

MOUNTAIN LIONS

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY (MOS.)

BEGIN TITLE SEQUENCE:

SLOW MOTION

YOUNG SAMMY (10) is running alone through the snow covered woods.

A deer runs through the woods as well.

Young Sammy chases the deer back and forth across meadows and through the forest.

END SLOW MOTION

END TITLE SEQUENCE

Young Sammy, his brother YOUNG MIKE (11) and their FATHER (35) lay low at a fallen tree. They are all dressed in winter hunting gear.

Father is in the middle with Sammy on the right, and Mike on the left.

Mike is holding the rifle and examining it. Father ignores Sammy and shows Mike how to operate the hunting rifle.

The deer comes into view and Father hushes them up. Everyone is tense.

Sammy inches his head up over the log to see the deer, but Father forcefully pushes his head back down and quiets him with his eyes.

Everyone focuses back on the deer.

SLOW MOTION

Mike caresses the trigger and lines up the deer in his sights with the rifle. Father carefully helps Mike line up the shot.

Just as Mike is about to fire, Sammy tries to inch up over the log again. His foot presses against a twig and a LOUD SNAP is heard.

The deer runs off.

Mike fires a SHOT and misses. Father swings his head around and shoots Sammy a vicious look. His eyes FLASH WITH MENACING LIGHT and a MOUNTAIN LION'S GROWL is heard.

A mountain lion comes out of nowhere and chases the deer.

END SLOW MOTION

Father slams his hand hard against Sammy's head. Sammy tries to get out of the way, but he trips and falls face first onto an exposed rock. Father and Mike stand up, towering over Sammy with his bloody cheek.

SLOW MOTION

The mountain lion chases the deer through the trees.

END SLOW MOTION

Mike reaches down to help Sammy get up, but Father stops him. They walk away.

SLOW MOTION

The mountain lion catches his prey and digs his claws into the deer.

END SLOW MOTION

INT. CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

Young Sammy wakes up with fear in his eyes. He clings close to his bed cover. He turns to look to Mike in the bed next to him. He is awake also. They hear the SOUNDS OF THEIR FATHER AND MOTHER FIGHTING outside their bedroom.

Images of their room: model planes. Flannel sheets. Baseball stuff.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Dad was home again. Drunk and
pissed at something again.

Outside the bedroom, their's Father's MUFFLED VOICE is harsh and loud.

SAMMY (V.O.)

My brother Mike and I were used to
it, but we were still scared.

Young Sammy looks over at Mike who looks back at him wide awake.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Mom told us if we were ever scared to just remember one of her stories and tell it to ourselves quietly. She was a great story teller. She used to read all kinds of books on just about everything, but mostly books on mythology and local folklore. She said she wanted to be a writer some day.

The hallway light coming under the bedroom door shows shadows moving back and forth.

SAMMY (V.O.)

One of my favorites was the story of the Two Brothers and the Mountain Lion. Mom told us this story took place long ago in a forest much like the one we lived in, and with two boys much like my brother and I.

Young Sammy pulls the covers over his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MYTHICAL FOREST - DAY

The trees are lush and green. The landscape is more beautiful than reality.

A young, pretty, pregnant Native American Woman called OKA walks through the forest.

SAMMY (V.O.)

A long time ago, the sky god Mirra fell in love with a beautiful human woman named Oka. They were married on the top of the highest snow-covered mountain and she became pregnant with two boys. The two boys wrestled with each other day and night inside their mother's belly.

Oka stops and grabs her belly in pain.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The only way she could calm them down was to take them for a walk.

(MORE)

SAMMY(cont'd)

One day she walked deep into the forest - much like the forest we live in - She walked for 5 years through the forest because it was the only way she could keep the restless children calm.

Oka walks through tall pine trees.

She walks past a meadow of tall grass.

She sees some otters playing in the river.

SAMMY (V.O.)

For these were no ordinary children. They had the blood of the great sky god in them. But finally, their time had come. Their mother was far from home in the forest, but her two baby boys were ready to be born.

Oka stumbles from the pain in her belly. Birds and lizards flee the scene. The sky instantly grows dark with thunderclouds.

SAMMY (V.O.)

She went to possums' house.

Oka knocks on a nearby tree. A possum pops its head out of a hole in the tree.

SAMMY (V.O.)

But he would not help a human.

He shakes his head 'no'.

SAMMY (V.O.)

She went to Fox's house.

Oka bends down to the mouth of a fox den. A fox pops its head out of the den.

SAMMY (V.O.)

But Fox was too busy with her own pups.

She shakes her head no.

SAMMY (V.O.)

She then went to Mother Mountain Lion's house for help.

Oka talks to Mother Mountain Lion at the mouth of a cave.

SAMMY (V.O.)
Mother Mountain Lion took pity on
the poor human mother and let her
come in.

Oka follows Mother Mountain Lion into the cave.

