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If you have patience with it, *Long Hair of Death* (a better and more serious movie than the title might suggest ... once it's over you'll appreciate the moniker), has a doozy of a payoff.

Antonio Margheriti directs (as Richard Dawson, no doubt to Anglicize the movie and draw English speaking viewers) what is essentially a classic supernatural gothic thriller. Crammed with intrigue and backstabbing and plenty of soap opera melodrama, *Long Hair of Death* is set in the fifteenth century during the black plague. The action is set pretty much entirely within the confines a lord's castle and its grounds.

The movie commences with the burning of a suspected witch and the murder of her older daughter, who tries to defend her. The eldest child is killed at the hands of the lecherous lord of the household. As the flames reach up to her in an elaborate and compelling death setup, the woman utters a curse on the household. Say it all together: This can only end in tears.

Years later, the younger daughter of the "witch" is grown, having been taken in by the very family who murdered her mother and sister. She is, against her will, married to the son of the man who killed her older sister and whose household was complicit in the burning of her mother. The son is a selfish, wicked rake whose attentions are soon turned from the witch's daughter to another woman who arrives mysteriously at a religious ceremony during a thunderstorm.

An affair commences between the new woman and the lord's son, and murder begins to be plotted. It's only a matter of time before the lord is murdered to prevent interference in the son's affair. Naturally, his murderous sights soon turn to the witch's daughter herself. Only thing is, once she's been killed, members of the household continue to see her and have everyday dealings with her as though the murder had not occurred.

The son, naturally, is frantic with wonder at what could have happened and his mind threatens to descend into a downward spiral of madness before all is finally revealed. *Long Hair of Death* has a strong opening but subsequently, the first half is a tad slow. It is, however, rooted in mood and not action and the viewer must patiently accept the storytelling on its own terms. As the movie steers toward its build-to-climax, the

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