

The Great Exhale

Written by

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SECOND DRAFT

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

A 10 year old boy, BRUCE, plays with another boy, his older BROTHER.

BROTHER

Bro, look what I've found.

Bruce turns to see his brother holding a frog. His brother smiles mischievously.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

The brother pours boiling water from a kettle into a big clear container.

BRUCE

Do we have to?

BROTHER

Why not? It's just a frog.

Bruce nervously watches his brother dangle the frog over the water.

Bruce Inhales and closes his eyes tight as we --

FADE TO BLACK.

PANTING BREATHS

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

A wide eyed panting Bruce, now 40. A hunting rifle slings over his shoulder.

He stares at a dead YOUNG WOMAN on the ground. Bullet wound in her chest.

OFFSCREEN RUSTLES. Then a GASP.

Bruce looks over and sees a young male, THE WITNESS, who freezes.

BRUCE

(stammering)

Listen, this isn't what it looks like...

The witness glances at a hunting knife in Bruce's hand. Bruce drops it.

HUNTER

... I swear.

Beat.

Witness splits --

BRUCE

(chases after)

Wait!

The witness rushes through trees, hurdling over logs and weeds as Bruce tails, clumsy.

The witness leaves Bruce trailing --

So Bruce swiftly gets on one knee -- fuck this -- takes aim at the witness who glances back -- sees Bruce scoping him down -- oh shit -- picks up pace --

Bruce FIRES -- Miss.

FIRES again -- another miss --

The witness spots the safety of a dense forest area getting closer.

Bruce lowers his rifle. The witness nears his escape --

Out of the blue, a BANG off screen and the witness collapses.

Bruce lowers his rifle.

EXT. WOODLAND AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Bruce approaches the witness.

WITNESS

What the fuck are you doing? You shot me.

BRUCE

I panicked. You think I killed that woman don't you?

The witness moans.

BRUCE

She came out of nowhere. It was an accident. I'm sorry.

EXT. WOODS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

STEADY BREATHS

Bruce lays on his belly. One eye peers through his rifle scope, the other closed. Focused. His finger slowly squeezes the trigger --

TEXT TONE interrupts --

BRUCE

Fuck.

He looks at his phone and sees multiple missed calls from 'Angie' and 'Work'. He turns the phone off.

Gets right back on task. Fires --

JUMP CUT TO:

He traverses the gap between him and his kill. Freezes.

EXT. WOODS - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Bruce sits against a tree. He swigs from a flask.

BRUCE

I shouldn't have been there. I should've been at work.

The witness, tied up against a tree:

WITNESS

Why weren't you?

BRUCE

I was scared.

WITNESS

Of what?

BRUCE

Everything.

WITNESS

What's everything?

BRUCE

My wife, she's pregnant and I don't think I'm ready. I come here to escape from --

WITNESS

Your responsibilities.

BRUCE

Yeah.

WITNESS

And because of that, my legs fucked and my fiances dead.

Bruce takes this in for a long beat.

BRUCE

She was your fiancee?

WITNESS

Yes.

BRUCE

I'm sorry.

Bruce gets up and dials 999 on his phone. He knows what he must do.

WITNESS

Who are you calling?

BRUCE

The police --

WITNESS

Don't --

BRUCE

Ambulance too, don't worry --

WITNESS

No, don't call anybody cut the phone --

BRUCE

Why?

EXT. FIELD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

LABOURED BREATHS

Vibrant and alive, the young woman strolls, headphones on. Unzipped rucksack bouncing on her back.

A water bottle falls out. She picks it up -- notices something far in the distance. Shades her eyes so she can see:

A MAN in a black ski mask emerges from the trees staring directly at her. He just stands there.

YOUNG WOMAN  
(under her breath)  
What the fuck?

The masked man holds a roll of duct tape in his hand. With his other hand, he unzips his fly, pulls out his --

Young woman cringes. Stuffs the bottle back in the rucksack and storms off.

The masked man follows, speed walking.

So she speed walks. He jogs. She sees this and sprints. That's his cue, he accelerates to full speed.

EXT. WOODS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

He pursues and she flies through the woods.

The masked man eventually trips: face plant. He looks up and the woman has vanished. He gets up. Removes the messed up ski mask. IT IS THE WITNESS.

GUNSHOT in the distance. He drops the mask and goes toward the sound.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Right back to where we left off:

WITNESS  
You'll get yourself in a lot of  
trouble if you call them.

BRUCE  
I can't possibly get into more trouble  
than if I don't call them.

WITNESS

Just let me go and you get out of here  
and I'll call the police myself.

Bruce considers this.

WITNESS

Think about your wife and unborn kid.

BRUCE

What about them?

WITNESS

You may be okay with getting arrested  
and losing them but will they be okay  
with losing you?

Beat.

WITNESS

Of course they wont.

BRUCE

But what kind of husband would I be if  
I'm not at peace within myself? What  
kind of father would I be? What kind  
of person would I be?

WITNESS

A good one.

BRUCE

I'd be the opposite.

WITNESS

Your family are gonna be much better  
off having you around rather than in  
prison.

BRUCE

But how long would that last?

WITNESS

What do you mean?

BRUCE

How long before I can't live with  
myself any longer and end my life?

WITNESS

You won't do that.

BRUCE

How do you know? What does it matter to you whether I call the police or not anyway?

WITNESS

It doesn't. But at least untie me from this tree before you call.

Bruce goes to him. He pulls out his hunting knife. Slices the witness free.

The predator struggles up. Bruce assists him.

HUNTER

Can you stand?

WITNESS

Yeah. Just about.

BRUCE

Let's get you an ambulance.

Behind his back the witness slips out a set of keys. He makes wolverine claws out of them. Keeps them hidden.

WITNESS

I'm telling you, you'll be better off just getting the fuck outta here right now.

BRUCE

And I'm telling you I won't be.

Bruce dials and puts the phone to his ear, maintains eye contact with the predator.

The predator suddenly STRIKES Bruce with the improvised claws causing him to drop the phone.

The phone continues to ring as Bruce and the predator's grunts and scuffles O.S. are heard. The call is answered.

The focus remains on the phone, and many times Bruce's arm nears it before being dragged away.

Operator is heard. Muffled yelling O.S.

This goes on for a while, operator repeats and repeats her question.

Then silence... Followed by a SHOT.

Bruce's hand suddenly comes in and grabs the phone.

BRUCE  
Hello? Hello?

OPERATOR  
What's your emergency, Sir?

BRUCE  
There's been a ... um. Actually.

INSERT FLASH CUT: The young woman's dead corpse.

BRUCE  
I've done something...um.

INSERT FLASH CUT: The frog from his childhood falling into the boiling water.

Bruce takes a deep breath. Eyes closed.

OPERATOR  
Sir?

BRUCE  
I need the police.

OPERATOR  
What's the emergency?

BRUCE  
I've killed two people.

CUT TO WHITE.

Heard over the white, a deep and restful SIGH.

ETHEREAL POLICE SIRENS over CREDITS.

THE END

