In other words, a Dennis Paoli flick". He praised Crampton but felt Lewis was "little less effective in that he struggles to sell some of the mischievous charm needed for the role at times".^[16]

Peter Bradshaw from The Guardian gave the film a score of two out of five and wrote, "Despite a very game lead performance from Heather Graham, and some amusing 90s-style erotic thriller mannerisms — voile curtains blowing on a hot summer night while a sex scene happens to a wafting sax accompaniment — this left me not knowing quite where to look".^[17] Dennis Harvey of Variety wrote, "There's no lack of effort here, but too often *Suitable Flesh* just feels effortful, rather than the outrageous good time aimed for".^[18]

References

1. "*Suitable Flesh* (18)" (<https://www.bbfc.co.uk/release/suitable-flesh-q29sbgvjdgldvbjpwwc0xmde2odc0>). *British Board of Film Classification*. October 13, 2023. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20231014164935/https://www.bbfc.co.uk/release/suitable-flesh-q29sbgvjdgldvbjpwwc0xmde2odc0>) from the original on October 14, 2023. Retrieved October 14, 2023.

2. "*Suitable Flesh*" (<https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt21397580/>). *Box Office Mojo*. Retrieved December 9, 2023.
3. Nemiroff, Perri (October 14, 2023). "*Suitable Flesh*'s Joe Lynch on Making a Movie With 'Madness & Body Swapping'" (<https://collider.com/suitable-flesh-director-joe-lynch-interview/>). *Collider*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20231026182902/https://collider.com/suitable-flesh-director-joe-lynch-interview/>) from the original on October 26, 2023. Retrieved October 14, 2023.
4. Davids, Brian (October 25, 2023). "*Suitable Flesh*' Director Joe Lynch Talks His Lovecraft Adaptation and Bringing Eroticism Back to Movies" (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-features/suitable-flesh-sex-scenes-80s-thrillers-1235628168/>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20231025232709/https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-features/suitable-flesh-sex-scenes-80s-thrillers-1235628168/>) from the original on October 25, 2023. Retrieved October 26, 2023.
5. June 09, Clark Collis; EDT, 2023 at 09:00 AM. "How a master of horror's unmade film was revived into the scary, sexy *Suitable Flesh*" (<https://ew.com/movies/suitable-flesh-tribeca-heather-graham-barbara-crampton-joe-lynch/>). *Entertainment Weekly*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20231014164935/https://ew.com/movies/suitable-flesh-tribeca-heather-graham-barbara-crampton-joe-lynch/>) from the original on October 14, 2023. Retrieved October 14, 2023.
6. "Wrapped Productions" (<https://filmississippi.org/latest/wrapped>). *Mississippi Film Office*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220813174301/https://filmississippi.org/latest/wrapped>) from the original on August 13, 2022. Retrieved October 14, 2023.
7. Grobar, Matt (June 5, 2023). "Heather Graham Horror Thriller *Suitable Flesh* Based On Lovecraft Story Acquired By RLJE Films & Shudder Ahead Of Tribeca Bow" (<https://deadline.com/2023/06/suitable-flesh-release-heather-graham-rlje-films-shudder-1235398378/>). *Deadline Hollywood*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230613204136/https://deadline.com/2023/06/suitable-flesh-release-heather-graham-rlje-films-shudder-1235398378/>) from the original on June 13, 2023. Retrieved June 13, 2023.
8. Squires, John (April 18, 2023). "*Suitable Flesh* – First Look at Joe Lynch's Lovecraft Movie Starring Barbara Crampton" (<https://bloody-disgusting.com/movie/3758752/suitable-flesh-first-look-at-joe-lynchs-lovecraft-movie-starring-barbara-crampton/>). *Bloody Disgusting*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230613203901/https://bloody-disgusting.com/movie/3758752/suitable-flesh-first-look-at-joe-lynchs-lovecraft-movie-starring-barbara-crampton/>) from the original on June 13, 2023. Retrieved June 13, 2023.
9. "*Suitable Flesh*" (<https://2023.fantasticfest.com/films/64dba08fcd428000504ec6e0>). *Fantastic Fest*. Archived (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/20231014151039/https://2023.fantasticfest.com/films/64dba08fcd428000504ec6e0>) from the original on October 14, 2023. Retrieved October 14, 2023.
10. Wampler, Scott (September 19, 2023). "Behold: The Red-Band Trailer For Joe Lynch's *Suitable Flesh*" (<https://www.fangoria.com/original/suitable-flesh-red-band-trailer>). *Fangoria*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20231014164945/https://www.fangoria.com/original/suitable-flesh-red-band-trailer/>) from the original on October 14, 2023. Retrieved October 14, 2023.
11. Navarro, Meagan (December 15, 2023). "*Suitable Flesh* and More Head to Shudder in January" (<https://bloody-disgusting.com/movie/3792419/suitable-flesh-and-more-head-to-shudder-in-january/>). *Bloody Disgusting*. Retrieved December 15, 2023.
12. Squires, John (January 26, 2024). "Joe Lynch's *Suitable Flesh* Comes to Fully Functional VHS and It's Up for Pre-Order Now!" (<https://bloody-disgusting.com/home-video/3797524/joe-lynchs-suitable-flesh-comes-to-fully-functional-vhs-and-its-up-for-pre-order-now/>). *Bloody Disgusting*. Retrieved January 26, 2024.

