

GRIZZLY'S BLUFF

by

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SAMPLE - FIRST 10 PAGES ONLY
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EXT. DARK ALLEYWAYS - SUBURBAN STREETS - NIGHT

Trash and broken boxes litter a grimy alley, deep in the Pacific Northwest. Rain lashing relentlessly.

A colossal SHADOWY FIGURE pounds through the night, gripping a large, stained corduroy sack.

Heart beating heavy as his feet strike the pavement. Obscured by the downpour, his monstrous form is more beast than man.

A SKINNY JUNKIE winds through the alley after him. Like a spry weasel on the hunt. Tiny feet fast and nimble.

Then SLAM!!! The junkie slides under the beast, sending him tumbling to the ground. Heavy and lifeless. His breathing stops.

The junkie's eyes fixate. Wiry hands reaching in for the sack.

But the Shadowy Figure THUNDERS to life, leaping up with a roar, clutching it with both hands. He fends off the would-be-thief, sending him sprawling to the ground with a THUMP.

The Shadowy Figure bolts, sack gripped tight.

Spilling out into the main street, he scrambles through the closing doors of a vandalized bus. The destination reads: 'GRIZZLY'S BLUFF'.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Broken lights flicker as the Shadowy Figure takes his seat, breath heavy as he looks out the window behind him.

Newspaper and rags poke from the seams of a tattered coat. His shrouded face consumed by a thick, twisted beard.

A mother warily shuffles away, shielding her daughter from the sight of the beast.

INT. CITY APARTMENT - DAY

SUPER: "FIVE MONTHS LATER:"

A pristine apartment, tailored to career success.

Unpainted toy prototypes on regimented display among blueprints.

Two competing hands grab at a piece of chocolate inside a CHOCOLATE ADVENT CALENDAR. Rival siblings: HOLLY and JACK. CHRISTMAS BELLS BEGIN TO JINGLE.

Holly, 6, the cutest kid in the world. Sparkling bright-eyed and hopeful. She still believes in everything.

Jack, 13, the forgotten child. Messy kid and likable badass. Fiercely independent with a penchant for breaking and fixing things. He hates three things: haircuts, rules, and liars.

In the background, a Christmas classic like 'Miracle on 34th St' plays on the flatscreen. Ignored by the SQUABBLING kids.

HOLLY

You had it yesterday! And the day before!

Jack pops the chocolate in his mouth to spite Holly.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Mommmmm! Jack's eating all my calendar chocolates.

Their mom, LAUREN slaves away at her home-office corner desk, on the phone to her boss, trying to balance the workload. An attractive thirty-something but pressured and overworked. Still, beneath her tired eyes there's a long-forgotten spark.

LAUREN

Won't you please just behave...

HOLLY

I am being haive!

Jack removes the sticky, saliva covered mess from his mouth and hands it to Holly with a smug big-brother-grin. Holly's face turns to blubbering jelly as she BURSTS into tears.

LAUREN

(on the phone)
Bracker... Yeah... Working on it now...

Lauren struggles, overwhelmed and distracted, scratching out numbers on her diagrams. A glass trophy on her desk reads: "DESIGNER - TOY OF THE YEAR."

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Jack. Say sorry to your sister.

JACK

Why?

LAUREN

I said so. It's the rules.

JACK

Screw the rules!

Lauren's in despair at this Saturday morning chaos.
Trying her best to manage.

LAUREN

You're making this really hard...

Jack's nostrils flare, as he begins to shout:

JACK

Ever think this is hard for me?!
Hockey pucking between houses!
Or maybe you haven't notic--

Holly bursts in front of Jack, shining bright, pointing at her feet. Struggling for Lauren's divided attention.

HOLLY

I finally did it! I tied my shoes!
All by myself!

Her laces tangled in a mess of impossible knots.

Lauren's boss, BRACKER barks impatiently down the line:

BRACKER (V.O.)

Forget the damn kids for a minute
and focus! I'm gonna need you to put
in some extra overtime this weekend...

Defeated, she SCRUNCHES her diagrams.

Jack can't hold it any longer. He breaks.
Screaming at his mom face to face. In fierce confrontation.

JACK

You LIED! You said it was all
going to be OK. But it's not!
It sucks! Everything sucks now!

He gets up and storms down the hall, SLAMMING the door.

INT. CITY APARTMENT - JACK'S ROOM - DAY

JACK

All grownups ever do is lie...

