

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAY

The intense BUZZING of summer insects and the SONG of songbirds. A birds eye view of a bucolic mid west farming landscape, corn field, blue skies, sunshine, a FARMER PLOUGHING a nearby field with a TRACTOR, grain silos and a hay stack. A MAN with a horse. A clapboard house with a strawberry field, a woman's hand picks strawberries; a WOMAN lying in grass, lazing...

OPENING CREDITS...

INT. DINING ROOM/HOME - NIGHT

Next to book shelves and an upright piano, with sheet music on the stand - CHOPIN. There is also a dining room table with leftovers from an abandoned meal - strawberries and cream.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MONTH LATER - a warm night, the MAN is asleep with the same WOMAN, now pregnant, no sheets on the bed. The MAN is restless and wakes. A distant RUMBLING, indistinct - the MAN swings his feet off of the bed and goes to the window, anxious.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The MAN is in his shorts, sweating, putting a plug in the bath and turning on the taps as far as they will go. The WOMAN appears in the doorway in a nightdress and leans against the door frame watching, blearily, cradling her pregnant belly.

WOMAN.

Why are you taking a bath?

MAN.

I'm not.

The WOMAN takes off her nightdress and goes to the bath.

WOMAN.

You'll sleep better.

He looks at her, surprised she's misunderstood.

MAN.

I'm not! Put your clothes back on.

She sees he's looking out the window now - there's an eery rose-colored glow of distant fire through the glass - and distant shouts and screams...

(CONTINUED)

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WOMAN.

What is it? What's happening?

END OF FLASHBACK:

TITLE: THE ROAD.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAWN

A MAN of about forty and a BOY of ten are asleep, camped on a tarp under a rock ledge, the blackened chasm of a burnt valley spread out below. It is the same man seen earlier - but ten years older, thinner, malnourished, with a thick beard. They are both emaciated and exhausted, their faces and hands coated in grime and soot from the burned, blackened landscape around them. Ash falls on the tarp, which is bright synthetic blue, the only color in sight.

The MAN is woken by something, he instinctively reaches out to touch the BOY, his hand rests on his chest and rises and falls with each of the sleeping BOY's breaths.

There is a low RUMBLE, the ground starts to TREMBLE and the BOY wakes.

BOY.

Papa? (NO REPLY.) Papa?

MAN.

Shh. It's okay.

BOY.

What is it, Papa?

They listen as it grows NEARER and LOUDER, everything SHAKING, tree roots GROANING and SPLITTING, until it passes between them with a ROAR like a subway train right beneath them. The BOY is now clinging to the MAN and crying, his head buried against his chest in fear.

MAN.

Shh. It's all right. It's all right. It's gone.

BOY.

What was it, Papa?

MAN.

It was an earthquake.

EXT. ROAD - DAY *

In the burnt, barren landscape, through swirls of soft ash and smoggy air the MAN appears dressed in a filthy old PARKA with the hood up, a knapsack on his back, pushing a rusted shopping CART with a bicycle mirror clamped to the handle and the BLUE tarp now covering it's load. The little BOY, similarly dressed with a KNAPSACK on his back, shuffles through the ash at his side - like Depression-era Dust Bowl homeless. *

There is a flicker of lightning over head, then more, but no thunder. *

MAN. (V.O.) *

The clocks stopped at one seventeen one morning. There was a long shear of bright light, then a series of low concussions. *

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE/ CRACKED ROAD - DAY *

Broken asphalt, the earthquake has caused a large FISSURE to open up ALONGSIDE the road, with a sheer drop. *

THE MAN and THE BOY edge past burnt trees and scrub. *

MAN. (V.O.) *

Within a year there were fires on the ridges and deranged chanting. The screams of the murdered. By day the dead impaled on spikes along the road. *

EXT. LAKE - DAY *

They trudge past a vast lake filled with dead trees... *

MAN. (V.O.) *

I think it's October but I can't be sure. I haven't kept a calender for 5 years. *

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY *

They truck along with the trolley through the fog, the ghostly shapes of dead trees on either side and the shapes of barren mountains in the background... *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN. (V.O.) *
 Each day is more gray than the one *
 before. Each night is darker - *
 beyond darkness. The world gets *
 colder week by week as the planet *
 slowly dies. No animals have *
 survived. All the crops are long *
 gone. *

EXT. EDGE WOODS - DAY *

A tree falls behind them with a WHUMP and they jump... *

MAN (V.O.) *
 Someday all the trees in the world *
 will have fallen. *

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY *

The MAN forages for petrol, checking the nozzle of the pumps, *
 rummaging through empty oil cans, he upends a bin to get at *
 the empty oil bottles. *

The BOY picks up a phone on a wall and listens to the dead *
 earpiece. *

MAN. (V.O.) *
 The roads are peopled by refugees *
 towing carts and road gangs *
 carrying weapons, looking for fuel *
 and food. *

EXT. LONG ROAD - DAY *

They head down a long straight road towards a dark, *
 forbidding looking tunnel - a turnpike. *

MAN. (V.O.) *
 There has been cannibalism. *
 Cannibalism is the great fear. *

EXT. CITY - DAY *

They emerge before a view of a deserted city-state... *

EXT. MALL - DAY *

They forage in a deserted mall... *

There are skeletons and human bones here and there. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN. (V.O.)

Mostly I worry about food. Always
food. Food and our shoes.

CU - the BOY examines the head of a moose mounted on a wall
in a SEARS hunting store.

MAN. (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sometimes I tell the boy old
stories of courage and justice -
difficult as they are to remember.
All I know is the child is my
warrant and if he is not the word
of God, then God never spoke.

END OF CREDITS/MUSIC.

EXT. RIDGE/ CAMPSITE - (CAMP 2) - EVENING

They are camped high up on the ridge of a mountainside.
There is a camp fire with wet clothes hanging to dry on
sticks beside it.

The MAN is erecting the tarp over string tied between two
sticks stuck in the ground. The BOY is sitting lighting a
lantern using the scavenged oil inside the makeshift tent,
his shadow stark against the illuminated tarp.

BOY.

Now you can read me a story.

He gets out a BOOK and looks at the pictures in the
lamplight.

The MAN reads him a story...

EXT. RIDGE/CAMPSITE - (CAMP 2) - NIGHT

The MAN awakens bathed in firey light as if the sun has come
out. There is pale gray snow all around him with a quivering
orange glow. He gets up to investigate, looks to the line of
trees up the ridge where a FOREST FIRE is burning, CRACKLING
in the distance. He stands staring at the fire, the warmth
and light moving him, enlivening him and not frightening him
at all. The BOY has got up and appears at his side, yawning.
He looks at the sky at a single gray SNOWFLAKE drifting down.

BOY.

It's snowing!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

It's like it used to be when the
sun came out.

The BOY catches the snowflake in his hand, surprised.

EXT. ROAD/PLAIN - DAY

They travel along the road through drifting wood smoke, smoke pouring off the ground like mist and thin black trees burning like candles on the snowy ridge.

They reach a spot where fire has crossed the road melting the tarmac. Their feet stick in the molten tarmac, it sucks at their shoes and they stop. Just ahead they see a set of foot prints in the tar and study them.

BOY.

Who is it?

MAN.

I don't know.

The MAN looks through a pair of BINOCULARS and sees: A stooped figure up ahead, a DYING MAN dragging one leg slightly, limping along. He stops and stands uncertainly, then continues. The BOY sees him too.

BOY.

What should we do Papa?

MAN.

We're all right. Let's just follow
and watch.

BOY.

Take a look.

MAN.

Yeah. Take a look.

EXT. ROAD/HILL - LATE AFTERNOON

The DYING MAN is getting slower and slower as they climb a slope, following, until he finally stops and simply sits in the road. The BOY hangs onto the MAN's coat anxiously as they approach.

POV BOY - the DYING MAN is burnt, his clothing scorched and skin black with soot. One eye is burnt shut and his hair is a nitty wig of ash. His shoes are bound with wire and coated with road tar.

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As they pass by the DYING MAN looks down, averting his eyes. The BOY keeps looking, unable to take his eyes off him.

BOY.

Papa, what's wrong with that man?

MAN.

He's been struck by lightning.

BOY.

Can't we help him? Papa?

MAN.

No. We can't help him.

They keep walking away and the BOY tugs at the MAN's coat.

BOY.

Papa?

MAN.

Stop it.

BOY.

Can't we help him, Papa?

MAN.

No. We can't. There's nothing to be done for him.

EXT. BRIDGE - (CAMP 3) - EVENING

*

They are camped under the bridge, ash and slurry drift by on the river, a dull sulphur light from the fires glows against the sky. The BOY sits in silence with his back to the MAN.

*

MAN.

There's nothing we could have done.
(NO REPLY.) He's going to die. We can't share what we have or we'll die too.

BOY.

I know.

MAN.

So when are you going to talk to me again?

BOY.

I'm talking now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.
Are you sure?

BOY.
Yes.

EXT. BARN - DAY

They come to a barn beside the road. They look at each other. *

MAN.
Let's take a look.

The man picks up the revolver and they go inside cautiously.

INT. BARN - DAY

Three pairs of FEET wearing different shoes - a man's shoes, a woman's shoes, and a CHILD's sneakers - hang above three carefully placed chairs.

MAN.
Don't look.

The BOY looks at the ground.

MAN. (CONT'D)
You don't need to see this.

The BOY takes a few steps, exploring, he eyes the empty hay loft but avoids looking at the hanged bodies.

BOY.
There could be something here.
There could be corn or something.

MAN.
No, they ran out of food.

BOY.
Maybe we could find some hayseeds
in the hayloft?

Now the BOY goes over to the swinging CORPSES, oddly curious.

MAN.
It's not what you think. They
committed suicide.

BOY.
What does that mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

You know what that means.

The MAN GOES outside while the BOY thinks about it a moment.

EXT. FARM GATE - DAY

They walk away from the eerily silent farm, stopping at an abandoned TRACTOR by a weathered, paint stripped letter box. *

MAN.

Come here.

The BOY goes over and the MAN takes out his revolver, opens the magazine and shows him: two bullets in the chamber.

