

LYSSA'S CHILD

by

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**OVER BLACK:**

TEXT APPEARS OVER EXCERPTS OF AN EMERGENCY RECORDING:

CALL HANDLER (V.O.)  
Hello, Ambulance service--

CALLER (V.O.)  
(breathless, panicked)  
There's a man, he's hurt--

CALL HANDLER (V.O.)  
Can you give me your location?

June, 2005, a patient named only as 'Duncan' is admitted to a London A&E with multiple injuries.

CALLER (V.O.)  
He's being attacked--

X-rays later reveal signs of over 100 breaks and fractures, some indicating injuries received during childhood.

CALLER (V.O.)  
He keeps falling, he can't get away--

CALL HANDLER (V.O.)  
Who's attacking him?

Following his recovery Duncan agreed to be interviewed under supervision of Dr. Edith Moore, a clinical psychologist.

CALLER (V.O.)  
I don't know...it's-- oh my God,  
it's-- he can't get away. Please,  
please just get here--

The following video recording took place just days before Duncan's disappearance.

**FADE IN:**

**INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION**

DUNCAN, mid 40s, wiry, bruised, seated in an armchair. He stares into the camera with brooding intensity. Nothing escapes his attention.

Book-shelves fill the room around him. Files and notebooks stacked on a desk. French doors overlook a patio.

A cuckoo clock hangs on a wall.

DUNCAN

S'pose I always had this feeling  
like I were being watched.

His hands rest over the arms of the chair. Each bears a row  
of scabbed, oft-broken knuckles.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Are they watching you now?

He looks around, comes back to the camera.

DUNCAN

Family home this, got a warmth to  
it. That a gnome outside?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

You've a keen eye. An old  
housewarming present.

DUNCAN

Brings you luck right..?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

What can you tell me about the day  
you were attacked. About what  
happened to you?

DUNCAN

I've been over it with them other  
doctors.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

I've read the reports. I'd like to  
hear it from you. If I may...

DUNCAN

You're taking care my boy, right?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Yes. He's in good hands.

DUNCAN

An' that stuff with the library? I  
want my books back.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

They've agreed to waive the fines.  
It's in writing.

Duncan nods, satisfied. He collects a mug from a table,  
gulps the contents down in one.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)  
How about you talk me through a  
normal day..?

A wry smile from Duncan.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)  
Take your time, there's no  
hurry...there is more tea.

DUNCAN  
I'll take another, ta'.

His eyes stray towards the patio, a flicker of unease.

DUNCAN  
An' pull that blind an' all.

**EXT. WASTELAND - FIRE-PIT - DAY**

First light. A scrap of weeds and dirt on the edge of town.  
An old couch sits before a smoldering fire. Smoke drifts.

RUNRIG, a mongrel mouths a stick from the ground. He turns  
and bounds towards Duncan who stands nearby dressed in a  
tracksuit and wool-cap.

Note, the dialogue from the interview continues throughout  
where indicated in V.O.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
Never been much of a sleeper. Read  
most nights. Read anything. Ancient  
history, I like that. There's a lot  
of it.

Duncan rolls his neck, working out the kinks.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
Dawn's a good time-- there's a  
stillness to the air.

He performs side-twists -- a warm-up routine.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
Don't go out after dark, an' I  
never hang about one place for  
long.

Runrig drops the stick at his feet. Duncan collects it.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
 But I won't live my life in hiding,  
 seen where that gets a man.

He hurls the stick --

Runrig stiffens, ears flatten, looks past Duncan with a growl.

Duncan spins, guard up, coiled to strike.

Runrig breaks away, barking madly as if running off an assailant.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)  
 Duncan?

Duncan upends the couch in a flash of anger. He paces away mumbling, agitated.

**INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION**

Blinds drawn now. Duncan sits in the half-light.

DUNCAN  
 Gotta be on your toes. They're sneaky, well sneaky.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)  
 How long has it been this way?

**EXT. URBAN HIGH-STREET - DAY**

Runrig strains at the leash, leading Duncan past a row of shuttered storefronts.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
 I remember stuff. Mum crying, Dad never leaving the house. I'd wake up in the night, he'd be screaming blue murder. She'd come grab me, lock us in the bathroom till he went quiet.

Duncan stops outside a library. Ties Runrig to a lamp-post. He casts a guarded look around, searching the street.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
 We never had nice things, no china, never knew why, not in them days.

