

WHERE THE WILD THYME GROWS

By

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**FADE IN:**

**EXT. NORTH WALES - HILLSIDE - DAY**

A rugged valley stretches towards distant mountains. A village lays nestled in the basin below.

CALEB, 12, a scrap of idle mischief, traipses along, swiping at wild-flowers with a stick.

He pops a stick of gum in his mouth. Pauses to gaze at a row of ramshackle stone cottages on a brow ahead.

**EXT. HILLSIDE - MINER'S COTTAGE - DAY**

Caleb squints through a cracked window pane.

**INT. MINER'S COTTAGE - LIVING AREA - DAY**

Weeds poke through broken floorboards.

A brick fire-place, blackened by use.

Caleb wanders the room, eyes searching.

In a far corner the floorboards have been pried up to expose a patch of dirt beneath.

Caleb crouches, studies the patch -- a scrap of cloth pokes through. He pulls it free.

It unfurls to reveal itself as a neckerchief --

TUNK. He looks down to find a small, dull colored object fallen from the folds.

He rubs the grime away to expose a metallic sheen beneath.

It's a locket.

He grins. Spits the gum.

Caleb continues through the cottage into a

**HALLWAY**

A closed door stands off to one side.

Caleb gives it a tentative nudge with the stick. It CREAKS open, stops, wedged on the uneven floor.

He peers through the gap to see the head of a rotted mattress on an iron frame.

Craning his neck he runs his eyes to the foot of the bed to find a figure hunched in silence.

Caleb's eyes go wide.

The MINER, late teens, dressed in a donkey jacket and flat cap perches there, head bowed as if in grief.

Caleb's stick clunks to the floor.

**EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY**

Bells PEAL in the distance.

Caleb races breathlessly from the cottage. A CRY of rage follows in his wake.

**INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY**

A pair of roses stand in a vase upon a windowsill. One firm and fresh, the other bruised and wilted.

MARIE PENNIFOLD, 70s, a wool hat struggles to contain her shock of grey hair. She stares at the flowers with a troubled frown.

The sound of RINGING bells draws her to the window.

Her hand moves instinctively to her neck -- as if feeling for something.

**EXT. STREET - MARIE'S HOUSE - DAY**

Marie draws a shawl around her, joins a handful of RESIDENTS gathered in the road. A mixture of irritation and bemusement on their faces as they try to discern the bells' source.

She stops beside PAMELA, 40s, dour, and VIC, 70s, stooped.

PAMELA

It's not St. Barts, wrong end of town for St. Barts.

VIC

Coming from the hills. The old colliery chapel bells.

PAMELA

Bah, chapel's long gone, you've the drink inside you, you old fool.

VIC

I'm sober as a stone. I was born to those bells.

He turns to Marie.

VIC

Marie, tell the youngun' here.

Marie looks past him --

Caleb hares along the pavement, flush with fright.

He looks their way, briefly meeting eyes with Marie before disappearing into a front garden further down.

Marie mulls this over...

**INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY**

Marie adjusts her hat in the mirror. Her eyes shift as if to address someone behind her.

MARIE

I'll hear no more about it.

She turns, stern.

A BLACK CAT rests on the sofa.

MARIE

I've to see for myself.

**EXT. COUNTRY LANE - BUS SHELTER - DAY**

A bus draws to a halt beside a rain shelter.

The doors SWISH open and Marie shuffles out with the aid of a walking stick.

She pauses at the roadside, her eyes raised to the row of abandoned cottages on the hillside above.

**EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY**

Marie picks her way through the meadow.

She stops. Her hand tightens on the walking stick as a faint CRY of anguish drifts from the cottages up ahead.

She removes a small pouch from around her neck.

Marie kneels, gathers a handful of a small, lilac plant (wild Thyme) which she stuffs inside the pouch.

**EXT. HILLSIDE - ABANDONED COTTAGES - DAY**

CRIES come from within the last building. The words unintelligible, edged with madness.

Marie tightens her resolve and pushes on.

**INT. MINER'S COTTAGE - LIVING AREA - DAY**

Marie pauses in the doorway.

Heavy SOBS from the back-room.

A trail of shoe prints lead across the floor to where the neckerchief lays crumpled beside the hole.

Kneeling, Marie plucks a wad of chewing gum from the floor.

She pauses, tightens. The sobs have stopped.

Marie presses flat to the wall beside the doorway, the pouch clutched to her chest.

A heavy, agitated BREATHING -- somebody stands there, just out of sight.

FOOTSTEPS withdraw from the doorway.

Marie leans her head against the wall, sad.

**EXT. VILLAGE PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAY**

Caleb sits on a swing.

He tears the wrapper from a stick of gum, tosses it away.

The wrapper tumbles with the wind --

The tip of a walking stick pins it to the ground.

Caleb thumbs his mobile phone.

MARIE

Did you lose something, child?

Caleb startles. He turns to find Marie close behind him.

She holds out the wrapper.

