

SPECIAL

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FADE IN:

INT. DUKE'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE - DAY

A shit hole. Mess everywhere, beer bottles strewn about, and on the sofa, passed out in his denims, is DUKE, 45.

His dog, an old German Shepherd, licks his face.

Duke's bloodshot eyes open and he clambers to his feet. Using his hands for support, he staggers into the--

KITCHEN

--and dumps food into a dog bowl. Duke stares into a kitchen mirror. A sad and tired face looks back - broken.

On the counter rests a large tub of pain killers. He opens the lid, pours the contents into his hand - a lethal dose.

Duke stares down at the pill, considers.

The dog finishes its food and rubs up against Duke. It distracts him. Duke gazes down at the elderly canine, sighs. He tips the pills back into the tub.

DUKE

It's OK buddy. Least you need me.

EXT. BRITISH COLUMBIA - MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

A car navigates a winding, tree lined road. Hills filled with pine and spruce tower above.

At the wheel, CINDY, 35, short cropped hair, and in the rear, staring out the window, JOEL, 12, pale, blank expression.

He wears a large set of HEADPHONES.

The car turns off at a sign: Silver Cloud Recovery Centre.

INT. SILVER CLOUD RECOVERY CENTER - PHIL'S OFFICE - DAY

The manager, PHIL, 65, weathered face, sits behind his desk. Slumped in a chair on the other side is Duke, still a mess.

DUKE

I told you Phil, I don't trek with no fucking Psycho's--

PHIL

They're patients...Duke. I know, but this is an exception. Special request from a major clinic. We need the work. I would ask Harry--

DUKE

Then why don't you?

PHIL

He's away. You either take this, or...I can't carry on making up work for you. They arrive this morning. I need you ready.

Duke shakes his head, bitter.

PHIL

One other thing. This kid loves animals. So no gun, no hunting.

Duke curses under his breath.

INT. BLUE WATERFALL RECOVERY CENTER - YARD - DAY

The car pulls up to the office. Scattered either side are the Center's various outbuildings and lodges.

Duke gathers his kit, glances over at the car with disdain. Cindy, unsure of Duke, ignores him and heads into the office.

Joel gets out, takes in the peace and quiet.

He pulls his head phones down around his neck, leans against the car and watches Duke throw his kit into the pickup.

Joel spots Duke's dog curled up at the front of the pickup. He looks closer, curious, scratches his head.

JOEL

What's wrong with your dog.

DUKE

(Aggressive)

Nothing! Why?

Joel recoils, puts his head phones back on.

Duke bends down and checks his dog. Carefully he strokes its stomach. The dog whimpers. Duke sits up, surprised.

DUKE

Sorry buddy, not sure you can join us this time. Seems we're all getting old.

PHIL'S OFFICE

Phil stands in front of Cindy, agitated.

PHIL

I understand, but I need to make sure it's the right thing for him.

CINDY

I appreciate that, but since the fire, all he's wanted to do is visit that waterfall. We got to go.

PHIL

Look, the mountains are filled with strange folk. Those who want to save the world, end the world, save their souls, find their god, you name it. It never works. The mountains are just mountains.

CINDY

I'm his support worker, he's ready.

PHIL

Then so be it. Your guide's outside. Duke, ex marine, knows the terrain. Just be aware he's not--

CINDY

Very friendly? I noticed.

EXT. MOUNTAIN GORGE - DUKE'S PICKUP - DAY

Dust whips up behind the pickup as it speeds along a dirt track, a mountain river racing alongside.

PHIL (V.O.)

You'll sleep in cabins. The first after Blade Canyon Waterfall, the other on the way back. Two nights.

PICKUP

Joel, headphones on, leans against the window taking in the passing landscape. Cindy sits in the front with Duke.

No one speaks. Duke fidgets, not used to company.

DUKE

You done this before, with...

CINDY

Joel? No. We had to stabilize him first.

DUKE

And the headphones?

Cindy gazes back at Joel. She smiles, reassuring.

