

HOLLOWED

Written by

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EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DUSK

A narrow gravel road snakes through towering pines. The last orange light of day glows on the treetops.

NOAH, 20s, kooky in his way, and MARA, 20s, monk-like, walk with overnight packs.

Noah shadowboxes the air.

NOAH
I should've held out for the
fountain of youth.

MARA
Sounds tedious.

NOAH
But I would be this Adonis in
perpetuity.

Mara cracks a small smile.

MARA
The place we're looking for is
about unlocking the spirit, not the
body. My dreams lately... I can't
describe them. It's like
something's calling. I need to know
why we're here.

NOAH
Copy that, kid.
(stares ahead)
How long til the trailhead?
Light's getting a little long and I
scare easy.

Noah raises his eyebrows in jest.

Mara points to the next bend.

MARA
Just there.

NOAH
Promise me something?

She glances at him.

NOAH (CONT'D)
If this feels wrong, like actually
wrong... we turn back. Deal?

MARA
You are scared.

She considers, then nods.

NOAH
This feels very real... and I like
breathing.

SUDDENLY—
A SUV WHIPS PAST, nearly grazing
them. Gravel sprays everywhere.

NOAH
What the hell?!

They stop, stunned.

MARA
Did you see the driver?

NOAH
No. Just a blur of glass.

MARA
Come on. Let's get to the trail.

They keep walking. Insects buzz. Something howls far off.

EXT. TRAILHEAD PARKING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

They round a bend. A dirt pull-off. The same SUV sits
crookedly, front wheel against a log. Passenger door half-
open.

NOAH
That's the same car.

MARA
Why the rush?

They approach.

Inside the SUV: chaos. A backpack ripped open. Pages
everywhere. A single hiking boot on the floorboard.

NOAH
Is that blood?

He points to a smear on the door handle.

Mara picks up a page: rough sketch of a black mountain peak with a glowing circle in its chest. Beneath: spirals, symbols, arrows.

MARA
These are cave markings.

She flips it. A child's drawing: a stick figure facing a glowing cave. Three dark shapes behind.

It rattles her.

NOAH
We could turn back.
Like, right now. Be home in time
for bad TV.

MARA
You can.
(a beat)
I'm going in.

NOAH
You said we'd wait til morning.

She's already stepping toward the path where thick black ooze trails into the trees.

Noah hesitates.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Jesus.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - LATE DAY

The trail narrows into dense old-growth pines.

NOAH
You feel that?

Mara nods.

A faint WIND picks up.

Noah points.

On a mossy stump sits a small humanoid figure made of sticks and bones, lashed with red thread. No face. Just a hollow circle where the head should be.

MARA
Could be a toy for all we know.

NOAH
That's a dark ass child that plays
with that.

She keeps walking. He rushes to stay close.

Another figure. Then another.

A rustle.

Noah spins.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Wait. Did you hear that?

Branches sway, though the wind has stopped.

MARA
Keep moving.

They pass a tree covered in crude carvings. Spirals and
symbols.

A soft WHISTLE cuts the air.

They both turn.

Nothing.

NOAH
Yo... this. Is. Not. Cool.

From behind a tree ahead, a FIGURE steps out.

DOUG.

Gaunt. Pale. Covered in the dark substance. His body twitches
between human form and something possessed. Eyes shimmering
like oil on water.

Noah instinctively steps slightly in front of Mara.

NOAH
Hey, hey man, you okay?
We can give you space.
The thing with the car, that was
uncalled for but, we're not here to
cause trouble.

Doug tilts his head.

MARA
Noah...

Doug takes one slow step...

Then suddenly BOLTS at them.

MARA (CONT'D)

Run!

They sprint. Doug is impossibly fast. He overtakes them.

The world goes black.

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Noah's eyes flutter open. Gagged. Hands and ankles tied with climbing rope.

Mara lies beside him, unconscious. A thin line of blood at her temple.

Doug crouches across the clearing, watching.

Noah tries to wake Mara with muffled grunts.

