

Project Z

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

At the foothills of a majestic mountain range. The forest is vast. Various birds CALL out from the treetops. It's the perfect picture of unbridled beauty until...

Sticks SNAP in an orchestrated harmony. RON PETERS (30s), dressed in hunting fatigues, toting a rifle, makes his way through a dense patch of brush.

As he emerges, a limb catches his pantleg and rips it. Ron examines the tear with a frown.

RON

Dangit.

BUTCH, his beagle, trots out into the open from the side, where the brush is virtually non-existent. He comes up to Ron, wagging his tail with excitement.

RON

If you want to show off, how about finding me a game bird?

Butch sniffs the ground.

Ron catches movement out of the corner of his eye.

It's an unsuspecting RABBIT looking for delectable greenery.

Ron lifts the rifle to his eye and takes careful aim. Just as his finger twitches...

Butch bolts off, BARKING as he chases the rabbit. It darts deeper into the wilderness, Butch hot on its trail.

RON

Darn mutt. Butch! Get back here.

Butch disappears from our sight. His BARKS quickly fade into the distance.

Ron follows after Butch. He only takes a few steps before...

O.S. Butch WHIMPERS in pain.

Ron pauses, then picks up the pace in pursuit of his beloved dog.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

An eerie silence grips the wilderness. Ron grows more frantic as he searches.

RON

Butch! Where are you?

Ron slows to a stop over something he sees just ahead.

Butch lies on the ground, dying. His body torn in a few places, the result of an animal's teeth ripping flesh and devouring large pieces. He WHIMPERS briefly in untethered torment.

The rifle slips out of Ron's hands. Shocked, he slowly approaches his faithful friend. Butch somehow finds enough strength to lift his head for one last look at his cherished owner. His head drops back to the ground and he dies.

Ron kneels next to the body. Tears in his eyes. He reaches out and lightly strokes Butch.

Butch suddenly comes to life, only there is something very wrong. He snaps at Ron, barely missing. Ron falls back. Acting like a rabid dog, Butch jumps up, BARKING and SNARLING.

Ron knows this is bad. He scrambles back toward his rifle.

RON

Butch!

Butch charges at him, just as Ron nears the gun. Ron holds up an arm to block the impending attack. Butch sinks his teeth into the forearm, shaking his head frantically to rip it off.

Ron grits his teeth in agony. He kicks at Butch but fails to dislodge him. Ron's fingers inch their way closer to the rifle. He shifts his whole body, dragging Butch with him.

The rifle finds its way into his hand. It's awkward at best, but Ron manages to lift the weapon with one hand and aim it at Butch's head. He FIRES. Butch drops to the ground, dead.

Catching his breath, Ron lifts his tattered arm for a closer look. Multiple punctures are deep and stream blood.

NEARBY

We see the back of a MAN as he moves away, taking slow, unsteady steps. A slight SNARLING is heard.

EXT. AVERY - DAY

A quaint small town surrounded by the mountains. The kind of place where any type of crime is extremely rare. KIDS play in the street. A few PEOPLE jog. A WOMAN walks her DOG.

EXT. RON'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

A small one-story house with a large area of flowers to the back of the yard, near the woods.

Ron strains to carry his dead dog into the yard. His injured arm is wrapped in an old towel. He goes to lay Butch down near the flowers. His injured arm gives out and he drops him the last couple of feet.

JENNY (30s), Ron's wife, steps out through the back door. Worry consumes her when she sees Butch. She hurries to Ron.

JENNY

What happened?

Ron straightens, gripping his arm. He looks unsteady.

RON

I... I don't know. Some animal attacked him, I guess.

Jenny sees the blood soaking through the towel and removes it for a look. She grimaces at the punctures still streaming blood.

JENNY

Did he do that?

Ron seems confused as he looks back to the flowers.

RON

I need to bury him.

JENNY

Not until you see Dr. Mason.

Jenny rewraps Ron's wounds and takes him by his good arm.

JENNY

Come on. I'll get you a clean towel
so you don't bleed all over the truck.

Jenny guides Ron into the house.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - DAY

ALLY REYNOLDS (8), bright-eyed with pigtails, is seated on the exam table. She has a bad scrape on her knee.

DR. MASON (40s) pulls up his stool and sits before the wounded leg with a saturated gauze pad.

Standing to the side, DAVID REYNOLDS (40), Ally's dad, nice guy and casually dressed, watches.

Ally tenses at the sight of the pad.

ALLY

It's going to hurt, isn't it?

DR. MASON

I'm not going to lie to you, Ally.
Maybe a little.

Dr. Mason closes in with the gauze. Ally tenses even more.

ALLY

Don't lie to me. It's going to hurt
a lot!

David goes to Ally. Places his hands on her shoulders to help hold her still.

DAVID

The best thing to do when you're
really scared is to get it over with.

ALLY

I think I'll let Mom clean it.

Ally tries to get up. Not happening with David holding onto her.

DAVID

You let Dr. Mason do his job.

Ally squirms.

DR. MASON

You don't want to give bacteris time
to get in.

ALLY

That could be bad, huh?

DR. MASON

Very bad. Now, just try to hold
still for me, okay?

Dr. Mason lightly dabs at the scrape. Ally buries her face
against David's chest. David grins at the doctor.

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - SAME

David's other daughter, SAM (14), pure tomboy, tosses a
baseball into the air over and over, catching it in her glove.

A truck pulls up and parks. Jenny jumps out of the driver's
side and hurries around to the curb. Opens the door for Ron
and helps him out. He now has a better towel wrapped around
his wounded forearm.

Sam stops playing with the baseball to watch.

SAM

What happened, Mr. Peters?

Ron is in too much pain to speak.

JENNY

The dog attacked him.

SAM

Butch? Why would he--

JENNY

We don't know, Sam.

Jenny assists Ron into the office.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Mason wraps a bandage around Ally's knee while she watches
bravely.

DR. MASON

That wasn't so bad, was it?