

HUNTING

by
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FADE IN:

INT. TRUCK CAB - LATE AFTERNOON

TOM, 33 and his son MICHAEL, 8 are driving in the mountains. They are sitting in silence. Michael has his hands folded in his lap and a large fountain soda balanced between his knees, he looks sleepy. Tom glances at his son and then back at the road.

The truck and its cab are loaded with camping equipment. There a rifle attached to the window in the cab. There is a map on the seat between the man and boy. Tom takes a long drink from a coffee cup and yawns. He opens a candy bar, breaks it in half, and hands a piece to the little boy who accepts and begins eating it.

The two chew the candy and stare down the road. Michael reaches for the open map and tries folding it.

TOM

Here. Let me show you.

He takes one hand off the steering wheel and grabs the paper. He chuckles absentmindedly when he realizes that he cannot fold with one hand and sets the map back on the seat.

TOM (CONT'D)

Never mind.

MICHAEL

Dad? How much longer?

TOM

Not very far. An hour maybe.

MICHAEL

What's it like there?

TOM

It's great. You'll like it. I've wanted to take you hunting for a long time now. You're finally getting old enough. In a few years, you can hunt too. This time, I'll start teaching you how.

BOY

How long does it take to find the them?

MAN

The deer? It depends. To you, it will probably always seem like a long time.

He smiles at his son and switches on the headlights. Michael looks to the rifle, then the road again.

MICHAEL

I like camping. Can we have a fire?

TOM

Soon as we get there.

MICHAEL

Will we get to be in a tree, like on t.v.?

TOM

No, it's not like that here. We don't hunt that way. We hunt the old fashioned way. We'll track the deer. To track them you see where the brush has been trampled, where their footprints are. It's more fair.

MICHAEL

Being in a tree might get boring too.

TOM

Yeah, maybe. It would certainly make it easier.

INT. TRUCK CAB - EVENING

The sun has set and it is considerably dark. The headlights illuminate different parts of the road as the truck rounds corners. The road winds, but Tom manages to maintain speed.

Michael is sleeping, his head pressed against the window. It is quiet aside from the truck's noises. The thumping, guttural engine huffs each time Tom presses the accelerator. When the truck hits a bump, gas can be heard sloshing in the tank.

Tom rubs his eyes and arches his back. Suddenly, a doe flashes in the headlights. Tom does not have time to react and slams on his brakes after he has already hit the animal. Michael wakes.

MICHAEL

Dad? Dad? What was that?

TOM

A doe. We hit her.

They stare through the windshield, stunned. The doe is lying on the roadside.

MICHAEL

Dad, I want to go home now.

Tom does not respond. He unbuckles his seat belt and opens the door. The deer kicks and rolls on her back. The animal's breath is visible in smoky puffs. Tom nears the animal with caution. She bellows in pain.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What are you going to do?

Tom still says nothing, but looks at his son sitting in the truck. Michael unbuckles his seat belt and opens the passenger door.

TOM

Stay in there, Michael.

The boy is almost out of the cab, his legs dangle from the seat. He stops the moment he hears his father's gruff tone, but does not pull his legs in or shut the door. Tom begins to speak to no one in particular.

TOM (CONT'D)

Something has to happen...

MICHAEL

What'd you say?

TOM

This isn't going to end well.

MICHAEL

Dad?

TOM

It's fine, Mike, just stay where you are.

The deer kicks again, then is still. Her bulky chest moves with each breath, she is still scared but is growing more resigned. The doe looks at Tom with one eye. The chocolate-colored iris gleams in the headlights.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TRUCK - EVENING

Tom is still watching the deer. He cannot quite make up his mind. Michael is getting increasingly uncomfortable with each passing minute. He shifts in his seat. He is perched, feet still dangling with the crumpled map in his hands.

MICHAEL

You have to fix it.

Tom responds without looking at his son.

TOM

I know.

MICHAEL (quietly)

I don't want to go hunting anymore.

He is interrupted by the deer who renews her struggle. The back legs kick and the animal emits a loud, high-pitched grunt. Tom steps back, startled. The sound has shaken him and he returns to the present.

MICHAEL

Dad, you have to fix it.

TOM

Just hold on, hold on.

He sounds exhausted and walks back to the truck. Michael watches him as he grabs the rifle. He waits for his father to say something, but Tom shuts the driver's door and returns to the doe. Michael realizes that his father has forgotten ammunition. He reaches in the glove box and takes one bullet from the box. Instead of leaving the truck, he waits, holding the copper bullet in his palm.

TOM (CONT'D)

Okay. It's okay.

He speaks for the doe, as well as himself. He opens the gun chamber and turns back. His son is watching through the windshield. Tom motions for him.

With determination, Michael opens his door and hops to the ground. As he rounds the truck's front he observes the matted hair and blood sticking to the grill. The headlights make the sanguine mess appear muddy. Tom clears his throat.

TOM (CONT'D)

Mike?

Michael jumps, then stands still.

MICHAEL

Hmm?

The animal has captured his interest. Without realizing it, he leans against the truck, smearing his hand with the doe's blood. He makes a face and wipes the gore on his plaid hunting shirt.

TOM

Come here...

His words sound more like a question than a command. Michael nears his father, hand extended, holding the bullet.

TOM (CONT'D)

Be careful and don't get too close.
She's scared.

Michael peers at the doe. Her breath is labored. He stands behind his father.

MICHAEL

She's pretty.

Tom lowers the gun and rubs his son's head.

TOM

I'm sorry. This isn't the way things
were supposed to go.

MICHAEL

Can we go home?

Tom loads the rifle, taking a deep breath.

TOM

Don't watch. Cover your ears.

Michael follows his father's directions. Tom fires the gun, killing the doe. Michael turns back round, solemn. Tom watches his son, trying to choose his words carefully. He kneels and grabs Michael's shoulders before speaking.

TOM (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

MICHAEL (quietly)

It shouldn't take us very much time
to go back.

TOM

You ready to go home, Mike?

Michael nods and rubs his nose on his arm.

TOM (CONT'D)

I don't think this is our hunting
year.

The two climb in the truck. The engine starts and the vehicle does a u-turn.

FADE OUT