

SYNOPSIS

Dead City by Noga Pnueli

Behind the bookshop of Boring, Kentucky, there's a tiny opening to hell. Every 10 years a man spends down in hell, he gets a day of vacation up above, in this small town. Due to this minor fact, the town of Boring is anything but, and the parents of lonely little girl LUCY don't let her leave the house. But one day, on her 6th birthday, she finds a dead man on her doorstep, visiting from hell. His name is BOB (30) and there's something disarming about him. He mimes needing a smoke and a drink. Lucy's scared, but she obliges. Grateful, Bob finds a beat-up piano nearby and gives it to her: a birthday gift. She promises to practice, he promises to visit again in 10 years.

By age 16, Lucy is sympathetic to the dead and fascinated with their life and death stories. The cliquey, snooty girls her age find her interest morbid and freakish. Even the local sheriff, DICK GABLES (large moustache), and his son, Deputy DICK JR. (small moustache) want Lucy to stay away from the dead. But Lucy couldn't care less, and spends her time learning all about them — there's DONALD, who died trying to lose his virginity, and LADY KILLER, who's reputed to live up to his name. They're all in hell for a reason, but Lucy only sees the good. Most of all, she's busy counting the days until her beloved Bob comes back.

Bob visits Lucy on her sixteenth birthday. He gives her dark sheet music, an epic piece called, "Symphony for the Death of Youth" about the Devil's search for a bride. Lucy wants to have sex, but dead Bob can't perform. She asks him about his life instead. It's clear that Bob committed a horrible crime, but he won't talk about it. Bob's time is up and they say their goodbyes: she promises to practice, he promises to visit again in 10 years. An odd but charming salesman called GEORGE hears about the town, and makes a deal with the mayor to turn it into a tourist attraction called "Dead City". Lucy turns 26, and discovers Bob was involved long ago in a crime called the Massacre of the Daughters. It's infamous, but no one in town will talk about it. Bob returns on his vacation day to a hurt Lucy. He points out that neither Sheriff Dick Gables nor his son ever age and shows her photographic proof, begging her to find the truth behind the awful rumours about him.

Meanwhile, the Disneyland from hell, Dead City, has become a popular tourist attraction. But a clash between Christian moralists and the angry exploited dead sets the entire town ablaze. Lucy finally solves the Massacre of the Daughters mystery discovering the dead had switched with the living, sending them down to hell in their place. Bob was never guilty of the crimes he was charged with. Fuelled by anger toward this terrible injustice and the desire to save the love of her life, Lucy climbs down the hole to hell. She confronts the DEVIL and his team of nervous LAWYERS, except it turns out the Devil has grown fond of her dark piano music, and wants Lucy as his companion bride was this his plan from the start? And if so, was Bob in on it? The Devil agrees to free her beloved Bob, but in exchange, she must stay with him down below. Bob is released, and spends his first day as a free man befriending a little girl on her 6th birthday.