CINDY

It's part of his treatment. Plays gentle sounds, makes him feel calm.

DUKE

He don't hear voices, does he?

Cindy looks away - doesn't answer.

WOODLAND CAR PARK

Duke locks the pickup. Without waiting he sets off.

DUKE

Let's get this done.

The three move off, backpacks on, following a path along the river. Duke leads, Joel in the middle, Cindy behind.

Joel soaks it up. The trees, the bird life, the tumbling river over smooth boulders. He lowers his headphones.

DUKE

The waterfall is about an hour,
we'll have lunch there.

CINDY

Sounds good.

(To Joel)

Almost there. Exciting isn't it?

For the first time Joel smiles.

LATER

They emerge from the forest. In front, a slender waterfall - the water not at its peak - cascades down a boulder strewn crevice, the woodland nipping at it either side. Beautiful.

DUKE

(matter of fact)

Blade Canyon Waterfall.

Joel stands still, mesmerized. Duke puts his bag down, finds a sandwich and tucks in. Joel hasn't moved.

Cindy whispers in Joel's ear, gives him a hug then leaves him be. Duke watches it all. He frowns, confused.

DUKE

Something I don't know?

Cindy sits alongside.

CINDY

His father trekked here as a boy.

Joel removes the headphones, hops out onto a large boulder at the base of the waterfall and sits down - a contented look.

LATER

Duke lies down on the bank whilst Cindy reads a book. He sits up, studies Joel. The boy hasn't moved - watches the water.

DUKE

So, what happened to him?

CINDY

His parents died in a barn fire,
trying to rescue their animals.
Joel watched it happen, alone. The
neighbors reported the screams.

It strikes a chord. Duke gazes back at the boy.

DUKE

Got stuck in his head, did it?

CINDY

Possibly. Emotional trauma can--

Duke raises a hand - puts a finger to his lips. In front,
Joel has turned his head towards the forest, stares.

Duke slowly moves forward, scans the area, can't see
anything. He reaches the river alert, when a--

--GRIZZLY BEAR...ambles out of the trees toward Joel, only a
few meters away. The boy remains still, calm.

Duke raises his palm to Cindy: 'stay there'.

Joel stands up, faces the Bear. He closes his eyes, lowers
his arms. Duke frets, considers the options. Cindy shakes.

The Bear looks right at Joel. Everything stands still as
though time is frozen, waiting for something to happen.

Joel opens his eyes, smiles at the Bear. It turns around and
disappears back into the woods.

He sits back down, as he was. Duke runs over.

DUKE

Boy, you alright?

Joel smiles back.

JOEL

Yeah, fine.

Duke wipes his brow, impressed at Joel's calm demeanor.

EXT. WOOD CABIN - NIGHT

All three sit around a campfire eating food. Cindy takes the
plates and heads inside.

Joel lies back and considers the star filled night sky. Duke takes a swig from a bottle, studies the boy - thoughtful.

DUKE
No more headphones, hey?

JOEL
No. They're quieter here.

DUKE
They're?...What, like, voices?

JOEL
I don't think so. They're just sounds, bit like screaming. Not sure what they are. Wish I knew.

Duke takes a swig, reflects. Joel watches the stars.

DUKE
Sorry about your folks. I saw something similar in Iraq.

Joel turns over. Duke looks past him, lost in thought, a thousand yard stare. He snaps out of it.

DUKE
Better rest, big day trekking tomorrow. Try and avoid the bears.

They share a laugh together.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

The three traverse a path, bathed in sunshine. Duke leads. Joel, without headphones, follows. Cindy at the rear.

Duke frequently stops, shows Joel the various insects, animals, fauna. Joel listens, asks questions. Cindy watches them together, smiles.

The sun beats down. They sweat, but carry on until--

--Joel stops dead in his tracks.

Duke now tuned into him, takes it seriously, scans for danger. Cindy fidgets.

DUKE
What? You OK?

Joel ignores the question, slaps his hands over his ears. He shakes his head, trying to get rid of a noise. He motions to Duke to carry on. They continue round a corner to face a--

--SECURITY FENCE, with barbed wire top, running alongside the path. Tyre tracks grooved into the soil.

