

Hide & Seek

by

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SCENE 1: EXT. FOREST - DAY

Flurries of snow mask a woody landscape. It is peaceful; powder trickles down to the forest floor. There is quiet. Until...

POW!!

The bang of a rifle crackles through the air, disrupting the peace; a flock of birds take flight from the trees.

INT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

A cap-gun rifle, still warm, lies on the ground. From the rifle we see a man run away from the spot. Another set of feet, larger and much hairier, follow in kind...

CUT TO:

SOLDIER (20's), experienced yet youthful, sprints through the forest, panic-stricken. Helmet askew, he struggles to keep his backpack and their contents in order as he flies through the powder.

He starts to run out of breath and stops. He puts his arm out and leans on a tree, hunched over.

In the distance behind, something roars.

Soldier turns to look behind him in fear. He dashes forward and looks for a place to hide. His eyes lock onto a hallowed-out tree; he climbs inside.

He fights to catch his breath. Frostbitten fingers wrap around a curiously plastic walkie-talkie. He struggles to call for backup.

SOLDIER

Breaker 1-9, Hogarth, got your ears on? What's your 20? We got a hostile situation!

Howling winds intensify the silence.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

I repeat, we've run into trouble. First team is down, we need second team backup! Hogarth, do you copy?
(Beat)
Hogarth?!

Soldier pockets the walkie in disgust and fumbles through his clothes. Cheap medals of honor line his outfit, all inscribed with a large #1.

Hands shaking, he finds the canteen hidden in his layers and tries to drink, only to find it empty. Soldier stares at the canteen in defeat.

SCENE 2: INT. FOREST - LATER

Soldier sits on a tree stump, pencil in hand, notepad in lap; he's writing his book, entitled "THE GREAT SOLDIER: A MEMOIR".

His handwriting is elementary, big block letters with no regard for boundaries.

CRACK! Soldier's pencil lead breaks. He stares vacantly at it, then reaches through his coat pockets for another. But before he can remove another pencil from his bag...

CRACK!

A branch snaps in the distance. Soldier's eyes come to life as he realizes he's not alone. He softens his breath.

Soldier slowly rises out of the tree trunk. Something breathes on his shoulder. He turns around and looks up.

A MONSTER (age unknown) towers over him and stares him down. A shapeless mass of a thing, the Monster's beady, dead red eyes fixate on Soldier.

Their eyes meet. The Monster roars.

SCENE 3: INT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Soldier crashes through the trees, desperately forging a path through the snow. He grabs for his walkie-talkie, looking over his shoulder mid-run. Everything is shaking.

SOLDIER

Hogarth, come in! I've got eyes on
a Bogey! Something's after me!

The Monster roars in the distance. Nothing from the walkie.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Hello? Anybody?! HELP!!

Soldier flings the walkie-talkie away; it lands upright in the snow. Wheezing, he continues to shed weight: helmet, canteen, and medals fly into the powder behind him as he sprints through the forest.

He manages to swiftly cross over a running creek. Soldier looks over his shoulder in disbelief and admires his footwork before smacking his head straight into a tree branch.

He crumples to the ground.

His eyesight fading, Soldier manages to make out a large, fuzzy presence looming over him, eyes glowing dead red. Soldier passes out...

SCENE 4: INT. FORT - DAY

Soldier wakes to the sound of a crackling fire. He sits up and takes inventory of himself before taking in his surroundings. He finds a cut on his forehead and winces.

He is in an entirely wooden open-air enclosure. It is littered with bags overflowing with all sorts of survival objects.

None of this is unfamiliar to Soldier; he has been here many times before...yet he looks around in dismay.

He turns to his left to find the Monster fumbling through a knapsack. The Monster notices that Soldier is awake.

The Monster lumbers over to Soldier and places a band-aid on the cut on his forehead. Soldier smiles.

SOLDIER

I thought I had you there; I never pass the creek. How did you find me so fast?

MONSTER

(Series of grunts.
Monster covers his eyes)

SOLDIER

You cheater! You can't peek when you're counting, how am I supposed to hide then?!

MONSTER

(Growls in disagreement)

The Monster grabs Soldier's nearby helmet and playfully places it on Soldier's head. The Monster then makes a series of motions toward Soldier, as if he was crowning himself.

SOLDIER

(Slightly annoyed)
Oh all right. Here, take it you big baffoon.

Soldier takes one of his toy medals out from underneath his coat; it glistens in the daylight, the inscription "#1" proudly displayed.

The Monster looks down in admiration, holding the medal in his hands; then up with pride.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Don't get used to it.

The Monster continues to admire his prize.

SCENE 5: INT. FORT - LATER

Soldier cooks up some grub for him and the Monster. He takes pride in plating his spaghetti-o's.

Soldier stares at his full bowl. The letters spell out "L O S E R". He stirs his food gingerly, but does not eat.

The Monster hardly notices, as he audibly devours his meal.

Soldier looks around, admiring the fort. Each pillar painstakingly erected by hand to keep him and the Monster safe from outside forces.

A crudely drawn map of the surrounding area is pinned to a wall. There are dash marks indicating territory. Outside the forest is marked DANGER - MONSTERS! Complete with pictures of buildings and monsters. Inside the forest is marked SAFE.

Soldier sighs.

MONSTER
(Concerned grunt)

SOLDIER
You can't have any more. We need to conserve.

MONSTER
(Unsatisfied growl)

SOLDIER
Well what are you gonna eat then?
All we have after this is peas!

Soldier points to a mountain of canned peas stacked in the corner.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
No more ice cream, no more pasta,
just peas. Peas! Which YOU wanted
to bring for some reason! Did you
think we were gonna eat peas just
'cause they were there?

