

Water and Shrooms

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INT. BAR NIGHT

The bar is dark and smoky; old and dirty. A dive in a small town. Older men and a few women fill the inside. One, the only one under the age of forty, SYLVIE DOUGHTY, (23) sits at the bar, alone, finishing a whiskey on the rocks. She chats with the bartender, but something about the entire experience is off and the people have strange appearances.

BARTENDER

Do you think you'll ever leave this town?

SYLVIE

That's the plan. I can't stay in this shit hole forever.

BARTENDER

No one ever leaves. We live here. We die here.

SYLVIE

Not me. I'll see the world. Travel. Have adventures. Adventures beyond this bar.

BARTENDER

Beyond this bar? Is there such a place?

Sylvie smiles at him gently. She pulls a notebook from her bag and looks at it, pondering. She picks up her rocks glass, finishes her drink and sets it down.

BARTENDER (cont'd)

Another?

SYLVIE

One more. Then I have to go.

He begins to pour her drink.

BARTENDER

Go? Go where? There's nowhere to go.

The atmosphere begins to shift. A group of young women, wearing clothes resembling those of Mennonite women enter the bar. The local patrons become more aggressive and or stand offish toward them. Sylvie looks up from her notebook, acutely aware of her surroundings. She looks across the bar and locks eyes with an old man. His hair long and silver, his eyes a piercing, ice blue. His face cracked with age, weather, and something else. He stares at her.

She shifts; uncomfortable. She stares back as the noise of the bar floods the distance between them. The women fill the space behind him, as if they can't walk past him due to some invisible barrier.

She gasps. The bartender comes over to her, oblivious.

BARTENDER (cont'd)
Gotta love the Thursday night crowd.

He notices that she has gone pale.

BARTENDER (cont'd)
Sylvie?

SYLVIE
Who's that man? I've never seen him here.

BARTENDER
Who?

She points to the man. As the bartender turns to look, the man fades into the distance. Sylvie shakes her head.

SYLVIE
I think I've had one too many.

As she gathers her things, the group of women begin climbing over the bar, whispering her name. The bartender does not seem to notice, nor does the crowd in the bar. They get closer to her, the space between then getting smaller. One reaches out, close enough to touch her...

CUT TO:

INT. PLANE, NIGHT.

Sylvie wakes with a start from a dream. She looks around, frantic. The man, DAVIS, handsome, 35, sitting next to her stares at her. She calms her breathing and notices him. He speaks to her in an Australian accent.

DAVIS
Are you okay miss? I think you were dreaming.

She rubs her face, ensuring that she is now actually awake.

SYLVIE
My parents died.

DAVIS
In your dream? Just now?

SYLVIE
No. They died earlier this year.

DAVIS
I'm sorry.

He looks confused. Sylvie hits the flight attendant button.

SYLVIE
Ever since it happened I've been
having terrible nightmares. None of
which have anything to do with them,
but horrific nonetheless.

The flight attendant appears. She also speaks in an
Australian accent.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
What can I get you miss?

SYLVIE
A whiskey, please. With a glass of
ice. And whatever my friend wants.

He shakes his head and the flight attendant walks away.

DAVIS
Where you headed?

SYLVIE
Everywhere. Currently Australia. I
want to dive in the reef and see the
Sydney Opera house. Oh and this tiny
town in the Blue Mountains. Katoomba.
Have you been?

DAVIS
You don't want to go there. Nothing
to see. No need.

SYLVIE
People always say that about the
places they live near.

DAVIS
Trust me. Katoomba is a tiny mountain
town. The spiders are gigantic and
you'll be bored in a day.

SYLVIE

Thank you for your input, but I've already booked a hostel and two tours. Besides it's only two days.

Davis scribbles down his phone number and his name on the cocktail napkin on his tray. He hands it to her.

DAVIS

Here's my number. Call me if you (he pauses) need a friend in Katoomba. I can be there in an hour.

She takes the napkin and smiles at him, not sure what to think of him.

SYLVIE

Thank you, (she looks at the napkin) Davis. I'll keep that in mind. Oh. I'm Sylvie, (she adds as an afterthought) by the way.

