

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN - DAY

The area is barren, little shrubs are scattered throughout the rocky terrain. It is impossible to look too far out ahead due to the exaggerated hills and valleys. The ground consists of a mixture of loose dirt and solid rock.

The trees are bare, with little buds attempting to grow in the unforgiving sun.

The air is without any moisture. It is so arid that sometimes nosebleeds occur, skin becomes cracked, and eyes become so dry that it is difficult to simply blink.

The sky is a bright blue, with the sun sitting dead in the center. Far in the sky, vultures fly around in circles. Walking through this desert terrain is a FAMILY of three brave explorers.

LUKE (36), the father, is tall and muscular. He has a clean-cut beard and is wearing a ball cap. MARY (34), the mother, is short and lean. She is wearing a sun hat and carrying a satchel over her shoulder. FREDDIE (9), the son, is a little small for his age, kind of short and skinny. He is extremely curious and bright.

The entire family is wearing hiking gear and hiking boots.

They trek through the desert, Freddie is holding Mary's hand. Mary looks up in the sky, spotting the vultures. She nudges Freddie and points to the vultures. Freddie looks up into the sky.

MARY

Oh! Look Freddie, do you see them circling up there? Do you think they're friendly?

FREDDIE

(chipper)
Yeah, I think so! Can we name them?

MARY

Sure, who's that?

Mary points to one of the vultures.

FREDDIE

(contemplative)
HMMMM...

Luke doesn't look up or turn around to speak to Mary and Freddie.

LUKE
They aren't friendly, Freddie.
They're vultures.
(beat)
(playful)
And if you aren't careful, they
might eat you.

MARY
LUKE! Stop that!
(Beat)
They don't want to eat us honey.

Freddie's stomach grumbles.

FREDDIE
(slightly whiney)
Mom...? Can I have a snack? I'm
hungry.

MARY
(cheerful)
Oh! Sure, honey. Let me see.

Mary reaches into her satchel and pulls out a Brown Sugar
Pop-Tart. She hands it to Freddie.

MARY
Here ya go, sweetie.

FREDDIE
(whiney)
Ah! Brown Sugar?!
(beat)
Can I have a Hot Fudge one?

MARY
No, I left those back in the truck.
(beat)
Besides, you don't need that much
sugar anyway.

FREDDIE
(disappointed)
Alright.

Freddie rips into the Pop-Tart and begins munching.

The family continues to travel through the rocky terrain.

LUKE
Alright guys, we're almost there!

FREDDIE

The magic tree! The magic tree!

Freddie skips around in between his parents.

INT. CAVE TUNNEL - DAY

They travel down into a narrow path, the farther they get the closer the rocks begin to close in. It eventually gets so tight that one could stretch their arms out and touch both sides of the rock made walls.

LUKE

Alright, hang in there guys, its getting pretty tight, we should be out of here in a moment.

MARY

Its getting quite dark in here isn't it Freddie.

FREDDIE

It's not night time is it?

MARY

No silly, look up.

The giant rocks that form the walls have met at a point at the very top forming a triangular ceiling above the family.

FREDDIE

Wow!

Luke, Mary, and Freddie continue to walk into the tunnel.

INT. MAGIC TREE CAVERN - DAY

The family walks out into an open area. There is a small area overhead that lets in a single beam of light that shines down onto a large twisted tree.

They stop half way between the opening of the cave and the mystical magic tree. Mary looks to Luke.

MARY

(enthralled)

I need to get a sample of this.

Luke nods, smiley and understanding. Mary walks toward the tree.

LUKE

(to Mary specifically)

Okay, I'll look after him.

(beat, to Freddie)

Hey, have you ever heard the story
of the magic tree?

Freddie shakes his head, smiling ear to ear. Luke crouches
down to Freddie, wrapping his arms around him.

LUKE
Well, you see, this tree has been
here, in this very spot, for over
100 years...

Mary arrives at the tree. She pulls a chrome-plated capsule
out of her bag and scoops dirt into it.