BACK TO:

INT. CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Young Sammy is startled back to reality by the unseen FIGHTING NOISES out in the hall. LOUD THUMPS hit the walls outside. More YELLING and FIGHTING. His Mother's CRIES are heard through the walls.

Young Mike gets out of the bed and runs to his desk. He grabs a black marker and a flashlight from the drawer. He comes back to Young Sammy's bed and jumps under the covers with him.

Young Mike takes his arm and starts to draw something with the marker. Young Sammy holds the flashlight over his arm.

YOUNG MIKE
You remember the mountain lion
story mom told us, about the two
brothers?

Sammy nods as Mike continues to draw.

YOUNG MIKE (CONT'D)
The brothers had a special symbol.
The people of the forest used it
for protection against evil spirits
and bad luck.

Young Mike finishes drawing the symbol and we see that it looks like a mountain lion. He draws it on his arm as well.

YOUNG MIKE (CONT'D)
We're just like those brothers,
Sammy. So this mountain lion symbol
will protect us too, right? Mom
said as long as we have this,
nothing can hurt us. There's
nothing to be afraid of.

Young Sammy nods again.

Through the walls, the VIOLENT NOISES get LOUDER and LOUDER. It causes Young Mike and Young Sammy to jump under the covers. They hold their arms together so the mountain lion symbols touch.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - SAMMY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The left arm of SAMMY (25) is covered in tatoos. At the very center is a small mountain lion figure.

Sammy hovers over the sink in his tiny bathroom. His head is shaved. He has some muscle, but it's turning into fat. He looks like he used to be stocky, but is turning soft.

Sammy washes his tired face then stares at himself in the mirror.

IN THE KITCHEN

Sammy opens the cupboard to reveal two lonely boxes of cereal. He grabs one and pours a bowl.

He sits down at his little table in the living room and eats his cereal. A tan, SCRAWNY CAT comes up to Sammy and caresses his leg. It then jumps up into Sammy's lap. After his last bite of cereal, Sammy lets the cat finish up the milk.

Sammy puts on his jacket and walks out the door.

EXT. STREET - SAME NIGHT

Sammy speeds off into the night on his cheap, beat-up motorcycle.

INT. MEATPACKING PLANT - SAME NIGHT

Sammy cuts a hanging side of beef with a chain saw. He wears winter clothes in the freezing room. Other men hustle around the plant: some cutting up meat, some moving it along. Every kind of unsavory, rundown man is working this late shift. Everyone keeps to themselves as they work.

IN THE BREAK-ROOM

Sammy waits patiently by the only pay-phone in the room for another GUY to get off. Some OTHER WORKERS are solemnly eating their lunch in the background.

Finally, the Guy gets off the phone. Sammy picks up and dials. He hesitates before pushing the last button, but he pushes it anyway. The line RINGS. A FEMALE VOICE (NAOMI) picks up.

NAOMI (O.S.)

Hello?

Sammy doesn't answer.

NAOMI (O.S.)

Hello? Sammy is that you? It's 3:00am you know.

SAMMY

Naomi? Oh, yeah, sorry, My schedule is kinda backwards.

Sammy just hangs in uncomfortable silence.

NAOMI

Is there something wrong, Sammy?

SAMMY

No, uh....I just wanted to say hello, to see how things are going.

NAOMI (O.S.)

Things are fine, Sammy. Is there something you wanted to tell me?

SAMMY

I uh...sorry. Um, we still on for tomorrow?

NAOMI (O.S.)

Yes, I told you we'd be by.

SAMMY

Ok, great.

More uncomfortable silence.

NAOMI (O.S.)

It's really late, Sammy.

SAMMY

Yeah, right. Ok. Um. I'll see you tomorrow then.

NAOMI (O.S.)
One o'clock.

SAMMY
One o'clock.

NAOMI (O.S.)
Bye Sammy.

SAMMY
Bye --

She hangs up too fast. He tries to hide his frustration.

EXT. MEATPACKING PLANT - EARLY MORNING

The workers come lumbering out of the plant after a long-night's work.

Sammy gets on his bike and rides off. The autumn leaves are beginning to fall.

INT. DINER - SAME MORNING

Sitting at a booth, he waits for the waitress to come up to him. The diner is relatively empty except for the minimal staff. LUCINDA, an attractive early 30's woman approaches Sammy with a smile.

LUCINDA
Hi, Sammy. Just get off work?

Sammy manages an honest smile.

SAMMY
Yep.

LUCINDA
Frooty-Hoops, right?

SAMMY
Right.

LUCINDA
You know, they make other cereals these days.

SAMMY
It's what I like.

LUCINDA
All right then.

She leaves with a smile.

Sammy doodles on the napkin while he waits.

Back towards the kitchen, Sammy hears some voices and a bit of a commotion. He looks to see Lucinda and her boyfriend TOMMY trying to have a quiet argument while she fixes Sammy's cereal.

Sammy tries to mind his own business and goes back to his drawing.

