

Deadly Hike

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Deep within a gorgeous mountain range. WOMAN (18) races by, taking frequent looks behind her where heavy FOOTSTEPS seem to keep up the pace.

The woman trips. She immediately bounces back up and staggers forward, trying to run faster than her feet will go.

She comes to a rock wall, too tall to climb. Whirls in a panic to go back.

Several feet away, we see a man's frame, dressed in denim overalls, stopping. An ax hangs at his side.

The woman breathes fast as she presses back against the wall. She breaks down into tears.

WOMAN

Please... please don't.

The unrecognizable man steps steadily toward her.

WOMAN

Help!

Crying, she slides down the wall, scrunched at the bottom. Her eyes look up at her attacker stopping before her. She shakes her head.

WOMAN

No!

The ax rises above her. Swings downward.

THE TREES

O.S. The horrid sound of an ax SPLITTING a skull.

Birds scatter from the trees at the noise.

ON THE GROUND

The ax, dripping blood, lowers to the man's side.

O.S. FOOTSTEPS come near.

The unseen man's head turns to the sound.

TRAIL

MIRANDA GARRETT (19), very bright, capable of putting on an award-winning innocent performance when she wants, jogs along a wide trail, wearing earphones connected to an Mp3 player on her belt.

An unseen man arrives behind a thick tree. His eyes lock on Miranda. Stare at her with interest.

Unaware of the potential danger, Miranda continues on. Disappears around a curve.

The man ducks back out of sight.

INT. UNDISCLOSED WORKROOM - NIGHT

The unseen killer lays the woman's body on a mesh rack long enough for a person, hanging above a metal tub of clear liquid. His hands turn a crank, requiring a good deal of strength.

O.S. BUBBLING increases to a harsh amount.

The man's cold eyes stare in the tub's direction. He waits. His hands turn the crank in the opposite direction.

O.S. The sound of liquid POURING off of something solid rising from it.

INT. TIM'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The news plays on the TV. Behind the ANCHOR, a photo of a homeless man, 50s, scraggly, dirty, appears.

ANCHOR (ON TV)

Randall Marx was arrested two months ago for the disappearances of 12 people over the past three years. While the bodies were never found, authorities believe that Marx, a homeless man for more than 10 years, living in the Sierra Mountains, murdered hikers passing through and buried their bodies in the vast wilderness.

TIM GARRETT (40s), friendly, a fatherly appearance and somewhat nerdy, stands before the TV with a remote in his hand. He listens intently to the news story.

ANCHOR (ON TV)

Marx's trial will begin next week. With the amount of local interest, police expect a high number of spectators to flood the courthouse. Extra officers will be sent in to handle the crowds.

Tim turns off the TV. Worried, he looks up the steps nearby.

INT. MIRANDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Very neat and organized. A few professional landscape paintings on the walls - mountainous areas. A family picture rests on the nightstand - Miranda (15), her parents and an older sister (17).

Miranda folds a small pile of summer clothes and places them inside a hiking backpack lying on the bed. A rolled up sleeping bag hangs from the bottom of the pack.

Tim knocks on the open door.

TIM

Knock, knock.

Miranda flashes him a smile as she continues to work. Tim goes to her.

TIM

Getting ready for the big trip, I see.

MIRANDA

Yeah. I can't wait.

TIM

What if they have the wrong man?

MIRANDA

There haven't been any murders since he was arrested. What does that tell you?

Tim sits down on the bed. His concern for his daughter shows.

TIM

To think you jogged parts of that trail many times, not knowing there was a killer on the loose...

Miranda zips up the pack and stands it against the wall. She takes a seat next to Tim. Places an arm around him.

MIRANDA

Now that I know what was going on, it scares me to think what could have happened, but they caught the guy, and it's Spring Break. You have to let me go a little.

TIM

Why this trail? Can't you go somewhere else?

MIRANDA

We could, but we don't want to. It's exciting to visit the area where this guy supposedly killed all those people.

Tim shakes his head.

TIM

Young people.

Miranda grips his hand.

MIRANDA

Look, I know how much you miss Mom. And you cling to me even more since she's not around. But it's been four years, Dad. It's time to move on, don't you think?

Tim sadly looks to the family photo.

TIM

Losing your mom was hard enough. Then Sarah... I can't stand the thought of losing the only thing I have left.

Miranda places her arms around him, rests her head against his.

MIRANDA

I'm not Sarah. I hate drinking so I won't be driving drunk. There's nothing to worry about.

TIM

Bears?

Miranda pulls back.

MIRANDA
Bears don't scare me.

She playfully holds up both fists in fight mode and throws a few jabs into the air with her right fist.

MIRANDA
I have a mean right hook.

Both laugh. Tim hugs his daughter.

INT. MIRANDA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Miranda trudges down the steps, toting the large backpack. She lays it against the wall.

The DOORBELL rings. Miranda opens the door to BRAD FENNING (20), harmless-looking, but adorable. He carries a similar pack with a rolled up tent attached to the bottom along with a sleeping bag.

BRAD
Hi, Beautiful.

He kisses Miranda as he steps inside.

BRAD
Ready to go?

MIRANDA
Hell, yeah.

They come together for a much longer kiss. Brad drops the pack and focuses on Miranda.

Tim walks down the steps. His pace slows to a stop at the bottom over what he sees. He clears his throat. The couple separates.

TIM
Maybe I should chaperone this trip
of yours.

MIRANDA
That won't be necessary, Dad. We'll
be good.

Tim's eyes turn to Brad. Waiting. Brad notices. Shifts his stance.