

The Cave
by
The Number Thirteen

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FADE IN:

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

An open window shows the black of night outside. The thin curtain hangs limply to one side.

Under the window, CYRUS (30s) lies on the bare bed in thin boxer shorts. Sweat glints in the faint moonlight as he thrashes, trying to get comfortable.

He takes his pillow and tosses it off the bed, then tries to get comfortable again.

It's useless. He checks his cell phone: 2:34am.

Fed up, he hops off the bed and into--

BATHROOM

The light reveals how wet his scalp and forehead are. He runs a cloth under the tap and brings it to his face, his neck, through his hair.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Cyrus emerges from the cabin, letting the screen door bang shut behind him. He has a pack over one shoulder as he heads into the dark woods, flashlight pointing the way.

EXT. CAVE - LATER

A large cave entrance sits at the bottom of a steep slope. The moonlight barely penetrates the canopy above.

Cyrus slides down the rocky path. At the bottom, his light plays across a faded wooden sign nailed to a tree next to the cave:

DANGER.

DO NOT ENTER.

Cyrus ignores the sign and walks into the cave.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, the flashlight reflects off the damp rock walls. Water drips in places, splashing faintly on the rocky floor.

Cyrus sucks in the cool air and breathes a sigh of relief. He finds a dry area and pulls a sleeping bag from the pack.

With the sleeping bag laid out, he flops onto it and smiles contentedly.

FADE TO:

INT. CAVE - MORNING

Water drips into pools reflecting the light from the cave entrance.

Cyrus lies bundled in the sleeping bag. He sits up and shivers, rubs his arms for warmth. His eyes settle on the back of the cave.

A **number 13** is painted in dark red. It looks fresh.

Startled, he looks around but the cave is empty. He goes to the wall, touches the paint. It's dry.

He shrugs and rolls up his sleeping bag.

EXT. CAVE - MORNING

Cyrus struggles up the scree of the slope.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

The small cabin sits in a wide clearing, already in full sun. Cyrus treads up the path towards it.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Cyrus enters the bright, well lived-in cabin. He wipes his sweaty brow on the pack and sets it down.

A digital clock blinks **12:00**.

He frowns and checks his cell phone to reset the time.

KITCHEN - LATER

Cyrus dries dishes next to a sink full of soapy water. Sweat drips from his brow as he sets wet cutlery down on a dish towel.

He reaches into the water and recoils. Blood wells from a cut on his finger. Reaching for the dish towel, he spills the cutlery to the floor with a loud clatter.

Cutlery litters the floor. He starts to pick it up.

Two butter knives lie in a perfect **11**.

His hand pauses over them for a moment before they're scooped up.

BEDROOM - LATER

Cyrus pulls on a pair of swim trunks and ties the drawstring.

A buzzing sounds from the other room.

LIVING SPACE

The digital clock alarm buzzes. It reads **10:00**.

Cyrus turns the alarm off. He resets the alarm to 6:00.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Cyrus walks down a trail to a small lake, carrying only a towel and a pair of shorts.

A tire swing hangs from a tree next to the lake. Someone had planted a stick next to it.

Together, they form a **number 9**.

He stares at the nine for a moment. He looks back the way he came, as if trying to piece together a puzzle.

He shakes his head and proceeds to the lake edge.

LATER

Cyrus comes up from beneath the water, refreshed by the coolness of the lake.

He wades to the shore and peels his wet swim trunks off, stepping out of them to towel off. He reaches for his dry shorts but stops.

His swim trunks lie in a perfect **8**.

Unnerved, he kicks the swim trunks out of shape.

INT. CABIN - DUSK

Cyrus fills a glass of ice with water.

On the table behind him, a piece of paper has numbers and doodles written on it: 13, 12:00, two knives in the shape of an 11, 10:00, the tire swing and stick, and a rough 8.

Cyrus takes the glass outside.

EXT. CABIN - DUSK

Cyrus gulps a glass of water with ice outside the screen door. A slight breeze rustles the leaves. He basks in it for a moment, eyes closed.

He turns to return inside but stops short. The glass drops and shatters. He runs a finger along a large crack in the peeling door frame.

It's a **7**.

INT. CABIN

He bolts through the screen door, panting heavily. He tries to calm his breathing, thumping his chest.

He paces back and forth, hands wringing through his sweaty hair.

He stops. Shakes his head. He laughs at himself.

He crumples up the paper and tosses it away.

The clock buzzes again: **6:00**.

He slams the button to stop it. Shaking, he checks the alarm. PM, not AM.

His phone chirps from his pocket. He checks it.

5% battery. Then, **4%** and it shuts down.

EXT. CABIN

Cyrus backs away from the cabin as if he'd seen a ghost. He runs along the path away from the cabin.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Cyrus runs through the darkening woods as if chased.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

The sky glows faintly with the remnants of day. The first stars are visible over the lake.

Cyrus skids to a halt not far from where he was swimming. He leans on his knees, gasping for breath.

When he straightens, a sob escapes his lips.

A lone curled branch sticks out of the water not far from shore. With its reflection, it forms a **number 3**.

Cyrus's eyes bug out. He runs up the embankment directly away from the lake, clawing his way to the top.

EXT. WOODS

Cyrus runs blindly now. No trail marks his way. The dark closes in, but still he runs.

Branches claw at him. The uneven ground makes him stagger and stumble.

He trips and crashes to the ground. His breath gone, he rolls onto his back, struggling to force his lungs to take in air.

Finally, he sucks in a deep, ragged breath. He gasps for air, gulps it.

He cradles his clenched hand to his chest. When he can breathe again, he uncurls his fingers.

Torn skin and dirt form the jagged shape of a **2**.

Cyrus's jaw drops as he stares dumbly at his hand.

He scrambles to his feet and runs, heedless of his direction.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

A dry gorge runs through the woods.

A dead and stripped tree trunk protrudes from the ground like an arrow pointing to the sky, or like a **number 1**.

A wail pierces the silence of the gorge, followed by the sound of feet scrambling across loose rock and Cyrus's heavy breathing.

At the bottom of the tree trunk, where it meets the rocky ground, a cry of alarm is followed by a sickening impact sound.

Silence. No more running. No more panting.

Blood drips onto the rocks, each drop a little off center from the one before, dripping to form--

A zero.

THE END