

THE MAGICIAN OF PEACOCK SPRINGS

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

SUPER: PEACOCK SPRINGS, OHIO 1979

Large enough to accommodate a family of six, yet houses only two. A late model truck sits nearby.

Barren fields to the right, crops untended and withering. A blustery wind swirls from the East, where an ocean of rolling black clouds approach.

A COW lays dead, flies circling.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

A mountain of papers and junk stacked atop a bureau, dusty mirror on the wall. On a night table...

FRAMED PICTURE: A yellow faded image of a YOUNG WOMAN holding a purse at her waist.

PAPA (O.S.)

Your Mama and me didn't always agree
on everything, but we both knew you
were special.

CATHY (O.S.)

Papa, please...

PAPA, 50s, tattered overalls and a week's worth of scruff,
reaches into a box.

CATHY, all of 8, in a pretty little sun dress, trembles as
Papa holds out a spoon and, as if drawn to her flesh, it
attaches itself to her nose like a magnet.

Every inch of Cathy's bare skin has something on it: forks,
knives, paper clips, coins.

A toaster on her shoulder, BUTCHER'S KNIFE on her ankle.

PAPA

Now go. Go find your brother.

Her watery eyes plead from behind the metal.

CATHY

But, Papa, why? Why are you doing
this?

Papa rises, runs a coarse hand through her dark hair and gazes
at her lovingly.

PAPA

I wish I knew myself.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Cathy's darkened silhouette clanks down the porch steps, takes
off across the fields and disappears into the thicket.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Alone, Papa lies on the bed with the picture of his wife
clutched to his chest. He searches under a pillow and pulls
out a sawed-off shotgun.

He places it under his chin.

PAPA

God, forgive me.

BLAM!

EXT. CAR - DAY

A dusty green Chevelle spits gravel as it rumbles down a
desolate highway.

INT. CAR - DAY

At the wheel is BUCKY, 18, t-shirt and jeans, country boy
handsome, face fraught with anxiety.

He floors the pedal, turns the radio on.

Static and more static. Then, the distant, droning voice of
some NEWS REPORTER somewhere:

NEWS REPORTER

...Israel was the first to report the catastrophic effects of the solar flares. Some estimates have the death toll in the hundreds of thousands, others...

(cuts out)

...moving West..

Radio goes dead.

SCREECH! Bucky jams the brakes, narrowly avoids hitting a STATION WAGON in the road. He deliberately drives past.

A FAMILY inside, slack-jawed and bloated. All dead.

Bucky covers his mouth against the stench.

BUCKY

Holy fuck.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The Chevelle out front. On the grass lies a MAN, face up, next to a lawnmower as Bucky hovers over him.

BUCKY

Mr. Gale, where's Emily?

The man's barely alive, and frothing at the mouth. He grabs Bucky by the shirt and attempts to speak.

Choking, gurgling sounds. He coughs spittle in Bucky's face as his eyes roll to the back of his head.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Bucky ascends the stairs two at a time, moves through the hallway and into...

BEDROOM

EMILY, 17, curled in bed as if she's just drifted off to sleep. Only she's not sleeping.

Bucky kneels at her side, choked with emotion. He grabs a little stuffed bear, places it in her arms and gently kisses her forehead.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

A once thriving small town that's exhausted its funds. A rickety wooden sign stands in an empty flower bed:

WELCOME TO PEACOCK SPRINGS

A lone stop light flashes intermittently. CORPSES line the sidewalk, and through storefront glass, several PATRONS of MAC'S LUNCHEONETTE lie slumped over its counter.

RAILROAD CROSSING

Just before town, the Chevelle passes over the tracks and stops. Bucky gets out.

He sees deserted Main Street, and the carnage. What he notices next prompts him to take cover behind a nearby tree.

MAIN STREET

A NAZI OFFICER in a Schutzstaffel uniform parades a perfectly timed death march in the center of town. German CROSS on his breast pocket, badges, shined black boots.

His name is KARL HECHT, 70s, deep lines traverse his aged face, yet his eyes are clear and steeled as his frenzied shouts in German echo throughout the empty canyon of buildings.

KARL

Ich schwore bei Gott diesen heiligen
Eid, das ich dem Fuhrer des Deutschen
Reiches und Volkes Adolf Hitler, dem
Oberbefehlshaber der Wehrmacht...

He stops, notices something.

BEHIND THE TREE

Bucky's breath races.

MAIN STREET

Karl stops marching, curiously peers Bucky's way, straightens his legs and raises his right arm in a Nazi Salute.

KARL

Heil Hitler!

BEHIND THE TREE

Bucky knows he's been spotted. He rushes back to his car, bangs his knee on the fender, turns back.

STREET CORNER

A block down from Karl, Cathy appears near a STOP sign, out of breath and bewildered, covered in spoons and forks.

Up further, Karl straightens his hat and lights a cigarette as Bucky hops in his car and guns the engine.

INT. CAR - DAY

Bucky leans his head out the window.

BUCKY

Cathy! Run, run!

MAIN STREET

Karl steps aside as the car roars past and screeches to a halt in front of Cathy.

Bucky jumps out, grabs her by the arm.

BUCKY

Come on, come on!

He forces her in, climbs over her and peels out.

Karl snuffs out the cigarette under his boot, casually crosses the street to where something has caught his eye.

He picks it up, regards it curiously. It's a spoon.

INT. CAR - DAY

Getting further away, into the country.

