

Faeries

by

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The twittering of birds.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Butterflies, early blooms, golden shafts of sunlight roiling with shimmering motes. It's idyllic.

A BLOODHOUND bounds along a narrow trail, happy to be free, sniffing and snuffling everything in reach.

A MAN behind him. He's thirty, in a fedora, trousers and suspenders over long-johns, rifle on his shoulder. He looks down with a smile at the LITTLE GIRL at his side, chats with her, points things out along the path.

She's beautiful, eight years old, white cotton dress and sunhat. She skips beside him, one hand in his, the other trailing a yellow ribbon.

They break through the trees into a lovely meadow. Oh! A doe stands in the tall grass, chewing on wildflowers, big brown eyes watery and innocent. They stop, transfixed. The man kneels next to the girl, arm tight around her.

Suddenly, the deer FREEZES. Birds and insects go SILENT.

The deer SCREAMS as it's yanked down into the tall grass, disappears, BLEATING to the sounds of wet mouths as the meadow shudders.

The little girl is frozen, shaking. The dog leaps about, braying frantically. The man jumps up as something barrels toward them through the high grass. He readies the shotgun.

From the left and right, two more paths in the grass train on them, all three converging on the pair.

He SCREAMS at the girl, waves her back as he takes aim.

She turns, runs toward the tree line.

Makes it to the trees, looks back. Her eyes go wide with horror at the sound of SHOTGUN BLASTS, HOWLS AND SCREAMS.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - DAY

A Land Rover, burdened with luggage and camping gear, cruises the tree lined road.

NICK (O.S.)  
What the hell is that?

INT. LAND ROVER - DAY

The driver, NICK, well groomed young Wall Street in his Eddie Bauers, wrinkles his nose. COURTNEY, equally trimmed but less tightly wound, aims a video camera at him from the passenger seat.

COURTNEY  
Somebody's not smiling.

GRAHAM in back, shorts and a worn concert T-shirt. PICKLES, a wiry terrier, on his lap. Graham grins and waves his hand.

GRAHAM  
I think it's the dog.

NICK  
Did one of those pieces of shit  
shit in my new Land Rover?

Next to Graham, REESE, an all American beauty with an angry scar from temple to chin, reclines, wearing comfortable clothes and a sleeping mask on her eyes. She cradles a smaller dog, CICERO, stroking its head.

REESE  
It's fine. It's just gas.

Courtney feigns gagging.

COURTNEY  
Oh, god!

She lowers the passenger window, leans out into the wind.

NICK  
God Dammit! Put the camera back in  
the case!

Courtney points the camera at Nick, zooms in.

COURTNEY  
What'sa matter? Did Nicholas leave  
his sense of humor back in the  
city?

Reese and Graham laugh.

NICK  
Nicholas doesn't like his eighteen  
hundred dollar camera hanging out  
the window! Nicholas is sick of  
baby-sitting.

The fun drains out of the car. Courtney packs up the camera.

COURTNEY  
Maybe Nicholas should pull over so  
we can all take a break.

EXT. COUNTRY STORE - DAY

A tiny mountain town huddled around a four-way stop sign. The Land Rover pulls into a dusty parking area.

They exit. Nick marches inside, leaving the others behind, stretching. Reese squints uncomfortably, dons wraparound sunglasses.

COURTNEY  
Awe, Mister Sunshine's gone.

Graham gives a mock shiver.

GRAHAM  
I miss his warm glow.

Reese pulls a wide brimmed hat down around her dark glasses.

REESE  
He's got a lot on his mind.

GRAHAM  
Yeah, well, a few days in the  
middle of nowhere should fix that.

INT. COUNTRY STORE - DAY

Nick is talking with OLD MACK, a crusty mountain man, looking over a map. The others enter. Reese and Graham cheerfully pick out snacks.

MACK  
What's yer business up Black Road?

NICK  
I just bought a cabin up there.

Courtney joins Nick at the counter.

COURTNEY  
We just bought a cabin up there.

