

MOUNTAIN CITY

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FADE IN:

EXT. TENNESSEE HILLS - DAY

In a valley the banjo pickers call 'that Appalachian thick'--

Inbound on a tractor mower is WADE (60), an old-bone hillbilly with a big-boy revolver holstered over his country heart.

Wade steers his mower into the gravel driveway of a--

DOUBLE-WIDE TRAILER

Rusty scraps and parts clutter the lawn.

DANNY RAY (40) spins a wrench on an APE HANGER MOTORCYCLE, kept company by beer cans, cigarette butts, and sleeves of pinup girl tattoos.

Wade shuts down the mower, stays on it.

WADE

What do ya say there, Danny Ray?

DANNY RAY

Not a whole lot, Wade. Brakes got away from me over Shady coming in from Bristol. Jim Stout's boy was able to pass me up on a scooter.

WADE

Were ya ridin' alone?

DANNY RAY

Always do.

Wade unwraps an apple sucker and pops it in his mouth.

WADE

Anyway... I was finishin' up on the commode when a fella in a city suit came beatin' on my door, sayin' he was lookin' for ya.

Danny Ray stands, wiping his hands with a rag.

DANNY RAY

Was he the law?

WADE

Nah, not really.

DANNY RAY
What'd you tell him?

WADE
Told the man he was knockin' on the
wrong damn door--
(pats his revolver)
Didn't have to holler at 'em
neither.

DANNY RAY
Makes two of us then.

Danny Ray cracks open a beer from a six-pack, offers it to Wade so he can pluck one off its vine. Wade reaches--

WADE
He also had a kid with 'em.

Danny Ray pulls back the six-pack.

WADE
Social worker from Detroit,
Michigan. Said the kid's momma had
died last week and he's your kin.

Wade doesn't flinch, just enjoys his sucker.

DANNY RAY
Go on and get going, old man.

WADE
Anyway... if ya ever round up this
eye sore, let me know and I'll mow
it for ya.

Danny Ray mounts his motorcycle, starts it up-- a BARITONE of pistons and exhaust. Wade does the same, steers his mower out of the driveway.

INT. DOUBLE-WIDE TRAILER - DAY

Draped over the window as a curtain is a POW/MIA FLAG. Danny Ray peeks out. No sign of visitors.

He looks around. Front-to-back filthy.

DANNY RAY
Oh man.

Trash bag in hand, he "cleans" around the house: picks up the floor and table garbage, dumps his ashtrays, finds panties...

DANNY RAY

Oh man.

Danny Ray removes an armful of beer from the fridge and opens a cooler that's already full with beer.

DANNY RAY

Oh shit.

He peeks out the window. A CAR pulls into the driveway--

DANNY RAY

Fuck me.

MOMENTS LATER

Danny Ray opens the door for CORY (14), pale kid, bifocals, blinks too much-- could be whip-smart or eaten alive.

Cory enters and takes a long, hard look at his new home. He stares at the POW/MIA FLAG.

DANNY RAY

Listen, I know your momma left behind some money. I ain't after penny of it. You earned it. She was decent, didn't deserve to leave this world the way she did.

Cory doesn't respond.

DANNY RAY

Hey I'm talking to you--

CORY

What flag is that?

DANNY RAY

Belonged to my pop'al. He was a mean son-of-a-bitch. Wait a minute-- you don't raise hell, do you?

CORY

Did mom know him?

DANNY RAY

Your great-granddaddy? If they did at one time, I reckon they don't see each other very much given where they're at now.

CORY

Mom never told me we had family down south.

DANNY RAY

What did your momma say about me?

CORY

Nothing, she never talked about you.

DANNY RAY

Figures. You ever been home by yourself?

CORY

Sometimes.

DANNY RAY

If you're gonna stay here, gotta do some chores. Pick up that yard while I'm out. And don't let that old-bastard-Wade-from-down-the-road touch my lawn. I'd cut it myself but the mower needs some work done.

Danny Ray throws on a leather vest, heads for the door.

CORY

We drove by a waterpark on the way down here. Looks like fun.

DANNY RAY

Boy, you're in the sticks now. Ain't no fun to be had here except drinking, smoking, and fucking--

Danny Ray walks out, but quickly pokes his head back in.

DANNY RAY

--but don't try any that stuff... ever.

Moments later the rumble of a motorcycle peels outbound.

Cory wanders into the--

KITCHEN

He opens the fridge. Not much there, he grabs an apple.

EXT. DOUBLE-WIDE TRAILER - DAY

From the porch, Cory munches his apple viewing the scenic country and its nothingness. He takes one last bite and chucks his apple core into the sky.

