

The Back-Country

by

Max Longden

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FADE IN:

INT. LOG CABIN - KITCHEN - DAY

A raging snow storm blocks out sunlight, deep in the Rocky Mountain back-country. A large, but quaint wooden lodge, stands as an oasis in the chaos.

LEONARD (60s), a contemptuous old man, is preparing a cup of tea. He glances up, outside the window, before putting the kettle on the stove and takes a seat by the kitchen table. As soon as he sits, a faint THUDDING is heard.

INT. LOG CABIN - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Leonard opens the front door, he sees two men (Matthew, 21 and Chris, 24) in front of him both barely breathing.

LEONARD
(scowling)
Who are you?

One of the men lifts his head to meet Leonard's gaze.

CHRIS
Sir. Please help us. My brother
and me- we've been trapped out
in this storm for days.

Leonard takes a moment to examine the brothers.

LEONARD
What business do you have being
out here?

The man is taken aback by Leonard's hostility.

CHRIS
Can't you just help us out? My
brother's in a bad way.

Leonard weighs the situation in his head.

CHRIS
At least let us use your phone
to call for help...
(desperately)
Please?

Leonard reluctantly stands aside to let them through.

LEONARD
You won't be able to call for
help until this storm passes.

The men scurry past Leonard with their heads down.

INT. LOG CABIN - LIVING AREA/KITCHEN - DUSK

The sun is setting. The men have dressed down, their wet clothes laid out in front of the fireplace. Both brothers are now awake. Leonard hands them both blankets.

Matthew is stood by the window with his phone held out, trying to get a signal.

LEONARD

I already told you, you can't
get service in storms like this.

Leonard moves toward the fireplace, throwing another log onto it.

LEONARD

(forcefully)
You fellas got names?

CHRIS

(looking to Leonard)
I'm Chris and this is my brother
Matthew.

Leonard sits down in his arm chair, crossing his arms, his stale facial expression unwaning.

LEONARD

Leonard.
(beat)
What were you fellas doing out
this far?

CHRIS

We came off the back-country
trail yesterday. The storm came
out of nowhere, we couldn't find
our way back.

LEONARD

You two idiots were lucky to get
outta that alive.

Leonard SIGHS, getting up out of his armchair, he turns to leave.

LEONARD

You two are both on the sofa
tonight, I'm not giving up my
bed.

INT. LOG CABIN - SITTING AREA - DAY

Leonard is sat in his arm chair reading his book. The men sit in silence for a while.

CHRIS

How long you been living out here?

LEONARD

Don't feel like you gotta make conversation.

(looking up from his book)

As soon as this storm rolls out you're outta here.

CHRIS

Don't you get lonely? There's not a soul for 20 miles.

LEONARD

(not looking up)

It's better this way.

MATTHEW

(sitting upright)

What's that supposed to mean?

LEONARD

(looking up)

Look, I didn't let you in to interrogate me. Show some respect.

The silence continues. Matthew wincing as he adjusts his seating. Leonard keeps reading, trying his best to ignore it.

CHRIS

(sitting up and looking to Matthew)

You ok?

MATTHEW

I'm fine. Just gotta go to the bathroom.

Matthew sits up slowly, taking a moment before standing.

CHRIS

(holding out his hand to help)

Woah, woah- Easy.

Chris helps Matthew out of the room. They both leave the room, Chris looks back over his shoulder, Leonard looks up from his book, they lock eyes.

Matthew leaves the cabin, hobbling to the Outhouse. The two men sit in silence until Leonard gets up and heads to the kitchen.

INT. LOG CABIN - KITCHEN - DAY

Leonard potters around the kitchen for a moment before putting the kettle on the stove. He turns to Chris, sat on the sofa.

LEONARD
You- uh- You want anything?

CHRIS
(turning around)
Oh- no thanks, Leonard.

Leonard returns to what he was doing, his brow furrows. Matthew returns from the bathroom. Leonard stops what he's doing.

LEONARD
Now I gotta hit the john.

Leonard leaves the cabin. A few moments after the door shuts the brothers begin conversing

MATTHEW
(frantically)
Chris, I can't do this.

CHRIS
Don't get soft now.

MATTHEW
He's just a helpless old guy. If we do anything to him, we're no better than he is.

CHRIS
Come on Matt, you know that isn't true.
(pointing to the outhouse)
You know what he did.