MACK  
Old Jasper's place.

NICK

Guess so.

MACK

Ain't no guess. That's what it is.

He points out the long road on the map, winding into the mountains, ending at the summit.

MACK (CONT'D)

That and Sarah's place is the only two spreads on the road. God knows ol' Sarah ain't never gonna leave that mountain. Why anybody'd wanna be way out there is beyond me.

Graham and Reese join the group.

GRAHAM

I'm a writer. Need the quiet. Is it really a long way?

MACK

Just outta God's reach. Why is it always writers think they wanna live in the middle of nowhere?

COURTNEY

Just how far can God reach?

MACK

As the crow flies, thirty miles.

COURTNEY

That's not so bad.

Mack chuckles, gives his head a "city-folk" shake. He rings them out.

MACK

Not if yer a crow.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Far below, a seemingly endless winding mountain road, carved into the sides of the stony mountains. There's the Rover, picking its way carefully around the blind corners.

The ratty pavement ends, becomes gravel. A bloom of dust behind the Rover.

INT. LAND ROVER - DAY

The car bounces and shudders.

COURTNEY  
Now I really have to pee.

NICK  
That jackass said it was thirty  
miles.

GRAHAM  
Apparently crows fly in a straight  
line.

Each bump draws a moan from Reese. She looks pained under the sleeping mask. Cicero comforts her with a lick.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
(to Reese)  
Do you want to pull over?

REESE  
No, I'm fine.

COURTNEY  
Hello? I'm the one who has to pee.

NICK  
Jesus! It's like Romper Room.

EXT. LAND ROVER - DAY

The car slides to a stop in the middle of the road. Nick gets out, spreads a map on the hood, frustrated. Courtney jumps out, drops her pants, squats behind the car.

Graham exits, Pickles on a leash, stretches, looks around. His gaze settles on something across the road.

GRAHAM  
Incredible.

A huge arch across the entry of a rough dirt drive. Woven from branches and bones, decorated with old license plates, brass bells, colored glass bottles and twelve point antlers.

Courtney pops up from behind the car.

COURTNEY  
What is it? Oh! Is that Sandy's  
house?

GRAHAM

Sarah's. I'm guessing.

NICK

Ain't no guessin' about it. There's only two spreads up here.

SARAH

You're not Daddy.

Nick startles at the strange voice, turns. SARAH (69), in a light cotton dress and straw sun hat, woven strands of herbs and a hand carved wooden whistle on a string around her neck, stands staring in the middle of the road. She rubs her hands on a stained leather apron.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I thought you were Daddy.

NICK

(to self)

How fucking old is Daddy?

GRAHAM

Sorry Ma'am. Just us. We bought the place up the road.

He puts a hand out. She doesn't respond.

SARAH

That can't be right. That's Jasper's house.

GRAHAM

Yes, Ma'am. That's the one.

SARAH

No, no. That's not right. That's where Jasper lives.

She wanders off through the arch and into the trees, mumbling. The others stare after her.

NICK

Yeeeah. Nice to meet ya.

GRAHAM

Well, there's the crazy old lady down the road. Next stop, the abandoned cabin and the axe wielding thrill killer.

COURTNEY  
Her mutant offspring axe wielding  
thrill killer.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

The Rover crunches down a gravel drive through a beautiful stand of trees, toward a stunning vista overlooking a still alpine lake.

Nick pulls to a stop in front of the cabin. Log walls, stone chimney, two stories, windows boarded shut. Nobody's lived here for a long, long time. Nature is reclaiming her turf.

Nick exits, takes a deep breath of clean air, surveys the cabin with satisfaction, starts shooting video. Courtney joins him. She looks less satisfied.

COURTNEY  
We bought the Alamo.

He turns the camera on her. Zooms in, discreetly pans her up and down.

NICK  
Not enough curb appeal for ya?

COURTNEY  
Not enough curb.

He focuses back on the cabin.