13. "*Suitable Flesh*" (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/suitable_flesh). *Rotten Tomatoes*. Fandango Media. Retrieved January 26, 2023.
14. "*Suitable Flesh*" (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/suitable-flesh>). *Metacritic*. Fandom, Inc. Retrieved November 13, 2023.
15. Navarro, Meagan (June 12, 2023). "*Suitable Flesh* Tribeca Review – Joe Lynch Pays Tribute to Stuart Gordon in Beguiling Lovecraft Tale" (<https://bloody-disgusting.com/reviews/3765642/suitable-flesh-review-lovecraft/>). *Bloody Disgusting*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230612193234/https://bloody-disgusting.com/reviews/3765642/suitable-flesh-review-lovecraft/>) from the original on June 12, 2023. Retrieved June 13, 2023.
16. Tallerico, Brian (June 15, 2023). "Tribeca 2023: *Suitable Flesh*, *You'll Never Find Me*, *Bad Things*" (<https://www.rogerebert.com/festivals/tribeca-2023-suitable-flesh-youll-never-find-me-bad-things>). *RogerEbert.com*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230620074157/https://www.rogerebert.com/festivals/tribeca-2023-suitable-flesh-youll-never-find-me-bad-things>) from the original on June 20, 2023. Retrieved October 14, 2023.
17. Bradshaw, Peter (October 24, 2023). "*Suitable Flesh* review – eye-rolling Heather Graham in erotic body-swap horror thriller" (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/oct/24/suitable-flesh-review-eye-rolling-heather-graham-in-erotic-body-swap-horror-thriller>). *The Guardian*. ISSN 0261-3077 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/0261-3077>). Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20231026071245/https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/oct/24/suitable-flesh-review-eye-rolling-heather-graham-in-erotic-body-swap-horror-thriller>) from the original on October 26, 2023. Retrieved October 26, 2023.
18. Harvey, Dennis (October 26, 2023). "*Suitable Flesh* Review: Heather Graham Gamely Steers an Uneasily Erotic H.P. Lovecraft Adaptation" (<https://variety.com/2023/film/reviews/suitable-flesh-review-1235761181/>). *Variety*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20231026130119/https://variety.com/2023/film/reviews/suitable-flesh-review-1235761181/>) from the original on October 26, 2023. Retrieved October 26, 2023.

External links

- *Suitable Flesh* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt21397580/>) at IMDb
-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Suitable_Flesh&oldid=1220672261"

▪