CALEB

No.

MARIE

Are you sure?

CALEB

Yeah.

MARIE

Then perhaps you found something?

She moves around in front of him.

MARIE

A small shiny thing. The kind of  
small shiny thing that doesn't  
belong in the claws of a young  
magpie.

She stops, holds his eyes intently.

MARIE

Sometimes we've good reason to bury  
the past. It brings great comfort  
to those that don't know they're no  
longer with us.

CALEB

I ain't found nothin'.

MARIE

You're sure? Only I fear I may not  
be the last to come looking.

He draws back on the seat, as if to swing forward.

CALEB  
You're in my way.

Marie straightens.

CALEB  
You gonna hit me?

MARIE  
Where would the sense be in such a  
thing?

Caleb pulls his feet up --

Marie just manages to step aside in time.

CALEB  
Then piss off you old witch.

She sighs. Watches him swing back and forth --

**INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

The pendulum of a wall clock oscillates...

A pot bubbles over the stove.

The curtains drawn. Marie sits at a table in the scant light. A steaming bowl of dark liquid rests before her. Five unlit candles surround.

She drops the wad of gum into the bowl.

**EXT. VILLAGE PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAY**

Caleb grips the handrail of a roundabout (merry-go-round), leaning his body out at arms length as it spins.

He hangs first by one arm then the other, alternating hands as he goes. Showing off.

**INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Marie mouths silently to herself, eyes closed. She circles a palm over the bowl, round and round...

A candle flickers into life.

**EXT. VILLAGE PARK - ROUNDABOUT - DAY**

Caleb grins and holds on.

Hands, strong, coal-stained, grasp the bars and spin the roundabout faster.

Caleb pulls himself tight to the handrail at this sudden kick of speed.

**INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Marie's hand continues to circle, building momentum. The liquid beneath swirls in unison.

One-by-one the rest of the candles light.

**EXT. VILLAGE PARK - ROUNDABOUT - DAY**

Caleb holds on for dear life.

He watches in terror as the coal-blackened faces of MINERS flash past him. Their cold, dead eyes stare through him as they send the roundabout faster.

Caleb cries out.

**INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Marie stops.

The candles snuff out.

The liquid slows.

**EXT. VILLAGE PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAY**

The roundabout eases to a halt.

Caleb clutches the handrail, ashen.

He takes off in a disorientated arc across the grass.



**INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

The Cat waits dutifully at the front door.

The flap RATTLES open. The locket drops to the doormat. A patter of FOOTSTEPS recede on the path outside.

Marie sends the Cat a look.

MARIE

Oh don't be that way. You'd have done the same.

**EXT. COUNTRY LANE - BUS SHELTER - DAY**

The bus pulls away to reveal Marie at the roadside holding a shovel.

**EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY**

Marie labors her way towards the cottages.

She pauses to gather a handful of Wild Thyme...

**INT. MINER'S COTTAGE - LIVING AREA - DAY**

Marie stands in the doorway.

Her eyes wander the room, unnerved by the silence.

Floorboards CREAK as she makes her way towards the corner.

Bells ring in the distance.

She freezes.

Her hand grips the pouch.

She stares straight ahead, fear barely concealed. Beside her stands the Miner. His coal blackened face inches from hers, twisted into a seething snarl.

She closes her eyes and mutters a brief incantation.

Marie takes a calming breath, continues forward.

The shovel plunges into the dirt.

**LATER**

Kneeling, Marie places the locket inside the neckerchief. She pauses, closes her eyes a moment before popping it open.

She smiles sadly at what she sees.

The Miner haunts the shadows behind her, subdued.

Marie gently places the folded neckerchief inside the hole.

MARIE

Sleep well my young man.

She stands and takes up the shovel.

**INT. BUS SHELTER - DAY**

Caleb sits playing with his phone. He looks up as a shadow falls over him.

Marie stands in the entrance, hood up, shovel in hand.

Caleb blinks, all his young nightmares realised.

Marie takes a seat beside him. They sit in awkward silence for a long moment.

She peers over at his phone. Their eyes meet.

Marie holds out a packet of chewing gum. A peace offering.

MARIE (V.O.)

Just a boy, little more than you...

**INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY**

A yellowed newspaper clipping bears the headline 'BELLS TOLL FOR MINERS KILLED IN PIT TRAGEDY'. It's illustrated with a grainy, black and white picture of a colliery.

Caleb sits on a sofa beside Marie. An open photo album in his lap. Two mugs of tea on the table before them.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Always was a light sleeper.

Caleb flips the page.

CALEB  
Was that you both?

**INSERT: PHOTOGRAPH**

A monochrome of Marie and the Miner, both late teens. He smiles, proud, a neckerchief around his throat -- she clasps the locket to hers, gazes lovingly up into his eyes.

**BACK TO SCENE**

A bittersweet smile finds Marie's lips.

On the windowsill, both roses stand tall and fresh.

**FADE OUT**