

THE REINDEER

Written by

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EXT. THE RURAL NORTH - DAY (WINTER)

ELLIOT, 10, bundled in warm clothes, walks home in the fallen snow under sunny skies.

There is so little traffic through this town that the roads are unplowed. What tracks are in the snow were put there by the school bus or occasional tractor.

On one side of the road are snow-covered rolling fields. On the other side, forest.

He approaches a playground with half-a-dozen rides, jungle gyms, etc, and sits in the swing, spinning as young boys do.

As he spins, he sees a juvenile reindeer at the edge of the forest. The animal appears to be watching Elliot.

The boy freezes in place, holding his breath.

The reindeer also doesn't move or breathe.

Seconds pass. Neither of them have moved so much as an eyelid. Elliot stands and untangles himself from the swing chains.

The reindeer only watches.

Elliot holds the chains until they stop swaying, then takes a single step toward the animal.

The reindeer takes a single step toward Elliot.

Elliot's eyes widen.

ELLIOT

Hi ... uh ... Mr. Reindeer.

To Elliot's amazement, the reindeer dips its head.

ELLIOT (cont'd)

(sotto)

Whoa.

The boy looks around, checking for other people, cars, anyone who can verify he's awake.

ELLIOT (cont'd)

Are you someone's pet? Do you live around here?

He steps closer and the reindeer just watches him.

As Elliot gets to within an arm's length of the animal, it reaches out its nose to sniff him.

Slowly, gently, Elliot raises his hand to touch the animal's neck. The reindeer leans into the touch and Elliot gives it a playful scratch.

ELLIOT (cont'd)
You're too friendly to be wild.
Someone misses you for sure.

The two of them look each other in the eyes.

ELLIOT (cont'd)
Want to come home with me? We can ask
the sheriff if anyone--

The animal hops back a step.

ELLIOT (cont'd)
Oh, oh. Okay. Not home. That's fine.
You can stay here.

The reindeer turns to the forest and steps toward it, then looks back at Elliot and tilts its head.

ELLIOT (cont'd)
What? I'm not going in there.

The animal rakes the ground with a hoof.

ELLIOT (cont'd)
No way. It's getting late and I'm not
supposed to go into the woods alone.

It shakes its head.

ELLIOT (cont'd)
Okay, technically, I wouldn't be
alone, but I don't think a reindeer
qualifies as a parental guardian.

As though rolling its eyes, the reindeer looks up ... and then down to the ground.

Elliot looks up and down the road, then relents.

ELLIOT (cont'd)
How far do you want to go?

EXT. THICK FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

The reindeer maneuvers between branches, dipping its antlers just enough to clear thicker limbs.

Elliot's short legs are a hindrance in the snow and brush.

He notices the animal has stopped next to a fallen tree. The trunk is snapped at the base, but the upper end is held aloft by the surrounding forest.

The animal tilts its head and taps the tree trunk with an antler.

ELLIOT

Want me to ride on your back?

It taps the tree again.

Elliot climbs onto the tree and uses it as a ramp up to the shoulders of the reindeer. He places a hand between the animal's shoulders and pats gently.

The animal leans against the tree.

Elliot swings a leg over the reindeer's back and leans forward to wrap his arms around its neck.

And they're off!

Now the animal can do what forest creatures do best. It flies between trees and over logs.

Elliot hoots and hollers as the reindeer darts left and right, up and over, quick as a wink.

Before Elliot can think, the forest grows thick. So thick it blots most of the light. The animal slows.

It seems nervous, looking left and right as it creeps forward.

They enter a clearing. Above, the sky is dark, cloudy. The woods are silent.

A branch snaps.

The reindeer whips its head around toward the noise.

Another crack, from the other direction.

The reindeer turns its head around to look at Elliot, then lowers itself to its front knees so he can climb off.

The animal stands and kicks at the ground, anticipating danger. It huffs and shakes its head.

Around the clearing, another reindeer, then a second, then a third enter the clearing. These are larger adults. Tall and handsome.

Elliot's friend brightens and struts forward. All four animals converge at the middle.

The juvenile pauses and looks back at Elliot. The other three turn their heads in the boy's direction.

As the three adults step toward Elliot, the younger one charges into the forest and disappears.

Elliot backs away from the animals as they approach.

All three huff and shake their heads.

The largest animal leaps at the boy and lands on him with the full force of its front hooves.

A scream is silenced as Elliot's head is dashed in an instant.

The other two reindeer join in and together they bludgeon the body to a gory pulp of blood, bone, and down insulation.

TITLE OVER BLACK: *Don't fuck with the reindeer.*

END