

INTO THE WOODS

by

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INT. OLD FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Wind and rain batter the ageing window panes. CLOSE on KATE STRATTEN (13) as she carefully unwraps a small box.

We see her piercing green eyes, her long auburn hair. There is a shyness to her. She is strangely beautiful.

She lifts a necklace from the box; dangling from a silver chain is a roughly cut black stone held in place by a metal clasp.

KATE

But it's yours...
(suddenly
concerned)
Where's the other stone?

Sitting besides Kate is her mother, HELEN (33). She pulls out a necklace from inside her dressing gown, an almost identical stone dangles at the end.

HELEN

(comforting)
Now we both have one.

She has an ethereal beauty but there's a vulnerability to her, tinged with a sense of loneliness. She has the same hair and eyes as her daughter.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Here.

She puts the necklace round Kate's neck, then takes her hands. Their closeness is obvious.

HELEN (CONT'D)

(awkward)
You're very special Kate... not
like other girls.

Helen looks uncomfortable, this isn't easy for her.

HELEN (CONT'D)

There's something I have to tell
you.

There's an intensity to her, it unsettles Kate.

HELEN (CONT'D)

But first you must promise me
something.

KATE

What?

She takes Kate's stone between her thumb and forefinger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELEN

(serious)

You must never take it off.

KATE

I don't understand...

HELEN

Promise me.

KATE

(unsure)

I promise.

(shaking her head)

But why?

HELEN

Because it will protect you.

KATE

(anxious)

From what?

Helen hesitates, torn.

We slowly move in on Kate's face as she waits for her mother's reply, her heart now pounding...

SLAM CUT
TO:

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - PRESENT DAY - EARLY MORNING

Kate wakes up suddenly, afraid. We see her face, now 21, the same shyness is there. Tears fill her kind eyes. She's had this dream before. She touches her necklace as if trying to comfort herself. Two stones now hang from the end. On a bedside table is an old photo of her and her mother. She looks at it, touching the glass with her fingers.

EXT. BACK STREET - LATE MORNING

A cold, grey day. Kate walks to work, a rucksack slung over the shoulder of her dark red coat. As she approaches an alleyway there's a noise. She stops. A dog has a noose round its neck. The rope is attached to a stake in the ground. The animal is limping and battered.

KATE

Oh God...

YOUTH (O.S.)

Out my way bitch!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kate turns to see two boys (13) staring at her. One holds a stick. Kate stands between them and the dog.

YOUTH (CONT'D)

I said, OUT MY FUCKIN' WAY!

KATE

(hiding her fear)

No.

(defiant)

You're not gonna touch him.

He grips his stick tighter, ready to smash her skull in...

...but something distracts him. A white van appears at the end of the alleyway behind Kate. It drifts along, shark like, as if watching.

YOUTH

(backing off
aggressively)

We'll see you later!

The youths run off.

Kate turns, but there's nothing there. She realises she's shaking. She takes a deep breath then slowly bends down to the dog.

KATE

It's okay.

(gentle)

Don't be afraid...

The dog slowly starts to calm down. It licks the back of Kate's hand. There is a collar round its neck with a small metal tag.

EXT/INT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL - A LITTLE LATER

The place is busy, men and women wait with their stricken animals. Cat's hissing, dog's barking. Photos of the employees hang from a wall. As Kate walks in carrying the dog, DOCTOR TAYLOR the HEAD VET looks up. She's an unfussy, intelligent woman of 47.

DOCTOR TAYLOR

(seeing the dog)

Jesus, what happened?

KATE

(bitter irony)

Just kids having fun...

(beat)

Sorry I'm late.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Doctor Taylor smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Kate wears a green medical top, her hair tied back. The room is small and clean. Attached to a wall is a computer screen, opposite is a basin and cabinet filled with trays of medicines. In the centre is an operating table around four feet high. Sitting on top is a black cat, Lulu. Next to the cat is MR. JACOBS (60), a small bearded man.

KATE

What seems to be the problem?

MR JACOBS

Lulu won't have kittens.

KATE

(tactful)

Lulu's a 'He' Mr. Jacobs...

CUT TO:

MIKE, a hippy in his 40's with his Python, Monty. He and Kate look at the coiled snake inside its plastic cage.

KATE (cont'd) (CONT'D)

...and what exactly would you like Monty to do?

Mike turns to Kate, thinking, like he's never really considered this.