The flight attendant returns with her drink, sets it down. Davis smiles at her. He replaces his headphones and closes his eyes. Sylvie takes a sip and stares into the void of dark night and ocean, blended together in a sea of black.

FADE TO:

EXT. KATOOMBA, DAY

A charming little town surrounded by Australia's Blue Mountains. There is one main street, a tourism office and two open air tour buses driving by, both mostly empty.

Sylvie exits a cab and as the car drives away, she surveys the town. She speaks to herself as she gathers her bag and pulls out the address of her hostel.

SYLVIE

Wow. How cute. It definitely has its charms.

She looks at the address and checks her map. She begins walking toward the end of the main street. She walks down the street passing a book store, a tiny post office, a few others and a cafe; the only restaurant in town, The Yellow Deli.

SYLVIE (cont'd)
I'm starving. I'll check in and I'll
come grab lunch. This place is
adorable.

Sylvie continues. She turns and walks down a side street,
stopping in front of a hostel. She begins to walk in.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSTEL, DAY

The lobby is empty except for two drunk guys playing pool in
the common area. She approaches the desk. She rings the
charming bell on the counter. She surveys the lobby and
seems satisfied with her choice. A man, the same man from
her dream, pops out from behind a door. She sees him and
gasps.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR NIGHT, DREAM FLASHBACK

The old man stares at her with his piercing blue eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSTEL, DAY

ZAIN
Hey there young lady. Did I scare
you?

Sylvie settles, recovering slightly, still staring at him.

SYLVIE
I'm a bit jumpy I guess. You look
like a man from a dream I had. It's
uncanny.

He chuckles.

ZAIN
Well, young lady, it's not often a
pretty miss tells me I'm the man of
her dreams.

SYLVIE (V.O.)
Harmless. A bit odd, but harmless.

She smiles.

SYLVIE
I'm checking in. Sylvie Doughty.

ZAIN
Welcome to you. Now Katoomba might seem like a safe little town, but it's a jungle out there. Be alert and stay safe. There's only one restaurant in town.

SYLVIE
I passed it, The Yellow Deli? It looked inviting.

ZAIN
Wouldn't go there if I were you. But, you will anyway so do this old man a favor... Don't drink the water. Old, rickety pipes.

Sylvie seems confused by this advice, but agrees.

SYLVIE
Um. Okay. I promise.

ZAIN
Room's this way.

He beckons her with his hand and she follows. He hands her the key and walks away. She speaks to herself as she opens the door.

SYLVIE
What an odd man.

CUT TO:

INT. DELI, DAY

Sylvie enters the Yellow Deli. Only a few people dine in the restaurant. There is a hand-painted sign advertising their organic produce and the special of the day. A young woman approaches her, late teens, wearing what appears to be floral Mennonite clothing. Sylvie gasps.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR, NIGHT, DREAM FLASHBACK

Sylvie sits at the bar. The aggressive Mennonite woman reaches out to touch her, now more demon like, almost possessed.

CUT TO:

INT. DELI, DAY

HOSTESS

Can I help you? Are you okay?

Sylvie shakes her head.

SYLVIE

Hi. Wow. I must have zoned out. A table for one please.

HOSTESS

Right this way.

Sylvie follows her, clearly disturbed, but shaking it off. The hostess leads her to a booth. Sylvie slides in.

HOSTESS (cont'd)

I recommend the special. French dip, but the au jus is an incredible mushroom gravy.

SYLVIE

That sounds great. Thank you.

Sylvie tries to relax, but she clearly has her guard up.

The hostess casually drops a glass of tap water on the table and continues walking. Sylvie reaches for it instinctively. It almost reaches her lips and she stops and stares at it.

SYLVIE (V.O.)

He's a rambling old man.

Sylvie slowly returns the glass to the table without a sip. As she does she speaks to herself.

SYLVIE

Eh, better safe than sorry.

A server, also in floral Mennonite clothing, drops off the sandwich, and continues walking. As she does, a dark blue car pulls up outside and parks across the street from the deli.

Sylvie looks down at her sandwich, disappointed.

SYLVIE (cont'd)
I hate mushrooms. I need a nap.

She picks up her sandwich and begins to remove everything she doesn't like.

CUT TO:

INT. DELI, DAY.

Sylvie has finished picking at her sandwich. The server comes by.

