

The Ties That Bind

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FADE IN:

EXT. OCQUEOC STATE PARK - AFTERNOON

Pine, Aspen, and Oak trees stand tall on both sides of the Little Ocqueoc River. A well cared for trail intersects an area of the river where waterfalls flow freely.

SUPER: Lower Peninsula - Michigan

Sunlight dances through the trees here and there, as a light breeze rustles the upper branches and leaves.

JOSH PERRY, 32, short military crew cut, leads the way, followed closely by CARL PERRY, 28, long hair pulled back in a ponytail.

JOSH
I can hear 'em. Sounds like they're
still flowing pretty good.

CARL
Totally, you'll be surprised.

The trail leaves the dense woods, opening into a clearing by the falls, where they pause.

Josh smiles, as he looks around.

JOSH
Sure as shit, little brother. You
ain't lyin'. Wow. The memories.

Josh puts his arm around Carl, gives him a shake.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Let's have a seat on the rocks, have
a smoke.

ON THE ROCKS - MOMENTS LATER

Josh and Carl sit, bare feet dangling into the rushing water.

JOSH
Oh man, you remember when we were
just kids up here? This place was
so much damn fun.

Josh takes a hit from a fat joint, passes it to Carl.

Carl takes a puff, laughs and coughs at the same time.

CARL
Sure do, big brother.
(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)
Remember when I caught you making
out with Lexy Loomis, and you saw me
watching from the woods?

JOSH
Yeah, you little perv! Lexy
Loomis...Sexy Lexy Loomis!

Carl passes the joint back to Josh.

CARL
You came after me, but I was too
fast for you, and-

JOSH
And I fuckin' slipped on the wet
rocks, broke my fuckin' ankle, you
little shit!

They both laugh hard.

CARL
I never told you, but after you went
away to "protect and serve", me and
your Sexy Lexy met up at Miller's
Pub one night, and...well, we-

JOSH
NO! You did not! You nailed her?

Carl laughs uncontrollably.

CARL
Well, a true gentlemen doesn't kiss
and tell.

Josh takes another hit, puts the roach out on a rock, pockets
it.

JOSH
Man, I've missed you, you little
shit. I can't believe how long it's
been.

Josh puts his arm around Carl.

JOSH (CONT'D)
I love you, Bro. I'm sorry I was
gone so long, and I'm sorry you had
to deal with all the shit.

As he pulls back, MIKE BAKER, 50, in a Ranger outfit,
approaches from the trail.

MIKE

Is that Josh Perry? Been a long time, Hero, and thank you for your service.

(beat)

Carl.

(beat)

I'm so sorry about your Dad, guys.

Josh and Carl stand as Mike approaches.

JOSH

Mr. Baker! How you doin'?

The three shake hands.

MIKE

We're all adults here now. It's Mike. You just get back into town?

JOSH

Mike, yeah, you know, here for the funeral, just catching up with Carl, shootin' the shit.

CARL

You'll be attending tomorrow, right, Mike?

Mike steps back, sniffs.

MIKE

Wouldn't miss it for the world. Whole town'll be there. He was a good man and he's gonna be missed.

(beat)

Is that weed I smell?

Carl looks at Josh nervously.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Huh? If so, you gonna share the wealth.

Josh smiles, reaches into a pocket, pulls out another joint.

JOSH

I guess I have been gone a long time!

He hands the joint to Mike, who gives it a sniff.

MIKE

Well, well, why thank ya, Josh. You always were a good kid.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Park's closin' in thirty minutes,
boys, so get your asses moving toward
the front gates, and I'll see you
both tomorrow.

TRAIL - EVENING

Josh and Carl walk together. Overhead, the sun begins to
fade as night approaches.

JOSH

I just can't believe he's gone. I
never got to say good-bye. I never
told him how much...

Josh stops walking, wipes at his eyes, as tears run down his
cheeks.

Carl gives him a tight hug.

CARL

He knew, Bro. He knew.

JOSH

No, it's not how it was supposed to
be. The day I left, I had it all
planned out. I just wanted to tell
him how much I loved him, you know?
How much I appreciated how he raised
us all on his own. The memories,
the...

Carl pulls back, takes Josh by the shoulders, looks him in
the eye.

CARL

Josh, he knew. He always knew.
He'd talk about you and how much he
missed you all the time. I showed
him all your letters, all your pics.
He has them up in his office. You'll
see when we get back.

(beat)

I think it was just the timing and
that last night, you know?

Josh wipes the tears away again, now sobbing.

A gust of wind swirls through the trees around them.

JOSH

Yeah? Really? Fuck...I hit him,
though. I hit him hard.

CARL

You broke the fucking orbital bone
in his cheek, you savage! He told
everyone a beam fell from the ceiling
in the barn and hit him in the face.
Nobody knew. He didn't say anything,
I didn't say anything.

Tears rain down Josh's face, as he sobs uncontrollably.

JOSH

Oh fuck, man. Really? I thought he
hated me. I wanted to apologize, I
wanted to write him, I wanted him to
be proud of me.

CARL

Josh, he was proud of you and he
talked about you all the time. All
the stuff you wrote about to me, he
told everyone. You were a Hero, and
seriously, you were his Hero.

The wind picks up and a few fat drops of rain break through
the canopy.

JOSH

C'mon, let's get back to the car
before old Mike locks are asses in.

They continue walking along the forested trail.

CARL

He wrote you a letter the day after
he got home from the hospital, but
he never sent it. I think he thought
you'd write, but you're both the
same, you know? Hardheaded,
unyielding. Neither of you wanted
to admit you were wrong OR apologize,
neither would back down.

JOSH

You have that letter?

Carl nods his head as they walk, rain now coming down harder.

JOSH (CONT'D)

You read it?

CARL

Uh huh. It's in the car, c'mon.
Let's get out of this rain.

INT. FORERUNNER - NIGHT

Josh sits shotgun, holding a faded letter, Carl in the Driver's Seat.

Carl turns on the overhead light, as tears instantly stream from Josh's eyes, as he reads out loud.

JOSH

My dearest Son, Josh, I can't begin to put into words the feelings rushing through me right now. The feelings of sorrow, regret, and love. I was never very good at expressing my feelings. Probably too much of a man, if that makes any sense, but it was the way I was raised, and the way I am. I've loved and cherished you since the very second you were born, and when you told me you were going overseas to protect the innocent lives being lost, I was so proud of you, yet so worried you wouldn't make it back. I didn't want to lose you. It was the same with your Grandfather, when I told him I was going to war. It's probably the way it is between Fathers and Sons since long before we were around.

Josh wipes at his eyes, as he lowers the letter.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Oh shit. Fucking shit. Man, I miss him.

Carl watches, his eyes tearing up as well.

CARL

Keep reading.

Josh raises the letter in front of him.

JOSH

When you're a Father, I think you'll understand that no matter what your Son does, you love him. You love him through all that life brings. The good, the bad, and the downright ugly. I loved you when I caught you smoking pot when you were just thirteen. I loved you when you totaled my Escalade.

(MORE)

JOSH (CONT'D)

I even loved you when I walked in on you when you had that girl in my shower. It's funny, looking back on these things, as they're nothing but growing up, nothing but life.

Josh lowers the letter, wipes at his eyes, as a smile forms on his lips.

CARL

What's so funny?

JOSH

Oh man. That girl was Sexy Lexy, and Dad called Mr. Loomis and the next day he came over and it was ugly. It's why I never saw her again.

Carl smiles through tear stained eyes.

CARL

Don't worry, Bro, like I told you, I took care of business for you with Sexy Lexy.

They both break into laughter.

Josh raises the letter again.

JOSH

As I sit here writing you, I'm wondering if I'll actually send this to you. I hope I do, as you need to know these things. You need to know that I will love you forever, no matter what you do, and when you get back, I'm going to show you all the love I should have all these years. When your Mother left, you did so much for me and your brother. You grew up fast, maybe too fast, but you know what they say, right? Shit happens, and it definitely does. I'll pray each and every night for your safe return and when you come back to me, we'll work these things out. We'll work these things out like men, not like hardheaded children. Just come back safe, my Son. I love you.

Josh lowers the letter, wipes his eyes again.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Thanks for this, little brother.
Thank you. I feel like all that
weight, all that fucking weight is
off my shoulders finally. Damn, I
just wish I told him how I felt all
those years. I wish he knew.

Carl starts the SUV up, reaches over and squeezes Josh's
shoulder.

CARL

Like I said, Bro, he did know. He
knew and now you know.

EXT. OCQUEOC STATE PARK - CONTINUOUS

The Forerunner pulls away into the darkness.

The wind swirls and a blue-white ball of energy pulsates.
It grows in size, moves with the breeze, undulating back and
forth, until it takes the shape of a MAN in his late 50's.

The face smiles, but the eyes show sadness.

DAD

I've always known, Son. I just wish
you knew all these years, too. I'll
watch over you and we'll be together
again.

FADE OUT: