

CHIMERA

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. COPPERHEAD CREEK, MONTANA - DAY

Under an icy blue sky, green and snow-capped peaks reveal a frost-covered highway that follows a river as it carves into canyons of rocky soil.

A mud-caked Dodge work truck barrels into view, SWISHES through a flurry of leaves, and passes a sign that reads: WELCOME TO COPPERHEAD CREEK, MONTANA. POPULATION: 653.

I/E. DODGE TRUCK - DAY

MARTIN BRENNAN, male, 50s, HUMS with a graveled voice to a sappy BALLAD. He unwraps a breakfast burrito just as he spots a young GIRL walking along the side of the road.

MARTIN

Oh, god dammit.

On the roadside, SABRINA GARCIA, female, 8, tucks her arms into her short-sleeved shirt for warmth. Martin pulls in front of her, rolls down his window.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hop in, Sabrina. I'll give you a ride to school.

Without hesitation, Sabrina does. Martin pulls onto the highway, notices her worn jeans and hole-ridden sneakers.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I hate it when I forget my jacket.

Martin reaches behind his seat, grabs a windbreaker, hands it to Sabrina. She slips it on, pushes the sleeves up over her elbows, smiles down at the embroidered name, MARTIN.

SABRINA

Nice jacket. My dad had one just like it before he quit his job at the garage.

Martin eyes her suspiciously.

MARTIN

...Truth?

SABRINA

Ha.

(beams)

Lie. He got fired for being drunk.

MARTIN

Cheater...okay, well, just last week, I scared off a grizzly with a single glance.

Spot the Lie is obviously a familiar game between the two.

SABRINA

Wait. No fair. Grizz is human. Besides, bears are hibernating now.

MARTIN

Well, aren't you observant?

SABRINA

Yep, but you're not. I snuck into your garage last night and slept in your Super Bee.

MARTIN

That's gotta be a lie.

Sabrina stares right at him, nope. This concerns Martin. Without a word, he drives, contemplates.

EXT. ARMSTRONG ELEMENTARY, PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Martin pulls up behind a school bus, where throngs of kids exit amidst the typical pre-bell commotion.

MARTIN

Look, Sabrina. You know if you ever need help, you're not alone, right?

Sabrina's sad smile reveals knowledge beyond her years.

SABRINA

Yeah, sure.

In front of the truck, a MOTHER holds out a backpack, kisses her unwilling daughter's cheek. Martin bags up his burrito.

MARTIN

Here, take this with you for lunch.

Sabrina kisses him on the cheek, takes it, hurries off. Visibly saddened, Martin watches her for a beat, finally pulls out his phone, dials. A voicemail answers.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
It's Alexis. You know what to do.

MARTIN
Hi, Lex. It's your old man. I know
it's a shitty time of year and
all...I guess I just wanted you to
know that I love you. No matter
what, I'm always here.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM, CHICAGO - DAY

A phone on a night stand BUZZES. ALEXIS BRENNAN, 27, nude,
snatches the phone, slips from the twisted sheets.

She glances over her shoulder. Next to her, GABE, male, late
20s, sleeps. He's rough, but handsome.

A regretful sigh escapes Alexis, *what the hell did I do?* She
quickly dresses, grabs a shabby apron, closes the door gently
behind her.

INT. GABE'S BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Alexis descends a set of wooden stairs, CLICKS on a hanging
light. She pulls her hair back in a knot and puts on chemical
resistant gloves.

Amidst boxes and dirty laundry, a makeshift lab sits. It
consists of Bunsen burners, beakers, and assorted chemicals.

LATER

Alexis studies a dog-eared chemistry book. Her phone BUZZES
again - DAD. She hits ignore. Gabe THUNKS down the stairs. A
lit joint dangles from his lips. Alexis glances up.

GABE
You're already back at it?

ALEXIS
You said you needed the stuff for a
party tonight. It takes time to
make.

She notices his joint.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)
Damn it, Gabe. Put that out.

GABE
Okay. Okay. Sorry.

Gabe flicks the cherry onto the concrete floor.

ALEXIS

Hey, where's that safrole?

Gabe motions to a mason jar filled with a resinous substance on the workbench behind her. Alexis studies it for a beat.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

Well, your cousin wasn't lying.
This is the real deal.

Gabe flicks the jar.

GABE

If I drink it, would it get me
high?

ALEXIS

No. It's normally used for
insecticides. The MDMA needs to be
extracted, or it will make you
puke.

Alexis grabs a Ziplock bag filled with shattered clear crystals.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

This is what you're looking for.
You asked for pure Molly. This is
as clean as it gets, so make sure
whoever buys it drinks lots of
water.

GABE

Yeah, yeah. And no kids.

Alexis gives him a pleading look.

ALEXIS

I'm serious. They'd better be old
enough to buy a fucking beer.

GABE

Okay, Alexis. I got it. What the
hell is wrong with you anyway?

Alexis pinches the bridge of her nose, softens.