Tommy grabs Lucinda's arm trying to force her to listen to him. The OLD COOK waves his spatula at the boyfriend.

OLD COOK
Buzz-off, Tommy. Lucinda's got work
to do.

Tommy shoots him a dirty look.

Sammy doodles faster and is becoming visibly agitated.

Finally, Tommy lets go of Lucinda and leaves the Diner.

She brings Sammy his cereal, again with a smile.

LUCINDA
Sorry about that Sammy. Here you
go, hun.

SAMMY
Thanks.

She goes back to her business as Sammy digs in. Through the window, he notices Tommy hanging around outside smoking a cigarette. Tommy finishes and moves on.

Sammy gulps down the rest of his cereal, slaps down some money and heads out the door.

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Tommy walks across the parking lot to his car. Sammy follows a safe distance behind with a sinister look on his face. His fists clench at his sides.

Just as Tommy is getting into his car, he catches Sammy out of the corner of his eye. Sammy loses his nerve and veers off into the alley.

IN THE ALLY

All alone, he takes his anger out on a dumpster instead. As he hits it, he hears the SOUNDS OF HIS CHILDHOOD VIOLENCE in his head.

He gets on his bike and speeds off.

EXT. BAR - SAME MORNING

Sammy drives by the local bar. It's too early for it to be open. He anxiously looks at his watch, then back at the closed bar. Sammy gives up and speeds off.

INT. CORNER STORE - SAME MORNING

Sammy grabs a box of cereal and walks up to the counter.

CLERK
Anything else?

SAMMY
Uhhmm. Yeah, how about that fifth
of Jack.

The clerk looks at his watch, then gives Sammy a condescending look. He gets the bottle for him.

CLERK
\$11.34

Sammy pays and is out the door.

EXT. SAMMY'S APARTMENT - SAME MORNING

Sammy goes to unlock his door. He rips off an eviction notice and crumples it up.

Just as he opens the door, his cat runs up and nuzzles his leg.

One of the neighbor's LITTLE GIRL comes up to talk to him.

LITTLE GIRL
Can I pet your cat.

Sammy bends down with her to pet the cat.

SAMMY

Sure.

LITTLE GIRL

What's his name?

SAMMY

It's a she. Her name is Fluffy.

LITTLE GIRL

She's a nice kitty.

SAMMY

Yep, she's always there when I need her.

Just then, the little girl's MOM pops out of another door. She sees the tattoos on Sammy's arm and gets a worried look.

MOM

Angelica, you leave that man alone and come on home.

The girl obeys her mom who gives Sammy a dirty look. Sammy returns the favor. He goes inside and locks the door behind him.

INT. SAMMY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Sammy goes straight for the kitchen and grabs a dirty cup. He rinses it out, then pours some Jack Daniels in it. Down it goes.

He looks around his dirty apartment. Sammy rolls up his sleeves and starts cleaning the place like a madman.

BEGIN CLEANING MONTAGE:

Sammy cleans in the bedroom.

The living room.

The kitchen.

The bathroom.

He pours and drinks from his bottle as he goes.

Pretty soon, he gets very sluggish and stops to rest. He's obviously drunk too much.

END CLEANING MONTAGE

Sammy looks at the clock: 10:00 am. He sits in his easy chair and flips on the TV to rest. His eyes go heavy as he flips through channels.

ON TV:

INT. MYTHICAL FOREST - CAVE - NIGHT

Oka lies down next to a cooking fire. Mother Mountain Lion nudges a bowl of milk towards her.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Mother Mountain Lion made the pregnant mother some food and gave her fresh milk to drink.

Oka clutches her belly in pain as she drinks the milk.

SAMMY (V.O.)

But the two boys in her belly were hungry too, so they fought with each other, and the first son came out of his mother's womb. The second son was angry at being second, and tried to steal his brother's milk, but his mother took pity on him and gave him his own milk.

Oka holds her restless infants still shiny and wet. Mother Mountain Lion helps to lick the boys clean.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The two boys had been in their mother's womb for 5 years, so they were as hungry as wolves.

The boys are now toddlers. They practically tear Mother Mountain Lion's house apart looking for and eating all her food.

SAMMY (V.O.)

And remember, these were no ordinary children; these were the sons of the sky god Mirra, so they grew very fast. They were always hungry, and they often fought with one another.

The boys are now the size of 8 year-olds. They rumble around the cave playing and wrestling each other like wild animals.

SAMMY (V.O.)

They began rumbling around and making lots of noise in mother Mountain Lion's house. She told them to be quiet or Father Mountain Lion would hear them and come home. Father Mountain Lion did not like humans, and he would not be as kind to them as Mother Mountain Lion was.

FAR AWAY ON THE HILLSIDE:

Father Mountain Lion is gorging himself on a deer carcass. His head perks up at the sound in the distance. He runs off down the hillside.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Sure enough, the boys were too noisy and Father Mountain Lion heard them. He came racing down the mountain as fast as he could. He could smell human flesh and he was not happy.