

To Be Found

Written By

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FADE IN

INT. DRAIN CULVERT - LATE MORNING, FINAL DAY.

Blinding, white light pours out from the open culvert entrance. Soft WIND brushes the outside of the pipe.

Deep within three huddled figures motionlessly cling to each other for warmth in the dark.

HELICOPTER BLADES crescendo in the background, one of the figures rises when the noise reaches its peak.

The man clamors up to his feet and darts out the entrance. The other two bodies lie still.

INT. DRAIN CULVERT - AFTERNOON, FIRST DAY.

A torrential blizzard rages from outside, it echoes in the empty drainage culvert.

DONALD, 38, is wrapped in a collegiate hoodie and a jean jacket, he crunches up to the entrance, assisting ERICA, 12, and WYATT, 14.

Erica and Wyatt wear puffy, down coats, they shiver viciously as they crawl down into the culvert.

Donald is the last to crawl in, reaching his children and pulling them close, reclines on the steel sides of the pipe.

They shiver and breath into their closed hands. Donald rubs his wind-blasted, rosy ears and face. He glances at his spacy, frozen children.

DONALD
(to both)
Look. Like this, it'll keep your
nose on.

They meekly raise their hands and mimic, then furiously massage their face and ears.

DONALD
(shivering)
C-calm down! You don't need to be
so rough.

He restrains their hands.

DONALD (CONT'D)
You both need to act calm, no
matter what!

They slowly ease down.

DONALD (CONT'D)
See, when you start to panic, you
start to freak out, it's called
shock.

They intently watch him.

DONALD (CONT'D)
Going into shock is bad, it's game
over for you, got it?

WYATT
(pause)
When do you think we'll find
rescue.

DONALD
Well-
(pause)
It'll be soon, trust me. Knowing
your mother-

He turns to his daughter's miserable face. He leans in and
pinches her cheeks

DONALD (CONT'D)
Knowing your mother, she must've
known we would go missing the
minute I told her we were getting a
Christmas Tree. We just need to
stay put.

WYATT
This isn't funny dad. We have to
look for someone!

DONALD
I'm not being funny. When you're
lost, you find shelter, you stay
put. Period. That's how you
survive.

WYATT
Why can't we look for help?

ERICA
Yeah?

DONALD
This blizzard might last days...
No, we're staying put.

He sits down and pulls his kids closer.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Got it?

FIRST DAY, DUSK

The light shines dimly inside the pipe. Donald's FLIP-PHONE flashlight hovered over a BAG of JERKY as Donald dispenses rations to Wyatt and Erica.

They huddle back in together, Erica nibbles her jerky and hums the tune to HEY YA! by Outkast.

They all sit in the melody of Erica's HUM and the whistle of the howling winds outside, chewing their hard jerky.

FIRST DAY, NIGHT

Donald shines his light over a sleeping Wyatt and Erica. He notices them painfully clutching their hands.

He tears the fabrics from the bottom of his sweater into two strips and wraps them around Erica and Wyatt's hands.

Wyatt sparks up.

WYATT

When are we gonna get found?

DONALD

(continuing wrapping)

Soon, buddy, soon.

WYATT

How do you know.

DONALD

Cause these guys are professionals,
buddy, they know exactly what
they're doing.

WYATT

Ok... Good.

Wyatt slinks into his fetal position. Donald sits beside him, face lit up by the light bouncing around the culvert.

He looks grim, and tired. The light flashes off.

INT. DRAIN CULVERT - SECOND DAY, LATE MORNING

Donald burst awake, shivering intensely and brushing snow drifts off him and the kids.

They sit in a circle, Donald pulls out an open, half-full bag of sunflower seeds, passing it to Wyatt and Erica. They each take handfuls.

DONALD
(pointing to mouth)
Now watch.

He crunches down on the seed and plucks the meat from the shell. He spits it out and shows them the seed.

DONALD (CONT'D)
Then you eat it.

They each take a seed and pop it in their mouths. They overexaggerate their bites, mashing the seeds. Wyatt swallows and gags on the seed for a moment, spitting it out.

It flies over and hits Erica on the forehead, it sticks on by Wyatt's saliva.

She frustratingly charges Wyatt, fist clenched. Donald lunges to break them up.