NICK  
Pavement Princess. What we have here is an extraordinarily beautiful - and might I add valuable - mountain paradise. For a sight-unseen purchase, we did just fine.

Graham approaches, wraps his arms around Courtney, gives an intimate hug. He beams.

GRAHAM  
Amen.

Reese removes her dark glasses.

REESE  
It's like... Home.

Nick mounts the porch, tears a board off a window.

COURTNEY

Hey Kong, maybe those are there for  
a reason.

NICK

Yeah, because no one lives here.

He peers into the dim interior.

NICK

Keys. Who's got 'em?

Graham pulls a bag out of the Rover.

GRAHAM

Right here.

NICK

Toss 'em.

GRAHAM

(fumbling with zippers)  
Just a second.

NICK

Come on.

REESE

Jesus, what's your hurry?

NICK

I wanna see my house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Boards are off the windows, light streams in. A few pieces of  
old furniture covered in sheets. Courtney with a broom,  
knocking down cobwebs. She SHRIEKS, stomps on something.

Reese on the couch, one dog in her lap, the other asleep next  
to her.

CLANG! An old cow bell tied to the doorknob rings as Nick  
hefts luggage through the front door.

REESE

Let me give you a hand.

NICK

I told you, I got it.

REESE

I can do something, you know.

NICK  
No. You can't.

He exits.

WHAM WHAM! Courtney is wrestling with a window. Reese joins her, crooks the dog under one arm, expertly Fonzi smacks and lifts, easily freeing the sash.

REESE  
These old double hungs can be tricky.

COURTNEY  
You're handy to have around.

REESE  
Opinions vary.

COURTNEY  
Nick loves you. It's just his way of taking care of you.

Graham enters, struggling with boxes.

GRAHAM  
Where do you want these?

COURTNEY  
Kitchen, hon.

GRAHAM  
Roger Dodger.  
(to Reese)  
Figured you'd be asleep by now.

Nick enters with a load, drops it on the floor.

NICK  
She should be.

REESE  
I'm not a delicate flower. I just get headaches.

NICK  
Migraines. And dizziness. And nightmares.

REESE  
They're not all about the accident.

NICK

Ooh, a breakthrough! At least you admit was an accident.

GRAHAM

That's right. An accident. By definition, nobody's fault.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sheets are off the furniture. Graham and Courtney organize the kitchen that opens onto the living room. Nick kneels at the front door with a toolbox, screwdriver in hand, removing plywood from the cat door.

Reese watches him, clutching Cicero.

REESE

They'll get out.

NICK

That's the point.

REESE

They'll get lost.

NICK

They're dogs. They'll find their way home. It's what they do.

REESE

This isn't home.

NICK

What, they're gonna run all the way back to San Dimas?

Reese holds Cicero tighter.

REESE

I can't lose them.

NICK

Listen to yourself. They're dogs, not security blankets. At least let them have a life.

The last screw falls. He removes the panel. Reese hugs Cicero, stares at the little door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Candles give the room a flicker of romance. Wine, cheese, crackers. Graham fusses with paper and kindling. Nick and Reese on the couch.

Courtney enters with a bright camping lantern burning.

COURTNEY

Tomorrow we get the generator running!

NICK

What's your hurry?

GRAHAM

I like the candles.

REESE

It's romantic.

Nick pours himself another glass, leaves Reese's empty. She self-consciously refills her glass.

NICK

So what are you gonna write? White Fang? Leaves of Grass? Walden?

GRAHAM

Children Of The Corn.

Everyone laughs.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

I'm no Thoreau, but if this place can't finally inspire me, nothing will.

Nick raises his glass.

NICK

I'm glad we could be a part of it.

COURTNEY

So are we.

Pickles suddenly goes alert, gives a growl, runs to the window.

REESE

What do you see, boy?

She joins him, stroking his head as she looks out into the darkness.

REESE (CONT'D)  
We're not in San Dimas any more,  
are we?

Graham has the kindling lit. Reese sniffs.

REESE (CONT'D)  
The flue.