THE SERVER
You need to stay hydrated. You didn't have any water.

Sylvie looks at her. It's time to go.

SYLVIE
Oh. Not thirsty I guess.

THE SERVER
And you barely touched your lunch.

SYLVIE
Jet lag.

THE SERVER
I'll pack this for you.

SYLVIE
(Not wanting to be rude) Great, thank you. And I'll take the check please.

The server nods and takes the plate. Sylvie gathers her things and pulls out her wallet.

The server returns with her food packed in a paper bag and the check. The check is on top of a Katoomba brochure. Sylvie leaves Australian money on the table, grabs the brochure and her food. She gets up and quickly leaves the deli.

CUT TO:

EXT. KATOOMBA MAIN STREET, DAY

The blue car still sits on the side of the street. Sylvie walks quickly past, as if she's escaping. She spots a trash can and tosses her left overs in without a thought. She opens the brochure and a smaller pamphlet flies out. She tries to catch it, but shrugs it off. She continues walking toward her hostel. The pamphlet flies through the air, landing on the front window of the blue car.

CU INT. CAR, DAY: THE PAMPHLET WITH THE WORDS "THE PLACE TO BELONG" WRITTEN AT THE TOP.

MED: EXT. CAR, DAY: DAVIS, THE MAN FROM THE PLANE, SEES THE PAMPHLET. HE ROLLS DOWN HIS WINDOW, REACHES OUT AND PULLS IT INTO THE CAR.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSTEL, NIGHT

Zain, sleeps in his chair at the counter. Sylvie, two female travelers, and the drunk guys from earlier play games in the common room. They all laugh, comfortable with their new, only for now, friends.

One of the girls pulls out a packet from her pocket.

SYLVIE

Borg, you are cheating. And what the hell kind of name is Borg?

BORG

I am a gentleman. I would never cheat. And my grandfather started calling me that one day and it stuck.

The girl with the packet speaks as she opens it, revealing dirty mushrooms.

BEV

Anybody want to take shrooms and go exploring?

The other girl, LeeAnn, reaches for one and speaks.

LEEANN

Bev, you sneaky minx, you've been holding out on us.

BORG

Hell yeah.

BEV

I heard from a friend who came here last year that there's an old house in the woods, about a mile from here.

NOAH

Yeah, bro. It's supposed to be mad haunted. We're gonna check it out tomorrow.

LEEANN

Why not tonight?

Bev passes the shrooms around. Everyone takes a few except for Sylvie who politely passes. Noah and Borg eat theirs immediately. The girls do not.

BEV

None for you?

SYLVIE

I hate mushrooms.

BEV

That's too bad.

BORG

Dude, ghost hunting. Who's in?

BEV, LEEANN, NOAH

Me, hell yeah, awesome.

BORG

Sylvie?

SYLVIE (V.O.)

This seems like a terrible idea.

Sylvie pauses for a moment before responding.

SYLVIE

Sure. What the hell? I'll just grab my sweater.

She gets up and exits the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSTEL ROOM, NIGHT

Sylvie picks up her cell phone from its charger. She rummages through a bag and finds the cocktail napkin from Davis. She looks at it and then dials his number. His voicemail picks up.

SYLVIE

Hi. Davis. It's Sylvie. From the plane. I'm shocked I'm calling you, but anyway a group of us from the hostel are going to check out a supposedly haunted house in the woods, about a mile out of town and I don't know, I thought someone should know where I'm going. I'm sure it'll be fine, but just in case, you're the only person I know here. Okay, bye.

She hangs up her phone slips it into her back pocket, grabs her sweater and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS, NIGHT

Sylvie and the gang walk through the woods with flashlights. Borg and Noah clearly feeling the shrooms; Bev and Leeann seem to be tripping as well, but theirs is different, slightly off. Chanting can be heard in the distance.

Sylvie pants a little as they walk uphill in the dark.

BORG

Yo, does anybody hear that?

NOAH

The ghosts? Yeah. They're singing.

LeeAnn passes Sylvie and hands her a bottled water.

LEEANN

Thirsty?

SYLVIE

Yes, thank you.

She takes the bottle, not realizing that the protective seal has been broken and drinks from it thirstily.

BEV

Come on. It can't be far.

The chanting gets louder.