EXT. OUTHOUSE - DAY

Leonard exits the outhouse and sees the men talking through the window. Faint ARGUING is heard.

INT. LOG CABIN - SITTING AREA - DAY

Leonard walks in, the two brothers quickly stop talking. Both looking to him as he promptly sits back down and resuming his book.

CHRIS
So, how long you been out here?

LEONARD
What'd I say about questions?

MATTHEW
If we're gonna be here for a
while, may as well get to know
each other a little better.

Leonard lets out a sigh.

LEONARD
About ten years.

MATTHEW
Must get real lonely.

LEONARD
I like the quiet. The real world
is too depressing.

Leonard looks up to see the brothers staring right at him.

LEONARD
Your turn. What made you guys
decide to head out right before
the biggest snow-storm in years?

Matthew glances at Chris.

MATTHEW
We forgot to check the forecast.

LEONARD
That's a pretty significant
oversight.

CHRIS
Yeah, we're lucky we found your
cabin when we did. I'm not sure
how much further we would've
made it.

INT. LOG CABIN - SITTING AREA - DUSK

The storm continues to bellow outside, blocking out most
of the sunset's light. Leonard is in the kitchen,
preparing dinner.

CHRIS
Just you up here, no wife or
anything?

Leonard places a pot on the stove and moves back to the
sitting area.

LEONARD
Can't I just read my book? Why
do you two schmucks care so
much?

Leonard takes a seat and sighs. The brothers keep their
gaze at him in anticipation.

LEONARD
(bluntly)
She died.

CHRIS
What happened?

LEONARD
She got sick. After she passed,
coming out here seemed
reasonable.

The two men share a look.

CHRIS
No kids or anything?

LEONARD
They're older now, I don't talk
to 'em anymore.

MATTHEW
Why not?

Leonard is getting increasingly agitated.

LEONARD
This feels more like an
interrogation than idle chit-
chat.

CHRIS
We're just trying to get to know
our host a little better. I
hardly think we're being
unreasonable.

There's an awkward pause, Leonard sits up.

Matthew gets up to check for phone signal again.

LEONARD
How many times I gotta tell you,
kid? You're not getting a
signal.
(a moment)
Alright then, you kids got
parents?

CHRIS
Mom died having Matt.

MATTHEW
Then Dad got into an accident a
while back.

LEONARD
And what happened to him?

The brothers take a moment to compose themselves before
responding.

MATTHEW
Car accident about 10 years ago.

CHRIS
(Staring right into
Leonard's eyes,
inexpressive)
Some drunk asshole ran him over.

Leonard eyes widen, he slowly drops his head to look down
at his cup of tea. His hands tremor slightly, as
realisation washes over him

LEONARD
That wasn't my fault.

He begins to break down.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
My whole life changed that day.

Leonard looks up, his eyes slightly reddened. He is
stifling tears.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
After my wife died I was broken.
It was a long time coming, but I
never expected it would hurt as
much as it did.

A tear wells in Leonard's eye, he looks up to the
brothers.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
Losing someone that close can
really break you.

CHRIS
We know.

LEONARD
(through a forced
chuckle)
'Course you do...

Chris is unfazed by the conversation, Matthew is slightly shaken up.

LEONARD

I drank. Too much. Every day.
Then one night I went for a
drive- to clear my head I
suppose, and I ran a red.

CHRIS

Hitting our dad, who was just
crossing the street, on his way
home to us.

LEONARD

I got arrested, my daughter paid
my bail. Then I got in a back in
my car, and just started
driving.

MATTHEW

(holding back tears)
That's the reason you're out
here? Because you're on the run?

CHRIS

Because he's a coward.
(still unfazed)
Who's too scared to face the
consequences.

MATTHEW

(hushed to Chris)
I can't go through with this.

CHRIS

(hushed to Matthew)
Don't back down now, Matt. Not
after what we've been through.
Not when we're this close.

MATTHEW

Close to what? What are we even
doing here, Chris?

CHRIS

We're making sure this piece of
shit-
(pointing at Leonard)
-reaps what he sows.

Leonard puts his tea on the end table.

CHRIS

Seems like your past has finally
caught up to you.

LEONARD
Maybe it has.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOG CABIN - DAY

The night has passed. Chris and Matt are wrapped up in their outerwear, walking out of the cabin. They leave the door open. Blood is briefly seen pooling behind them.

FADE OUT: