

The Red Weed

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FADE IN:

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - NIGHT

The iconic landmark lies in ruins. One of the supports is little more than melted slag.

A dark figure moves through the rubble along the shore. Thick, rubbery red weeds not unlike kelp grow all over the remnants of the bridge and shoreline.

EXT. SHORELINE - NIGHT

NICOLLE (45) wends her way to the water, moving quietly and avoiding the red weeds.

With gloved hands, she picks up a rope tied to a stake and pulls a fish trap from the dark water.

She empties three fish onto the rocks and inspects each one closely.

Two have red weed growing on their bodies. She hurtles them far onto shore.

She inspects the third, the smallest of the three. No red weed. She sighs and puts it into a sack.

Quick movement grabs her attention. She draws a Beretta M9, but doesn't see anything more.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Nicholle climbs over a ridge. A wide highway stretches away to the left and right dotted with abandoned vehicles. The red weed grows in splotches everywhere.

On the other side, a crashed Lockheed AC-130 military plane lies slanted and partially buried in the soil.

INT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - NIGHT

The gutted fish sizzles in a pan over a propane fire.

Nicolle inspects her hands under a bright LED light. Satisfied, she retrieves a bottle of hand sanitizer from a duffel bag full of them and applies it liberally, making sure not to miss a spot.

EXT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - DAY

Nicholle walks around the dipped wing of the aircraft, a flamethrower on her back. The lit tip follows her eyes as she scans the scorch-marked camouflage fuselage.

She spots a small patch of red weed. She blasts it with fire, leaving only more scorched paint.

INT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - DAY

She drops the flamethrower and picks up a bucket of gardening tools. A glove falls from the rim, landing on the tip of the flamethrower.

Nicholle exits the plane without noticing. A puff of smoke rises from the glove.

EXT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - DAY

Nicholle checks the line of solar panels connected to the plane. She wipes one of them with a cloth.

She drops the bucket at the edge of a vegetable garden. She picks up the lone remaining glove and frowns, scans the ground.

INT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - DAY

Nicholle opens the aircraft door and is greeted by smoke. The blaze has already spread to her sleeping bag and the duffel bag.

She grabs a fire extinguisher from beside the door. Before she can approach, the duffel bag erupts with blue flame, forcing her back. She fights back with retardant, kicking the flamethrower away from the fire as she does.

LATER

The fire is out. Her sleeping bag is a half-melted ruin.

Nicolle sifts through the contents of the duffel bag, pulling out pieces of melted plastic. She hangs her head.

She pulls the Beretta M9 from her holster and checks the clip. Full.

She grabs an AR-15 assault rifle from beside the door and slaps a full ammo clip into it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

She climbs the ridge on the other side of the highway with an empty duffel bag over her shoulder.

A deer steps onto the highway a quarter mile away. It limps along the asphalt, legs not quite working, head hanging at an odd angle.

Nicolle looks through the scope of the AR-15.

THROUGH SCOPE: Red weed clings to the deer's matted fur. Its bloodshot eyes flit about wildly as if in a panic. Blood drips from it's gaping mouth where red weed has taken over it's muzzle and nose.

Nicolle fires. The deer drops.

She slings the rifle and moves on.

EXT. HIGHWAY TUNNEL - LATE DAY

The sun rests near the horizon as Nicolle approaches the tunnel. Bullet-ridden cars pack all four lanes leading in and out of the tunnel. The red weed grows everywhere.

Nicolle flips on the muzzle flashlight of the AR-15 and heads into the darkness.

INT. HIGHWAY TUNNEL - LATE DAY

She moves along the lines of cars. The red weed lessens as she proceeds until there's none to be found.

Her light settles on a delivery truck ahead. She approaches silently and slips a key into the padlock. It clicks. She freezes and waits.

She carefully slides the lock out and gingerly raises the rolling door. Boxes of hand sanitizer lie haphazardly inside. She quietly begins filling the duffel bag.

Her foot kicks an empty soda can. Its rattle echoes through the tunnel. She freezes again, dread on her face.

It starts as a low moan. Then many moans. Wails. Frantic yells. Screams.

Nicolle slings the duffel bag, slams the door closed, locks it, and runs full tilt through the tunnel.

EXT. HIGHWAY TUNNEL - LATE DAY

Nicolle runs from the dark tunnel at full speed. She chances a look behind her--

From the tunnel bursts DOZENS OF PEOPLE covered in red weed. Some limp, others run blindly, bumping into cars and other people. All look manic, even rabid. The faster ones break away from the pack and close in on Nicolle.

She collides with an old car, catching the sleeve of her jacket on a broken side mirror covered in red weed. She looks at the rip with horror, but no time to stop.

She pulls out a half-full bottle of hand sanitizer from her pocket and pours it into the rip as she runs.

EXT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - NIGHT

Nicolle runs into her camp, exhausted. Flood lamps trip, bathing her in bright white light.

The sound of the horde is dangerously close.

She ignites two road flares and throws them to one side before she leaps through the door and slams it shut.

In moments, the first of the red-weed people scramble into the light. They veer towards the road flares, followed by more, and more.

The horror show of afflicted people form a huddle around the flares, each trying to reach the smoke-spewing light.

INT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - NIGHT

Nicolle looks through a small window in the fuselage.

NICOLLE

I'm sorry.

EXT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - NIGHT

A gattling gun winds up and erupts with muzzle flashes, mowing down the people. Many are cut in half, others blown to pieces. It's over in moments.

The gattling gun slows and stops, barrels smoking. The door opens and Nicolle steps out, pistol up. She examines the bodies.

A RED-WEED WOMAN shuffles into the light, moaning. Nicolle fires two rounds into her head.

A second AFFLICTED WOMAN limps into view. Nicolle double-taps her too.

A RED-WEED MAN lunges from a different direction. He's on her before she can see him.

She falls, using her forearm to keep the Red-Weed Man from touching her skin. One eye is completely overgrown, the other rolled up into his head. His teeth are gone, his mouth full of red weed. Blood flecks dot his cheeks.

Nicolle brings her knee up between them. She forces him up and screams before firing twice in his face.

He falls aside and she sags, catching her breath.

LATER

She sits beside a campfire and gulps from a bottle of whiskey. She pushes her torn sleeve up. Her forearm is cut. Closer inspection reveals tiny tendrils of red weed around the edges of the cut.

She opens a fresh bottle of hand sanitizer and douses the cut, cringing at the pain. The red weed withers. She gulps more whiskey.

INT. LOCKHEED AC-130 - MORNING

Nicolle inspects her arm. A light fuzz of red weed clings to her skin around the wound.

NICOLLE

Fuck.

She picks up a machete and hacks off her arm below the elbow in one smooth motion.

She bites back her scream and wraps the wound tightly with linen. The linen is instantly soaked with blood.

She puts her severed arm into a plastic bag and ties it tightly with her teeth and one remaining hand before tossing it out the door.

Satisfied, she picks up the gardening bucket and exits the plane.

FADE OUT.