Cory picks up the rusty scraps and parts from the overgrown lawn-- some of it easy, most of it heavy. He throws it in a pile on the side of the road.

Wade passes by on his tractor mower, observing Cory heaving the last of the scraps. He makes a wide turn and pulls into the driveway.

WADE

I see your pops already put ya to work. That was quick.

CORY

You're that old-bastard-Wade-from-down-the-road?

WADE

That's right.

CORY

We don't want you to cut our grass today.

WADE

I'd been fixin' to trim that mess for a while so step aside, yankee doodle junior.

Cory looks at the pile of scraps and parts...

Wade spins and looks too...

Cory and Wade size up each other with deadeye stares...

Wade tries to unwrap an apple sucker--

WADE

Damn wrapper's stuck...

CORY DASHES FOR THE PILE.

Fiddling with the sucker, he finally pries off its wrapper and HITS THE GAS.

Cory tosses the scraps and parts from the pile back into the lawn. Wade mows around him, zig zagging to avoid the debris.

WADE

For heaven's sake, boy, get outta my way!

CORY

Eat shit, old-bastard-Wade-from-down-the-road!

Wade and Cory continue their war in the Tennessee heat...

ON THE PORCH

Wade and Cory sit back in rocking chairs, both drinking beers. They admire their work:

A disaster of half-mowed patches, scraps and parts scattered in the yard once again.

WADE

Ya know, I should send ya over to them bushes and make you pick out your own switch.

CORY

Yep.

Wade looks over at the BROKEN PUSH LAWNMOWER belonging to Danny Ray.

WADE

Ya know how to fix an engine?

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

An oil lamp glows over Wade and Cory as the two fix the lawnmower. After a few adjustments...

WADE

Anyway... that should do 'er. Go on and rip it.

Cory tugs its ripcord, it vibrates alive.

CORY

Right on!

WADE

Ooh wee. How's it feel to pump that country blood through those veins?

YARD

Wade holds the lamp, lighting the way while Cory pushes the lawnmower.

INT. DOUBLE-WIDE TRAILER - NIGHT

Cory is fast asleep on the couch...

A SCREAM wakes him.

Leading up to the bedroom, a MASCULINE GRUNT dominates the quiet house.

BEDROOM

Both naked, Danny Ray fucks DAISY (40) from behind. Her face buckles with each thrust-- the kind of sharp, numb pain that defies traditional intercourse.

DAISY
(startles)
Oh-my-god.

She sees Cory sprout from the shadows rubbing his weary eyes, seemingly unaffected by the sight of sex. Daisy shoves Danny Ray off of her and covers her body.

DAISY
Seriously, Danny Ray! Where the heck did he come from?

DANNY RAY
Dang nabit, I forgot he was here.

She gathers her belongings and leaves the bedroom--

DANNY RAY
Go easy...

--followed by a SLAM of the front door.

DANNY RAY
...on my door, shhhit.

Danny Ray sits on the edge of his bed, opens a pack of smokes. Cory squints.

DANNY RAY
Where's your glasses, dude?
(lights a cigarette)
Can you even see without them?

CORY
No.

DANNY RAY
Amen for that. Did you do your chores?

CORY
I fixed your lawnmower.

DANNY RAY

No shit? Go on and give me a minute. I'll come in there and tuck you in.

ON THE COUCH

Cory watches a ceiling fan spin, indifferent.

Danny Ray lounges by his feet.

CORY

I sipped on one of your beers today.

DANNY RAY

Ah hell. Don't do it again then I guess.

CORY

I was thirsty.

DANNY RAY

(laughs)

Sounds like you been running with Wade.

Cory eyes wander back up to the ceiling fan...

DANNY RAY

Your mother took you away from me when you were just a runt, moved as far away as she could with the hundred bucks she stole from me. I don't blame her though. Don't get me wrong, I was pretty pissed when she ran off, but what I'd done to her... Lord knows I can't take that shit back. She be turning over in the grave right now if she'd knew I was raising you so let's leave it at that. But my pop'al taught me to do what's best and what's right. That said, pop'al never taught me to swim so if I take you to the waterpark tomorrow you better keep me floatin', ya hear?

Danny Ray raises his hand, offers a high-five. Cory high-fives him. He pulls a blanket over his body.

Danny Ray heads for the bedroom--

DANNY RAY
Goodnight, son. Proud to meet you.

EXT. TENNESSEE HILLS - DAY

With Cory on back, Danny Ray REVS his motorcycle over 'down yonder', where the banjo pickers play and that dew sings...

FADE OUT.