She stirs. Sees Doug. Freezes.

Doug approaches slowly, gentle but unsettling. He removes Mara's gag.

Noah thrashes harder.

MARA

We're not a threat.

Doug raises a trembling hand and lightly touches her head—

Mara convulses violently.

Noah screams through the gag.

Doug pulls back, chest heaving.

NOAH

(muffled)

What—did—you—see—

Mara gasps.

MARA

His name is Doug.

There was an accident... in these woods.

He, they didn't tell anyone.

She looks at Doug differently now.

Doug grabs a stick, draws three shadowy figures with sharp limbs.

A sudden GUST scatters the drawing.

Doug moves to Noah and unties him. Then Mara.

He stands, points deeper into the woods.

MARA (CONT'D)
He's going to the same place we
are.

NOAH
His name is Doug?
Okay—what the hell is happening?
We should NOT follow this thing.

Doug looks back at them once. Almost pleading. Then disappears.

Mara shoulders her pack.

MARA
You're welcome to stay here by
yourself.

She walks after Doug.

Noah watches her go, torn.

Then grabs his pack.

NOAH
I really hate how much I like you
right now.

He follows.

EXT. HIGH RIDGE - NIGHT

They crest a narrow ridge, headlamps slicing darkness.

They catch up to Doug.

In the distance: a cave entrance nestled between stone pillars, glowing faintly.

MARA
There it is.

NOAH
We'd have never found this.

Branches CREAK in the dark.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Wait, do you hear that?

A figure stumbles from the trees. A young WOMAN, human, terrified, bloodied.

WOMAN
Please, help me.
They took my brother, they...

Doug raises a hand, blocking Noah and Mara.

MARA
She's hurt.

The woman collapses. Then, her spine straightens unnaturally.

Her face SMILES, wrong, mechanical.

She MELTS slightly. Eyes go glassy.

A HOLLOWED. Mimicking.

Shapes emerge from the woods. Jerky. Fast. Silent.

Doug's form shifts, skin gray, bones elongating.

He lunges, attacking the nearest Hollowed.

NOAH
Run!

They sprint for the cave.

Doug tears through two more Hollowed. One morphs mid-attack into a 12-year-old boy.

HOLLOWED 2
You should've told my family what happened.

Now you'll pay with your will.

Doug THROWS them down a rocky embankment.

EXT. CAVE MOUTH - NIGHT

Noah and Mara stagger toward the cave entrance.

Doug limps behind, drawn to the glow. For a moment, he smiles, almost peaceful.

A DEEP GROWL.

A massive HOLLOWED lunges from the treeline, smoking with black energy. It grabs Noah and Mara, dragging them toward the cliff edge beyond the cave.

MARA

Doug!

Doug freezes. Looks to the cave, his redemption.

Looks back at them.

Back at the cave.

He ROARS, purely human and abandons salvation.

He CHARGES the beast.

Mara slips, Noah kicks at the creature, useless.

Doug SLAMS into the Hollowed. They tumble.

OVER THE EDGE.

Silence.

Noah and Mara crawl to the cliff's rim. Nothing below.

The cave dimming.

MARA

Deliverance.

(softly)

He didn't take it.

NOAH

Nobody knows we're here.

No one would believe it anyway.

He paces, panicked.

NOAH (CONT'D)

We have to go.

Mara turns.

A GNARLED HAND shoots up from the ledge, grabbing her leg.

The large Hollowed, still alive, drags her down.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Mara!

She claws at the rock. Terror. Realization.

MARA

You were right. None of us are
ready. Please tell my mother...

Noah lunges to grab her but she is slipping away.

She braces, kicks the Hollowed's hand.

Both FALL into the abyss.

Noah collapses. Hollow.

The cave glow pulses... fades to nothing.

Wind rustles the trees.

Noah rises slowly, staring at the dead light of the cave.

Noah begins to collect large branches and stones to cover up
the entrance to the cave.

He turns and walks into the dark.

His eyes begin to flicker like oil on water.

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