

LYSSA'S CHILD

by

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TITLES OVER BLACK:

Autumn, 2005, a patient named only as 'Duncan' is admitted to a London A&E after being found unconscious in the street...

X-rays reveal signs of over 100 breaks and fractures, some indicating injuries received during childhood...

Duncan agreed to be interviewed under supervision from Dr. Edith Moore, a specialist in Multiple Personality Disorder...

The following recording took place just days before Duncan's disappearance.

FADE IN:

INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION

DUNCAN, mid 40s, wiry, unkempt, seated in an armchair. He stares into the camera, focused, intense -- nothing escapes his attention.

Book-shelves fill the room around him. Files and notebooks stacked on a desk. French doors overlook a patio.

A cuckoo clock hangs on a wall.

DUNCAN

S'pose I always had this feeling
like I were being watched.

His hands rest over the arms of the chair. Each bears a row of scabbed, oft-broken knuckles.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Is there someone watching you now?

DUNCAN

Apart from you?

He grins. Looks around, comes back to the camera, satisfied.

DUNCAN

Family home, got a warmth to it.
That a gnome outside?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

You've a keen eye. An old
housewarming present.

DUNCAN
Brings you luck right..?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
What can you tell me about the day
you arrived at the hospital, about
what happened to you?

DUNCAN
They not tell you?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
I've read the reports. I'd like to
hear it from you.

DUNCAN
Be nothing new in it-- you're
looking after my boy, right?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
He's in good hands.

DUNCAN
You see they feed him up-- an' that
stuff with the library?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
They've agreed to waive the fines.
Provide you with a new card.

Duncan smiles, relieved. He collects a mug from a table...

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
How about we talk about you? Take
your time, there's no hurry.

...he downs the contents in one. Nods.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
There's more tea.

DUNCAN
I'll take another, ta'.

His eyes stray towards the patio -- a flicker of unease.

DUNCAN
An' maybe pull that blind?

EXT. WASTELAND - FIRE-PIT - DAY

First light. A scrap of weeds and dirt on the edge of town. An old couch sits before a smoldering fire. Smoke drifts.

RUNRIG, a wiry mongrel mouths a stick from the ground. He turns and bounds towards Duncan who stands nearby dressed in a tracksuit and wool-cap.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

I'm out early, never been much of a sleeper. Read most nights. Love books, read anything, ancient history-- there's a lot of that.

Duncan rolls his neck, working out the kinks.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

Dawn's a good time-- there's a stillness to the air.

He performs side-twists -- a warm-up routine.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

Don't go out after dark. Never hang around one place too long.

Runrig drops the stick at his feet. Duncan collects it.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

But I won't live my life in hiding, seen where that gets a man.

He hurls the stick -- Runrig stiffens, ears flatten as he looks past Duncan and growls.

Duncan spins and steps back, his guard up.

Runrig breaks away, barking madly as if running off an assailant.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Duncan?

Duncan upends the couch in a flash of anger. He paces, agitated, mumbling to himself. After a moment he calms. Rights the couch.

DUNCAN

Sneaky bastard, sneaky...

EXT. URBAN HIGH-STREET - DAY

Runrig strains at the leash, leading Duncan past a row of shuttered storefronts.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

I remember stuff. Mum crying, Dad never leaving the house. I'd wake up in the night, he'd be screaming blue murder. She'd lock us in the bathroom till it went quiet.

Duncan stops outside a library. Ties Runrig to a lamp-post. He casts a guarded look around, searching the street.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

We never had nice things-- no china, never knew why, not in them days.

Duncan paces, agitated. Checks his watch.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

I were about eight when it first happened. Went off to school one morning-- that's all I remember. Milkman found me lying in the parish hedge. Put me on his cart an' took me home. Mum just picked me up an' carried me in. Not a word.

The 'closed' sign in the library window flips to 'open'.

Duncan slips inside.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

She knew what were coming.

INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION

Blinds drawn. Duncan sits in the half-light.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

And your father, what did he do?