MAN. (CONT'D)

You see that? Two left. One for you and one for me.

He places the BOY's thumb on the hammer and cocks the pistol. He curls the BOY's index finger around the trigger.

MAN. (CONT'D)

You put it in your mouth and point it up. Like this. Just like I showed you.

He puts the barrel of the pistol in his own mouth until the BOY nods, wide eyed. He takes the pistol out of his mouth and uncocks it.

MAN. (CONT'D)

You got it?

BOY.

I think.

MAN.

Is it okay?

BOY.

Okay.

The MAN puts the gun away and cuddles the BOY close. They set off again.

INT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY

FLASHBACK - the WOMAN is sitting by the window, staring out at the garden which is barren now, the sky gray but tinged with the same fireglow seen earlier, a film of gray ash covers dead lawn and shrubs and inside the paintwork is grimy and colorless now, a lot of the furniture gone. A pile of broken up furniture and pieces of the piano are stacked up next to the fireplace. In the fireplace the scorched, ashen remains of piano keys. The WOMAN is now heavily pregnant. The MAN sets down chipped old plates and spoons, spoons beans from a pot and sits to eat. *

As the WOMAN starts to eat she winces and freezes with a look of horror, spoon halfway to her mouth. She looks down and sees:

POV WOMAN - water and blood running down her legs. *

WOMAN. *

Oh no. Oh no.

MAN.

It's okay, I'll help you. Just like we said.

WOMAN. *

No no no...

MAN.

I'll heat water. We can do it. *

As he goes out she MOANS in despair.

INT. KITCHEN/CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY

The MAN rushes in and opens a drawer in the sideboard. Instead of cutlery it contains a pair of kitchen shears, a bottle of antiseptic, worn but clean towels and a pair of worn out yellow rubber dish gloves, all laid out in readiness.

The WOMAN appears at the door, blood running down a leg.

WOMAN. *

We don't have to.

MAN.

Well, I think we probably do.

WOMAN. *

What kind of life is this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

It's life. It's the only thing left.

He takes the WOMAN back into the other room. *

INT. DINING ROOM / CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY *

TERRIBLE SCREAMING. The WOMAN lies on the dining room table SCREAMING as she has her first contractions. The MAN is wearing the rubber gloves, one gloved hand resting on the WOMAN's leg, about to deliver his own baby. He wipes his brow and leaves a smear of blood as the SCREAMING goes on. *

WOMAN. *

I can't.

MAN.

It's coming.

END OF FLASHBACK.

INT. TRAILER HOME - (CAMP 4)- EVENING *

Inside a badly damaged trailer home, one wall half fallen off, a pan of water boils on a small fire. The BOY sits shivering in a blankets as he eats beans from a tin, scraping around for the last one or two. The MAN opens his knapsack by the fire and produces a packet of COCOA. He fixes a cup of cocoa for the boy. He hands the BOY the cup of cocoa and as the BOY examines it and drinks, the MAN surreptitiously pours himself a mug of water and sits blowing on it. The BOY realises the MAN has left him all the cocoa. *

BOY.

You promised not to do that.

MAN.

What?

BOY.

You know what, Papa. I have to watch you all the time.

MAN.

I know I'm sorry.

BOY.

If you break little promises you'll break big ones. That's what you said.

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CONTINUED:

The MAN relents, pouring the hot water back into the pan and taking some of the BOY's cocoa into his own cup. The BOY wipes his finger around the inside of the empty bean tin and licks his finger.

MAN.

Watch your finger.

BOY.

You always say that.

MAN.

That's because you always do it.

The MAN spreads bits of a worn out road map on the boards and studies them.

BOY.

What are you doing?

MAN.

We have to keep moving. We have to go south to the coast.

BOY.

Why?

MAN.

It'll be better at the coast.

BOY.

Why?

MAN.

Because we're going to freeze here. *

He picks up the map pieces carefully. *

EXT. TURNPIKE - MORNING *

The MAN and the BOY truck along the blacktop. *

At the crest of a hill they come to FADED BILLBOARDS advertising MOTELS and stop. The BOY notices a sign in the distance, which has words painted over a faded advertisement: odd, nonsensical, Biblical ramblings about "bones" and "the dead." The MAN follows the BOY's gaze and reads: "BEHOLD THE VALLEY OF SLAUGHTER - JEREMIAH 19:6." *

MAN.

Do you remember your alphabet?

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CONTINUED:

BOY.

Yes.

MAN.

Can you read that? *

BOY (SCRUTINISING IT.)

No.

MAN.

Good, let's go. *

The MAN takes out a large REVOLVER, cocks it in readiness and places it on the tarp as they move. The BOY eyes the MAN nervously, eyes the gun and they move off. *

EXT. TURNPIKE, TUNNEL APPROACH - DAY *

They trudge along the turnpike towards the opening of a deep, black tunnel and the BOY suddenly comes to a stop, increasingly upset, unable to face the yawning mouth of the tunnel. *

BOY. *

I can't, I just can't... *

MAN. *

There's no other way. *

BOY. *

We could go over. *

MAN. *

We can't take the cart over. *

BOY. *

We don't know what's in there. *

MAN. *

There's nothing in there. It's just the same as it is out here. Okay? *

BOY. (BEAT. VERY RELUCTANT.) *

Okay. *

The boy sticks close to the MAN's side. The man has the revolver in his belt now and his parka unzipped, ready as they nervously walk towards the mouth of the tunnel. *

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

The MAN has his arm around the boy as they push the cart cautiously ahead, acutely aware of all that's around them. They pass footprints in the dried sludge on the ground. Ash and litter blowing about and a handful of MUMMIFIED DEAD REFUGEES appear along the sides of the tunnel, sitting and lying on camp stretchers, their bags and supplies long since looted. They are shrivelled and drawn like latterday bogfolk, shoeless, a couple of men, a woman a small child and a DOG.

The MAN stares at the group.

The BOY stares at the small child and then at the mummified DOG, transfixed. The MAN puts out his hand for the BOY to take - the BOY takes his hand and the MAN moves him on.

MAN.

Just remember that the things you put into your head are forever.

BOY.

But you forget some things don't you?

MAN.

You forget what you want to remember and you remember what you want to forget.

EXT. TUNNEL EXIT AND TURNPIKE - (CAMP 5) - EARLY MORNING

The MAN and the BOY are asleep inside an abandoned car amongst a line of other abandoned vehicles littering the turnpike.

INT. ABANDONED CAR - (CAMP 5) - EARLY MORNING

Now the BOY's hand rests on the MAN's chest as he sleeps. The MAN breathes stertorously, wheezing a little and the BOY'S small hand goes up and down on his chest.

Suddenly the MAN wakes and rolls onto his side, listening, the revolver lying beside him. He slips his hand onto the revolver and raises his head slowly. He looks around - nothing but the sound of a distant DIESEL ENGINE. He looks at the BOY fast asleep. When he looks back at the tunnel he sees a nightmarish vision:

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POV MAN - Exiting the tunnel, shuffling through the ash, a group of HOODED MEN, some in gas masks and filthy biohazard suits, slouching along, coughing, casting their heads from side to side and swinging clubs and lengths of pipe - a ROAD GANG. The MAN listens to the sound of a DIESEL TRUCK behind the gang. *

MAN.
Quickly. Quick...

The BOY jolts awake as the MAN shoves his pistol in his belt, grabs the boy by the hand. They slide out of the car and crouch on the ground, the BOY is frozen with fear. *

MAN. (CONT'D)
It's all right. It's all right but we have to run. Don't look back. Come on.

Their backpacks are still left in the back of the car... *

MAN. (CONT'D)
Run... run...

The flat bed truck RUMBLES into view, MEN from the GANG standing on the flat bed looking around, some holding rifles. The BOY falls and the MAN pulls him to his feet with such force he lifts him clean off the ground and has to dangle him back down again.

MAN. (CONT'D)
You okay? It's all right... come on...

They rush down the embankment into the trees alongside the turnpike. *

EXT. TURNPIKE UNDERPASS - DAY *

They run through the woods. The truck is heard in the background, the motor missing and SPUTTERING, coils of black diesel smoke coiling through the woods. The motor dies with a flapping RATTLE and there's SILENCE. *

The MAN and the BOY crouch in frozen silence, the Truck now on the overpass nearby, dangerously exposed to the view of the Gang. They listen to the GANG TALKING and raising the hood of the truck. *

The MAN puts his arm around the BOY and draws his pistol as they see the truck begin to roll, the GANG pushing it... but it coughs and stalls again. *

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CONTINUED:

The MAN sees one of the GANG MEMBERS coming down the embankment, unbuckling his belt. He is emaciated, in dirty blue overalls and a gas company cap, and has a long beard cut square at the bottom and a bad tattoo of a bird on his neck. He doesn't stop, just keeps coming, closer and closer until he's just feet away, almost on top of them. He unzips his pants and takes a piss. As he stands pissing his eyes roam around - at any moment he could look to the side and see them crouching there. *

The MAN is wide-eyed, gun ready, eyes darting from the GANG MEMBER to the BOY to the GUN. The GANG MEMBER rolls his shoulders and exercises his neck... he looks down and studies the steam coming off his piss. *

The MAN silently trains his pistol at the head of the GANG MEMBER who, as if by instinct, rolls his head around and looks right at him.

MAN.

Just keep it coming.

The GANG MEMBER sees the gun and stops pissing, looks back at the truck, zips his fly.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Don't look at them. Look at me. If you call out you're dead. Where you from?

GANG MEMBER.

Does it matter? Where you from?

MAN.

What's the truck running on?

GANG MEMBER.

Diesel fuel.

MAN.

Where d'you get that?

GANG MEMBER.

I don't know.

MAN.

You don't know, huh?

The GANG MEMBER just stares, not answering.

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MAN. (CONT'D)
You got ammunition for those
rifles?

The GANG MEMBER looks back towards the truck.

MAN. (CONT'D)
I told you not to look back there. -
Where d'you get all that stuff?

GANG MEMBER.
Found it.

MAN.
What are you eating?

GANG MEMBER.
Whatever we can find.

MAN.
Whatever you can find, huh?

GANG MEMBER.
Yeah...

Now the GANG MEMBER looks at the BOY, causing the MAN To
raise the revolver and cock it.

POV GANG MEMBER - he looks down the barrel at the magazine
and sees empty space.

GANG MEMBER. (CONT'D)
You won't shoot that thing. You
ain't got but two shells. Maybe
just one. And they'll hear the
shot.

On the over pass the ROAD GANG are looking around, MURMURING *
as they notice one of their number missing.

MAN.
Maybe. But you won't. It'll be
through your skull and inside your
brain before you can hear it.

The MAN steps closer and aims the gun at the MAN's forehead,
hammer back, ready.

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MAN. (CONT'D)

To hear it you'll need a frontal lobe and things with names like colliculus and temporal gyrus and you won't have them anymore because they'll just be soup.

GANG MEMBER.

Are you a doctor?

MAN.

I'm not anything anymore.

GANG MEMBER.

We got a hurt man. It'd be worth your while.

The MAN glances in the direction of the ROAD GANG, then back at the GANG MEMBER, who is still eyeing the BOY. The BOY is sitting with his hands on top of his head, peeking out through his arms, terrified as the tension escalates.

MAN.

If you look at him again I'll shoot you in the head.

GANG MEMBER.

I'll bet that boy is hungry. Why don't you all just come onto the truck. Get something to eat. Ain't no need to be such a hard ass.

MAN.

You don't have anything to eat. Let's go.

GANG MEMBER.

I ain't going nowheres.

MAN.

You think I won't kill you but you're wrong.

GANG MEMBER.

You know what I think? I think you're chickenshit. You never killed a man in your life.

He drops his belt on the ground with a CLATTER, a canteen and army pouch hanging from it. The MAN eyes the army pouch, eyes the GANG on the road - and notices for the first time some of them are wearing the same army pouches.

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One is banging his stick on the side of the truck to call their lost member. The MAN is distracted by this and when he looks up the GANG MEMBER has taken two silent steps and is standing between him and the BOY, holding a knife.

MAN.

What do you think you're going to do with that?

Without a word the GANG MEMBER dives and grabs the BOY, rolls and lands on his feet holding the BOY against his chest with his knife at his throat. Simultaneously the MAN drops to his knees, trains the pistol and fires from six feet away, shooting the GANG MEMBER in the forehead. He falls back and lies with blood bubbling from the wound, eyes open, the BOY lying in his lap in shock, deafened, expressionless, covered with gore and mute as a stone.

The GANG hear the loud SHOT and freeze, they start looking around them more urgently now. The MAN grabs the dazed BOY by the hand and yells but in his deafness the BOY hears only a MUTED soup of words:

MAN (MUTED.)

Move! Let's go!

The MAN shoves the pistol in his belt, hoists the BOY onto his shoulders and sets off down the road at a run. *

EXT. WOODS - DAY

They crash through the woods, the MAN straining to keep the BOY aloft and find a path through the trees - the BOY clutching the MAN's head with both hands.

There's a sickening THUD and the MAN falls, the BOY flying off with a cry. The MAN struggles to gather his wits, unsure whether he's been felled by another man.

MAN (MUTED.)

Come on. Get up, get up quickly!

The MAN swings the BOY onto his shoulders and runs.

EXT. WOODS/TURNPIKE - DAY *

The MAN and BOY stagger through trees and the man drops to his knees, letting the BOY down. They are back by the turnpike again. They listen and watch, utterly exhausted and out of breath, the MAN is wheezing, the BOY at his side, holding his hand, staring, in shock still. *

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CONTINUED:

MAN.

Shh. It's okay now. You're going to be OK.

POV BOY - the BOY can still HEAR nothing, temporarily deaf. But he sees the MAN talking and looking around, through 360 degrees, trying to work out where it's safe to go.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Come on.

He grabs the BOY's hand and they take off again.

EXT. WOODS - EVENING

*

The MAN pulls out blankets from his knapsack. The BOY sits staring, shocked as the MAN tries to wipe the blood and gore from his face but it's thick and congealed now. His hands tremble as he tries to pick it from the BOY's hair.

MAN.

It's okay... it's okay now...

Frightened by the BOY's muteness, he wraps him in a blanket, unzips his parka and holds him close under the parka.

The MAN picks up his revolver, checks the chamber, only one bullet left. He eyes the flickering shadows in the distance and then eyes the BOY, making minute calculations of distance, calibrating the space between the ROAD GANG and the BOY. He holds the revolver up and cocks it.

MAN. (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I try to look like any common
traveling killer but my heart is
hammering. When it comes to the boy
I have only one question: Can you
do it? When the time comes?

*

*

*

*

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*

There is no moon, but not far away, perhaps 30 yards, a firey TORCH makes its way through the woods. About 50 yards away from that another TORCH is being used to search... shadows flicker ominously. The sounds of TWIGS snapping underfoot and BRANCHES being broken as the ROAD GANG searches wordlessly, just BREATHING heavily through their masks and beards. The MAN clutches the BOY tighter, and stifles a cough.

*

They remain frozen like this, unable to budge.

FADE OUT.

EXT. EMBANKMENT - DAWN

They are by a thin, toxic, rust-red stream, slushy ice at the edges and gray froth. The MAN leans down and pushes ice away and scoops up a hand full of gray water. He runs it through the boy's hair to wash it and the BOY flinches with cold. He rubs more icy water into the BOY's hair, roughly, quickly, with a sense of panic as he helplessly tries to wash out lumps of flesh and blood. The BOY is weeping silently and shivering from the extreme cold as the MAN picks out the dried gore and washes the hair clean. *

MAN.

It's no use crying. You have to talk to me. *

He takes the blanket and dries the BOY's hair as he talks.

MAN. (CONT'D)

I'm not going to let anything happen to you... I'm going to take care of you... I'm always going to try and be here for you... and I'm going to kill anybody who touches you.

He smooths the BOY's hair down with shaking fingers, clumsily trying to brush it out of his eyes, a fatherly instinct to make the BOY neat.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Because that's my job. Do you understand?

When he's through the MAN lifts the BOY's thin arms, puts a vest over his head, then a ragged sweater, then he folds the BOY into his parka, zips it up to the neck and kisses him on the top of the head.

The MAN grabs his knapsack, tips it upside down, rummages inside - it's empty.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Come on, we need to get the cart back.

EXT. EMBANKMENT BY TUNNEL EXIT - DAY *

Approaching the embankment, the MAN walks quickly and stealthily, wired, listening to the silence, straining to hear, sure he's being watched. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BOY stumbles along behind, slower, fatigued, making the MAN anxious. The MAN leaves the boy hiding: *

MAN (WHISPERS.) *

Wait here.

He starts to climb the embankment and hears: little running FOOTSTEPS as the BOY comes after him, he turns to face the BOY urgently, exasperated. *

MAN (WHISPERS.) (CONT'D)

No I need you to wait. I'll hear you if you call. I'll just be a little ways and I'll be able to hear you if you get scared and you call me and I'll come right away.

He walks off but hears... the little BOY's FOOTSTEPS running after him again - he turns around.

MAN.

I said wait!

The BOY's face crinkles up and a tear rolls down.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Stop it. I need you to do what I say. Take the gun.

The BOY freezes, refusing to take the gun.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Just take it will you?

The BOY shakes his head.

MAN. (CONT'D)

We don't have time for this. We need our food. What's left.

The MAN shoves the gun into the BOY's hand.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Don't argue.

He creeps up the embankment. The BOY just stares at the revolver. *

EXT. TURNPIKE ROAD - DAY *

The MAN searches for the cart. He comes to where they'd left it in between the abandoned cars. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Their backpacks lie open on the ground, next to the cart on its side, its contents spilled out, mostly plundered, just a few children's BOOKS and TOYS, old pots and pans, shoes and ragged clothing remaining. Nearby are the remains of a large campfire in the middle of the turnpike. The man collects up the few remaining possessions and puts them into the backpacks.

POV MAN - he sees charred billets of wood, ash and... the bones of the shot ROAD GANG MEMBER. Nearby is a pool of his blood and guts, still gently STEAMING, the head decapitated and rolled under a car. He nudges the bones with the toe of his shoe.

EXT. EMBANKMENT BY THE TURNPIKE - DAY

Below, down the embankment the BOY is waiting obediently with the gun.

The MAN heads back to the BOY, trying to think what to say. The BOY hands the gun back and takes the MAN's hand and they walk away into the woods, the MAN tucking the gun back into his belt.

MAN.

Let's get out of here. The freeway's too dangerous. Find the back roads.

BOY.

Okay.

INT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE - NIGHT

FLASHBACK - Now the house is in considerable disrepair, no furniture, the skirting boards falling away, large cracks in the walls, cornices and lamp fittings pulling away from the ceilings, water marks from rain, the windows covered with corrugated iron sheets. The MAN and the WOMAN are sitting across from each other with a lamp illuminating the dark. Between them lies the revolver seen earlier. The WOMAN picks up the gun and swings open the magazine. There are two bullets in it, she takes them out and places them on the table, one after the other.

WOMAN.

That's all that's left. I should have done it when there were more bullets in the gun.

The MAN shuts his eyes, unable to take it. In the corner, the BOY is standing in the background, drawing on the walls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN. (CONT'D) *

Sooner or later - no listen - they
will catch up with us and they will
kill us. They will rape me -

MAN.

No -

WOMAN. *

And they will rape him -

MAN.

Please no - just - no -

WOMAN. *

They are going to rape us and kill
us and eat us and you won't face
it. You'd rather wait for it to
happen.

MAN.

Please.

WOMAN. *

Stop it.

MAN.

I'll do anything.

WOMAN. *

Such as what?

She picks up the revolver and puts the TWO BULLETS into the
chamber.

WOMAN. (CONT'D) *

I thought about not even telling
you. Just doing it. I'd empty every
godamn bullet into my brain and
leave you with nothing.

MAN.

Don't say that. Don't talk this
way.

WOMAN. *

There's nothing left to talk
about... my heart was ripped out of
me the night he was born...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN.

Please don't do this. I won't let anything happen. We'll survive.

WOMAN. *

I don't want to survive! I'd take him with me if it weren't for you. You know I would. Why can't you face it?

MAN.

Will you listen? You're talking crazy -

WOMAN. *

It's not crazy and you know it. It's the right thing to do.

They glance at the BOY. *

WOMAN. (CONT'D) *

Other families do it.

She goes to the BOY, strokes his hair, kisses him, makes a reassuring display of being motherly.

WOMAN. (CONT'D) *

Time for bed, there's a good boy.

She picks him up in her arms and carries him off to bed.

END OF FLASHBACK.

EXT. RAVINE/WATERFALL - DAY

The THUNDER of a waterfall, the river disappears into space - the BOY and the MAN stand staring up at the waterfall, 80 feet above, shrouded in gray mist. A color spectrum is visible rising from the waterfall, like a rainbow - the boy is transfixed, clutching the MAN's arm for safety. *

BOY.

What is it?

The MAN looks at the BOY, surprised he's talking again.

MAN.

It's a waterfall.

BOY.

Look. Colors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

There used to be color everywhere.
You don't remember. It was before
you were born. There used to be so
many thnings...

*
*

The BOY approaches the water's edge, shallow and clear with
gravel and pebbles sparkling at the bottom. He scoops up some
water, surprised that it seems clean.

*

BOY.

Look. It's clear.

MAN.

Do you want to go in?

BOY.

I don't know.

MAN.

Sure you do.

BOY.

Is it okay?

MAN.

Just don't swallow any.

The MAN unzips his parka and slips it to the ground. The BOY
eyes the MAN, surprised - then does the same.

EXT. RIVER/WATERFALL - DAY

Naked, pale, filthy dirty and shivering with cold, the BOY
frolics in the spray of the waterfall. The MAN watches him
enjoying himself by the waterfall, clutching his shoulders,
hopping up and down, he joins him.

*
*

EXT. RAVINE/ROCKFACE - (CAMP 6) - EVENING

*

The MAN has strung the tarp against a rockface to make a
shelter. He meticulously filters water through a rag into a
pan. In the background, the waterfall can be heard RUMBLING.
The BOY has painted his face with CRAYONS, drawing a bizarre
set of FANGS and dripping blood around his mouth. The MAN
studies the BOY's painted face a moment.

*
*
*
*

MAN.

Listen. That man back there...
there's not many good guys left,
that's all. We have to watch out
for the bad guys.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN. (CONT'D)

And we have to talk. Always. We have to just... you know... keep carrying the fire...

BOY.

What fire?

MAN.

The fire inside you.

The BOY is thoughtful a minute, and then:

BOY.

Are we still the good guys?

MAN.

Yes. We're still the good guys.

BOY.

And we always will be no matter what happens?

He eyes the BOY uncertainly, unsure if he can promise this.

MAN.

Always will be. Yeah.

The MAN goes back to tying the tarp.

EXT. THE RIVER/VALLEY - MORNING

*

The MAN and the BOY are trudging along, away from the waterfall now.

*

MAN.

We have to keep moving. Other people might be attracted to the waterfall just like we were. We wouldn't hear them coming.

They stop to look at a lake surrounded by fog down in the valley

BOY.

Do you think there could be fish in the lake?

MAN.

No. There's nothing in the lake.

They move on.

EXT. BACK ROAD - DAY

*

They come around a bend in the road and immediately hear the ROAR of river rapids. Up ahead they see a bridge with a jack-knifed TRUCK on it.

*

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

They walk out onto the bridge over GREY FROTHING WATER, and inspect the truck. The tyres are flat, the cab jammed against the railings. The trailer end has swung across the road, knocked out the railings and lies with it's last few feet hanging over the side of the bridge, blocking the bridge off completely.

*

EXT. ABANDONED TRUCK - DAY

The MAN climbs up onto the gas tanks, wipes the glass and peers into the cab. He swings the door open and climbs inside, pulling the door shut behind.

INT. TRUCK/CAB - DAY

He looks around at discarded detritus, old magazines and trash. He checks behind the seats where there is a mattress on a bunk and calls out.

MAN.

Come up here.

INT. TRUCK/CAB - (CAMP 7) - NIGHT

*

SNOW continues to fall on the dusty WINDSCREEN. Outside, all around snow falls, silently, covering the truck and the bridge, transforming it. They are both still awake, unable to sleep, staring at the transformed world, carpeted by snow.

BOY.

I'm hungry.

MAN.

I know. So am I.

BOY.

Can I ask you something?

MAN.

Of course.

BOY.

Are we going to die?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

No. Sometime. Not now.

BOY.

And we're still going south?

MAN.

Yes.

BOY.

So we'll be warm?

MAN.

Yes.

BOY.

And there might be food there?

MAN.

Everything depends on reaching the coast.

BOY.

Okay.

The MAN draws a blanket around him and kisses him goodnight, it is now pitch black.

MAN.

Go to sleep.

BOY.

I wish I was with my mom.

They are silent a moment, until:

MAN.

You mean you wish you were dead.

BOY.

Yeah.

MAN.

You mustn't say that. It's a bad thing to say.

BOY.

I can't help it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN.

I know but you have to. You have to stop thinking about her. We both do.

BOY.

How do I do that?

The MAN is silent, lost in thought.

EXT. TRUCK/CAB - (CAMP 7) EARLY HOURS *

The man gets down from the cab and walks a few feet in the dark and snow. He coughs a bit, takes a few breaths of air, and walks away from the truck, vanishing into the mist.

EXT. CAMP/ROAD - (CAMP 7) - EARLY HOURS *

The MAN is alone now by the road. He takes out his WALLET and sifts through: money, ancient cards, driver's license and a picture of HIMSELF and the WOMAN on their WEDDING DAY, which he studies a moment sadly. *

MAN. (V.O.) *

She was gone, and the coldness of it was her final gift... she died somewhere in the dark... there is no other tale to tell. *

He lays everything out on the grey slushy ground, then flings the wallet into the river and walks back to camp, leaving the PHOTO and cards to blow away.

EXT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE/YARD - NIGHT

FLASHBACK - The WOMAN kisses the MAN. *

MAN.

Will you tell him goodbye?

WOMAN. *

No. I won't. I can't.

MAN.

Will you at least wait till morning? Stay with me through the night.

WOMAN. *

No. I have to go now.

They kiss again, she turns and walks away out of the yard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

What am I going to tell him? What are we going to do without you?

WOMAN. *

You should move south. You won't survive another winter here.

The MAN follows a few steps and she stops and turns to him.

MAN.

Why won't you help me?

WOMAN. *

I can't help you. Don't you understand? This is how I'm helping you.

MAN.

Where are you going to go? You can't even see.

WOMAN. *

I don't need to see.

MAN.

I'm begging you.

WOMAN. *

Please don't. Please.

The MAN stares. She goes, vanishing into the darkness. *

END OF FLASHBACK.

EXT. CITY LIMITS - DUSK *

The MAN stares. In the distance, a dead city. *

EXT. OVERPASS/CITY LIMITS - EVENING

The MAN and the BOY approach the edge of the city. Up ahead a cluster of three tall buildings, a dozen or so floors of concrete and glass, the upper floors of one illuminated by the flickering fire glow of candle light inside. The MAN stops and stares and the BOY follows his gaze. *

In one of the illuminated windows a SILHOUETTE FIGURE stares back at them, somebody in the building. In another window another SILHOUETTE FIGURE is staring out, motionless, they could be refugees, cannibals or more mummified dead for all we know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOY.

Who are they, Papa?

MAN.

I don't know.

BOY.

What if it's more bad guys?

MAN.

It won't be more bad guys. Don't worry. Stay close.

He takes hold of the gun and they walk in a different direction now, giving the high rises a wide berth.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Keep low. We'll be okay.

When they get to the end of the block they stop and the MAN checks around the corner before they cross the street. In the distance three men appear, emaciated, slow-moving. They step forward, stop and watch the BOY and the MAN. *

EXT. OUTSKIRTS/CITY - DAY *

The MAN, now carrying the revolver, and the BOY head off down a railway track that leads away from the city. *

EXT. COUNTRY RAILWAY LINE - DAY *

In the country, along the railway, they see past a small road to a once grand house on a rise. It is tall and stately with white Doric columns across the front and a gravel drive that curves up from the road through a field of dead, foot long grass. They stand there staring at it, the BOY still holding the MAN's hand. The MAN listens - nothing but the WIND in the dead bracken, a CREAK of a door or shutter rattling. *

MAN.

I think we should take a look.

BOY.

I'm scared.

MAN.

There's nothing to be scared of.

EXT. DRIVEWAY/STATELY HOME *

The MAN sets off up the drive. He stops and faces the BOY who is rooted to the spot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

You want to stay here? *

BOY.

No.

The BOY joins him and they set off slowly up the drive, through patches of melting snow. There is a tall dead privet fence with a deserted birdsnest in it.

EXT. PORCH/STATELY HOME - DAY

They climb the steps to the porch, the BOY clutching the MAN's hand. They notice a window is slightly open. The MAN goes to it, opens the window wide, looks inside.

INT. FOYER/STATELY HOME - DAY

They climb through the window onto black and white marble tiles and the MAN carefully shuts the window a little so it's the same as when he found it. They regard the room, binoculars set up on a tripod sit next to an arm chair. An elaborate staircase in front of them, William Morris wall paper, water stained and sagging, plaster moldings and cornices sagging from the ceiling. *

They cross back to the other side where there is a great hall of a drawing room, high ceilings, huge fire place with raw brick around it where the wood has been stripped, a pile of warm-weather clothing, boots and backpacks on the floor by the hearth. *

BOY.

Papa?

MAN.

Shh.

INT. KITCHEN/STATELY HOME - DAY

They creep in and find blackened pots and pans, a cord with a bell for servants, trash piled on the floor and work tops, a rusted sink covered in mould, bare cupboards. In the floor is a hatch with a lock set in a steel plate. The man examines it while the BOY tugs at his arm, frightened.

BOY.

Papa, let's go.

MAN.