MONSTER
(Whines)

SOLDIER
I don't wanna have to make another
run. Not now.

They sit in silence.

SCENE 6: INT. FOREST - DAY

Soldier and the Monster gather sticks in the forest. They begin to play around; Soldier pokes the Monster with his stick and pretends not to notice as he walks past.

The Monster hits Soldier with a snowball in the back.

Soldier turns around to see the Monster looking around at nothing in particular, playing coy. Soldier smiles.

Soldier and the Monster jab and parry, at first an equal match. The fight begins to favor the Monster, and with a mighty slam of his stick Soldier's weapon is whisked away.

Soldier bends down on one knee and bows his head to the Monster.

The Monster stares at Soldier.

SCENE 7: EXT. LAKE - EVENING

Soldier rides piggyback on the Monster, who walks them down the path to the lake. The only thing separating them from the mouth of the lake is a steep hill.

They joyously run down the hill together.

Soldier and the Monster sit on a ledge by the mouth of the lake and watch the sunset. Soldier puts his head on the Monster's shoulder.

Soldier closes his eyes, content. The Monster stares out at the sun.

SCENE 8: INT. SLEEPING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Soldier lies on his back and chats up a storm, unable to sleep. The Monster listens to his friend. He gazes up into the blackness of the sky.

SOLDIER

...but you should NEVER have
anything sweet touch vegetables.
It's morally wrong. Ants on a log?
What kind of monster thought that's
a good name for a food?

(Beat)

Food should never touch anyway.
That's MY rule.

They lay in silence, admiring the stars.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

What do you think is up there? All those stars...what else do you think?

MONSTER

(Grunts)

SOLDIER

Yeah. That'd be cool.

(Beat)

Do you think that's where we go when we die? Up in the stars?

The Monster does not answer.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

I think that's where we go. And we get to soar through the sky and see all the cool things out there...and the best part is we get to do it together. We can play in the stars forever! We can play hide and seek all day and all night and fly through space and there are no creeks to run through or trees to hit you in the face.

Soldier turns to look at the Monster. He repositions himself so that his head is laying on his stomach. He yawns.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Thanks for being my friend.

Soldier closes his eyes, ready to drift off to sleep. The Monster stares into space. He twiddles the medal around his neck in his hands.

SCENE 9: INT. FORT - DAY

Soldier observes the forest map on the fort wall, picking apart the best routes for Hide & Seek Tag. The Monster looks uneasy, but Soldier takes no notice as he rambles on in excitement.

SOLDIER

...I'm gonna make it to the end this time. I'm not gonna go easy on you; I've got my super fast shoes on! This really separates the men from the boys. You ready?

MONSTER

(Concerned whine)

SOLDIER

Oh relax.

Soldier puts on his helmet, grinning widely.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

It's gonna be fun!

Soldier hits the Monster's arm playfully before pulling out his walkie-talkie and dashing out of the fort.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Breaker 1-9, Hogarth, got your ears on? What's your 20?!

Soldier fades into the distance. The Monster steps outside of the fort entrance and watches him go, then looks down. His medal still hangs loosely around his neck.

The Monster looks behind him at the fort entrance sign that reads SAFE.

He looks back down at his medal and holds it in his hands. He then lifts it up over his head and walks in the same direction as Soldier.

SCENE 10: INT. FOREST HIDEAWAY - LATER

As the wind whistles through the trees, Soldier huddles up in his hallowed-out tree. He shivers but is excited, as if he is waiting for something. He has his notepad out and is drawing the Monster.

CRACK!

The sound of branches breaking snaps through the air. Soldier's eyes light up.

He won't get caught this time.

Soldier jolts up and breaks through the trees with lightning speed!

In his wake, the Monster peers from behind a tree, snapped twig in hand, sadness on his face. His medal absent from his neck.

He continues breaking the twig absentmindedly.

SCENE 11: INT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Soldier sprints through the forest, dashing by each obstacle, bobbing and weaving through the trees; everything is shaking.

He jumps over the creek but doesn't look back; he ducks and dodges the branch!

Blood pumping, Soldier's mouth twists into a smile. He is about to make it to the finish for the first time! He reaches the end of the forest...

SCENE 11: EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

...and Soldier's smile falls. He sees buildings. Civilization. He pouts, angry and upset; a child about to throw a tantrum.

SCENE 12: INT. FORT

Soldier storms into the fort, dropping his helmet at his feet. He looks around, but no one is there.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

(Yells)

Well? Where were you?!

(Beat)

I don't see what the big deal was.

There wasn't a prize.

The silence is deafening. He continues to yell out.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Looks like you win again! I guess

I'll never beat you!

The Soldier checks around the fort for potential hiding spots.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Come out, come out, wherever you
are...

He is alone. And afraid. He takes out his walkie-talkie and speaks into it with his head down, close to tears.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

What will I do without you...

Soldier sits on the ground, fiddling with the walkie. He throws the walkie away in anger. It lands with a thud in the snow in front of him, and something glistens from above.

He looks above where the walkie landed to find a shiny object hanging from a branch just above where it landed.

The medal!

Soldier walks over and puts it in his hand, looking at its face, reading what it says: "#1".

He places the medal over his head. He is the winner.

A voice, warm and familiar, calls out in the distance. A woman's voice.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Honey, it's time to come in! You'll catch cold!

Soldier looks out to the sound of the voice. He takes a deep breath, and walks off.

CAMERA PANS DOWN TO THE GROUND WHERE SOLDIER WAS.

We see the objects that Soldier left behind. A small green army man; a monster doll; a bundle of sticks; a crude map; a plastic gold medal...

A small, gloved hand reaches into frame and grabs the medal, pulling it away.

END. ^