DONALD
What did I say about being calm!

They oblige, resentful, and take different ends of the culvert.

After a few moments, Erica grabs her head, pained.

ERICA
Ow!

DONALD
Baby, what's wrong!

She turns back, the seed on her forehead has frozen over, Donald peels it off in a quick move.

She latches on to Donald, crying. Wyatt watches somberly, Donald tries to comfort her.

A blast of cold air rushes down the pipe, it hits the group, they face bitter temperatures. Again, they huddle close together to retain heat.

DONALD
(shivering)
Sing for me, baby.

Teeth clenched, Erica breaks out in ICE ICE, BABY by Vanilla

Ice. Donald chuckles as she reaches the chorus.

WYATT
(under Erica)
Dad?

DONALD
(under Erica)
Yes?

WYATT
Are you sure we'll get out of here?

DONALD
(pause)
Yes I am.

WYATT
When.

DONALD
Sooner than you think, pal.

SECOND DAY, AFTERNOON

The kids sit close together, alone, watching the entrance.

The blizzard is raging outside, they both look intensely worried.

WYATT
It's been too long.

ERICA
So?

WYATT
We should check.

ERICA
That's not what Dad said.

WYATT
What if-

ERICA
Wyatt, no.

WYATT
(walking up)
I'm just gonna-

Donald rushes in from outside the culvert, grabbing Wyatt's shoulder to keep him back. Donald is covered in snow

drifts, his hands are tucked into his jacket, his face is bright red.

He collapses onto the ground, Erica and Wyatt rush to him.

DONALD
(intensely shivering)
Snow... is t-too deep. W-we can't
find a way out.

Erica tends to Donald as Wyatt shoots up, frustrated.

WYATT
Maybe if I took a-

He starts over to the exit, Donald catches him by the ankle.

DONALD
We're stuck here, Wyatt. Trust me.
Don't go outside without me.

WYATT
But Dad! Maybe I can spot a-

He grabs his ankle tighter.

DONALD
Cut it out.

Wyatt kicks a loose snow pile and sits beside Donald.

SECOND DAY, DUSK

Kids are asleep, shivering, Donald lies wide awake beside them.

INT. DRAIN CULVERT - THIRD DAY, NOON

Family huddled together, calmly shivering. They look accepting of the cold now, frost has accumulated all over their face, clothes, and hair.

Erica breaks into a mumbly hum, her voice is strained.

She hums KILLING ME SOFTLY by Robert Flack, the humming is crackly she has to stop to cough several times.

Wyatt cracks a sunflower shell and takes care to pluck it from his mouth with his hand. He reaches for more seeds, the bag is empty.

THIRD DAY, NIGHT

The blizzard howls outside, the family sleeps motionlessly.

Wyatt's head lifts from the pack. He spies the culvert entrance, and cautiously crawls over his unconscious family.

He quietly approaches the open air, Donald's hand stretches out and clenches onto Wyatt's ankle.

They both struggle, Wyatt trying to push away from Donald and escape and Donald trying to hold him in.

WYATT

Dad! Stop! What if someone-
Someone could be out there! We
have to find them!

DONALD

No one is out there, Wyatt. We
walked a mile or two into the woods
to find that god damn Christmas
tree and now we are nowhere near
anyone. Going out there is gonna
kill you, son, you need to listen!

He pins Wyatt down.

DONALD (CONT'D)

I'm not going to let them find you
dead, buried in the snow, Wyatt,
I'm not ever gonna let you go.

Wyatt tears up and turns away.

DONALD (CONT'D)

We just need to stay here.

INT. DRAIN CULVERT - LATE MORNING, FINAL DAY.

The same as before, the three lie motionless and covered in snow. The area is totally silent, the blizzard has stopped.

The crescendo of the helicopter blades emerges, Donald's weary eyes struggle to burst open. He turns his head to hear the noise coming from the entrance better.

He sprints up and darts outside. From within the culvert Donald's loud calls echo throughout. Wyatt and Erica slowly arise from their sleep, both looking weak and drained.

The helicopter's blades grow intensely loud, snow blows in from outside the culvert, Donald's footsteps are crunching towards the entrance.

FADE OUT