LUKE (CONT.)
...Explorers came across this tree
while excavating the Grand Canyon in
2122...

Mary takes a pair of clippers from her bag. She cuts a small
budding branch from the magic tree and puts it in the
capsule.

LUKE (CONT.)
...It was one of the finest
discoveries of the 22nd Century. Some
of the explorers were so entranced
by the tree's magic, that they
become obsessed with it...

CLANG! A rock hits the ground. Mary perks up. She slowly
peeks around the magic tree, looking toward the shadowy back
wall of the cave. Mary looks into the darkness, curious but
cautious.

There is a shuffle in the darkness. Mary is struck with
fright, she slowly backs away from the magic tree.

LUKE (CONT.)
...They would worship it, believing
that the tree held the secrets to
the universe.
(beat)
Some even claimed that this tree
could make you immortal.

Freddie looks up to his father.

FREDDIE
What does that mean?

LUKE
Immortal?
(beat)

It means you can live forever.

Mary, still backing away, can't pull her eyes away from the shadowy void.

The beam of light surrounding Mary and the magic tree begins to shrink. The shadows creep closer and closer.

Mary stops in her tracks, petrified. She snaps her head around looking over at Luke and Freddie. She tries to call to them, but nothing comes out.

In B.G., Luke grabs Freddie by the shoulders and turns him. They are now eye to eye.

LUKE

(hushed, playful)

Legend has it, that some of the explorers really did become immortal.

(beat)

And they have been living in these caverns ever since.

The shadows surrounding the magic tree and Mary begin to recede, revealing a crowd of indigenous, CAVE PEOPLE.

The cave people are pale and emaciated, tribal paint covers their disfigured and deformed bodies. Most of the cave people are wearing masks. A few masks stand out from the crowd, they appear to be giant bird skulls with jagged beaks. For those not wearing masks, they have bloodshot eyes bulging from their sunken faces.

Some of the cave people are wielding crudely constructed weapons, such as spears and blow darts.

The cave people stare at Mary, snarling like angry, hungry animals. They begin to close in on her.

Mary spins around, looking in horror at the cave people surrounding her.

The cave people pounce.

Mary lets out a piercing scream.

Luke snaps his head around just in time to see the cave people converge on Mary. His eyes explode with fear.

LUKE

(terrified)

MARY!

Freddie looks over to Mary, but its too late. All he sees is her desperate arm reaching out from a heap of cave people. He stares with his mouth hanging open, tears start streaming down his face.

FREDDIE
(choked up, shaky)
Mom?
(beat)
(absolutely horrified)
MOM!

One of the BIRD SKULL MASKED CAVE PEOPLE steps away from the heap and turns to look at Freddie and Luke. Freddie and Luke stare back in disbelief. Without saying a word, the bird skull masked cave person raises his spear, pointing it at Freddie and Luke.

A small horde of cave people break away from the heap and bound ferociously toward Freddie and Luke.

Luke scoops up Freddie and puts him over his shoulder. Luke runs toward the mouth of the cavern. Freddie rears his head up and reaches an arm out toward Mary.

FREDDIE
(yelling, horrified)
MOM!

INT. CAVE TUNNEL - DAY

Luke weaves his way through the dark, rocky tunnel. He runs frantically over the jagged terrain, making sure not to lose his footing. Freddie grips the back of Luke's shirt. His knuckles are white, his eyes clenched shut.

The horde of cave people chase after them, they are not too far behind. Three of them are bounding on all fours, growling and chomping their teeth, foaming at the mouth. The other three cave people run on foot, wielding spears and blow darts.

Freddie hesitantly raises his head, he peaks with one eye at the horde of cave people.

One of the cave people raises their blow dart and fires. A sleek, black dart plunges into Freddie's neck.

Freddie winces in pain, he closes his eyes and nestles his head into Luke's back.

The mouth of the cave becomes visible. Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, Luke begins to run faster.

EXT. MOUTH OF THE CAVE - DAY

Luke and Freddie emerge from the cave, the desert sun cascades over them, swallowing them whole. Luke continues to run for his life, trying desperately to escape the barbaric cave people.