BUCKY

The hell were you doing back there?

CATHY

Papa sent me away. He told me to go find you... Who was that man?

BUCKY

Wasn't Alan Alda, I'll tell you that.

CATHY

Where are we going?

BUCKY

Back home? I dunno. Radio says thousands of people are...

Cathy leans on his shoulder.

CATHY

I'm scared.

He puts his arm around her.

BUCKY

Can I ask you a question?

(she nods)

Why you got a toaster on your arm?

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DUSK

Close to sunset, long shadows in the fields as Bucky pulls in next to the truck.

INT. CAR - DUSK

He turns to Cathy.

BUCKY

Wait here.

CATHY

No, no. Don't leave me.

BUCKY

It's okay. I'm just going to check on
Papa. I'll be right back.

She grabs ahold of his arm. He pulls away, kisses her on the cheek, exits the car and runs up the porch steps.

Cathy stares at the house. A minute passes. She doesn't have a good feeling about this. A noise, and...

She whips around to find herself nose-to-nose with Karl, who leans in the open window, red Swastika band around his arm.

KARL

Hallo, mein kleiner Engel.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK

Hurried footsteps from the hall. Bucky pokes his head in, and the expression on his face tells all as his gaze settles on the blood-stained picture of his mother.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - MINUTES LATER

The screen door swings open, Bucky appears with a suitcase in his hand and approaches the car.

BUCKY

Come on, we're gettin' outta here--

Only she's not there.

EXT. FIELDS - DUSK

Cathy and Karl tread across the dirt. A dead horse bursts into flames as they pass.

KARL

Do you know who I am?

She hasn't a clue.

KARL

They once called me the *Magician of Auschwitz*.

CATHY

Why did they call you that?

KARL

It started as a joke in Birkenau. My fellow officers said I had a great talent for making people disappear.

She looks up, warming to him.

CATHY

Friends at school call me Magnet Girl.

KARL

Don't sound much like friends to me.

He grins, closes his eyes and exhales deeply as day's final light shines upon his face.

KARL

Do you feel something different in the air? It's like I am a Kint. I see and *feel* things like never before. Like I could call the sun to rise in the dead of night and it should be so.

PAPA

Papa says we sure could use some rain.

KARL

You are a curious little girl.

He crouches, inspects the metal clinging to her body.

KARL

May I?

Cathy nods as Karl pries a spoon from her shoulder. He holds it near her face, feels the energy as it jumps from his fingers and attaches itself to her forehead.

Karl is astonished.

CATHY

I'm kinda like a magnet. I attract things. All sorts of things. Not just metal. Papa says--

BUCKY (O.S.)

Hold it right there.

They turn, and there's Bucky with the sawed-off shotgun.

BUCKY

I didn't know who you were at first, but I remember now. You were all over the news before the flares started. You were on trial for war crimes at the death camps. The Magician of Auschwitz.

Karl straightens himself.

KARL

And what do you think of that?

Karl's eyes, like the two darkest caverns of hell, take on a menacing red glow.

BUCKY

I think you deserve to die. Cathy, come here.

But Karl holds her close, opens his mouth to speak and emits a low, otherworldly rasp. Thousands of voices, groaning at once, shrieking in pain. Women. Children. The old.

Karl points a finger at Bucky, whose arm catches fire. He drops down to one knee, and levels the gun at Karl.

CATHY

Bucky, no!

Bucky squeezes off a shot. The bullet exits the gun in a blinding FLASH, and cuts slowly through the air, heading straight for Karl when...

It suddenly changes course, striking Cathy in the forehead.

BUCKY

No!

Cathy wobbles, takes a step, falls to the ground.

A barrage of metal explodes off her body in a silent blast forceful enough to drop Bucky and Karl.

Bucky raises his head, mouth full of dirt. He rushes to Cathy, flips her limp body over, bulging eyes pouring over her.

Not a single drop of blood. No entry wound. Nothing.

He looks up.

BUCKY

Stay away from her, you sick fuck.

Karl stands over them, then drops to his knees, both hands clutching his stomach where a butcher's knife is firmly lodged.

With his bloody hand he sifts through the dirt, grasps something and holds it up.

It's the spoon, an impression dead center where the bullet struck it.

He lowers his head and sobs.

KARL

I'm sorry.

Bucky stares at him, not sure how to react.

Cathy's eyes flutter open, she coughs.

CATHY

Bucky?

BUCKY

I'm here, Cathy.

She slowly gets to her feet, and heads for Karl.

BUCKY

Cathy, no.

Karl wipes soot from his face as Cathy takes the spoon from his hand and places it on her nose.

She smiles as it gently slides off.

CATHY

It's over.

Karl nods.

KARL

I knew a girl like you once. Long ago.

CATHY

What happened to her?

KARL

I...

He goes silent, stares through her, then lowers his head.

CATHY

It's okay. You don't have to hate anymore.

She takes a step back, turns to go.

KARL

Wait.

He holds out a closed fist, opens it, displaying the Iron Cross from his uniform.

He struggles to speak.

KARL

I want you to have this. It symbolizes bravery. At least, that's how I'd like it to be remembered.

She takes the medal, leans in and kisses his cheek.

Karl watches as she rejoins Bucky, takes his hand, and the two of them head off into the purple gloaming.

Bucky steals a glance back to see that Karl is no longer there. A small pile of ash is all that remains.

A drop of water pelts the dirt. Then another.

First rain they've had in weeks.

FADE OUT.