Duncan paces, agitated. Checks his watch.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

I were about eight when it first happened. Went off to school one morning...that's all I remember. Milkman found me lying in the parish hedge. Put me on his cart an' took me home. Mum just picked me up an' carried me in. Not a word.

The 'CLOSED' sign in the library window flips to 'OPEN'.

**INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION**

Duncan thumbs his cup.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

And your father, what did he do?

He smiles at the memory.

**EXT. WASTELAND - FIRE-PIT - DAY**

Duncan shadow-boxes. He bobs and weaves, breath steady. Fists snapping the air with a practiced ease.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

He taught me to fight.

Runrig watches patiently.

Duncan spins and fires off a quick series of jabs.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

(alarmed)

Duncan?

Duncan drops his guard and jogs on the spot.

DUNCAN

Easy, Doc, you'll know when.

**EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - COURTYARD - DAY**

A cluster of aging grey blocks connected with walkways.

Duncan moves towards a stairwell. He carries a plastic bag of books. Runrig sniffs around off the leash.

DUNCAN

I'd let you up but you wouldn't  
wanna anyways, it's a squat. Just  
me an' the boy up there, that's the  
rule.

He glances off as if spooked by something. His pace  
quickens. WHISTLES for the dog.

He reaches the stairwell and enters with Runrig in tow.

The camera pauses on the doorway --

A sudden gust of wind carries a plastic bag across the  
courtyard. It glances the stairwell door, drops to the  
ground.

**INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION**

Duncan heaps several spoons of sugar into his mug.

DUNCAN

Dad never had rules, he just took  
to hiding.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Did he ever talk about it?

DUNCAN

The war hadn't left him with much  
to say. See it in his eyes, he were  
just...gone. One day he weren't  
there at all--

A cuckoo bursts from the clock above Duncan -- CUCKOO!

DUNCAN

Shit off!

He's on his feet, poised to strike.

The bird slowly draws back into the clock-face.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Duncan it's okay, you're safe--

DUNCAN

You don't know safe.

He steadies his breath. Rolls out his neck and sits.

DUNCAN  
Housewarming, you end up with all  
kinds of shite.

An awkward silence. Duncan stares down the camera, intense,  
twitching. Adrenalin in full flow.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)  
You were telling me about when he  
left you, your father...

Duncan bends the spoon in half -- a subconscious act. He  
looks from the spoon to the camera, sheepish. He places it  
on a table beside several others having met the same fate.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)  
Would you rather we talk about  
something else?

Duncan considers.

DUNCAN  
I'll tell you about my tenth  
birthday...

**EXT. FIELD - DAY**

Grass sways. Bells peel from a distant church.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
Had this big cake an' a clown. Mum  
even saved up for a bouncy castle.  
Just tried to carry on, maybe she  
thought what with dad gone...

**EXT. CHURCH - GRAVEYARD - DAY**

Duncan stands before a headstone. Bells RING.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
I remember falling, trying to get  
back to the house, trying to get  
up, I can see the sky-- can taste  
the dirt, the blood...the other  
kids screaming...Mum got to me,  
dragged me back inside.



**INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION**

Duncan sips his tea.

DUNCAN

It all changed. Home weren't safe,  
nowhere was. It were coming for me.

He cuts a wary glance at the cuckoo clock.

DUNCAN

Weren't long after that it put me  
through a plate glass window. Broke  
both wrists. Lost four pints of  
blood an' a nipple.

He starts to hitch up his shirt to prove it--

**EXT. CHURCH - GRAVEYARD - DAY**

Duncan rests a rose against the headstone.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

She didn't deserve all that. They  
blamed her, sent me away for my  
protection. She were my protection.  
She understood. To the likes of you  
I were just a problem child,  
someone else's problem.

Duncan stands and gazes off into the distance.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

Never forgot the last thing she  
told me...

**INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION**

Duncan's thumbs dig into the armchair.

DUNCAN

You can die of a broken heart, you  
know that? I read that, not in no  
medical book mind.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

I can believe that.

DUNCAN

You don't. You'd not let yourself.  
You're like all them others.

He taps his head. Rocks, growing agitated.

DUNCAN

We're all just a checklist, ask a question, tick a box.

He gestures to the bookshelves.

DUNCAN

I seen them books before, even read a few, it's all the fuckin' same, never mattered a lick of salt what I said.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Do you not think they wanted to help you, all those others?