DUNCAN

Taught me to fight.

EXT. WASTELAND - FIRE-PIT - DAY

Duncan shadow-boxes. He moves with a practiced ease. Breath held steady as he bobs and weaves.

Runrig watches patiently.

Duncan spins and fires off a quick series of jabs.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
(alarmed)
Duncan?

Duncan drops his guard and jogs on the spot.

DUNCAN
Easy, Doc, you'll know when.

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - COURTYARD - DAY

A cluster of towering grey blocks connected with walkways.

Duncan moves towards a stairwell. He carries a plastic bag of books. Runrig sniffs around off the leash.

DUNCAN
No-one comes up, you wouldn't wanna
anyways, it's a squat. Just me an'
the boy up there, that's the rule.

He glances off as if spooked by something. His pace quickens. WHISTLES for the dog.

He reaches the stairwell and enters with Runrig in tow.

The camera pauses on the doorway --

A sudden gust of wind carries a plastic bag across the courtyard. It hits the stairwell door, drops to the ground.

INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION

Duncan heaps several spoons of sugar into his mug.

DUNCAN
That were Dad's problem. He didn't
have rules, just took to hiding.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
Did he ever talk about it?

DUNCAN

The war hadn't left him with much to say. See it in his eyes, he were just... gone. One day he weren't there at all--

A cuckoo bursts from the clock above Duncan -- CUCKOO!

DUNCAN

Shit off!

He's on his feet, poised to strike.

The bird slowly draws back into the clock-face.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Duncan it's okay, you're safe--

DUNCAN

You don't know safe.

He steadies his breath. Rolls out his neck and sits.

DUNCAN

Housewarming, you end up with all kinds of shite.

He stares down the camera, intense, twitching. Adrenalin in full flow.

DUNCAN

Where was we?

An awkward silence...

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

You were telling me about when he left you, your father.

Duncan bends the spoon in half -- a subconscious act. He looks from the spoon to the camera, sheepish.

He places it on a table beside several others having met the same fate.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Would you rather we talk about something else?

Duncan considers...

DUNCAN
I'll tell you about my tenth
birthday...

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Grass sways. Bells peal from a distant church.

DUNCAN (V.O.)
Had this big cake an' a clown. Mum
even saved up for a bouncy castle.
Just tried to carry on, maybe she
thought what with dad gone.

EXT. CHURCH - GRAVEYARD - DAY

Duncan stands before a headstone. The bells RING.

DUNCAN (V.O.)
I was outside, I can remember
trying to get back to the house,
trying to stand, I can see the
sky-- can taste the dirt-- the
other kids screaming... Weren't for
Mum, she dragged me back inside.

INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION

Duncan sips his tea.

DUNCAN
It all changed. Home weren't safe,
nowhere was. It were coming for me.

He cuts a wary glance at the cuckoo clock.

DUNCAN
Weren't long after that I went
through a plate glass window. Broke
both wrists. Lost four pints of
blood an' a nipple.

He starts to hitch up his shirt to prove it--

EXT. CHURCH - GRAVEYARD - DAY

Duncan rests a rose against the headstone.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

Done her best bless her, didn't
deserve all that. They blamed her,
sent me away for my protection. She
were my protection. She understood.
To the likes of you I were just a
problem child, someone else's
problem.

Duncan stands and gazes off into the distance.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

Never forgot the last thing she
told me...

INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION

Duncan's thumbs dig into the armchair.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

What did she say?

DUNCAN

You can die of a broken heart, you
know that? Read about it, not in no
medical book mind.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

I can believe that.

DUNCAN

But you won't. Won't let yourself.
You're like all the others.

He taps his head. Rocks, growing agitated.

DUNCAN

That's what you believe. It's all
up here. Never mattered a lick of
salt what I said.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Do you not think they wanted to
help you, all those others?

DUNCAN

They'd pill me up to the gills,
lock me away, strap me down-- whole

(MORE)

DUNCAN (cont'd)
 stack of notebooks on me
 some-place-- now you get it all on
 camera. You wanna help me?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
 Yes, I do.