He THROWS himself onto his bed and sinks into the solace of repairing a small, BROKEN REMOTE CONTROL HELICOPTER.

He connects some wires from it's open innards and it jerks to life with a mechanical buzz.

INT. CITY APARTMENT - DAY

Hurrying down the hall, Lauren calls out to the kids:

LAUREN
Get your backpacks, we're going to
your dad's.

She TRIPS over a long, awkwardly placed cardboard box. A lopsided plastic Christmas tree blocks the doorway.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Hell! Where did this come from?

HOLLY
You gotta have a tree Mommy.
It's Christmas!

Lauren obsessively tries to straighten the tree.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
You were too busy, so I did it
myself. Jack didn't help at all.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - PARKING GARAGE

Holly swings from her mother's arm, wearing a UNICORN SHAPED BACKPACK, as they make their way toward Lauren's car. Jack plays his beloved HANDHELD VIDEO GAME as he walks.

HOLLY
Mom... If I stop fighting with Jack,
will you stop fighting with Daddy?

LAUREN
Sorry lovebear. You've got more
chance of seeing reindeer fly.
First your dad needs to grow up.

HOLLY
But then he'll be boring too!

Holly races for the front seat, jumping in. Jack is unfazed.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Can we visit Grandpa on the way?

LAUREN
We're in a rush and Grandpa is sick.

HOLLY
That's why we should visit him!

INT./EXT. LAUREN'S CAR - DAY

Lauren drives through the blanketing snow of GRIZZLY'S BLUFF:
A sleepy suburban town in the Pacific Northwest.

Face pressed against the window, a wide-eyed Holly watches
the homeless men push shopping carts through the snow.

ON THE RADIO:

NEWS (V.O.)

*...still hunting a man who escaped
from Caine House Facility, urging
townsfolk to be on full alert. He
is considered deranged and
dangerous. Authorities describe
the man as 'haggard', with a thick
beard and grizzled temperamen...*

Lauren switches it off. Not wanting to worry the kids.

HOLLY

Are they going to go crazy?

LAUREN

Who?

HOLLY

The homeless mans... It said on the
TV that when people are away from
their family at Christmas, they
sometimes go crazy.

JACK

(under his breath)

This family makes me crazy.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

A cheap weatherboard house in the suburbs. Overgrown grass
swallows an alphabet soup of toys and scrap furniture.

LOUD DRUMMING spews from a rusty orange '74 FORD VAN wobbling
in the driveway. Windows plastered with nineties band
stickers: Mudhoney. Nirvana. Pixies. Paw. Pavement.

Messy long hair spills over a flailing green flannel.
BASHING WILDLY on the drums is MIKE: Loving father and failing
rock star. 37 going on 20. Unintentionally good looking -
despite no effort made at his appearance. A grown child.

Lauren impatiently thumps on the open van door.
Mike continues banging away, oblivious to their arrival.

Holly climbs into the van, edging toward him in sneak attack, arms raised like a monster. Just as she's ready to pounce...

Mike SPINS and GRABS her, tickling her to death, roaring like a big gorilla. Holly SQUEALS in delight.

HOLLY
Eeee!! Not the whirlygig!!!

Mike spins her around. Giving her the whirlygig.

Jack looks on laughing. Lauren breaks her cold front with a smirk, remembering the man she once loved. That is, until Mike begins to lose his grip and Holly FALLS from his arms to the van floor with a THUMP.

Lauren's eyes blaze at Mike in disbelief. Love lost in anger. Holly's face flat on the floor.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
It's OK! I'm OK!

Unfazed, Mike picks Holly up off the ground, brushes her off and kisses her on the butt, sending her on her way.

Lauren sighs in dismay at the utterly forgivable Mike.

MIKE
So, did you have fun at your mom's?

HOLLY
I guess... Mom was pretty busy, but
I learned something very important...

A proud toothy grin...

HOLLY (CONT'D)
There's only so much broccoli you
can hide in a glass of milk!

Mike laughs. Lauren doesn't.

LAUREN
Listen. I've gotta get to work.

Holly bear-hugs her mother goodbye and the kids run toward the house excitedly.

Mike drags his drum kit to the back edge of the van. His words breeze lazily.

MIKE
Can you give me a hand with these?

Unable to refuse, she helps Mike lower the kit from the van. But it SLIPS from Mike's grip and the cymbal screw catch her hair, pulling it from the roots. Lauren YELLS:

LAUREN
 FFFFAAAARR...