There's a reason this is locked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BOY is now panicky, hopping about, close to tears.

BOY.
Don't open it - don't!

MAN.
I need something to pry it open.

BOY.
No!

The MAN goes out abruptly and the BOY follows, wringing his hands in fear.

EXT. BACK GARDEN/STATELY HOME - DAY

The MAN comes out the back door with his revolver drawn, looks around and sees an old station wagon with flat tyres on the dead grass. Beside it is a 40 gallon cauldron on the blackened remnants of a fire. There is also a wooden SMOKE HOUSE with thin wisps of smoke coming off it. The MAN studies it nervously, sniffing the air, then goes to the tool shed and starts sorting through tools. He finds a long handled spade and hefts it in his hands.

INT. KITCHEN/STATELY HOME - DAY

The spade chops into the wood around the lock on the hatch. The MAN hacks away, then prizes up the hatch, lock and all, revealing a gap of darkness.

BOY.
Papa...

MAN.
Listen to me. Just stop it. We're starving. Do you understand? I have to do this. I don't have any choice.

The MAN opens the hatch fully and lies it on the floor.

MAN. (CONT'D)
Just wait here.

BOY.
I'm going with you.

MAN.
Okay. Just stay close to me. Nothing's going to happen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They descend the rough wooden steps.

INT. CELLAR/STATELY HOME - DAY

There is a terrible stench and they have to cover their mouths and noses with their parkas. The MAN gets out his lighter, lights it and tries to light the way.

POV MAN - BLACKNESS except the small area illuminated by the lighter as the MAN searches: part of a stone wall; then a clay floor; an old mattress with dark stains. The glow of the flame crawls across the floor to a corner as the MAN steps closer, then plays the lighter along from the corner to reveal:

Huddled against the wall, all trying to hide, shielding their shining eyes from the light, NAKED MEN and WOMEN, thin as skeletons like inmates in a death camp. The BOY jumps, shocked and the MAN freezes, staring, dumb struck by:

On a mattress on the floor lies a NAKED MAN with his legs gone to the hip, their stumps blackened and burned, cauterized. The BOY covers his eyes.

MAN.

Jesus...

The MAN on the MATTRESS turns to them and WHISPERS, a low indistinct murmur at first.

MAN ON MATTRESS.

Help us... please help us...

MAN.

Christ... oh Christ...

The others join in, an eerie chorus of WHISPERING, "Help us... please help us..." The MAN turns and grabs the BOY and rushes for the steps.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Hurry... go... move!

The MAN drops the lighter as he tries to push the BOY up the steps. Out of nowhere a BEARDED FACE appears at the foot of the stairs, blinking.

BEARDED FACE.

Please... they're taking us to the smoke house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BEARDED FACE reaches out and feebly tries to grab the MAN's arm but he breaks free and concentrates on getting the BOY up the steps, following in a blind panic, fumbling and missing his footing.

MAN.

Hurry - hurry!

They scramble up the steps towards the light of the hatch as the BEARDED FACE reaches out and tries one last time to grab at the MAN's feet but he kicks free.

INT. KITCHEN/STATELY HOME - DAY

The MAN scrambles out, slams the door shut and drags a solid table over the door. He looks around for the BOY.

MAN.

Christ. Run!

The BOY is near the window, dancing up and down in terror, pointing out the window to:

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Coming up the path toward the house are four BEARDED MEN and two WOMEN, all suspiciously well fed and healthy-looking. One of the MEN holds hands with one of the WOMEN, as if they were returning from a stroll before dinner.

INT. KITCHEN/STATELY HOME - DAY

The MAN stares a moment, frozen with horror, then grabs the BOY by the hand and jerks him away.

MAN.

Run. Run!

INT. FOYER/STATELY HOME - DAY

They tear through to the front door, the MAN fumbles to get it open but it has a well-maintained deadlock on it. He stares out the window next to the door and sees:

POV MAN - The WELL-FED PEOPLE are climbing the steps of the porch. The MAN Grabs the BOY and they rush through into kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN/STATELY HOME - DAY

In the kitchen the hatch is being lifted from underneath and the table elevating inches. They rush back out again.

INT. FOYER/STATELY HOME - DAY

As they reach the stairs, a key turns in the lock and the MAN picks up the BOY in his arms and they sprint to a door under the stairs. As they get through the door the front door swings open and the WELL-FED PEOPLE drift inside.

INT. REST ROOM - DAY

They are in a small rest room under the stairs, just a toilet and a basin. The BOY's face is level with the basin and while the MAN is holding the door shut the BOY comes face to face with the contents of the basin:

POV BOY - bloodstained clothing soaking in bloody water and tallow in the basin. Around the basin are bloody red hand prints on the white porcelain.

POV MAN - through a thin crack he sees the WELL-FED PEOPLE on the far side of the foyer, chatting casually. He is not close enough to hear everything they say, but close enough to see that the MEN's beards are trimmed and they wear well-repaired clothes.

WELL FED WOMAN.
I'm going to freshen up.

*

BEARDED MAN.
I need a drink.

WELL FED WOMAN 2.
I'm going up to change.

*

He hears one of the WOMEN STOMPING across the old floorboards and up the stairs to change while the other WOMAN takes a few steps towards the rest room, then turns back towards the window as the conversation lurches on.

BEARDED MAN 2.
Who left this window open?

WELL FED WOMAN.
I leave it open for the smell.

*

BEARDED MAN 2.
What smell?

WELL FED WOMAN.
You don't smell it anymore?

*

BEARDED MAN.
Who wants a drink?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They hear the sound of the WINDOW BEING CLOSED and LATCHED. As all this goes on, the MAN is frozen, eyes wide with fear, he slips the pistol from his belt, cocks it and squats on his haunches so he's close to the BOY, desperate, unable to decide what to do, unable to think straight with fear.

The BOY is staring from the door to the pistol to the bloodied basin as if hypnotised, in shock, babbling somewhat.

BOY. (MUMBLING, TO SELF.)
Bad guys... bad men...

MAN.
Shh, shh...

There are FOOT STEPS outside the door as the WELL FED PEOPLE drift closer and then away again. The man starts to cough but he has the revolver in one hand and the BOY's hand in his other. The MAN tries to stifle his cough but can't. Then the BOY notices and holds his own small hand to the MAN's mouth, stifling his coughing as the talk goes on outside:

WELL FED WOMAN. *
Will you help me with the dirty
dishes?

BEARDED MAN 2.
I'm hungry.

As the coughing subsides a little the MAN takes the BOY's hand from his mouth and pushes the revolver into it.

MAN.
Take it.

The BOY tries to resist, shaking his head, terrified, mute.

MAN. (WHISPERS.) (CONT'D)
Take it.

The MAN puts his left arm around the BOY's tiny, thin shoulders and holds him close.

MAN. (WHISPERS.) (CONT'D)
Don't be afraid. If they get hold
of you, you're going to have to do
it just like everybody else. Do you
understand? Shh. No crying. Do you
hear me?

The WOMAN turns from the window and one of the BEARDED MEN pours whiskey and hands her one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The BOY is weeping and shaking his head as the MAN shows him again what to do with the gun.

MAN (WHISPERS.)
Stop crying. You have to be a brave
boy. You know how to do it.

BOY (WHISPERS.)
I think so.

MAN (WHISPERS.)
Say "Yes I do Papa."

He stares down at the little BOY who just holds the gun feebly... he realises the BOY won't use it. After a moment of torturous contemplation, the MAN very gently takes the gun from the BOY's hand and the BOY sits forlornly, staring down at his hands, afraid to look at the MAN now. When the BOY looks up again he is staring down the barrel of the pistol, the MAN aiming the large revolver at the BOY's forehead.

BOY.
What are you doing?

The MAN's hand shakes, his thumb trembles on the hammer as he cocks it...

BOY. (CONT'D)
Papa?

MAN.
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

BOY.
Will I see you again? When will I
see you?

The MAN's finger trembles on the trigger as he slowly squeezes it... At that moment there's a loud THUMP from the kitchen and the WELL FED PEOPLE stop and listen, then rush through to the kitchen, and immediately there's a commotion as they see the state of the hatch with the table over it.

BEARDED MAN 2(O.O.V.)
What the fuck do you think you're
doing? Huh? What the fuck do you
think you're doing...?

WELL FED WOMAN (O.O.V.)
Don't look at me like that. What
are you doing?

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The MAN gathers his wits and opens the door a crack.

MAN.

Follow me, take my hand, don't let
go.

INT. FOYER/STATELY HOME - DAY

The MAN bursts out of the rest room with the BOY and they make a dash for the open window. He sticks his gun in his belt and wrestles with the window, an old colonial style frame which sticks.

From behind the closed kitchen door they hear muffled GRUNTS and SHOUTS until the MAN wrenches the window open, stuffs the BOY through and follows.

EXT. PORCH/STATELY HOME - DAY

The MAN picks the BOY up and they rush down the steps.

EXT. DRIVEWAY/STATELY HOME - DAY

They rush down the driveway and the MAN drags the BOY through a gap in the dead privet hedge onto the road.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

They hesitate a moment on the road, deciding.

MAN.

Come on, keep running!

They rush across the road to the woods on the other side, the BOY ahead as the MAN checks behind them. The MAN looks back towards the house and two of the WELL-FED PEOPLE have come outside, looking around suspiciously.

He hits the ground and takes the BOY with him, they lie flat at the edge of the woods and the road. They are wildly out of breath, chests heaving, the MAN coughing.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Keep your head down.

POV MAN - the WELL-FED PEOPLE walk a few steps down the drive and a BEARDED MAN looks through BINOCULARS at the road and the woods, but not directly at the MAN and the BOY hiding. The WELL FED PEOPLE start looking around the side of the house, walking away. The MAN and the BOY get up, dash through the treeline and disappear into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A dull moon hidden in the ashen sky and the outlines of trees as they set off through the woods, sleepy, stumbling like drunks now. They hear a hideous SHRIEK in the distance, coming from the house. They stop, hearing another SHRIEK and a MAN'S SCREAMING. The MAN holds the BOY close and tries to cover the BOY's ears as they stare and wait for it to pass.

MAN.