He stares across the room, sullen.

DUNCAN
 Come and see.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
 What will I see, Duncan?

DUNCAN
 I'm a fucking survivor, It won't
 take me. I'll fight.

He seems to lose his train of thought.

DUNCAN
 Just like she told me to.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
 (nervous)
 What is it you're fighting?

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - COURTYARD - DAY

Pigeons crowd the pavement.

Duncan stands with his back to a wall. He scatters bread in
 a wide arc around him.

A handful of pigeons take flight across the yard.

Duncan coils. His eyes tighten, searching...

Runrig cocks his head.

INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION

Duncan rolls out his neck.

DUNCAN
 I can feel It, when It's close. I
 can feel-- It wants to take me.

He clenches his fists, the veins rising on his forearms.

DUNCAN
I won't go.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
What is It?

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - COURTYARD - DAY

A cluster of pigeons scatter, closer now. It's as if SOMETHING is moving towards Duncan.

He starts to rock with a steady, rhythmic motion.

More birds take flight, closer still.

A feather hangs in the air. It turns to drift towards him.

Runrig whimpers. Duncan kneels and slips the leash free of a bench. He looks into the dog's eyes.

DUNCAN
Be good lad.

Duncan pushes the leash towards the camera.

DUNCAN
Take him an' stay here.

He takes off towards the stairwell. The camera follows.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
Duncan?

DUNCAN
Do like I said, don't matter what you hear, you stay away.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
Where are you going?

The camera struggles to follow, swings wildly, loses focus. A door SLAMS. Duncan CRIES out O.S.

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - STAIRWELL - DAY

Looking through a small window set into the door: GRUNTS and angry SHOUTS from inside. Dr. Moore's panicked breathing O.S.

The door rattles against the frame -- locked. Runrig BARKS.

Duncan twists into view, fists snapping at thin air as he vies to stay on his feet. He slips into shadow --

A face appears at the window, eyeless, features twisted in screaming agony -- it's there for a split second, perhaps a trick of the light...

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
 (startled)
 Oh, Jesus--

Duncan's flung back into view, SLAMS against the far wall. His shouts turn to CRIES of pain.

BOOM!

Something CRASHES against the door -- the camera recoils, a blur of sound and movement.

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK - STAIRWELL - DAY

A dark, seedy space of concrete and damp.

Duncan slumps in the corner. Head down. His shirt ripped. Knuckles cut and swollen. A puddle beneath his crotch.

Runrig sits whining before him.

He looks up to reveal a bloodied face. He tries a smile -- it fails. He turns away.

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - WALKWAY - DAY

Duncan, his back to the camera, carries his weight with pain, determined to stay ahead.

DUNCAN (V.O.)
 Anything happens to me while you're
 here you just get away from me.
 Don't bother callin' for help.

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - DUNCAN'S SQUAT - DAY

The door SNAPS shut.

A hand tests the letterbox -- it's sealed.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)
 Duncan? Can you hear me?

A small window beside the door. In it is stuck a 'neighborhood watch sticker', the silhouette of a sinister figure beneath the red prohibited sign.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Duncan..?

Runrig WHINES from behind the door.

INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION

Duncan stares into his tea mug. Emotionally drained.

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - COURTYARD - DAY

Dead leaves swirl, caught in a small vortex. Perhaps...

DUNCAN (V.O.)

I read somewhere, the Greeks said
there were a rage, been with us
from the start. Like a seed, it
grew in the cracks till it spilt
out into the world. It were picked
up on the wind, blown around and
around, looking for someone-- maybe
dad left hoping it would follow
him.

The pigeons take flight en masse.

EXT. WASTELAND - FIRE-PIT - DAY

First light. Smoke drifts from the remnants of a fire.

Runrig lies curled on the abandoned sofa.

Duncan shadow boxes. Feinting, jabbing...

CUT TO BLACK