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

...SSHBLAMM-PA-RAM-PAM-PAM!!! Jack smashes his way across his junior drum kit, masking Lauren's expletive.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike apologetically holds up his greasy hands and pulls an empty bucket of fried chicken from the back of the van.

MIKE
 Sorry. Chickenfingers.

Lauren glares as he wipes the chicken grease through his hair.

Holly watches on from behind a screen door, face pressed to the mesh. As Mike spots her, she darts back inside.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 They like seeing us together y'know.
 What happened? This used to be fun.

Lauren draws a deep breath. Trying to hold it all together.. Pulling back her rage.

LAUREN
 I guess I grew up.

From inside, the kids bang out their messy punk rock cacophony.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 Being Dave Grohl isn't a goal anymore. It's a pipe dream.

MIKE
 I've sent stuff to all the labels.
 We're about to break through.
 I can feel it...

He stares blankly into the distance.
 Lauren SLAMS the van door shut.

LAUREN
 You can't keep doing this.

Mike's lovable slacker smile breaks to pieces. He turns away fiddling unnecessarily with mic cables, hiding his pain.

MIKE

I'm not doing anything.

LAUREN

Exactly! No rules. No structure. Just fun and mess and noise! And it makes me bad cop. You're turning them into little versions of you.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

The kids ROCK OUT with the TV LOUD. Jack guzzles a can of Coke, BANGING on the drums. Holly twirls gleefully with a guitar until she flumps down dizzy.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

MIKE

I turned out okay.

He struggles to close the busted lock on his van doors. Lauren stares him down.

LAUREN

I can't keep bailing you out.

Mike brushes his long hair back from his face, revealing patchy three day growth and an uncomfortable smile.

MIKE

I just want them to remember me as a great dad. And you know I can't do the normal job thing. It's not my style.

Lauren paces to her car, burnt out and frustrated.

LAUREN

Aarrgh. Why do I bother!

Mike calls out optimistically as Lauren begins to drive away.

MIKE

'Cos somewhere in that icy heart, you still love me!

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Half-empty boxes of pizza scattered across the table. Mike is asleep on the couch. Either side of him, the frightened kids are watching an old black and white ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN HORROR FLICK. Terrified and loving every minute.

Holly picks the marshmallows from a box of Lucky Charms, leaving the uneaten cereal inside.

Jack's eyes are transfixed to the screen as the Abominable Snowman ROARS. Holly nervously peers through her fingers.

Mike's hand falls off the couch into a spilt bowl of popcorn.

ON TV:

The Yeti has been captured. The truth comes out. A hunter pulls off the Yeti's mask:

HUNTER
You're nothing but a cheap
fairground trickster!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

The snow has fallen heavy overnight. A large clump slides from the gutter, burying a hapless Rasta garden gnome beneath.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mike is flipping through homemade cassette tape recordings of former bands - still clinging to the past. As Holly watches on.

He comes across a stack of Polaroid snapshots Lauren and him in their grungy Seattle days. Stoned and in love.

HOLLY
Why do you want old tapes when you
can fit infinity songs on a iPod?

MIKE
It's called nostalgia... It's when
we like something because it's old.

HOLLY
Like Grandpa?

Mike smiles.

MIKE

This was your mom's favorite...

He pulls out a homemade recording: 'FOOLISH FIRE'.

HOLLY

She really still makes you gooshy
in the brain doesn't she Dad?

He nods. Hopeless.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

All I know 'bout love is: You're
s'posed to get shot with an arrow
or something... But after that...
it's not so bad.

MIKE

Sometimes -- the arrow gets stuck.
And you can't pull it out.

Mike ducks around the corner to hide his pain from Holly.

HOLLY

Don't worry. Santa's going to grant
my wish and everything'll be peaches!

From around the corner, Mike smiles and wipes his eyes,
reaching inside the half-eaten box of Lucky Charms.

MIKE

Heyyyy... Who ate all the charms?

HOLLY

(a cheeky lie)
Jack!

Mike GALLOPS back into the kitchen on an invisible horse,
speaking like a faux-medieval knight.
He scoops her up under one arm, as Holly squeals in glee.

MIKE

Are you ready my princess?
For tonight we shall ride!

HOLLY

Where to Daddy?
Where shall we ride?

He turns to the window and straightens his arm valiantly.
Pointing as he announces:

MIKE

To the mall!

END OF 10 PAGE SAMPLE --

Want to know more?

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