We'll be safe soon.

BOY.

They're going to eat those people aren't they, Papa?

The MAN does not answer.

EXT. SEARS DEPARTMENT STORE/SHOPPING MALL - NIGHT

They are back in the city, trudging through the parking lot of a huge shopping mall, just outside what used to be SEARS department store. A dull moon hidden in the ashen sky illuminates the ruined store front as the MAN looks up at the mall, thinking. The BOY is just staring into space, still in shock.

INT. SEARS/MALL - (CAMP 8) - NIGHT

The MAN and the BOY have set up camp in the mall, outside the SEARS entrance. The MAN is building a big fire. The BOY stares through the glass at the deserted department store. Nearby, strewn across the doorway are bunches and bundles of cash in notes and coins... the BOY looks closer and finds expensive items of jewelry still in their boxes, LOOTED from the store and discarded.

The BOY sits, he looks like he's given up, and then:

BOY.

Papa? Papa, we wouldn't ever eat anybody would we?

MAN.

No. Of course not.

BOY.

No matter how hungry we were. Even if we were starving?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

We're starving now.

BOY.

Because, because we're the good
guys?

MAN.

Yes.

BOY.

And we're carrying the fire.

MAN.

Yes.

The MAN takes the BOY in his arms. In a moment the BOY starts blinking sleepily and drifts off to sleep and the MAN strokes the sleeping BOY's hair and kisses him on the forehead.

EXT. SUPERMARKET/PARKING LOT - DAY

They walk through the parking lot until they come to a supermarket around the other side. A few old cars in a trash strewn parking lot. The MAN heads through the defunct automatic doors. *

MAN.

Come on. There's nobody here.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

The MAN and the BOY trudge the empty aisles, only litter remaining, the once brightly-colored packaging strewn around, it's contents long since looted.

In the empty gun section there is a deer's head mounted on the wall. The BOY stops and stares, mesmerised while the MAN searches the empty shelves for ammo, finding only empty boxes.

The MAN glimpses a woman's face staring dolefully from an aisle - an emaciated, dead beat SCAVENGER watching them, vanishing as quickly as she appeared. *

On their way out they come to a pair of vending machines tipped over, the sodas looted, coins scattered around in the ash. The MAN sits beside one and feels inside the gutted machine, eventually producing a single unopened can of COCA COLA. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOY (EXCITED.)
What is it, papa?

MAN.
It's a treat for you. Here. Sit
down.

He helps the little BOY off with his knapsack and sits him down and opens the can of COKE ceremoniously. The BOY looks startled and sniffs the fizzing can as if it's the strangest thing he's ever seen in his life.

MAN. (CONT'D)
Go ahead.

The BOY takes the can.

BOY.
It's bubbly.

MAN.
Go ahead. Drink it.

The BOY takes a sip and considers.

BOY.
It's really good. You have some,
papa.

MAN.
No. I want you to drink it.

BOY.
But I want you to have some.

The MAN reluctantly takes the can and has a tiny sip, hands it back to the wary BOY.

BOY. (CONT'D)
It's because I'll never get to
drink another one, isn't it?

The MAN doesn't know what to say.

EXT. MALL/PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON

They head out of the mall now towards the road, lifeless traffic lights at the intersection, town houses and apartment blocks on the other side of the road. The BOY stops to listen, stares around, suddenly energised, bobbing on his toes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.
What's wrong with you?

BOY.
What was that?

MAN.
I didn't hear anything.

BOY.
Listen.

MAN.
I don't hear anything.

They listen more until, very faintly we hear a DOG BARK in the distance. The BOY turns around 180 degrees to listen, alert with anticipation.

MAN. (CONT'D)
It's a dog.

BOY. (EXCITED.)
A dog! Where did it come from?

MAN.
I don't know. Come on.

The MAN walks across the road, past the apartments and the BOY follows, bouncing up and down, over-excited now. *

BOY.
We're not going to kill it are we
Papa?

MAN.
What? No, we're not going to kill
it. Why did you say that?

BOY.
You still got one bullet left.

MAN.
We're not going to hurt the dog, I
promise. We're not going to kill it
and we're not going to eat it
either.

BOY (OVER EXCITED, NOT FRIGHTENED.)
Maybe it'll eat us!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN.

I doubt it very much.

BOY.

Can we look for it?

MAN.

It's gone, okay?

EXT. SUBURBS - DAY

They trudge through the suburbs on the edge of the city, past what used to be the local ball park, now barren, dead, a vast flat expanse of ash and cracked, scorched earth, forlorn stands and bleachers blackened by ash and soot.

BOY.

What is it?

MAN.

I used to watch the ball games here with my father.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

They walk up a once tree-lined suburban street, barren now, ash and dust layer what used to be front lawns, post boxes, picket fences, porches, crazy paving. The MAN stops outside a typical, suburban clapboard house with a dead, cracked yard where the lawn used to be and a bare flag pole. The BOY eyes the MAN enquiringly.

BOY.

What is this place, Papa?

MAN.

It's the house where I grew up.

They go up to the house - clapboards have been removed for firewood leaving studs and insulation exposed. The BOY stops, reluctant to go further, and the MAN takes a few more steps then turns around to check on him.

MAN. (CONT'D)

You coming?

BOY.

I don't want to.

MAN.

Don't you want to see where I grew up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOY.

There might be somebody in there.

MAN.

There's nobody there now.

The MAN takes the BOY's hand and they approach a basketball hoop by the garage. The MAN is momentarily overcome with emotion as he recalls the details, but it doesn't mean much to the BOY.

After a moment the MAN goes up the steps - frightened, but horribly compelled at the same time. The BOY follows nervously.

BOY.

I'm scared.

MAN.

We've got to find something to eat.

BOY.

I'm not hungry. I'm not!

The MAN takes his revolver from his belt and approaches the front door, warily pushing it open.

MAN.

We'll be all right. Come on.

He goes through the front door - the BOY stays where he is, rigid with fear. The BOY notices a stuffed toy dog in the window, staring out at the garden and his curiosity takes over. The BOY goes inside carefully.

INT. DINING ROOM/HOME - EVENING

The pine panelling is stripped from the walls, there is some broken furniture but much has been taken for firewood. They go over to the fireplace and the MAN examines it. He runs his fingers along the mantle where there is an old drawing pin still stuck in the wood, nostalgia overcoming his fear.

MAN.

This is where we used to have
Christmas when I was a boy. We'd
hang our stockings right here.

The MAN examines the yellow tiled surround. The BOY watches the MAN as if he's gone mad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN. (CONT'D)
 My mother scrubbed these every day.
 It's still spotless.

Much of the woodwork and the floorboards have been stripped and taken for firewood - there are gaping holes.

By the fireplace is a small pile of bones - and in the grid are more burnt bones and the skull from the family cat. The MAN takes it all in sadly but the BOY is unmoved.

BOY.
 Papa? I don't think we should do
 this.

MAN.
 You want to wait outside?

The BOY nods vigorously.

MAN. (CONT'D)
 All right.

He takes the BOY's hand and leads him out.

EXT. PORCH/HOME - DAY

The come out onto the porch.

MAN.
 Sit here on the stoop and don't go
 away.

The BOY sits quietly and the MAN goes back inside. After a moment he starts going through his knapsack, less afraid now.

INT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

The floorboards CREAK horribly, swollen from rain or ripped up, as he creeps into the living room. The timber cladding is stripped from the walls, the ceiling plaster is collapsed, beams exposed. The MAN pads through to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN/OLD HOUSE - DAY

The kitchen is similarly dilapidated, the cupboards stripped bare. On a shelf by the window are dusty jars of fruit, preserved. He grabs a jar, prizes open the lid and finds a an oily slick of black mucus floating in the top, like rotted mushroom spores. He sniffs it suspiciously, holds it up to the light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the light small black fish hook-shaped spores drift from the top of the jar to the bottom. He replaces the lid, appalled.

EXT. PORCH/OLD HOUSE - DAY

The BOY is sitting on the steps of the porch drawing with crayons on a pad taken from his knapsack. Across the road is another big old house, much of the clapboard missing, swathed in dead brambles - the BOY suddenly looks up and stares at it, distracted.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

The MAN comes outside and regards the deadened yard, old garden hoe and spade, gardening equipment and several dead apple trees. He goes over and examines the ashen ground and digs about to unearth several small, dark brown, shrivelled spheres spaced several feet apart - apples. He bends down and picks one up, examines, sniffs. He gathers up the strange apples and stuffs them in his pockets. *

EXT. PORCH/OLD HOUSE - DAY

The BOY is still staring at the house across the road when he notices A GHOSTLY FACE, completely still, in a window. The BOY drops the pad and crayon and stands, surprised, not believing his eyes - it is the face of a SMALL BOY roughly his age, which disappears almost immediately, receding back into the gloom like a ghost. *

INT. PANTRY/CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY

The MAN is in the looted pantry. He finds some shrivelled raisins that have spilt and hidden in the back of the shelf. He puts them into a handkerchief, folds it and pockets it. He hears: *

BOY. (O.O.V.)
Stop - stop!

The MAN freezes, then charges out.

EXT. PORCH/CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY

The MAN rushes out and stares about frantically for the BOY - he's gone.

EXT. HOUSE OPPOSITE - DAY

The BOY has run across the road to another house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POV BOY - peeping around the side of the house is the other SMALL BOY, the same age, similarly grimy and thin, wearing an outsize woollen coat. The other SMALL BOY disappears down the side and the BOY runs after him.

BOY.

Wait! Come back! I won't hurt you!

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

The BOY runs to the bottom of the yard where there is various suburban garden detritus, a dusty lawn mower, a clothes line, a shed, bikes with no tyres.

BOY.

Where are you?!

The MAN comes sprinting up the side of the house and seizes him by the arm.

MAN.

What are you doing? What the hell are you doing?

BOY.

There's a little boy, Papa, I saw a little boy.

MAN.

There's no little boy. What's the matter with you?

BOY.

Yes there is! I saw him! A boy just like me.

The MAN takes the BOY by the arm and drags him back through the yard, up the side of the house, the BOY resisting, crying and looking back all the way.

BOY. (CONT'D)

Why? Why can't I go and see him?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Out the front of the house the BOY digs his heels in and the MAN has to drag him, his feet slithering through the dirt.

BOY.

I need to see him! I need to!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

Why?

BOY.

I just do!

The BOY has gone limp, weeping bitterly, resisting being moved. The MAN gives up and squats beside the sobbing BOY.

MAN.

Okay, I'm sorry. I understand.

He holds him, wipes his tears from his cheeks.

*

EXT. TOWN STREET/OVERPASS - EVENING

In the failing light they come across a late model Chevy abandoned under an overpass.

BOY.

Papa? Will there be other boys like me at the coast?

MAN.

I hope so.

The MAN goes to the car, wipes thick dust from the windscreen and peers in - it's empty.

INT. CHEVY - (CAMP 9) - NIGHT

*

They try to get comfortable in the leather seats, the MAN spreading the blankets over them and tucking the BOY in. They are quiet a moment as they watch darkness start to fall. Then:

MAN.

I got you something

The MAN produces from his pocket one of the tiny hard brown apples and holds it up to the remaining light.

BOY.

What is it?

MAN.

It's an apple.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hands it to the boy who examines it curiously. The MAN takes out a pocket knife, takes the apple back, cuts the apple in half to reveal a woody brown interior. They regard the mahogany apple uncertainly, the MAN is the first to take a bite, with some difficulty. The BOY bites his half and makes a face.

MAN. (CONT'D)
Suck it a while and it'll soften.

They sit sucking and chewing the ancient apple.

BOY.
Did you ever have any friends?

The MAN eyes the BOY - curious at the sudden question.

MAN.
Yes. I did.

BOY.
Lots of them?

MAN.
Yes...

BOY.
Do you remember them?

MAN.
Yes. I remember all of them...

BOY.
What happened to them?

MAN.
They died.

BOY.
All of them?

MAN.
Yes. All of them.

EXT. URBAN ENVIRONS (MONTAGE) DAY

The MAN and the BOY make their way out of the ruined city.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN. (V.O.)

He yearns for his own friends and
imagines how things will be
different at the coast - and that
there will be other children
there....When I have nothing else,
I try to dream the dreams of a
child's imaginings...

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - DAY

*

The MAN and BOY walk along a desolate road in what was once
farmland, grain silos loom ominously, still standing.

*
*

BOY.

Do you know where we are Papa?

MAN.

I think we're about two hundred
miles from the coast. As the crow
flies.

BOY.

"As the crow flies?"

*

MAN.

It means, going in a straight line.

*

POV MAN - In the background, something catches his eye and he
focuses on:

*

A frieze of HUMAN HEADS, dried with taut grins and shrunken
eyes, perched on wooden poles. Some are tattooed with targets
and runic slogans. Some are skinless, with signs and words
inked onto them. One has suture marks etched on it, like a
blue print for assembly.

*

BOY.

There aren't any crows are there?
Just in books.

MAN.

Yeah, just in books...

The MAN stares at the heads as the BOY continues his
conversation, distracted and not seeing the heads.

*

BOY.

Do you think there might be crows
somewhere?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

I don't know...

BOY.

But what do you think?

MAN.

I think it's unlikely...

They keep walking and talking, the MAN grim-faced but the BOY intent on what's ahead.

BOY.

Could they fly to Mars or some place?

MAN.

No, they couldn't fly to Mars...

BOY.

Because it's too far?

MAN.

Yes.

The MAN discretely hurries the BOY on with a guiding hand towards the woods and off the road. *

BOY.

What if they tried and-and-and they just got halfway or something and then they were too tired? Would they fall back down...?

EXT. EDGE OF WOODS - EVENING *

On the edge of the wood the MAN and the BOY stop to examine footprints in the snow. *

The MAN listens and hears: the low THUDDING of BULL DRUMS in the distance. He looks at the exhausted BOY a moment. *

MAN.

We can't go back on the road.

BOY.

Why, Papa?

MAN.

I think someone's coming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BOY stares at the tracks. The MAN stares in both directions, examining the road in the distance. He moves a few paces and notices tied to a dead sapling a thin red neckerchief. He takes a few steps and through a gap in the trees sees a clearing - snow and a mass of BLOOD RED FOOTPRINTS, the icy snow stained blood red like a sorbet. A killing floor. *

BOY.

Will they see our tracks?

MAN.

We'll cover them.

The MAN moves the BOY away and kicks snow over their tracks - then lays fresh ones going in several different directions. The BOY copies him, leaving his own maze of tracks. They run off keeping parallel with the road but staying off it. * *

POV MAN - in the distance TWO FIGURES appear on the road.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Here they come.

The MAN now looks over his shoulder for a good look, then grabs the BOY's hand and takes off.

EXT. HIGH GROUND - EVENING

TWO MEN come prowling on the ROAD, they are MILITANTS from some sort of ARMY, wearing the same red neckerchiefs and carrying weapons, searching, predatory.

WIDER - we see that only 30 feet away, concealed amongst the trees, the MAN and BOY are crouched in blankets, watching. The two MILITANTS stop and look around, as if they sense the BOY and the MAN - who freeze, frightened to breathe. The MILITANTS sniff the air menacingly.

One of them walks over to a stone by the side of the road, leans down and starts sharpening his lance, made from a the straightened coil spring of a car. The MAN and the BOY watch - wide-eyed. Eventually the MILITANTS walk off up the road.

BOY.

What are we going to do?

No answer.

EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - (CAMP 10) - EVENING *

There is a thick carpet of gray snow. The man lays out a tarp on the ground and blankets on top. Out of the murky sky more gray snow is falling. The MAN is distracted by a sudden noise, the LOUD CRACK of sheering wood - this time very close. He looks around just as: *

Out of nowhere a tree branch sails down, barely missing them, landing with a heavy WHUMP just feet away. *

MAN.
Move! Quickly! *

He tries to get the BOY to his feet but he is limp, staring around blearily, exhausted. *

They hear another loud WHUMP. Then the GROAN of timber and another WHUMP as trees start to keel over around them. The MAN grabs the BOY and runs as best he can through the snow and falling trees. They have abandoned their blankets, tarp and backpacks. *

BOY.
What's happening? *

MAN.
Just keep moving, run! *

They rush through the woods as more and more trees fall one after the other, WHUMP, WHUMP, WHUMP, great loads of snow falling from limbs to the ground with a BOOM, setting the woods shuddering. The BOY is getting bogged in the snow and the MAN stoops and scoops up the BOY and they cram themselves under a fat fallen tree to shield themselves. *

EXT. SEWER PIPE/EMBANKMENT, SNOWDRIFT - (CAMP 11) - NIGHT *

They are huddled inside a huge SEWER PIPE, sheltering. *

The BOY is wrapped up inside the man's coat, wet and shivering, wide awake, nerves shredded, too anxious to lie down and sleep now. *

The MAN boils water in a car hubcab. *

He takes from his pocket the handkerchief filled with raisins, offers them. *

BOY.
That's all there is, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN.

Yes.

BOY.

There's nothing left anywhere.

MAN.

No.

They sit eating raisins, saying nothing until they're finished.

BOY.

Can I ask you something?

MAN.

Sure.

BOY.

Are we going to die now?

The MAN just looks at the BOY, then looks away. *

MAN.

What do you think is going to happen? We're just going to suddenly keel over and die? It takes a long time to die of starvation. The important thing is water to stop you dehydrating. We've got water. We'll be all right.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - MORNING *

Snowed in farmland, in the background a row of fallen and crumpled high tension electrical towers. A town in the far distance ahead of the BOY and the MAN. The BOY is hunched over with a hunger cramp. They are both wet and shivering. The MAN eyes the BOY anxiously. *

EXT. PATIO/TOWN HOUSE - DAY *

The MAN stands on the back patio of a house on the edge of town, the BOY at his side, fields stretching out before them, the land flattened and dead, ravaged fences running the perimeter. In the yard are a few dead trees, a fence, a metal tool shed, an old barbecue on the patio made from a 44 gallon drum. The MAN slides the patio door open and peers inside gingerly. *

INT. BEDROOM/TOWN HOUSE - DAY

*

The MAN is in the bedroom looking around for useful things - it has been stripped, the wooden frame gone from the window, the bureau ransacked and chopped up - only a summer dress on a wire hanger on the back of the door remains. He glances at empty drawers on the floor and a cupboard before turning his attention to the bed.

He blinks and sways a moment, trying to focus on:

POV MAN - underneath the filthy, dusty blankets a thin, dried head pokes out, the blankets pulled up to the chin. On the pillow are long hunks of rotted hair.

MAN. (V.O.)

Every day is a lie. But I am slowly
dying. That is not a lie ...I am
trying to prepare him for the day
when I am gone.

*
*
*
*
*

He takes hold of the lower hem of the blanket and tows it off the bed, revealing a desiccated corpse. He ignores it, shaking the blanket out and folding it under his arm. He notices the BOY at his side, watching wide-eyed.

*

MAN. (CONT'D)

Nothing you haven't seen before.

*

They go out.

INT. KITCHEN/TOWN HOUSE - DAY

*

The MAN opens and shuts empty cupboards, slamming the doors, increasingly desperate, close to tears of frustration now. Eventually he feels dizzy and has to sit on the floor. He just sits there, alone on the kitchen floor, clenching and unclenching his fists, his head in his hands, when he hears:

BOY. (O.O.V.)

Papa!

The MAN draws his pistol and goes out, alert again.

INT. TOWN HOUSE - DAY

*

The BOY is staring at himself in a dusty, flyblown full length mirror. As the MAN comes in he sees the BOY's reflection and his own and jumps.

BOY.

It's us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BOY stares at his reflection - he looks like an alien, skinny with giant staring eyes on shaky legs.

BOY. (CONT'D)
We look skinny.

MAN.
We are skinny.

The MAN puts the blanket around the BOY's shoulders. He notices an old upright piano, covered in ash and dust. The BOY stares as he goes to it, lifts the lid and plays a chord. The BOY's eyes light up and he is magnetized, instantly coming over and waiting for the next note. The MAN plays another chord. *

BOY.
What is it?

MAN.
It's a piano.

BOY.
What's it for?

MAN.
For making music. This... (HE PLAYS.) ... is music. Your mother played very well.

BOY.
I don't remember. *

MAN.
Before you were born. We had one just like it. It was beautiful. *

BOY.
What happened to it? *

MAN.
Chopped it up for firewood.

He stares into space, slumps suddenly, overcome with emotion as he remembers: *

INT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY *

FLASHBACK - Just the MAN and the pregnant WOMAN alone in the house, just before the BOY was born. Some of the furniture has been broken up for firewood - there are broken pieces by the fire and a huge axe propped on the hearth. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The WOMAN stands at the piano and tries to play. She plays for a moment and the MAN cracks a rare smile - the piano is out of tune and she stops. She plays a bit more but soon starts to bang the keys atonally in frustration. The MAN just lets her get on with it until she's spent.

WOMAN.

I used to worry what would happen if there was a fire. What would I save? What could I bear to lose? There used to be so many things, so many beautiful things. Things people made. Things nature made. Who knew we would lose it all?

MAN.

I'll strip the floorboards.

WOMAN.

You can't live without a floor.

MAN.

You can't live without a piano.

She starts to dismantle the piano, opening the lid, taking it off it's hinges, it's heavy, she hands him the heavy lid and he reluctantly dumps it on the floor.

WOMAN.

It's my piano.

MAN.

I bought it for you.

WOMAN.

It needs tuning. Who's going to tune it? Can you tune it?

They look at each other sadly. They take the front piece away and dump that. The WOMAN picks up the axe and hands it to the MAN. He swings it at the frame.

END OF FLASHBACK.

EXT. YARD - DAY

The MAN walks toward a tin shed and crosses the dead grass. He stops suddenly. He stamps about a bit, listening. He continues on into the shed. Beside the shed sits an INDUSTRIAL GARDEN TROLLEY. The man reappears, spade in hand. He digs the spade into the dead grass and hear's it CHOMP into wood. He digs more urgently, increasingly exhausted, until a door is revealed in the dirt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He is so engrossed he hasn't noticed the BOY standing a few feet away, watching with saucer eyes, scared.

BOY.
Don't open it, Papa.

MAN.
It'll be okay.

BOY.
Please, Papa, please.

MAN.
It's okay.

BOY.
No it's not! What if there's people
hiding down there?

The MAN ignores him, focussed as he chops the plywood around the lock, gets the spade under a corner and levers the door open. The BOY has his fists bunched up to his chest, bobbing up and down with fear.

The MAN starts to descend a hand made wooden stair case in the bunker. He takes another disposable lighter from his pocket, gives the child a kiss on the forehead and then disappears into the bunker, leaving the worried BOY staring after him. The BOY looks around at the deserted yard as the evening draws in, now even more frightened.

*
*

MAN. (O.O.V.)
Oh my God... oh my God!

BOY.
What is it, Papa?

MAN (O.O.V.)
Come down. Oh my God come down.

The BOY is in the hole and down the steps like lightning.

INT. BUNKER - (CAMP 12) - EVENING

*

The little BOY CLATTERS down the steps. The MAN is busy lighting up candles.

*
*

BOY.
Papa? What did you find?

MAN.
Everything. I found everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stored in the bunker are crate upon crate of canned goods: tomatoes, peaches, beans, apricots, canned ham, corned beef, hundreds of gallons of water in jerry cans and in boxes paper towels, toilet paper and trash bags stuffed with blankets.

The MAN takes the BOY's hand and helps him down, then goes back up the steps and draws the door shut and jams a pair of metal pliers through the heavy inside hasp to stop the door being opened. He goes back down the steps to the BOY and holds up a candle to illuminate the shelves. *

MAN. (CONT'D)
Can you see?

BOY.
What is all this stuff?

MAN.
It's food! Can you read the labels?

The BOY stares at the brightly colored packaging, he's never seen anything like it before. The MAN hands the BOY a tin.

BOY.
"Pears." It says "pears."

MAN.
Yes! It does! Oh yes it does!
Pears!

They inspect the shelves: chilli, corn, stew, soup, spaghetti sauce, the BOY's eyes are like saucers.

BOY.
Is it real?

MAN.
Oh yes, it's real all right.

The MAN pulls a box of butane lighters from the shelf and tests one, it doesn't work. He tests another which works, it has a large flame - he uses it to read the labels.

BOY.
Why is it here?

MAN.
Because someone thought it might be needed.

BOY.
But they died.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN.

Yes. What would you like for breakfast?

BOY. (THINKS.)

Pears.

MAN.

Pears it is.

The MAN claws open a box and pulls out a tin of pears. He gets paper bowls from a stack, plastic forks and spoons, lays them out. He finds a camping lamp. He puts a butane cannister in and lights up the lamp. He finds a can opener and opens the pears while the BOY watches silently, wrapping a blanket around himself and sitting on the soft bunk bed. *

BOY.

Is it okay for us to take it?

MAN.

They'd want us to.

The MAN dishes up two bowls of pears and they sit side by side on the bunk with spoons and pears.

MAN. (CONT'D)

These will be the best pears you ever tasted. The best. You just wait.

They eat in silence. They lick the spoons and drink the syrup from the bowls. The MAN feels inside his mouth with his fingers - the sugar irritating a sore tooth.

MAN. (CONT'D)

Too sweet.

The BOY smiles, amused, and the MAN opens another tin. *

INT. BUNKER - (CAMP 12)- EVENING *

Ham and powdered eggs frying in a pan on the camping stove. The kettle is boiling on another ring of the gas stove. The BOY just stares at the bubbling food as the MAN cooks. *

Nearby a breakfast table is set out on a stack of boxes acting as a breakfast bar: biscuits, a plate of butter, condensed milk, salt and pepper plates and utensils.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The MAN brings the pan over and forks over chunks of ham onto the pates, then spoonsfull of scrambled eggs from a second pan, then baked beans from a small pot. The BOY just stares, as if drugged, uncomprehending, the food alien to him.

MAN.

Go ahead. Don't let it get cold.

BOY.

What do I eat first?

MAN.

Whatever you like.

The BOY eats a hunk of ham as the MAN pours coffee.

BOY.

Is this coffee?

MAN.

That's right. Careful it's hot.

He hands him coffee.

BOY.

We did good, didn't we Papa?

MAN.

Yeah, we did good.

INT. BUNKER - (CAMP 12)- NIGHT

The MAN puts the BOY to bed in a bunk and smooths his filthy hair tenderly, smiling with relief, until the BOY shuts his eyes and nods off. He covers the BOY with a blanket and kisses him. He just sits watching the BOY sleep, suddenly on the verge of tears.

INT. BUNKER - (CAMP 12) - NIGHT

The MAN folds the BOY's tiny clothes, noticing the bulging pockets of his pants. He empties them, creating a small pile of collected artefacts: a smooth stone, a marble, an old house key, bottle tops, a smooth, hand made Indian arrow head, fashioned from stone, lastly a broken piece of a woman's mother of pearl hair comb.

By the BOY's bunk he unfolds the crayon drawing he's been working on and examines it, deeply moved:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POV MAN - an eccentric, childlike drawing of the WOMAN, skinny like a stick figure but, inexplicably, with a brightly smiling face and big laughing eyes, labelled simply "mom" in spidery scrawl. *

Stirring classical music fades up and into:

INT. THEATRE - EVENING

FLASHBACK - Close in on a pair of LEGS in stockings, a summer dress, a WOMAN's hands holding a MAN's hand in her lap. The MAN feels the tops of the stockings with his fingers.

WIDER - the MAN is with the WOMAN in a concert theatre, at a recital. The WOMAN wears the mother of pearl hair comb. The seats are velvet, gold scrollwork adorns the boxes, an illustrious, fortunate world. *

END OF FLASHBACK.

INT. BUNKER - (CAMP 12) - MORNING *

The BOY wakes blearily and immediately notices his collection of artefacts turfed out by the bed.

Nearby the MAN is dressing as the BOY starts gathering up his collection crossly, especially protective of the arrow ahead - or just embarrassed. They look at each other.

MAN.

What?

BOY. (TEASING BUT INDIGNANT.) *

Don't touch my stuff. *

EXT. LAWN - DAWN

The hatch opens and the MAN's face appears, as he looks around. He opens the hatch more and clammers out with a couple of jerry cans of water, the yard is quiet. Next, the BOY's face pops up and peers around. He clammers out carrying a big pot with a camping stove in it.

INT. BATHROOM, TOWN HOUSE - DAWN *

They empty the jerry cans into the huge pot, light the stove and put the pot on the stove to heat the water. *

INT. BATHROOM, TOWN HOUSE - DAWN *

The BOY is in the bath, filthy and scrawny, as the MAN bathes him, rubbing him with soap, scrubbing an oily film of scum from his dirty neck to reveal clean pale skin underneath. *

MAN.

What do you think?

BOY.

Nice and warm.

He washes the BOY's hair, lathering water over him with the pot. He has a sudden thought:

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM/CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY

FLASHBACK - the MAN watches unseen from the doorway as the WOMAN tenderly washes the BOY's hair - he is perhaps a year younger than at the start of the film - she appears lost in the task, enjoying it, chatting away to the BOY, momentarily unburdened. She sticks a finger in the BOY's ears, giving them a good soaping, which he likes.

WOMAN.

You could grow potatoes in these ears...

INT. BATHROOM, TOWN HOUSE - DAY *

END FLASHBACK - now the MAN is in the tub, also scrawny and filthy, lost in thought as he soaps up - the BOY helps. *

INT. BATHROOM, TOWN HOUSE - DAY *

The MAN trims his beard off with scissors in a mirror. He lathers up with shaving cream and starts to shave with a plastic safety razor. When the MAN is done he turns to the BOY, wiping away the foam.

MAN.

How do I look?

BOY.

Weird. Won't you be cold? *

INT. BATHROOM, TOWN HOUSE - DAY *

Now the MAN is cutting the BOY's hair with kitchen scissors and a plastic comb.

(CONTINUED)