Attached a sign: PRIVATE PROPERTY - NO TRESPASSERS

Joel backs away from the fence as though it is the source of his pain. Duke notices.

DUKE

That's the Isis Ranch. Religious weirdos. We'll pass it soon.

Joel nods and continues, but the pain gets worse. Cindy offers him the headphones, he waves them away.

Joel stumbles, falls to his knees and holds his head in agony until...his head bolts up, eyes wide open.

JOEL

Got it! The voices, they're not voices. It's pain...animal pain. I hear pain.

DUKE

What!? From there?

JOEL

Yes. So much pain.

Cindy puts an arm around Joel and they move on, Duke on edge.

INT. WOOD CABIN - NIGHT

Three solemn faces sit around a small timber table, eating supper. Cindy holds Joel's arm, reassuring.

CINDY

How far to your pickup.

DUKE

Couple hours.

JOEL

What are they doing in there?

CINDY

Sweetheart, you must rest. There could be lots of reasons for the--

Duke tilts his head, considers Joel's question.

DUKE

I don't know, but I've never trusted that type. They turn up, build a compound, do weird things, just 'cos they're in the mountains.

(Turns to Joel)

You feel the animals? Like my dog?

JOEL

Yes. I understand now.

Duke leans forward, intense - wants to know more.

DUKE

And the bear?

CINDY

That's enough, time for bed.

Joel ignores Cindy, looks Duke right in the eyes.

JOEL

Sort of, but different. It was nice, a warm feeling, felt like it was...my Mother. The bear was just curious. I think it was a girl.

CINDY

Look, I really don't know--

DUKE

You're right. It was a mature female. They're normally vicious.

Duke sits back, ponders. He puts down his beer.

LATER

All dark, everyone asleep except Duke. Quietly he rises, moves to the door, lifts his bag and heads out into the--

WOODS

--From his bag he finds a torch, wire cutters and a camera. Duke moves off.

Above, a full moon lights up the forest. Behind him, the cabin door opens.

FENCE

Duke squats down, readies his wire cutters.

JOEL (O.S.)

We going in?

Duke just about controls himself. He turns, angry. Joel sits down alongside. He scratches his head.

JOEL

I can guide you. I...feel them.

Duke sees Joel's struggle. He frowns.

DUKE

You keep close, no silly business.

Joel nods agreement. Duke cuts a hole to crawl through.

DUKE

Keep very quiet. They don't want us
to see what they're doing.

Joel takes a deep breath, accepts the message.

They move forward through the trees taking care. Duke leads. He stops, listens out, moves on again.

After a while, Joel touches him on the shoulder, points to the side. Duke registers it and they change direction.

The ambient light increases as they reach a thicket. They peer through it, careful.

Immediately in front is a service road, looping around an estate of low rise, industrial buildings. It's close.

Joel struggles to control himself, claws at his head. Duke extracts his binoculars, studies the buildings.

JOEL

What...is...this?

DUKE

A church, so they say.

BINOCULARS POV - Duke spies large radio antennae, satellite dishes and then, around a corner, a two man security patrol.

Duke puts the binoculars down, gets Joel to lie low, keep calm. Joel fights back the noises. He twitches.

The patrol passes.

DUKE

What can you...feel?

Joel breathes deep, collects himself, focused.

JOEL

It's coming from there.

He points straight ahead at a warehouse, outside rests several large industrial bins.

A LIGHT blasts across their faces--

--as a door in the unit opens. Two FIGURES in chemical suits with face masks, push a large metal trolley outside.

As they turn the trolley, the light shines on the cargo - ANIMAL CARCASSES. A variety - dogs, cats, monkeys.

Joel's twitching increases.

SECURITY PATROL (O.S.)
For the incinerator?

The patrol has returned to check out the light.

One suited figure gives him the thumbs up. The patrol keeps their distance from the payload.

SECURITY PATROL
Hey! You got a live one there.

A dog on the top gasps. A suited figure throws it on the floor, stamps on its head. They laugh.

The patrol moves off, and the others move inside.

Duke bites his lip, manages to control his rage.

DUKE
Fuckers.
(To Joel)
Stay here, I need photos. Don't
move. Understood?

Despite his shaking, Joel manages to nod agreement.

Duke scampers across the road, up to the bins. He shines his torch inside, keeping the light low.

BIN - an unimaginable sight of contorted animals, festering wounds, swollen eyeballs, huge weeping sores. Some are still alive, just - they whimper.

Duke gags, covers his mouth.

He collects himself, photos the carnage. The flash lights up the area. Quickly, he runs back just as a--

--TORCH LIGHT captures him running.

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)
Stop!

The security guards return. One lifts his radio.

SECURITY GUARD
Code red security breach. Instigate
lock down and perimeter sweep.

WOODS

Duke grabs Joel and drags him out. Behind him, the compound bursts into light. A SIREN sounds.

They race through the trees, branches whipping their faces as they flee. Joel, still consumed by the noises, struggles with the pace. Torches flicker behind.

They reach the hole in the fence, the Guards closing in.

DUKE

Head for the cabin. Go.

He pushes Joel through. Joel hesitates.

DUKE

Now! Trust me.

Joel runs. Duke steps back from the fence, hides behind a large tree. He kneels down, searches for fallen branches.

He finds a foot long, heavy stump of a branch - a club.

The Guards burst out of the forest, scan the fence with their lights. They spy the hole.

SECURITY GUARD

There!

Guard 1 drops onto his chest to crawl through the hole, Guard 2 waits behind. Something snaps. Guard 2 spins as--

--the branch smashes into his face. He drops, out cold.

Duke throws himself onto Guard 1. Duke grabs his neck chain. The Guard thrashes out. Duke pulls tight, strangles him.

Duke drags the body to the side and crawls through the hole.

He runs into the woods on the other side. He can't see Joel, starts to panic.

DUKE

Joel? Joel?

He thunders through the undergrowth until his foot drops into a hole, twisting an ankle. He stifles a scream.

Duke picks himself up, limps on. He arrives at the forest edge, overlooking the Cabin. The lights are on and a jeep is parked in front, engine running.

Cindy is dragged out by two Guards - gagged.

GUARD

Quick, get her in the jeep.

Duke checks his damaged foot. He can't move fast. He sweats.

Cindy kicks out. A tall Guard hits her.

JOEL (O.S.)

No!

Joel emerges from the undergrowth on the other side. Duke panics, looks around for another weapon - none.

The tall Guard raises a fist above Cindy's face.

GUARD
Come here boy or...

Joel walks forward, twitching violently. The other Guard grabs Joel. Duke limps out, arms up in surrender.

DUKE
Stop! Let them go. You want me.

Joel's face bolts towards Duke, sees Duke injured and vulnerable. Joel flips out.

With a piercing, guttural SCREAM, Joel releases all the pain. A sound beyond normal human capacity.

Everyone is forced to cover their ears and all the--

--LIGHTS explode. Everything goes dark.

After an age, Joel stops. All goes quiet, until a ROAR.

The tall Guard looks up to see the silhouette of a BEAR towering above him. Its claw slashes across his face.

Joel runs forward, pushes the other into the Bear's claws.

Duke sees a chance. He limps forward, grabs Cindy and Joel, bundles them into the jeep, gets into the drivers seat.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Today the United Nations discussed
the new risk of viral Terrorism.
This follows the discovery of the
Isis Cult's plot to spread pandemic
virus's using infected animals.

Duke races the jeep up the mountain track.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH - DAY

Duke and Joel trek along a mountain ridge, the sun shining down. They reach an outcrop, sit down.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
The government has confirmed that
no known viruses were released, but
it is monitoring the situation with
the help of special advisers.

Duke opens a backpack, extracts an electrical monitor and together they get it working.

Finished, they sit back, take in the scenery - both at peace.

FADE OUT.