CUT TO:

A MOTHER and her TEENAGE DAUGHTER.

TEENAGE GIRL

(deadly serious)

He's just so incredibly selfish.

All three look at the offending Guinea pig.

CUT TO:

MRS. TIBBS (75), a little old lady.

KATE

And how can I help?

MRS TIBBS

(emphatic)

I want to see the vet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kate suppresses a sigh, oh God...

CUT TO:

Mike, still deep in thought...

MIKE
(looking at Monty)
I dunno, maybe it's his name?

Kate nods, yup this guy's a freak.

MIKE (CONT'D)
(eureka)
Maybe I should just set him
free?

Kate quickly shakes her head in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

Mrs. Tibbs continues to patronise Kate.

MRS TIBBS
No, I mean the *real* vet...

KATE
Mrs. Tibbs...

CUT TO:

Mr. Jacobs, still in shock after discovering the gender of his cat:

MR JACOBS
...a 'He'?

Kate nods. We see that his cat has just peed everywhere.

CUT TO:

Mrs. Tibbs, unable to shut up:

MRS TIBBS
You can't possibly be qualified
dear...

KATE
(fed up)
Mrs. Tibbs.

MRS TIBBS
What?

KATE
You seem to be without your pet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WIDE: We see Mrs. Tibbs doesn't have an animal with her. She looks around in bewildered silence.

INT. RECEPTION - AT THE END OF THE DAY

Dr. Taylor gently escorts Mrs. Tibbs to the front door. She turns the sign to 'closed' then looks over to Kate. They share a brief smile. The place is now empty.

DOCTOR TAYLOR

Look I've got go. They need me
at the Burton farm. You'll be
okay?

KATE

Yeah I'll wait...

Dr. Taylor picks up her medical bag and leaves.

INT. RECEPTION - NIGHT

Kate is sweeping the floor. She places the broom against the reception counter.

She looks at the collar of the dog she tried to save. The metal disk reads 'Jack'. She puts it behind the counter.

Suddenly the door bell rings. She takes a deep breath, dreading the news she must break. She unlocks the door.

A MOTHER (40's) and SON (9) walk in.

BOY

Where's Jack?

The mother can read Kate's sad eyes.

KATE

I'm so sorry.

The boy looks at his mother, distressed.

BOY

I want Jack.

She puts her arm round her son.

BOY (CONT'D)

(shrugging her off)
I want to see him.

MOTHER

Not now darling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATE

(guilty)

I wish I could've done more...

MOTHER

It's not your fault lovey.

BOY

(to Kate)

Was he in pain?

KATE

(lying)

No.

BOY

But how d'you know?

Kate crouches down to him.

KATE

Because he told me.

The boy contemplates this for a moment...

BOY

Can we take him home?

An awkward moment.

MOTHER

We'll come tomorrow darling.

Come on...

Kate rises as the boy heads towards his mother.

BOY

(by the door)

Did she really speak to him?

The woman smiles at her son, briefly tussling his hair. Kate watches them leave, before glancing up at the nearly full moon.

She then turns the lights off and grabs her bag and coat from reception. She sets the alarm and exits, exhausted.

EXT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

As Kate turns, a man, CRAWFORD (45) runs up startling her. Only his eyes are visible. His motorcycle helmet is badly scratched, his leather jacket ripped on the right shoulder.

CRAWFORD

Thank Christ you're here!

There's been an accident.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRAWFORD (CONT'D)

My girlfriend, she's badly hurt.
Can you help me?

Kate is about to reply...

CRAWFORD (CONT'D)

(pleading)
I've called an ambulance but
they're still not here.
(desperate)
Please. She's bleeding...

He briefly touches her arm, his eyes begging her to help.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

CRAWFORD

(motioning)
Just over here.

Kate follows Crawford, trying to keep up. He turns a corner heading down a more dimly lit street. He stops. Kate squints, looking for a body in the darkness.

KATE

(suddenly uneasy)
I can't see...

CRAWFORD

(turning)
Here she is.

He lifts up a GUN, a black silencer jutting from the end.

Terrified, Kate takes a step backwards... straight into another masked man, TURNER (35). A gloved hand presses a large serrated knife to her throat.

TURNER

Not a fuckin' sound.

A white van now blocks the top of the road. Crawford grabs Kate's bag as Turner violently drags her towards the vehicle. She stumbles, gashing her knee on the rough tarmac. Crawford yanks open the back door as Turner drags her inside. He slams the door on them.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Crawford pulls his helmet off: We see his dark greasy hair. His dead eyes.

