

An excerpt from my file of night dreams.

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FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Towering PONDEROSA PINES. Turbulent white water races down a river framed by rocky terrain.

An ominous HUM drowns out the sound of rushing RAPIDS. We follow the sound to $\ensuremath{{--}}$

EXT. CABIN - SAME TIME

A rustic log house nestled in the woods. Years of growth have swallowed it up. Moss covers the old rooftop.

We follow the HUM, now a loud BUZZ, to a writhing female figure covered in bees on the ground in front of the cabin.

The honey bees carpet her flesh, tangle in her long hair as she grapples on the ground losing the battle.

An old rocking chair on the front porch rocks a steady course. We cannot see its occupant.

She extends her bee covered arm 'help'. She struggles to SCREAM, but a tsunami of bees rush down her throat. Block her voice and airway.

She twists, contorts, twitches -- her body goes limp. Her fear filled eyes, frozen in death.

FADE TO BLACK.

WHITE LETTERS OVER A BLACK SCREEN

"I will be as careful for you as I should be for myself in the same need." Homer's *The Odyssey* 500-800 BC

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Transformers posters. Model planes hang from the ceiling.

BENJAMIN, 9, black hair, pale skin, sits in a wheelchair, hunched over, sobbing into his hands.

JOSEPHINE (0.S.) You ok? You got me rushin' up in here thinkin' ya done fell out that chair again.

JOSEPHINE, 40, African American, walks over, sits down on the bed beside him.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D) What's wrong child?

BENJAMIN

Mama says I'm gonna cause her and Daddy a divorce. She didn't say it, but I don't think she loves me anymore, Josephine.

JOSEPHINE

Surely she don't mean it. She just talkin' out'a anger, baby.

BENJAMIN

Maybe, but she says she's sendin' me off to live with Granny Potts. Said she's not gonna be needing you around here either once I'm gone.

Josephine puts her arm around Benjamin. He sits up. Wipes tears from his face.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D) It's all cause of leukemia and this stupid chair. I hate this chair.

JOSEPHINE

Your Mama just talkin' crazy nonsense. She don't mean none of that junk. She loves ya. You just keep ya faith cuz' God, he can cure anything. You put your mind to prayin', ya hear?

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

MAMA, 36, pushes the wheelchair to the SUV in the driveway.

She attempts to move Benjamin from the chair to the backseat, but DADDY, 40, tan, salt and pepper hair, sets a suitcase down, lifts Benjamin up for her.

Mama grabs up the suitcase. Her unsure eyes well up as she watches Daddy shut the door. She hurries into the vehicle.

Daddy folds the wheelchair, throws it in the back.

Josephine shuffles out of the house, over to the SUV. She leans in the back window. Smiles at Benjamin.

JOSEPHINE You be good for ya granny. I be right here when you get back.

BENJAMIN You promise?

He nods towards his parents in the front.

JOSEPHINE Yeah, reckon I do. I'll be right here waitin' for ya.

He glances up at her warm smile.

BENJAMIN I love you, Josephine.

JOSEPHINE I loves you too, baby.

INT. SUV - SAME TIME

Mama looks at Daddy. There is a silent communication one can only feel. He shakes his head 'it's going to be ok'.

EXT. FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Josephine waves goodbye as the SUV rolls out of the drive.

Benjamin's hand is pressed against the window, a sad look on his face as they drive away.

EXT. NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

A beautiful view of the Cascade Mountains. The SUV barrels past a sign: STATE ROAD 20 NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY.

INT. SUV - SAME TIME

Mama gazes back at Benjamin who's fast asleep.

MAMA I don't know if I can do this. She turns to the front, her face etched with confusion. Surrounded by beautiful landscape -- she's in another world.

Mama stares out the window. A BEAR CAUTION sign. Trees zoom by. A tear rolls down her cheek. She wipes it away quick.

EXT. SUV - DUSK

Daddy steps out, removes the wheelchair, readies it for Benjamin. The passenger window descends.

DADDY

Wake up Benjamin.

He sets Benjamin down carefully in the chair. Benjamin stretches, then realizes he isn't at Granny's place.

Daddy pushes Benjamin away from the SUV.

BENJAMIN Where are we? I don't have to pee right now. Mama, why we stoppin'?

He looks back over his shoulder at his mother. Tears flood down her face. Four last words as she rolls the window up --

MAMA I love you, Benji.

BENJAMIN

Mama!?

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Daddy pushes the wheelchair over the rugged earth.

BENJAMIN Daddy? Where are we going? Slow down! I'm gonna fall out!

He picks up speed. Further and further --

DEEPER IN THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

The wheelchair comes to an abrupt halt almost catapulting Benjamin out, but he clings tight.

Daddy turns, walks away.

BENJAMIN Where are you goin'? Daddy! Say something! Wait! Don't leave me!

