

ELEVATION 404

By

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ON BLACK: "From which one died, from it he fears"

SOUNDS OF NATURE: bird cries, insects, rustling branches.

SOUNDS fade out.

FADE IN:

EXT. - FOREST - DUSK

BLACK AND WHITE:

The sun sinks behind a dense forest.

Branches full of leaves swing in the breeze.

Solid trunks sink their thousand years into the soil.

A FLASHLIGHT.

Held in a hand. It turns on and off. On and off. On and off.

EXT. - FOREST ROAD - DUSK

A tight road - barely wide to squeeze two cars past.

A young HITCHHIKER, (25), moses his way along. A black rucksack slung on him.

A FLASHLIGHT in his hand - pointed ahead - on and off.

LATER

Hitchhiker drags himself on.

Into the distance, he becomes dwarfed by the trees.

From --

BEHIND

CAR BRAKES SLAM full on - ripping up the peace.

EXT. - FOREST - DUSK

The engine chatters away.

A door creaks open.

OLD MAN, (75), steps out. He looks left, then right. Sits his hands up on his hips.

He shakes his head.

Steps back in his vehicle.

BOLTS off up the road.

INT. CAR - DUSK

From the back seat, Old Man's peering ahead - the headlight scour the road.

There's a FIGURE ahead - we're on top of him - then we've passed him.

Car BRAKES shatter the peace once more.

Old Man turns his head. Chucks his vehicle into reverse.

Back to the figure, and stop.

OLD MAN  
Hey! You need a ride?

The hitchhiker face still in the shade.

HITCHHIKER  
No.

A beat.

HITCHHIKER (CONT'D)  
Thanks.

OLD MAN  
You're in my direction anyway.  
Wherever you go cant' make no  
problem for me.

No response.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
I wanted to say it's a two way  
road.

Nothing.

OLD MAN  
C'mon, all you can do is get faster  
to wherever is that you're going  
to.

He waits for a response.

OLD MAN  
It's already dark. It's no time to  
be walking alone around here, you  
know.

HITCHHIKER  
All right.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DUSK

BACK SEAT

The headlight beam on the road ahead.

DRIVER  
(cheerful)  
Where you headin'?

HITCHHIKER  
(calm)  
You know this road?

DRIVER  
Like a back of my hand.

Driver smiles.

DRIVER  
'Bin passin' here since eternity.

HITCHHIKER  
Then you'll drop me at the  
elevation four-o-four.

Driver looks at Hitchhiker. Surprised. The back to the road.

DRIVER  
I'll take you to the village.

A beat.

DRIVER  
There's a place to eat and there's  
a place to sleep. You can go on  
tomorrow morning.

HITCHHIKER  
You just take me to the elevation.  
I'll be fine.

DRIVER  
Suit yourself.

And on up the road.

The light's fading.

DRIVER (CONT'D)  
(cheerful)  
You're not from around here?

A beat.

DRIVER  
But it's like I know you somehow.  
As I seen you before. You've been  
coming around here?

HITCHHIKER  
No. You've probably mixed me with  
someone else.

DRIVER  
So, what brought you here? You  
daredevil of some kind?

HITCHHIKER  
Something like that.

DRIVER  
I'm annoyin' you to hell.

HITCHHIKER  
That sums it up.

Driver takes a long look at Hitchhiker, takes him in.

DRIVER  
You know, I've bin passing this  
road back and forth for years.  
Centuries. You know what's the  
worst thing about it?

Driver looks across to Hitchhiker.

DRIVER (CONT'D)  
It's the routine. Man looses sense  
of worth. Even time. Days seem  
years, years seem centuries.

HITCHHIKER  
(irritated)  
It's all relative.

DRIVER

Come again?

HITCHHIKER

I said it's all relative. That's the only constant thing.

DRIVER

It's all relative. You put it so nice. I see you're a bit of philosopher too. Well did I just find my match.

A beat.

DRIVER

You're in college?

HITCHHIKER

(cold)

I did my time.

DRIVER

Look, I'm sorry if I'm a bit of pesky, you know. I'm a bit of an talker. Always alone in this damned car. I get carried away sometimes.

HITCHHIKER

Don't your radio work?

DRIVER

It's dead. Broke down a couple of months back. I never get it fixed. That's what I'm telling you about. Freaking routine. Makes a man forget things too.

He flicks on the Radio - dead as disco.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

See? Just the engine and me. And today we include you.

A beat.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

You don't like my company very much, do you?

HITCHHIKER

I don't like driving.

DRIVER

Why?

HITCHHIKER

Don't know. Some kind of phobia I guess.

DRIVER

Well, we'll be at the elevation in a minute or two. You sure you don't want me take you the village? I'll be kinda awkward leaving you here.

HITCHHIKER

I'll manage.

DRIVER

No fear? Alone in the woods at night? I would think twice if you ask me.

HITCHHIKER

Everyone fears something.

DRIVER

Do you wanna know what I'm really afraid of?

HITCHHIKER

What?

DRIVER

Of the thing coming next.

The driver pulls a GUN - levels it at the hitchhikers head.

With speed and precision, the Hitchhiker grabs and reverses the gun back to the driver.

Surprised, the driver fights for control of the car.

The driver struggles to retain control of the weapon.

BANG! Driver brain just flew out of the shattered window.

Hitchhiker grabs the steering-wheel, when --

HEADLIGHTS FLASH straight toward him.

With seconds to spare, he bangs the car-door open and jumps.

EXT. - FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

THUD! Hitchhiker hits the road, rolling.

He covers his head with his arms, comes to a stop, arms round his head tighter --

but nothing.

Sound of the WIND rustling leaves.

He slowly raises his head, and looks about him.

Road's clear.

He stands.

He begins to search around him - looking on the ground.

He kneels on all four. Touches something.

A bright beam snaps tearing through darkness - a flashlight in his hand.

He stands.

He walks slowly zig-zaging the light on the ground.

He enters a bit deeper into the woods.

He looks around.

Another step and he hits something hard with his leg. He jerks back enlightening it with the flashlight.

A stone - modeled - similar to a gravestone.

A side is blank.

Hitchhiker's puzzled. He faces it's front side.

On the stone:

A small picture framed inside a round metal frame.

Below it a few words engraved. Warm words. A farewell to a lost child by his parents.

Killed in a CAR CRASH at this location.

A face on it looks familiar.

IT'S THE HITCHHIKER'S OWN PICTURE.

He's not a day older then on it.

The hitchhiker backs away from the stone.

HITCHHIKER

No, no, NO!

He turns runs.

He slips over something in the dark and falls down.

Like a scared animal he scans his surroundings.

It's his RUCKSACK.

A brief moment of relief on his face.

He grabs it, stands up and runs.

EXT. - FOREST ROAD - DAWN

An orange sky.

Branches of the trees swing in a light breeze.

A quiet, empty road.

The hitchhiker runs, but he's lagging.

And lapses to a walk.

A CAR passes by.

THE SAME CAR FROM EARLIER.

Up ahead, the car stops.

Hits reverse.

Stops next to the hitchhiker.

DRIVER (O.S.)

Hey! You need a ride?

The hitchhiker stops.

Turns his head toward the car.

Expression on his face asks: "could it be such a bad idea?"

FADE OUT: