

POPULATION PURGE – SYNOPSIS

In the near future, under a radical Government program to reduce growing population numbers, every citizen – man, woman and child – are infected with a poison. Only 5% of the people, those with a blood-type of AB+, are spared as they are immune to the poison, by design – these are the intended survivors. But, the Government’s plan goes wrong, and instead of eliminating the other blood-types entirely, the poison sickens them for the rest of their days. Regular rations of ‘perfect’ AB+ blood can slow their symptoms and sustain them, but it’s only delaying an inevitable death.

In the apocalyptic chaos and panic that ensues after the mass poisoning, the overwhelmed hospitals are abandoned outside of the major metropolitan areas where all of the healthy survivors are relocated and registered. But in an attempt to maintain law and order, District Wardens are instated by the Government. In the town of East River, designated ‘District 22’, ONSLOW is placed in charge – and he reigns with an iron fist.

Murderers, thieves and child molesters are punished equally in his ‘court’, with verdicts dolled out by loyal, masked soldiers, THE PROTECTORS; the penalty is death and Onslow’s judgement is final. He instructs his adopted son ELIJAH – who was blinded by the poisoning – to pull the trigger on the crossbow, killing the convicted.

Meanwhile, within the derelict grounds of the Rivers Edge Mental Facility, CHARLIE an eccentric and immune survivor has established a secret compound where he can live in peace, indulging in fantasies of his faded acting career. With creepy mannequins for company and surrounded by salvaged junk, as well as the skeletons of the dead; Charlie ambles to a rundown RV where his teenaged granddaughter MAYA is awaiting him.

Following a twice weekly ritual, Charlie sits on a gurney in the RV and has his blood drawn by Maya, while they always play the same record – the psychedelic tones of ‘White Rabbit’. A calendar on the wall is counting down the days to Charlie’s 80th birthday. Charlie then departs with a cooler of his blood to make the treacherous trip into town, in a canoe via the swamp and river. He goes alone and, despite her protests against this “lockdown” lifestyle; Maya understands it’s not safe out there, so she tells him to be careful while she stays behind.

Onslow visits a bedridden Elijah – who’s condition has worsened – at a makeshift clinic that’s run by NAOMI, a nurse using scavenged medical supplies to treat the poisoned. The meager blood rations from the Government aren’t going to save Elijah; he’s running out of time. His only hope is a full transfusion.

Seeing that Onslow is desperate, and feeling sympathy for Elijah who reminds her of her own granddaughter; Naomi suggests that he could break the law and turn to the illicit underground blood market, which auctions trafficked AB+ blood to the highest bidder. But, Onslow thinks he has a better idea that won’t jeopardize his position as Warden – cut out the middle men and find the source: an unregistered AB+ survivor.

Naomi reveals that her friend JADE, a feisty African American witchdoctor / gypsy lady, lives in

a shack in the woods. Jade is the connection to the source; she receives his healthy blood, purchasing it and then ‘cutting it’ with herbs and potions to dilute for re-selling at the illegal auction.

Onslow finds the shack and bumps into Charlie, leading to a provoked encounter. After Charlie leaves, having been paid for his blood, which he uses to buy gas for the generator that powers his compound; Onslow calls in his Protectors to get heavy with Jade and make her talk – not realizing that the source just slipped through his fingers.

While the Protectors beat Jade into revealing Charlie’s identity as the source, though she’s unaware of his whereabouts; Charlie goes back to his ‘home’ – an old Greyhound bus at the compound. Powering up the generator, he sits in the darkness watching a black-and-white movie with himself in the starring role of Captain Flint, a pirate. Until he suddenly hears a “Boo!” from the back of the bus amongst the audience of mannequins – a lone heckler. Crossing the line between reality and delusion, Charlie becomes enraged and attacks the heckler, who we see is actually a lifeless mannequin.

Onslow heads to the auctioneers, ROBERTO and LOUIS, and threatens to shut them down and render judgements against them if they don’t bring in the source. With this ultimatum, Roberto and Louis lie in wait in the woods for Charlie’s next delivery.

