

LOST IN THE STORM

Written by

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FADE IN ON:

INT. MOTEL LOUNGE - NIGHT

A motel lounge - cluttered with pamphlets and bad shag carpet. Worn-out tables fill the room, the reception desk several feet away.

Two men and a woman sit at a table, listen as the wind HOWLS outside:

GARY, 53, truck driver written all over him. Barrel chested with deep lines on his face. MIKE, 34, looks red-neck himself... except for the colorful bead necklace around his neck.

SHIRLEE, 55, looks out the window. Dyed red hair - two shades too bright. Holds a floppy purse, with room enough to park an RV.

GARY

They're sayin' hurricane warning. Roads shut down for miles. No-one goin' home until late tomorrow.

SHIRLEE

There was a storm the night Todd went missing...

MIKE

Eileen, too. Came outta nowhere, just like this one.

He looks across the room. A MAN, 20s, rests alone at a table. Sunglasses on his face - black jeans and vest. Coffee and ice water sit before him, untouched.

MIKE

Other things look familiar, too.

Shirlee picks up a pamphlet, "NFMC" on it's cover. She flips it open. The heading reads "National Foundation for Missing Children." Pictures of kids on every page.

Mike points to a section.

MIKE

You go to that seminar? Speaker was Carl Dunford, UFO expert. Got all of his books on abductions.

Gary coughs loudly, makes a face.

SHIRLEE

I went to the family session on grief counseling. How to cope with losing a child.

GARY

Yeah. Went to the forensic speech, myself. New techniques for assessing old evidence. A lot more useful than that flaky shit. Can't believe they let stuff like that in...

Mike opens his mouth, about to respond.

SHIRLEE

Well, you know. Different strokes for different folks.

MIKE

(glares at Gary)

Not everyone's ready to handle the truth.

Shirlee smiles at both men, attempts to make peace.

SHIRLEE

The important thing is, we're all here for the same reason. Healing. Finding answers.

(smiles at Gary)

Meeting people who have been through the same thing as you.

Gary relaxes, turns to Mike.

GARY

Shirlee here - she lost her son. Same as me.

Mike's face falls, looks genuinely concerned.

MIKE

Oh, man. I'm sorry.

Shirlee snuffles. Mike digs in a pocket, gives her a wrinkled tissue. Shirlee tucks it away, doesn't use it.

MIKE

What happened? If you don't mind me askin'?

Shirlee digs in her purse, finds a bottle of Valium. Pops a pill with a shaking hand.

SHIRLEE

You know, it's just so hard to be a parent. You're either too protective, or not enough. My Todd was only ten. I used to think, 'let boys be boys'. Then one day, he climbed the shed, fell off the roof onto a stick. Almost poked his eye right out of his head. After that, I was always so careful. No rough housing. No action sports.

She watches as water drips from a leak in the ceiling.

SHIRLEE

Then on night, I put him to bed. It was raining hard. I tucked him in, made sure he was warm. The next morning... He was just gone. The window was open. And no more Todd.

Her voice cracks. She finds Mike's tissue, puts it to use. She pulls a picture from her purse, shows it to the men: A young boy with bright blue eyes - a faint scar under his left cheek.

SHIRLEE

The police came, took evidence. Never got the slightest lead. It's like he vanished. Into thin air.

Gary pats her hand.

MIKE

A storm, huh?

Mike fidgets with an "energy bracelet" on his wrist. Shoots a meaningful look at Gary.

MIKE

Lotta twisters where we live. But when my little 'sis went missin', it was really bad. Trailer picked up, wiped off the earth. Our parents had put us in the tub, in case it hit the house. Eileen got up, to get some toys. When she didn't come back, I went lookin' for her. Saw her in the backyard, talkin' to some man. Smooth lookin' guy, dressed in black...

Glances over at the Man in Black. The stranger sips his coffee, doesn't look up.

MIKE

Then she was gone. Like she never existed.

(glares at Gary)

You may say there ain't no UFOs. But I know what I saw. And I ain't never gonna forget.

GARY

If it makes you feel better, believe what you want. Bad enough things happen in the real god-damned world.

(eyes Mike's 'energy beads')

And fairy dust ain't gonna make it go away.