Freddie appears to be woozy, he struggles to keep his eyes open. The sleek, black dart is still protruding from his neck.

The snarling and growling of the cave people stops. There is a moment of eerie silence.

Luke notices, he takes a quick glance behind him. He double takes. Luke stops running and looks back to the mouth of the cave.

There, at the mouth of the cave, is the horde of cave people. They remain just inside the cave opening, shrouded by the dark shadows. The entire horde stands eerily still, resembling statues. They stare at Luke with blank expressions.

Luke stares back at them, panting, his heart still racing.

Simultaneously, the entire horde of cave people slink back into the cave, retreating into the shadows.

Luke stares into the darkness.

No sign of movement.

No sound.

Nothing.

Luke and Freddie stand in the large desert crevice, alone.

Luke looks over his shoulder to check on Freddie.

LUKE
(Out of breath)
You doing okay buddy?

Luke motions as if he was adjusting a heavy backpack, jostling Freddie's limp body.

LUKE
(Panicked)
Freddie...?
(beat)
Freddie?!

Luke spots a bent, twisted TREE nearby. He jogs over and kneels down in the small amount of shade. Luke lays Freddie down, he takes off his bag and uses it to prop up Freddie's head.

Freddie is unresponsive, he lays motionless with his eyes closed.

Luke, shaken to his core, brushes Freddie's sweaty hair out of his face.

LUKE
(mortified, short of breath)
Freddie?!
(beat)
Ah, Christ...

He goes to check Freddie's pulse. He feels the blow dart stuck in Freddie's neck.

LUKE
W-what the hell?!

Luke pulls the small, black blow dart from Freddie's neck. He holds it up for a closer look, but only for a moment. Luke flicks the blow dart away.

Luke closely inspects Freddie's neck.

The wound from the blow dart looks terribly bruised and swollen.

There is a large purple-ish, blue splotch around the wound. The splotch has began to spread across Freddie's neck.

LUKE
(Shaken voice)
Oh my god...

Luke looks back at the cave.

LUKE
(Under his breath)
What the hell is going on?!

Freddie lets out a small moan. Luke snaps his head around.

LUKE
(ecstatic, hopeful)
Freddie?!

Luke lightly pats Freddie's cheek.

LUKE

Freddie?! Buddy, c'mon...

Freddie begins to drift off again.

LUKE
(frantic)
Freddie?!
(beat)
Shit.

Luke quickly digs through his bag to find his canteen. He tries to get Freddie to drink, pouring a little bit of water in his mouth.

No use.

The water trickles down the sides of Freddie's mouth.

LUKE
Fuck... C'mon Freddie!

Luke pours water on Freddie's forehead. He starts to shake Freddie.

LUKE
(desperate)
Wake up, Freddie!
(beat)
Please, wake up!

Freddie Lazily opens his eyes.

FREDDIE
Daddy...?
(beat)
Where's.. Mom?

Luke's eyes swell with tears.

LUKE
Freddie, buddy!
(beat)
Oh, thank god you're okay!

Luke holds Freddie in a tight embrace.

FREDDIE
(softly)
Where's Mom?

Luke pulls back, he sees that the splotch on Freddie's neck has grown bigger. It covers the entire left side of his neck, reaching from the bottom of his chin to the middle of his chest.

Unsure of what to say, Luke looks back to the cave. The wave of emotion hits him, but he tries his best to hide it. He slumps his head down and sobs to himself.

Luke pulls himself together, for Freddie.

LUKE
(through tears)
She uh...
(beat)
She's ahead of us. She went to go
get help.
(sniffle)
We're gonna catch up with her.

FREDDIE
(woozy)
I dont feel too well...

Luke wipes the tears from his eyes, pulling himself together. He lets out a large sigh.

LUKE
(choked up)
It'll be okay, buddy. We'll alright.
(beat)
Lets get out of here.

Luke helps Freddie sit up.

Freddie's body is heavy, he slouches over, limp.