Graham looks blank. Smoke suddenly billows from the fireplace.

GRAHAM  
Shit.

He reaches above the fire, struggles to open the flue. Gets it open, smoke starts up the chimney.

GRAHAM  
There we go.

A SUDDEN SCRATCHING AND CHITTERING in the chimney, a CLATTERING on the roof. Soot falls into the fireplace.

COURTNEY  
What is that?

NICK  
It's wilderness.

REESE  
Just critturs.

COURTNEY  
How many?

REESE  
We're outnumbered, sweetie. They  
were here first.

From outside, a surreal orchestra of clicks wells up, an uneven marriage of white noise and castanets, a million crickets in tap shoes. Courtney burrows into Graham's chest.

COURTNEY  
That's comforting.

INT. CAR ON CITY STREET - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Rain runs in sheets down the windshield, barely interrupted by the wipers. Nick driving, one hand on the wheel, staring angrily ahead.

Reese next to him. There's a silent chasm between them.

Reese says something to Nick. He throws a sideways glance at her through his knotted brow. His phone rings. He struggles to get it out, PUNCHES the call button, talks, ignoring Reese.

Dejected, she looks ahead through the rain gusting across the road. Orange lights line the roadside, haloed in the mist.

EXT. DOCK - DAY

The morning sun glows orange through the mist rising off the water. Graham sitting on an ancient dock, just breathing. A huge smile.

BAM! BAM! BAM! GUNSHOTS from the cabin.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Reese bursts out of the cabin, Cicero in her arms, scans the yard, fixes her gaze on Nick.

Nick in a robe, coffee in one hand, aims a shiny 9mm Glock at a row of rusty cans perched on a log. BAM! A can flies.

REESE  
Where's Pickles?

NICK  
Good morning to you too. Oh, and  
how the hell should I know?

REESE  
Well he's gone!

NICK  
Probably out chasing squirrels.

REESE  
I've been calling all morning, he's  
nowhere around.

NICK  
What should I do about it?

REESE

Put away your toys, dammit! It's  
your fault he got out!

NICK

Ahhh, the shrill tones of blame.  
Can I gag down some breakfast  
before the fireworks start?  
(beat)  
You know, just because you're  
freaking out doesn't mean he is.

Reese starts to say something, thinks better of it. Spins,  
stomps down the path, passing Graham trotting up.

Graham stops, looks at Nick. Nick rolls his eyes, shrugs. His  
bliss destroyed, Graham turns, follows Reese.

EXT. WOODED TRAIL - DAY

Reese leads Graham along a narrow trail through dense forest.  
Cicero strains at his leash.

Reese stops, clenches her jaw, brings hands to temples.

GRAHAM

How are you doing?

She kneels, leans on a tree, removes her dark glasses. Rubs  
her eyes.

REESE

I'll be fine in a minute.

Graham kneels, leans on the tree alongside her.

GRAHAM

I mean the big picture.

REESE

The big picture? It's a little  
blurry right now.

GRAHAM

I haven't seen you take any meds.

REESE

I didn't bring any.

GRAHAM

Is that wise?

REESE

They don't do anything. Haven't for months.

GRAHAM

What's the neurologist say?

REESE

It needs time; sometimes years... Sometimes never.

GRAHAM

Nick?

REESE

He's impatient. Who could blame him.

GRAHAM

You know what I mean.

REESE

He feels guilty, and Nick does not do guilt.

GRAHAM

Courtney and I suggested counseling. Maybe --

REESE

-- Cicero will win American Idol?  
(mimics Nick)  
"Therapy equals weakness, period."

She shakes her head clear, stands, returns to the hunt. Graham falls in a step behind.

REESE

Pickles! Here, boy!

She stops, stares at a tree, reaches out. A small bell has been tied to a branch with ribbon. She JINGLES it, looks at Graham curiously, moves on. Graham gives the bell a glance as he passes.

They break into a clearing. It's the same meadow as the opening scene.

Graham spots something just off the trail.

GRAHAM

Oh god.