Checking in on Naomi and seeing Elijah’s grim outlook, Onslow reveals how he served in the military on an overseas mission where he turned against a fellow soldier to rescue a young boy (Elijah) from an uncertain fate. He still has a bitter contempt for the Government, as their poison was responsible for the death of his wife, as well as Elijah’s near-death condition. Onslow is also sick himself, with one eye covered by a patch and worsening health. With resent, he knows that finding the source is the only way to save his son and free himself from the Government’s “leash”.

For Maya, sitting amongst a crowd of mannequins, Charlie puts on a one-man play at the compound, performing dressed in an Abraham Lincoln costume. But in a psychotic break from reality, Charlie snaps during his speech and pulls out a shotgun, chasing a terrified Maya into a shadowy labyrinth of tunnels. As he shoots at mannequins in the tunnel, Charlie screams in a paranoid rage about everyone wanting his blood. After several scares, Maya is forced to knock out Charlie and he awakens strapped to the gurney in the RV where he calmly claims it was all part of “an act”. While still shaken up, Maya accepts this and she draws his blood as usual so he can go to town and meet with Jade.

When he gets there, Charlie makes a gruesome discovery at the shack – Jade’s body, drained of all blood – and then he’s pursued by Roberto and Louis who expected his arrival. As they hunt him down in their truck, Charlie manages to jump onboard and shoot Roberto with Louis’s crossbow. But as he flees, Charlie then runs into a gang of sickly citizens who realize that Charlie is healthy and not like them – they try to capture him and Charlie is suddenly hit by an arrow fired by Louis, still in pursuit. Injured and losing blood, Charlie barely escapes in time, leaping into the canoe and drifting down the river.

With haunting visions, Charlie floats back home and is found by Maya on the edge of the swamp. Meanwhile, Onslow keeps his promise to Roberto and Louis – sentencing them to death for allowing Charlie to escape, which is the same fate that now awaits his son without Charlie’s blood. By killing the auctioneers, and Jade, Onslow announces to an angry mob of citizens that the underground blood market is no more – effectively sealing all of their fates, too.

Charlie comes to, with a bandaged wound, and reveals to Maya what happened in town – there’s nothing left for them now; it’s all “poisoned”. Maya storms out, with a cryptic remark, and he follows after her in a confused state, leading to a shocking reveal that not everything is what it seems to be.

At the clinic, Onslow is distraught by this turn of events, feeling that the future is doomed now. Yet, Naomi gives him hope by revealing she has a personal connection to Charlie. She makes a deal to tell Onslow where Charlie is, if he promises to bring him to town without harm, as he’s old and needs help – Charlie was a court-ordered patient at the Rivers Edge Mental Facility, prior to the Government’s depopulation program.

That night, Onslow stays by Elijah’s bedside as he sends his top three Protectors with Naomi to guide them along the river; a spine-chilling journey leading to Charlie’s compound. They arrive as Charlie is heard to be in the middle of a rousing performance of ‘Macbeth’, but he was ready for these intruders – armed with his shotgun and accompanied by his macabre mannequin army.

With semi-automatic weapons, the Protectors move in and Naomi soon understands that they only care about Charlie’s blood – not whether he lives or dies. The compound becomes a shooting gallery as the mannequins take the Protectors by surprise. Even the heckler returns, in human form, as the Protectors are dragged into Charlie’s web of madness.

Several Protectors are killed, and the remaining Protector is tormented in the tunnels by horrifying visions. All the while, Charlie is found by Naomi and it’s a bittersweet reunion, revealing their true relationship and secrets of the past.

The poison finally takes Elijah from this world and Onslow has nothing left to lose. A man on a mission, he races towards the compound in his vehicle, smashing through Charlie’s roadblocks.

In a final battle on stage, the third Protector breaks up their dance, knocking Naomi unconscious, and he tries to siphon Charlie’s blood with a syringe, until he is shot and killed by a just-arrived Onslow.

Turning the crossbow on Charlie, shooting him in the leg, Onslow signals his murderous intent, explaining that as Charlie’s pure blood didn’t save Elijah, then it won’t save anyone. He sees Charlie as the last lifeline – a false hope for the sick and dying. So, he’s going to end it all. However, as Onslow reloads the crossbow, he is stabbed in the eye with the syringe by Maya.

Just as Charlie seems to be saved, the boundaries between reality and his scripted fantasies begin to twist even further out of control, for a mind-blowing finale where Charlie’s life is still on the line in an unexpected population purge at the hands of Onslow and the Government.