

THE TRAIL

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

Rugged, rocky mountains high above the timberline.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

An almost imperceptible trail leading up a rugged slope.

The two hikers on it look like ants in the distance.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

BOB and CARLA WILSON, mid 20s, seasoned hikers who are a rugged match for the rugged country, move steadily up the slope.

Bob takes a deep breath and surveys the country.

BOB

Gotta be over ten thousand feet
now.

Carla looks off to her right in the direction of darkening clouds.

CARLA

Late October. Not the wisest time
to be up this high.

Bob puts his hand on Carla's shoulder.

BOB

You wanted one last camp-a-thon
before the snows came.

CARLA

Looking at those clouds, the snows
may be coming.

BOB

We have a couple of more hours to
decide if we want to head back down
today.

CARLA

I'd like one more night here.

She unfolds a map.

CARLA (CONT'D)

(re: map)

Still can't figure what trail we're on.

BOB

It's so lightly traveled.

CARLA

The map's five years old. That's why it's not on here."

They continue up the trail.

A FAINT, RHYTHMIC METALLIC CLUNK begins coming from up ahead.

They look for the source of the sound.

They see far up the trail a WOMAN running down toward them.

As the woman draws near they see that the sound is produced by a metal cup hanging from her backpack that is striking something, say, a penknife in the pocket of her pants, or the aluminum frame of her backpack.

The woman, mid-20s and apparently a seasoned hiker, finally reaches them.

She is out of breath and very agitated about something.

She leans forward, hands on her knees, trying to recover enough breath to speak.

BOB

Got a yeti in hot pursuit?

The woman looks at Bob annoyed, not totally understanding him.

Then she comes to them and tries to hug them.

She is clearly frightened.

WOMAN

I'm so glad to see you two!

CARLA

What happened? Is someone hurt?

WOMAN

It's terrifying!

CARLA

Tell us what's terrifying.

WOMAN

I've never seen anything like it!

CARLA

What's your name?

WOMAN (JENNIFER)

Jennifer Rollins.

CARLA

I'm Carla. Wilson.

BOB

I'm Bob.

JENNIFER

The trail...

Jennifer looks up the trail for a long moment.

Then turns back to Carla and Bob.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

About a mile further up the trail suddenly ends.

CARLA

We were just commenting on how seldomly used it looks.

BOB

It's not on our map.

JENNIFER

The trail doesn't just peter out. It ends at a precipice.

CARLA

It probably took a jag before the precipice.

JENNIFER

No. At a precipice. And then nothing. No mountains. Nothing. Just a vast grayness, an abyss of nothing.

BOB

How long have you been on this trail?

JENNIFER

Probably the same as you two. It's my third day.

CARLA
Have you been drinking enough
water?

JENNIFER
I know what I saw.

Jennifer begins to cry.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
It was the End of the World.

CARLA
You think it's the end of the
world. It's got to be a trick of
the clouds.

BOB
Do you ever watch that
meteorological channel? They show
clips of baffling natural
phenomena.

CARLA
And they usually have to do with
strange cloud formations.

JENNIFER
I could say just hike on up and see
for yourselves. But I wouldn't wish
that on anyone. Not even to prove I
saw what I saw.

She takes her cellphone from her pocket.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
I took a photo.

She holds up her phone to Bob and Carla.

JENNIFER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Not very convincing, I know. Just
grayness.

CARLA
The Enquirer wouldn't give you five
dollars for it.

BOB
Where's home?

JENNIFER
San Luis Obispo.

CARLA
What do you do?

JENNIFER
I'm a vet. Cats and dogs.

CARLA
Married?

JENNIFER
My boy friend manages his parents'
cattle ranch.

BOB
We practice law in San Francisco.

CARLA
Do you want us to accompany you
down?

JENNIFER
And miss seeing the End of the
Earth?

CARLA
Want to check out Jennifer's story,
Bob?

BOB
If Jennifer is okay with going down
alone.

JENNIFER
I'll be fine once I get to my car.

Jennifer looks back up the trail.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
That's not true. I'll never be fine
after what I saw.

BOB
I definitely want to continue on
the trail.

JENNIFER
Maybe when I'm in my house, in my
room, the hard edges of this awful
experience will soften.

CARLA
Did you see or pass anyone near
where you saw the end of the earth?

JENNIFER

Not a soul.

BOB

Maybe it would help if you came
back up with us.

JENNIFER

You don't understand. What I saw
wasn't amazing. It wasn't
interesting. It wasn't mysterious.
It was terrifying. I think I would
lose part of my mind if I had to
contemplate it again.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Jennifer hugs Bob and Carla and turns to begin her descent
down to her car.

After a couple of steps she turns back to them.

JENNIFER

Before you come to the End of the
Earth you'll hear a sound. That way
you'll know you're almost there and
that you can turn back, if you
want. Before your eyes regard the
End of the Earth.

CARLA

What kind of sound?

JENNIFER

A hissing.

BOB

Hissing?

JENNIFER

A hiss of emptiness, of
nothingness.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY - LATER

Bob and Carla continue up the trail.

They turn to look at Carla.

She is now far down the trail from them.

She turns around and looks back up at them.

She doesn't wave.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Bob and Carla walk carefully along the trail.

BOB

What that woman saw or thought she saw I don't know, but she was scared shitless.

CARLA

Well, if she saw what she thought she saw we should be getting near the End of the Earth.

They follow the trail around an outcrop of boulders.

Carla raises a hand to her ear.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Listen! The hiss...

The sound is faint, like that of a natural gas cock that has been opened.

They continue walking.

Carla buttons the neck of her wool shirt.

CARLA (CONT'D)

God, it's getting cold.

Bob puts on a stocking cap.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

The hiss is now stronger, an eerie otherworldly sound.

They continue to climb.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

The hiss is even stronger, now with a deep bass tone in it.

Carla stops.

She puts her hands over her ears.

CARLA

Bob, I think we should turn back.

BOB
And not see the End of the Earth?

CARLA
I think we should get off this
mountain as soon as possible.

BOB
You'll always regret not seeing
where this trail leads.

CARLA
I mean it.

BOB
Another hundred yards we see for
ourselves if there is an End of the
World.

CARLA
Not seeing if there's an End of the
World is more important than seeing
it.

BOB
Then I'll go on alone.

CARLA
I won't let you.

Carla's tone has become threatening.

BOB
What's come over you?

CARLA
I'll stop you.

Bob looks down at Carla's waist.

He sees her hand move to the handle of her Bowie knife.

Her eyes have narrowed.

They stand with their eyes locked.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY - LATER

Bob and Carla are walking down the trail now.

Bob is pissed and Carla relieved.

Carla's hand reaches out and takes hold of Bob's.

CARLA
There'll be only one vet in San
Luis Obispo with the name of
Jennifer Rollins.

Bob looks at Carla, losing some of his anger.

BOB
We'll find her. She'll need us now.

CARLA
As we will her.

Carla leans her head against Bob's shoulder as they walk.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY - LATER

Bob and Carla are far down the trail now.

Hand in hand they descend the mountain.

THE END