SYLVIE
What is that sound?

BORG
Dragons.

LEEANN
No, Borg. It's the bats.

Borg stops suddenly. He sits down on the ground.

BORG
I can't go on. I'm melting.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR. NIGHT

Davis's phone buzzes in the seat next to him. He sleeps in the driver's seat and jolts awake. He grabs his phone and checks his voicemail, hearing Sylvie's message. He closes the phone. There is a knock at his window. He jumps and relaxes recognizing Zain. He rolls down the window.

ZAIN
They left about thirty minutes ago.
Everything's ready. It's time.

DAVIS
Let's go. I'd hate to miss the fun.

Zain gets into the passenger side, shuts the door and the car drives off into the dark.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS, NIGHT

Sylvie slurs her words as she speaks. The group is now short one Borg. They exit the woods into a large clearing with a big, gnarly, old house. The lighting is ghastly and women in Mennonite clothing head toward them.

SYLVIE POV: THIS SIGHT IS TRIPPY, AS IF A CADRE OF GHOSTS HEADS RIGHT FOR THEM.

SYLVIE
I don't feel well. I need to sit
down.

Bev hands her another bottle of water.

BEV

Here. Have some more water.

Sylvie stares at her for a moment, then the water. She tries to stabilize herself.

SYLVIE

No. Something's wrong. I have to go.

She turns to leave and a large man, DAMIAN, 50, the leader, wearing all white appears in her way. LeeAnn grabs her.

DAMIAN

What a beautiful wife you will make me.

SYLVIE stares at him, seeing him move in double.

SYLVIE

Wife? What... I .. I have to..

BEV

Welcome Sylvie, to the place to belong.

Dave still tripping from the shrooms, approaches the man.

NOAH

Woah. Are you a dragon?

DAMIAN

Beverly, you disappoint me. You brought a man here. Competition for me.

BEV

I had to Master.

Damain slaps Bev hard across the face.

BEV (cont'd)

I'm sorry master.

Damian pulls a giant knife from the folds of his clothing. He stabs Noah in the chest. Noah slides to the ground, blood running down his chest.

Sylvie screams and tries to fight back, but the drugs she was given hinder her motor skills.

Damian grabs her. He stares at her.

DAMIAN

We must get you dressed for the ceremony.

He holds the back of her hair and kisses her aggressively on the mouth. The group of women surround them from all areas of the woods. They chant.

GROUP

A new sister. A new wife. A wedding.
A new sister. A new wife. A wedding.

Sylvie bites his lip and pushes him away long enough to run. He chases after her, and she continues to scream.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS, NIGHT

Zain and Davis walk briskly through the woods. Each holds a tiny flashlight. They hear the scream.

DAVIS

Oh god, I hope we're not too late.

ZAIN

This way.

They run toward the scream.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS, NIGHT

Sylvie finds a dark area to hide. She ducks in and tries to regain her mental state.

The sound of footsteps approaching gets louder. They stop right next to her.

DAMIAN

I now pronounce us man and wife.

Sylvie sucks in her breath and holds it. In a flash he is on top of her. He covers her mouth and rips at her clothes. She bites him. He hits her firmly in the back of the head. As everything goes from blurry to dark she hears

DAVIS

Freeze. We have you surrounded.

ZAIN

We're not arresting him.

A gunshot sounds as her vision goes black.

FADE TO

INT. HOSTEL, DAY

Sylvie lies in her bed. Her head and a few other spots are bandaged. Davis sits in a chair next to her bed. She opens her eyes, looks around the room, slightly disoriented. She sees Davis and gasps.

DAVIS

Shhh. You're safe. Everything's all right.

Tears well up in Sylvie's eyes. They come pouring out with gasping breaths. She surveys her body with her hand.

SYLVIE

I? Did he? Am I?

DAVIS

No. He didn't. I'm a detective. Zain too. Been trying to catch them for years.

SYLVIE

Oh.

There is a long pause.

SYLVIE (cont'd)

Will you ... um... hold me?

He looks at her and then gets up and gently sits on the bed. He wraps his arms around her. She buries her face in his chest.

She sobs. Zain walks by the door silently. He makes eye contact with Davis. Davis nods and Zain walks off.

BLACKOUT.