Benjamin does his best to maneuver the lodged wheels around.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D) Daddy! No! Please don't go!! You can't leave me here!

Daddy disappears. Benjamin SOBS.

He desperately tries to get the wheelchair to move, but the landscape isn't yielding.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Moonlight shines through the thick tree canopy.

Benjamin sits all alone. Glowing eyes of a coon peer out of the brush. The sound of a hoot owl. Benjamin shivers, sobs.

EXT. CABIN - GARDEN - MORNING

In a garden of herbs, YARROW, 45, long blond braided hair, big straw hat, harvests fresh lavender.

Something alerts her. She sets her basket down. A faint CRY for help can be heard. She strides toward the wood's edge.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Yarrow rushes up on the wheelchair. Benjamin lies on the forest floor, struggling with hardly any strength left.

When she reaches down to help him, sunlight hits her hair like a halo. She struggles to get him back into the chair.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Dried herb bundles hang from the ceiling. Shelves against the wall hold jarred specimens ranging from plant clippings to garter snakes.

Benjamin lies bundled up on the couch. Sweat beads on his forehead as he rustles awake.

He scans his surroundings. Yarrow sits at a table grinding plant leaves in a mortar and pestle.

BENJAMIN

Thank you for savin' me out there, Miss. You looked like, well, like an angel come to take me to heaven. My name is Benjamin.

Yarrow stops grinding. Looks up at the child. Then goes back to her work.

YARROW What's a child like you doing out here?

BENJAMIN Mama and Daddy left me like a stray cat. I guess the sight of this chair and the idea that I'm gonna die, made'm just give up on me, but Josephine, she's my nanny, she'll probably come lookin' for me.

YARROW You aren't gonna die, boy.

She stops grinding. Walks to the wood stove where she pours up some hot tea. Delivers it to Benjamin.

> YARROW (CONT'D) Here. Drink this.

LATER

On the couch, Benjamin twitches in his sleep. His arms jerk as if he's having a dream.

He opens his eyes. Everything is blurry. The ceiling spins overhead, he gags, grabs a bucket beside the couch and pukes.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

It's a bumpy ride for Benjamin as Yarrow pushes the wheelchair across the uneven ground.

He is groggy. He opens his eyes, his vision distorted.

She stops under a giant pine. Dumps Benjamin onto the ground. Ties a rope around his ankle then anchors the rope around the base of the pine tree.

Benjamin slowly pulls himself up into a sitting position.

BENJAMIN Why're you tying me up? Please lady. Don't leave me out here.

Yarrow ignores him. She climbs into a plastic protective suit. Fishes a stick off the forest floor.

She stares up into the tree. Benjamin looks up also.

We see the target -- a thriving bee hive. She jams the stick into the nest until a large chunk of it falls crashing down beside Benjamin.

In a frenzy, BEES attack. Adrenaline hits him like a ton of bricks jolting him from his lethargic state. He panics.

She watches. He SCREAMS. Bites swell all over his exposed flesh. He struggles to slap them off. SCREAMS frantically, then his eyes close.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Yarrow grinds herbs at the table. She takes the mortar to the stove top, dumps herbal powder into boiling water.

Benjamin lies swollen on the couch. He's covered in blankets. His face is dotted in pasty medicine covering lumpy sores.

YARROW

Drink.

The sound of her voice wakes him. She lifts his head, puts the tea to his lips.

BENJAMIN Please lady. I think I should...

YARROW My name is Yarrow. Hush and drink. One day you will thank me for all this.

BENJAMIN But I want to go home.

Through his eyes, her face distorts. He's out again.

SUPER: THE TREATMENT CONTINUES OVER SIX MONTHS

MONTAGE

-Bee's sting Benjamin under a tall tree. He MOANS in agony. -Benjamin drinks the tea. Yarrow coats his sores with paste. -Bumpy rides through the forest. Benjamin begs and pleads. -Under a Douglas Fir, he sits, unbound, while bees attack. <u>He doesn't fight anymore</u>. He is changed.

INT. CABIN - MORNING

Yarrow nudges Benjamin awake.

YARROW Come on. We have to go into town.

EXT. CABIN - MORNING

Yarrow and Benjamin walk hand in hand away from the cabin.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A DOCTOR breezes in with good news. He smiles at Benjamin who sits on the examination table.

DOCTOR I don't know how exactly to explain it, but you're in remission. This is really big. You're going to be in the newspapers, probably even on TV one day. What's your name, son?

Stoic, Benjamin stares blank. Doesn't say a word.

YARROW I call him the Bee Boy.

DOCTOR There will be testing. Labs. But it's nothing short of miraculous. A giant step in homeopathic medicine.

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

As Yarrow leads Benjamin to the truck, he catches sight of someone familiar. The 'old' Benjamin is back.

BENJAMIN Josephine! Josephine! It's me! Benjamin! Over here! Josephine!