DUNCAN

Pill me up, lock me away, strap me down-- whole stack of notebooks on me some-place. Now you got this--

He flicks a hand towards the camera.

DUNCAN

You wanna help me?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Yes, I do.

DUNCAN

Then believe me. Come and see.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

What will I see, Duncan?

DUNCAN

A fuckin' survivor, a fighter.

He seems to lose his train of thought.

DUNCAN

Just like she told me.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

(nervous)

What are you fighting?

**EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - COURTYARD - DAY**

Pigeons crowd the pavement.

Duncan stands with his back to a wall. He scatters bread in a wide arc around him.

A handful of pigeons take flight across the yard.

Duncan coils. His eyes tighten, searching...

Runrig cocks his head.

**INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION**

Duncan rolls out his neck.

DUNCAN

I can feel It, when It's close. I  
can feel...It wants to take me.

He clenches his fists. Veins rise on his forearms.

DUNCAN

I won't go.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

What is It?

**EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - COURTYARD - DAY**

A cluster of pigeons scatter, closer now. It's as if SOMETHING is moving towards Duncan.

He starts to rock with a steady, rhythmic motion.

More birds take flight, closer still.

A feather hangs in the air. It turns to drift towards him.

Runrig whimpers. Duncan kneels and slips the leash free of a bench. He looks into the dog's eyes.

DUNCAN

Be good lad.

Duncan pushes the leash towards the camera.

DUNCAN

Take him.

He takes off towards the stairwell. The camera follows.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Duncan?

DUNCAN

Do like I said, don't matter what  
you hear, you stay back.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Duncan!

The camera struggles to follow, swings wildly, loses focus.  
A door SLAMS. Duncan CRIES out O.S.

**EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - STAIRWELL - DAY**

Closing on a small window set in the door: GRUNTS and angry  
SHOUTS from inside. Dr. Moore's panicked breathing O.S.

The door rattles against the frame -- locked. Runrig BARKS.

The angle of the camera briefly catches DR. EDITH MOORE'S  
reflection in the glass as she films. On the other side  
Duncan twists into view, fists snapping at thin air as he  
vies to stay on his feet. He slips into shadow. YELLS  
enraged.

Suddenly there's a FACE at the window, eyeless, features  
twisted in screaming agony -- it's there for a split second  
-- perhaps a trick of the light.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

(startled)

Oh, Jesus--

Something CRASHES into the door, trying to break out. The  
camera recoils in a blur of sound and movement.

Duncan's panic turns to CRIES of pain.

**INT. APARTMENT BLOCK - STAIRWELL - DAY**

A dark space of concrete and damp.

Dr. Moore's laboured breath O.S.

Duncan slumps in the corner. Head down. His shirt ripped.  
Knuckles cut and swollen. A puddle beneath his crotch.

Runrig sits whining before him.

He looks up to reveal a bloodied face. He tries a smile --  
it fails. He turns away.

**EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - WALKWAY - DAY**

Duncan, his back to the camera, carries his weight with pain, determined to stay ahead. Blood trails behind him.

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
 Anything happens to me while you're  
 here you just get away from me.  
 Don't bother callin' for help.

**EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - DUNCAN'S SQUAT - DAY**

The door SNAPS shut.

A hand tests the letterbox -- it's sealed.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)  
 Duncan? Can you hear me?

A small window beside the door. A 'neighborhood watch sticker' stuck to the glass. It shows the silhouette of a sinister figure beneath the red prohibited sign.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)  
 Duncan..?

Runrig WHINES from behind the door.

**INT. DR. MOORE'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY - INTERVIEW SESSION**

Silence. Duncan stares into his tea mug. Emotionally drained.

**EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - COURTYARD - DAY**

Dead leaves swirl, caught in a small vortex. Perhaps...

DUNCAN (V.O.)  
 I read it somewhere, the ancient  
 Greeks said there were a rage, been  
 with us from the start. Like a  
 seed, it grew in the cracks till it  
 spilt out into the world. It were  
 picked up on the wind, blown around  
 and around, looking for  
 someone...maybe dad left hoping it  
 would follow him.

A flock of pigeons take flight en masse.

**EXT. WASTELAND - FIRE-PIT - DAY**

First light. Smoke drifts from the remnants of a fire.

Runrig lies curled on the abandoned sofa.

Duncan shadow boxes. Feinting, weaving, jabbing...

**CUT TO BLACK**