ALEXIS

Sorry. It's not you. The
ventilation isn't great down here.

GABE

Maybe you need a break. Let's go to Erika's party tonight. Like a real date for once.

ALEXIS

Look, Gabe. I told you. I'm not looking for anything serious. We just need to sell this shit so I can get the hell out of this town.

GABE

Come on. Chicago isn't that bad. Where are you going anyway?

ALEXIS

I don't know. Xibalba for all I care. As long as the shots are flowing, where nobody cares who I am and what I do.

GABE

So that's it for us then, huh?

ALEXIS

I told you I don't do the love thing.

GABE

All right. I'm cool with that.

Gabe hides the sting, holds up the bag full of Molly.

GABE (CONT'D)

Besides, I've got all the *lovin'* I need right here.

ALEXIS

Good, because you've got seven more coming.

GABE

I thought you said eight.

ALEXIS

I'm taking one bag for the road, and I'm gonna need you to front my half of the cash before I go.

GABE

Maybe I can do that...if you come to Erika's party tonight.

Alexis hesitates.

GABE (CONT'D)

Come on. One last night. We're gonna make a killing. You gotta be there.

OFF ALEXIS...

EXT. MONTANA, STREICHER MINING SITE - DAY

The site looks like an inverted Mayan pyramid gouged into the jagged landscape. The EIGHT-MAN mining operation BUSTLES. Each work truck sports a company logo: STREICHER MINING.

Martin walks among heavy equipment and BEEPING skip loaders. TK, female, 30s, operates a bulldozer. She's hard enough to body-slam a marine. She muscles the dozer into a higher gear. Its teeth SCREECH and bounce off of a quarry of black ore.

Standing behind the rig, RAMMER, 30s, a rangy, ball-cap-wearing man-child, WHISTLES for TK to stop.

RAMMER

Whoa! Shut her down.

MARTIN

What's going on?

RAMMER

It looks like the same shit we've been mining, but this stuff is tougher. We're not making a dent.

Martin nods toward a huge, treaded tank-like excavation rig, the VERMEER SURFACE MINER.

MARTIN

Why don't you give that a shot?

EXT. MINING SITE - LATER

TK fires up the surface miner. As the machine's barbed steamroller chews into the quarry, odd VIBRATIONS emanate from the ground. Martin motions for TK to stop. She does.

MARTIN

Is the drill supposed to vibrate like that?

Rammer shrugs. TK leans out of the rig's window.

TK

What's the hold up?

Martin contemplates and then waves TK the go-ahead. Again, the ground RESONATES. Loose gravel dances on the surface.

Something EXPLODES beneath Rammer and Martin's feet, knocks them back. TK leaps from the rig. Another CRACK rips open the earth beneath the drill, releases a steam vent.

DONOVAN STREICHER, male, late 20s, BURSTS out from a site trailer, runs toward Martin and the crew. His crisp button-up is a blatant contradiction to the grimy site.

DONOVAN

What happened? Is anyone hurt?

Martin dusts himself off, heads toward a newly formed fissure.

POV FISSURE - Martin stares down into the abyss. TK, Rammer, and Donovan follow suit. TK WHISTLES, whoa.

MARTIN

Donovan, take the chopper up and get Stump some radar images...

Below the surface, Martin's voice ECHOES through the cavern.

MARTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...Your old man ain't gonna be happy about this.

INT. UNDERGROUND CAVE - SAME TIME

A strange dark cavern is composed of crystalline amber stalagmites. In the center, they have fused together into a thirty-foot slick chrysalis. Refracted through its translucent surface, a shadowed figure sits.

TIGHT ON - A crack has splintered the glassy casing. The shadow twitches.

EXT. COPPERHEAD CREEK, MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAY

Jagged peaks disappear into heavy storm clouds. Rhythmic blades WHOOSH as a two-man helicopter flies into view. Attached to its undercarriage, a 360° GROUND-PENETRATING RADAR spins, snaps a rapid series of shots.

INTERCUT: DONOVAN IN HELICOPTER/STUMP IN SCIENCE TRAILER

Donovan pilots the chopper. In the passenger seat, EDWARD STREICHER, male, 60s, a hard-lipped 'suit' in working man's clothes, motions to the nearby storm clouds. Donovan speaks to Stump over his headset radio.

DONOVAN

Stump, it's getting choppy up here.
Did we get what we need? Over.

STUMP, male, 40s, an ADHD toe-tapper with some missing fingers, sits at a sloppy desk. Different porn videos play on all three monitors in front of him. He tips back a bag of Cheetos, knocks the crumbs into his mouth.

DONOVAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Stump, you there? Over.

Stump hits a button on a radio.

STUMP

Yep, I got what we need. Over.

He casually clicks the video feeds back from porn to the helicopter's radar shots, immediately shoots up in his chair.

STUMP (CONT'D)

Jee-zus! Donovan, scratch that. You need to swing back for more images of the Apsaalooke Ridge.

INT. STREICHER MINING - SCIENCE TRAILER - LATER

Martin, Stump, Edward, and Donovan study images of the site.

ON SCREEN: The underground structure fills the monitor. Edward can't take his eyes from it.

MARTIN

How the hell did we miss a platinum deposit that big?

Stump points to a thin vein that runs close to the surface.

STUMP

We've been chipping at these two veins. The bulk of the ore is down deeper.

EDWARD

It doesn't matter how we missed it.
How quickly can we get it out?

Martin shakes his head.

MARTIN

I've never seen anything like it.
If it's a cave, we're going to need
a ton of reinforcements.

STUMP

No, it's gotta be solid. A cave
that big would've collapsed the
entire town by now.

MARTIN

Then how did we trigger the tremor?

Stump and Martin turn to Edward.

EDWARD

Doesn't matter. I want it all out
of the ground, ASAP.

MARTIN

Now hold on, Edward...

EDWARD

Drop a camera down there. Brace the
site up if you need to. Just get it
done, Martin.

EXT. MINING SITE - MOMENTS LATER

Martin and Donovan head toward the fissure, spot a group of
miners flicking pennies into the abyss.

MARTIN

Guys? Get away from that damn hole
until we know it's safe.

The crew disperses.

DONOVAN

What do you want to do, Martin?

Martin checks his watch.

MARTIN

Today's shot. Send the crew home.

DONOVAN

Do you need me to stay?

MARTIN

Nah, I'm just gonna drop a camera down there. See what kind of bracing we'll need for tomorrow.

Donovan nods, waits expectantly.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Is there something else?

DONOVAN

Well, it's just that it's November. Have you heard from her?

Martin shakes his head. Donovan waits, hopes for more.

MARTIN

Listen, son. I miss Alexis too. She'll come back around. You just gotta give her time.

INT. ERIKA'S HOUSE, CHICAGO - NIGHT

Muffled DANCE MUSIC. In a haze of party smoke, Alexis sits beside Gabe with a group of 20-somethings.

Gabe does a line of cocaine, offers it to Alexis. She waves it away.

The group's conversation fades. Alexis shifts her attention to the party around her. College cliques, relationship drama, and flirtatious LAUGHS. She finally focuses on a muted television playing old cartoons of the ROADRUNNER.

Gabe motions to ERIKA, 20s, female, indicates a COUPLE groping each other feverishly on the Lazy-Boy.

GABE

Holy shit, Erika. Looks like it's almost orgy time.

The group bursts out in a series of "NOS and GOOD GODS?"

ERIKA

Somebody stop them!

GABE

No, wait. Hang on. It's just getting good.

Gabe tosses a small baggie of Molly onto the coffee table, pulls out six bottles of Evian water. He measures a salt spoon worth of molly in each one.

GABE (CONT'D)
Told you Alexis's shit was amazing.

This snaps Alexis from her daze. The cocaine straw makes its way back around. PARTIER #1 hands it to Alexis.

PARTIER #1
Last chance to lift off, girl.

Alexis relents, snorts a line.

CHILD (O.C.)
Mommy?

The voice shocks Alexis, who hides the straw, wipes her nose. JOSH, male, 4, clutches a plastic dump truck to his chest.

ERIKA
Josh, get your ass back to bed.

JOSH
I'm thirsty.

The group continues to talk, but Alexis can't focus on anything but the boy. The party NOISES swirl into her HEARTBEAT. She hyperventilates. Overwhelmed, she rushes out.

EXT. ERIKA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alexis bolts from the front door. Gabe follows.

GABE
Baby, wait-wait-wait. Slow down.
What just happened in there?

ALEXIS
Are you serious? Did you know there
was a kid in that house?

GABE
Yeah, Josh. He's cool as shit.

Gabe sways under the influence of a litany of substances.

ALEXIS
This was a mistake. I shouldn't
have come tonight. Just give me my
half of the cut, and I'm gone.

GABE
Wow. Okay. I see how it is.

Gabe pulls a roll of cash from his pocket, angrily slaps it into her hand.

GABE (CONT'D)

You know what, Alexis? You act like you're better than me, but the truth is, you're just like me. A fucking drug dealer. But hey, you wanna disappear? There's the road.

Alexis pushes past him, hurries down the driveway to her car.

GABE (CONT'D)

Yeah, go ahead. Run like you always do, but no matter how far you get, you'll still be there.

Alexis gets into her car, CHIRPS her tires, speeds off.

INT. ALEXIS'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Alexis speeds down the road. Her engine redlines. Furious, she punches the accelerator. 70mph, 80mph. A DANGER: CLIFF sign appears. She races past. The streetlights disappear. Darkness swallows the road. If she could just fly off of there, she would be free. She pushes harder, when...

Her phone BUZZES on the passenger seat - DAD. She lets out a primal SCREAM, slams the brakes. Her head SMACKS into the steering wheel. Her car stops inches from a dead black abyss.

--END OF SAMPLE--