Yarrow pushes him up into the truck. Slams the door.

INT. JOSEPHINE'S CAR - DAY

Josephine is on her cell phone.

JOSEPHINE I swear it was him. His voice. I'd know it anywhere.

MAMA (V.O.) I'm going to call Bill right now. I'll keep you posted. Thank you again, Josephine.

EXT. NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY - DUSK

The SUV speeds around a bend. The last of the day's sun bounces off the mountains in the distance.

INT. CABIN - DUSK

A cold, dark look covers Benjamin face. He slaps the hot tea out of Yarrow's hand.

BENJAMIN

No more.

Yarrow fetches more tea. Talks the whole while.

YARROW

You owe it to me. You'd'a been nothing but bear bait, but I saved you. They tossed you away like garbage, and now you don't need that wheelchair anymore. You are going to be famous can't you see? Everyone will be talking about the Bee Boy.

You can see the hate in Benjamin's eyes. A honey bee crawls out of his nose.

Yarrow returns. She lifts the cup of tea. He presses his lips tight together, but she pushes the cup between them until --

-- honey bees spew from his mouth as thick as a cloud. They attack Yarrow who swats frantically. She races for the door, bursts out.

Benjamin walks calmly behind her. Gently opens the door.

EXT. CABIN - FULL CIRCLE

Benjamin takes a seat in the old rocker. He stares devoid of emotion as the bees overtake Yarrow.

INT. SUV - EVENING

Daddy drives. Mama bites her nails.

MAMA Do you think he'll ever forgive us? He's been out here for nearly a year, Bill. Maybe we shouldn't...

DADDY If he's alive, we're picking him up. It's the only way to right a wrong.

EXT. CABIN - LATER

A small yellow light by the front door illuminates the porch. Benjamin still sits in the rocking chair. Yarrow is still lying in the yard at the bottom of the steps.

> MAMA (O.S.) Oh my God! You're alive! It's you! Benjamin! It's Me! Mama!

The rocker stops. Mama runs towards the front porch. She trips over the body in the dark. Daddy rushes to her aid.

Benjamin stands. Walks to the edge of the porch. Mama gazes up in awe.

MAMA (CONT'D) Benjamin! You can walk! Oh my God! Look he can walk! It's a miracle!

DADDY

Fucking Christ! What the...

Daddy stumbles backward. Stares in horror at Yarrow's body. Mama spins around at the fowl language. She gags at the site of Yarrow's swollen, disfigured face. Benjamin's jaw opens up like a hatch. His cold eyes stare into the sky as a deadly swarm, massive in number, spews from within. Bees cover Mama and Daddy.

They try to run, but are brought down fast. They SCREAM. Thrash around on the ground.

Benjamin walks back over, sits down in his rocker and starts rocking. The morbid sound of BUZZING is replaced by --

INT. JOSEPHINE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ray Charles' "Georgia On My Mind". Josephine stands over the sink humming as she washes dishes.

The doorbell RINGS. She wipes her hands on a dish towel.

INT./EXT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Josephine looks down to find Benjamin. He's dirty. His clothes are soiled and worn. His expression is distant.

JOSEPHINE Sweet Jesus! I'm so happy to see you! Come on in, Benjamin.

A honey bee crawls about his cheek. She gently brushes it away. She grabs his hand, leads him to --

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The refrigerator covered in photos, some of Benjamin.

Josephine opens the frig, her back to Benjamin. A honey bee crawls out of his pursed lips.

JOSEPHINE

That was you the other day wasn't it? I heard your voice and knew it was you. I called your Mama soon as I got to the car. Must'a been enough to make'r go on down there and pick you up. And look at you. You're up walkin' all around.

She turns towards the counter, pulls out a drawer.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D) I told you all ya had to do was ta keep the faith. (MORE) JOSEPHINE (CONT'D) And you must'a did cuz God, he fixed you up just right. Ya see, there ain't nothin' old Josephine don't know 'bout.

Josephine pops the top off a coke, delivers it to Benjamin.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D) There ya go. Now lemme hear all about ya trip to ya granny's.

A honey bee buzzes around. Lights on the table. Josephine reaches for the fly swatter. Lifts it up over the table --

BENJAMIN Josephine, please. Don't do that.

-- SPLAT. It comes down squashing the stray honey bee.

She scrapes what's left of it off the table. Benjamin turns his head away quick as he can.

JOSEPHINE Them thangs, they belong in a hive, not on a kitchen table. They sting like the devil ya know.

She looks up to see Benjamin's back to her now.

A bee crawls out of his ear, takes flight. Another squeezes from beneath his eyelid, another slips from his pursed lips.

The dreadful sound of a SWARM, and he can't hold it back.

Benjamin's jaw drops open. A tear races down his cheek. Honey bees gush out like lava erupting from an angry volcano.

HONEY BEES BLACK OUT THE SCREEN.

FADE OUT.