MIKE

(defensive)

These things give off positive vibes.

GARY

Wasn't no storm when my boy went missing. Just a camping trip in the Adirondacks - nice and safe. Drew left the cabin - didn't come back. Beautiful weather, not a cloud in the sky. And I was the Scout Leader, for Christ Sake!

Gary makes a fist, stares at the table. Shirlee looks nervous, pops another pill.

GARY

They'd sighted wolves in the area. Large ones, migrated from somewhere else. They combed the woods, never found his pack, or his body. He just... disappeared.

Gary looks up. Mike's not paying attention; too busy watching the stranger at the other table.

GARY

Am I boring you, pal? What's that bug up your ass?

MIKE

(whispers)

Over there. I swear. It's one a' those Men in Black!

SHIRLEE

Aren't they supposed to wear suits?

MIKE

He's got the shades, dark clothes. And he don't fit in. Think people 'round here wear fancy stuff like that?

SHIRLEE

Maybe he's from the conference, travelled from somewhere else. Like us.

GARY

(chuckles)

Doesn't look nuthin' like Will Smith to me. Besides, aren't the Men in Black supposed to be the good guys?

Mike's temper starts to simmer.

MIKE

I know what I'm talkin' about. The guy talkin' to Eileen had the same sorta stare.

GARY

What, you can see through Raybans, now?

MIKE

He's sittin' so still. And he's lookin' right at us - even if you can't see his eyes...!

Mike stands up, at boiling point now.

MIKE

You wanna be cowards, fine. But I ain't gonna let him go. And I ain't crazy. No matter what you people say...

(yells to the man in black)

Hey, mister! I wanna word with you.

He storms toward the table, Gary and Shirlee close behind. Mike's hand shoots towards the man's glasses - ready to rip them from his face.

Gary grabs his arm, holds him back.

MIKE

Lemme go!

(to the Man in Black)

Big guy, takin' away a six year old girl. Lemme see what you can do 'gainst a full grown man!

The Man in Black looks up. No reaction. Utterly calm.

Mike's free hand reaches into his pocket, pulls out a knife. Shirley grabs for his wrist.

Mike jerks back, nicks her palm.

SHIRLEE

Ow!

The cut isn't deep - but it draws blood. Gary slams Mike into a wall, gets in his face.

GARY

That's enough.

He twists Mike's arm behind his back.

GARY

You and me, we're taking a trip back to your room.

(to Shirlee)

You stay here. Put a band-aid on that.

Shirlee watches them go. Stands over the Man in Black's table, completely embarrassed.

SHIRLEE

I should really apologize for my friend over there. I mean, he's not my friend. But he had no right.

The Man in Black's barely moved. Seems strangely detached from the whole situation.

SHIRLEE

You okay, hon?

MAN IN BLACK

I'm fine. Please - sit down.

His voice seems smooth - almost hypnotic. Shirlee sits down, obedient. The man slides a glass of water across the table.

MAN IN BLACK

Drink this. You'll feel better.

Shirlee takes a sip. Regards the stranger over the glass.

SHIRLEE

Are you here for the conference?

The man looks at Shirlee for a long moment - his stare intense even behind his shades.

MAN IN BLACK

Not exactly.

SHIRLEE

Oh. Here on business?

A shadow of a smile on the stranger's face.

MAN IN BLACK

Of a sort. And other things.

Shirlee fumbles with her purse, finds her pills.

SHIRLEE

Well, I don't mean to pry. Maybe I should just leave you alone.

She starts to pop a Valium. The stranger reaches out, grabs her wrist.

MAN IN BLACK

Please don't. You've taken too many already.

Shirlee freezes, puts down the pill.

SHIRLEE

You've been watching me?

MAN IN BLACK

A little.

SHIRLEE

I - think I should go. You have a nice business trip. Or whatever...

The stranger tightens his grips, locks Shirlee's hand to the table.

SHIRLEE

Let me go!

She looks around for help. The lounge is empty. There's no-one at the reception desk.

SHIRLEE

(yanks on her arm)  
I'll scream.

The stranger removes his glasses. Vivid blue eyes stare at Shirlee - a faint scar visible above his cheek.

MAN IN BLACK

Please sit down. We don't have much time.