LUKE
Hold on...

Luke slings his bag over one shoulder and picks Freddie up and throws him on his back.

LUKE
(deflecting sadness)
Upsy daisy, here we go.
(beat)
We'll be alright.

Luke heads out...

EXT. BARREN DESERT - DAY

The sun sits high in the sky, beating down on the rocky, desert soil. The heat is visible as it simmers across the empty terrain.

Luke comes into focus.

He is tired, his feet are heavy, his steady pace has become slow and dragging.

He calls back to Freddie.

LUKE
(Pretending to be on a walkie
talkie)
Earth to Freddie, do you read?
...Over

FREDDIE
(slowly)
Freddie here... thanks... for
checking in...
(beat)
...Over...

They continue to travel.

EXT. BARREN DESERT - AFTERNOON

The sun is starting to set, Luke and Freddie continue to saunter through the relentless heat.

LUKE
(Pretending to be on a walkie
talkie, out of breath)
Earth to Freddie, how we doing back
there, buddy?
(beat)
...Over

FREDDIE
(mumbling, sleepily)
Good...
(beat)
...Over...

EXT. BARREN DESERT - EVENING

The sun can barely be seen over the steep hills far out.

The sky is an ombre of yellow into a vibrant purple with a wide range of blues in between. Luke and Freddie walk across the barren desert, silhouetted against the sunset.

Luke spots the TRUCK in the distant horizon. Luke stops in his tracks. A long-needed smile stretches across his face.

LUKE
(excited)
Earth to Freddie! I've spotted the
mothership! I repeat, we have

reached the mothership.
(beat)
Over...

Nothing...

LUKE
(worried)
Freddie...?
(beat)
Freddie, you there...?

Luke looks back at Freddie, his eyes are closed, he's not responding. The splotch on Freddie's neck has spread to the left half of his face, his entire left arm is engulfed.

LUKE
Freddie!
(frustrated, breaking point)
Ah, dammit!

All of a sudden, a loud CAW screeches in the distance. It echoes throughout the desert.

Luke's head snaps up, his heart drops in his stomach. He looks off into the horizon, horrified.

A low, ominous chant-like RUMBLE in the distance. It slowly gets louder.

Luke hikes Freddie up on his shoulder and makes a run for the TRUCK.

EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

The sky is a dark, dark blue. The last sliver of sunlight is almost gone, peaking ever-so slightly over the mountain scape.

Luke is making a mad-dash for the truck, he is getting close. Freddie is still slumped over Luke's shoulder, unconscious.

Behind them is a HORDE of CAVE PEOPLE sprinting through the desert. The HORDE is led by one of the CREATURES wearing a BIRD MASK and wielding a badass spear. The Bird Masked creature lets out a mighty SCREECH! The HORDE responds with CHANTS and WAR CRIES.

Luke doesn't look back, he doesn't have time.

He finally reaches the truck. Luke fumbles with the keys but manages to unlock the truck and open the door. He quickly sets Freddie in the passenger seat and hops in the truck.

Luke tries to start the car...

AS...

SLAM! The Bird Masked creature strikes the truck with its staff, denting the hood of the truck.

Luke quickly turns the key in the ignition and the truck comes to life. Luke turns on the headlights.

A bright flash cuts across the desert. The horde of cave people, including the Bird Masked creature, are illuminated by the harsh spotlight. They shriek and cower into the darkness, parting like the Red Sea.

Without hesitation, Luke slams his foot on the accelerator. He wraps an arm around Freddie as the truck zooms forward. The cave people hit and smash against the truck as it passes them.

The truck cruises through the desert, leaving the horde of cave people in the dust.

Luke looks in the rear-view mirror, then down at Freddie. Freddie's face is now entirely covered by the blue-ish, purple splotch.

Tears run down Luke's face. He runs his weathered hands through Freddie's hair.

LUKE

It's alright... Take a rest,
buddy...

We pull back into an ariel view of the car.

SFX: In the B.G., the Bird Masked creature screeches.

FADE TO BLACK