Driving is JONES (21). 5'10, medium build, dirt blonde hair. Naive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hits the accelerator.

FADE TO
BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. CAR - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

A grim November morning. A blue Audi speeds through the rain towards the mansions of St. George's Hill, Weybridge.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR JOHN LOCK (50) is messy, instinctive, and tough. His grey hair is thinning.

Driving, is DETECTIVE SERGEANT PAUL DEAKIN (34). A trim, handsome man with short dark hair.

Lock has a briefcase at his feet, a coffee in his left hand, and a battered looking book in his right. He reads the first sentence aloud:

LOCK

'When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous cockroach...'

He eyes Deakin like he's a freak.

LOCK (cont'd) (CONT'D)

And you read this type of shit for fun?

DEAKIN

It's just a story.

LOCK

(sarcastic)

Really?

(beat)

I find the less imagination you have the easier life is.

Lock shakes his head, tossing the book to the back.

LOCK (CONT'D)

You know I should write my memoirs. Give you something proper to read, make myself a bit of cash. Chapter one: 'How to kidnap someone and actually get away with it...'

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOCK (CONT'D)

(beat)

And when I'd finished I'd put my feet up, lie in the sun, and shut my eyes...

Lock shuts his eyes.

DEAKIN

So why don't you retire then?

Lock flicks his eyes open, scowling at Deakin.

DEAKIN (CONT'D)

...to write your book.

LOCK

Because I hate golf, and the idea of having to spend the entire day with my wife is enough to make me want to kill myself.

DEAKIN

Very romantic of you.

LOCK

Oh, don't tell me, you're in love?

DEAKIN

Single.

LOCK

(patronising)

Didn't she understand?

DEAKIN

(deliberate)

Lack of communication.

LOCK

(amused)

Still searching for the one then?

Deakin smiles ambiguously.

LOCK (CONT'D)

Yeah well I'm sure she's out there somewhere...

(beat)

Working in some late night kebab house...

Lock grins to himself... as Deakin slams on the brakes, sending Lock's coffee flying into the dash board and over his hands. The car skids to a halt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LOCK (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ!

Staring at them fearlessly in the middle of their lane is a scraggy BLACK DOG.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

WIDE: We see dog and car a few metres apart.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly the dog disappears into the garden of one of the gated mansions. Lock and Deakin turn in its direction.

LOCK

(annoyed)

What the fuck was that about?
Are people round here too
stinking rich to look after
their animals or something?

DEAKIN

Don't think it had a collar.
Probably a stray.

LOCK

Well I don't care what it is,
could have bloody killed us!

Deakin notices Lock has coffee on him.

DEAKIN

You've spilt your coffee, sir.

LOCK

Yes thank you. Because I hadn't
noticed the hot brown liquid
currently scalding my hands.

Deakin hands him a cloth. Lock snatches it, wiping his hands and suit as Deakin drives off.

Lock stuffs the cup into a drinks holder, then lifts up his briefcase and snaps it open. He takes out a file, inside are a few sketchy printouts and cuttings.

LOCK (CONT'D)

(irritated)

Kate Elizabeth Jane Stratten.

(snorts)

Not enough names really... let's
see... born October 21st 1988...
went to school St Mary's,
Sussex.

(shaking his head)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOCK (CONT'D)

Christ, another fucking rich kid.

(turning to Deakin)

Probably not getting enough attention from daddy so she decides to piss off on holiday and gets her boyfriend to leave a message...

Deakin smiles.

LOCK (CONT'D)

Where was I..?

(scanning notes)

Stepfather, Robert Michael Stratten... multi-millionaire business man... lives alone...

(reading)

Married to Helen Walsh 1999... adopts her daughter the following year... wife killed in a car crash 6 months later... daughter was also in the car, but somehow survived. She was 13 at the time.

DEAKIN

What caused it?

LOCK

Says accident. Car smashed into a tree.

(reading from clipping)

'Police suspect no foul play. It is assumed Mrs. Stratten lost control of the vehicle. Mr. Stratten says he is devastated at the death of his wife and requests that he and his daughter be allowed to get on with their lives, and grieve in private'.

DEAKIN

Nice gentle nudge to your teens.

LOCK

Indeed.

Deakin takes the road to the right. There is an imposing Victorian Gothic mansion at the end.