SHIRLEE

Todd?

Todd takes the pill from her hand, places it at his end of the table.

TODD

(quiet)

When I was ten, I wanted a Tony Hawk skateboard. You said it was too dangerous. Gave me a bike with knee pads and a helmet. I sulked in my room. Sold it to a friend a week later. You grounded me for the rest of the summer.

Shirlee's mouth drops open in shock.

SHIRLEE

Is that really you? You could've found that out some other way.

Todd takes Shirlee's hand gently. Looks at her with bright blue eyes.

TODD

What do you think?

SHIRLEE

How can this be? Where have you been?

TODD

I've been... busy. Learning so many things.

His gaze shifts to the cut on her hand. He grazes the wound with his fingers.

The skin mends under his touch - the blood absorbed.

TODD

The people who took me, taught me this.

SHIRLEE

That man Mike. He was right?!?

TODD

(smiles a little)

Aliens? No. But special people, who know special things. And help the world in vital ways the rest of us must never know.

He looks at his mother sadly.

TODD

And who need special children, to pass on their skills.

(pause)

I've met Mike's sister. She's a beautiful person.

Shirlee's hand shakes. She reaches in her purse, looks for the Valium bottle. Todd takes it away, slips it in his pocket.

SHIRLEE

Give it back!

TODD

No. You're hurting yourself. Please, Mom. I won't let you do it.

SHIRLEE

You have no right. THEY had no right. To take a child from it's mother.. I don't care what you say, it's simply evil!

TODD

I wish I could have stayed. But believe me - it was for the best.

Shirlee stares at her son.

SHIRLEE

Are you happy?

TODD

I've seen amazing things. I only wish I could have shared them with you.

Shirlee looks at her hand - then at Todd.

SHIRLEE

You came to see me.

TODD

I came for a few reasons. You were a very important one.

A door opens on the far end of the room. Gary walks in with the RECEPTIONIST, talks (MOS).

TODD

No-one else must know.

Shirlee points to Gary.

SHIRLEE

What about him? What really happened to Gary's boy?

TODD

(shakes his head)

Probably dead. Children disappear for bad reasons, too.

Gary heads toward the table.

GARY

Our friend Mike's sleeping it off. Don't think we'll have any more trouble from him.

Todd puts the shades back on his face, pulls his hand away from Shirlee. Her face falls - she looks abandoned.

GARY

Everything okay?

Shirlee nods, unsure.

The bell RINGS as the front door opens. A HARRIED WOMAN walks to reception, blond hair stringy from the rain.

HARRIED WOMAN

The road's a mess out there. Do you have any rooms left for the night?

The receptionist nods.

RECEPTIONIST

Single or double?

HARRIED WOMAN

Double, please. I'm with my son.

The woman's phone RINGS. She picks it up:

HARRIED WOMAN

No, sweetie. Stay in the car. Play with your GameBoy until I'm done.

Shirlee looks at Todd. A sad smile plays across his face.

TODD

I'm here for business. As well as family.

Gary looks tired - a little impatient.

GARY

Lissen. You two can stay up - talk about whatever. But I'm hittin' the sack. Got a long drive in the morning.

He takes Shirlee's hand.

GARY

Nice meeting ya.

Glances at Todd, a puzzled expression on his face.

GARY

You too. I guess.

He heads away, down a hall. Shirley looks at her unblemished hand, turns to Todd.

SHIRLEE

If you could turn back time..?

TODD

I'd miss you so much. But I'd let them take me.

The harried woman grabs room keys, dials her phone.

HARRIED WOMAN

Okay. You can come in now. But hurry - it's pouring. You'll catch a cold...

Shirlee looks for a long moment at the woman at the desk. She turns back. Her eyes linger on her son's face.

SHIRLEE

(to Todd)

You were always a good boy. I trust you to make the right decision.

She squeezes his hands, stands up from the table.

SHIRLEE

I think it's time to go to bed.

Shirlee walks away. Past the reception desk and the woman. Todd watches her leave, blue eyes hidden behind his glasses.

There's a RING as the motel entrance opens. The shadow of a child visible through the glass...

Todd stands up from the table, heads towards the door.

FINAL FADE OUT: