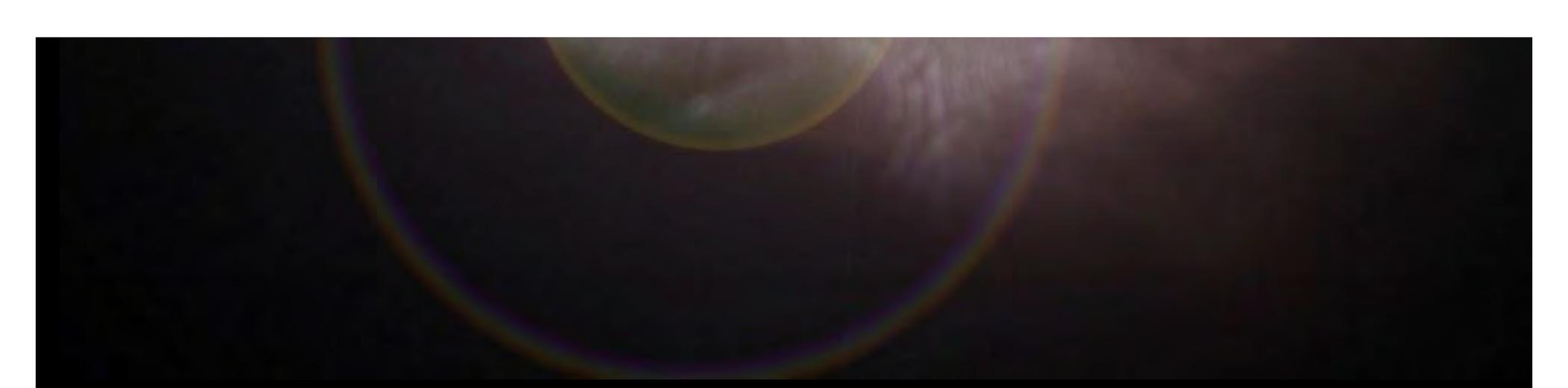


# H A U N T I N G





## Deserving Power – A Self-Help Seminar Is More than What It Seems

📅 November 3, 2020 👤 By Lacey Pawlowicz ✎ In Immersive Horror, Performance Theater, Review 💬 No Comments

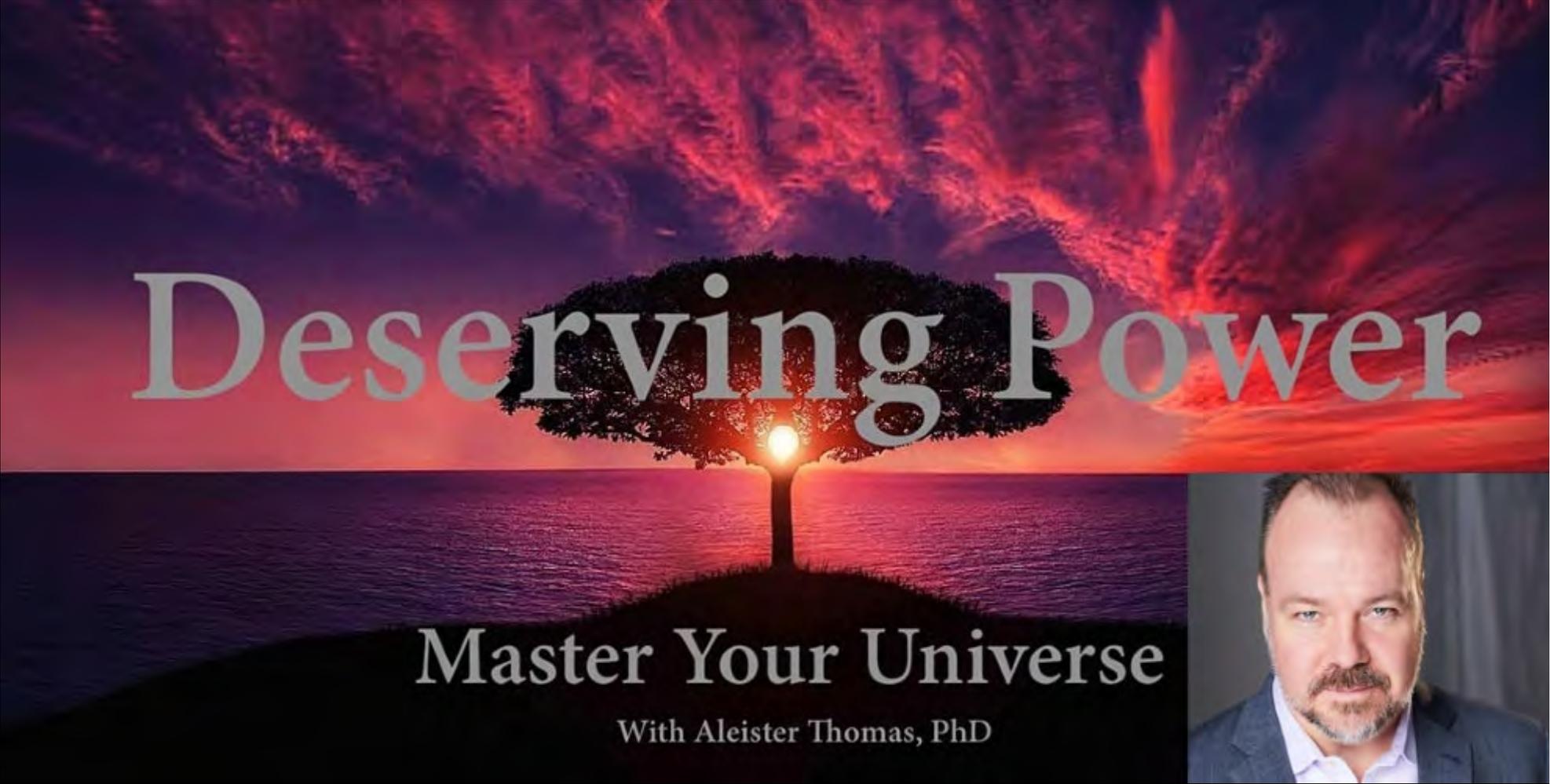
I sit in front of my computer in the dark room, save for a single candle and the monitor's glow. I dip my fingers in a bowl of water I've prepared for this moment, and shut my eyes. I hear Aleister Thomas' deep, soothing voice coming from my computer, reciting what seems like a chant in a long-lost language. This no longer feels like the self-help seminar I originally signed up for...

*Deserving Power*, written and directed by Devon Armstrong, is a remote, immersive and interactive thriller. Ten to twelve participants sign up for a self-help seminar led by Aleister Thomas, to be hosted over a 90-minute Zoom session. Additionally, at the time of ticket purchase, each guest chooses an avatar that comes into play during the seminar. However, it quickly becomes apparent that there is more going on than meets the eye. Long before the assigned event time, guests may receive emails or texts from Father Connelly suggesting that Thomas is planning something sinister and it's the participants' job to find out what. This allows the audience to engage with the characters with purpose, but from what I could tell, audiences will not be able to affect the narrative or overall outcome of the experience.

On the surface, *Deserving Power* is a simple story of an occultist luring unwitting participants into his scheme. However, woven throughout – in the self-help portion of the experience – Thomas brings up philosophical and moral questions that legitimately will make guests think about, and even perhaps reconsider, their values. For instance, in Thomas' "focus exercises," guests are split into separate, smaller Zoom rooms to chat about difficult questions. One being: *Does true good and evil exist, or are some things more good or evil than others?* Heavy stuff for an immersive horror experience, but a pleasant surprise nonetheless. *Deserving Power* does not expect answers, or guests to volunteer theirs; it only presents these

types of questions for participants to mull over, after the immediacy of the seminar.

# Deserving Power



## Master Your Universe

With Aleister Thomas, PhD



*Deserving Power* utilizes technology in simple yet effective ways. The texts and emails preceding the seminar prepare guests for the world they're about to enter, and sufficiently fills in exposition. Zoom works perfectly well here, as the audience size is small and well-contained. The break-out rooms allow guests to interact with other participants or characters, before coming back together for group talks. Guests are encouraged to chat in the break-out rooms, but typically not during the group talks. I got overzealous once and spoke up out of turn, before quickly realizing a question from Thomas was rhetorical. The technology also serves the narrative flow nicely; beginning simple with only talking heads before transitioning into

some eerie pre-taped footage, secondary websites and texts, and well-done special effects during the finale.

As sinister, self-help guru Aleister Thomas, Rob Nagle commands the experience, intricately weaving between scripted and improvised dialogue. His Thomas is charming, convincing, and almost made me a believer; it's clear why he's leading the seminar. The rest of the cast is a mix of live performers and pre-taped video and audio recordings, which add to the suspense of the experience. I hesitate to say more lest I spoil the surprise; let's just say that everyone is so convincing that it took me a while to discern when a guest was just another guest.

*Deserving Power* interlaces a pulpy thriller with moving and complicated moral quandaries. Guests will enjoy the suspense of the narrative, while potentially taking something meaningful away from it as well. The acting and supplemental media add to the immersion, promoting a real sense of discovery for participants throughout their journey with Aleister Thomas – in the fictional world, and perhaps even within themselves.

Sales have closed for *Deserving Power*, but keep up to date on this and future productions on their [website](#) and [Instagram](#). Be sure to bookmark our [Event Guide](#) to keep up to date on Halloween and horror events throughout the year.

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### About The Author



Lacey Pawlowicz

Ever since seeing Michael Jackson's "Thriller" music video, Lacey has been obsessed with all things horror and Halloween. Now, she watches, produces and acts in horror films, and is lucky enough to attend haunts/immersive events and write about them. Groovy!

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