

MINOTAUR

by

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EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, VIRGINIA - DAY

Moving slowly past endless white headstones.

WIDE REVEAL - Rows upon rows of identical graves spread to infinity across green acreage.

In the distance, among the headstones, SEVEN MARINES in dress uniform FIRE a three-volley salute. Their SHOTS echo faintly.

TITLE: MINOTAUR

EXT. STONERIDGE TOWN - DAY - 1993

Golden light spreads over idyllic North American mountains.

Pickup trucks roll casually through a small town: Stoneridge.

American flags FLAP in a chilly Fall breeze.

An old man sweeps leaves from his porch.

INT. BRIAN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Moving over rows and rows of canned beans.

HARLEY BROWN, early 30s, stacks shelves. She's meticulous. Serious. Going about her job as though she were at a nuclear reactor.

WENDY (O.S.)
Um... Harley?

WENDY, 50, treats Harley as though she is a movie star. Harley pretends to be oblivious.

WENDY
The butter beans. I just can't-

HARLEY
That corner, below the ketchup.

WENDY
Oh! Someone needs glasses. Thanks,
Harley.

Harley's attention snaps to-

The cash register. A MARINE, 40, wearing KHAKI SERVICE UNIFORM, is buying cigarettes from BRIAN, 65, the store owner.

BRIAN

On the house. Thank you for your service.

MARINE

(chuffed)

You're welcome, Sir.

On the way out, the marine crouches to pet JET, a lazy old German Shepherd "guarding" the door.

HARLEY

Excuse me, Wendy.

EXT. STONERIDGE MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Harley exits the store. Jet perks up, wags his tail.

Harley follows the marine across the street, pausing as a beat up 4x4 cruises past.

4X4 DRIVER (O.C.)

Mornin' Harley.

Harley nods curtly back to the 4x4 driver.

HARLEY

Excuse me. Sir?

MARINE

(lights a cigarette)

Ma'am.

HARLEY

Heading to Camp Howard?

MARINE

Nah. Scottsville.

HARLEY

Where'd you serve? If you uh-

MARINE

No problem. Persian Gulf. I-raq.

HARLEY

That your combat patch?

MARINE

This here is my rank. See I'm a Staff Sergeant.

HARLEY
Okay. Which unit?

A beat.

MARINE
Second battalion. Seventh marines.

HARLEY
I see you wear your gold stripes on
the service uniform there.

MARINE
That's right.

HARLEY
Thought you boys only wore 'em on
your dress blues.

MARINE
No, no you can wear 'em like this.
They don't care.

HARLEY
Right. They don't care. Shoes...
definitely ain't standard issue.
Belt's all kinds of wrong.

MARINE
You for real?

HARLEY
Look man, wear the costume, I don't
care. But Brian's trying to run a
business.

MARINE
My buddies died in this "costume".

HARLEY
Okay.

MARINE
I served my country. The fuck've
you done, huh?

HARLEY
(overlapping)
Not about me.

MARINE
Nothing. Nothing.

HARLEY
Just pay for the cigarettes.

The marine is disgusted.

HARLEY
Please. I really don't want to
involve the sheriff.

BOY (O.C.)
Dad?

A BOY, 8, steps out of the local Video Store.

Harley backs down.

BOY
Can I play Street Fighter?

MARINE
We're Oscar Mike, Bud.

BOY
Yes, Sir.

The boy slinks into a dusty pickup truck.

HARLEY
He doesn't know.

MARINE
Well, go on then. Make sure he
sees.
(removes his service cap)
You want the medals? You could pin
'em to your apron. How 'bout that?

The boy rolls down the window to listen in.

Harley switches tone. Holds out her hand in peace.

HARLEY
Just wanted to thank you, Sir. For
your service.

The marine plays along.

MARINE
You're welcome, Ma'am.

The marine notices on Harley's inner forearm: a U.S. Marine
Corps TATTOO. He dies inside.

HARLEY

Blackfoot's five miles South of
Scottsville. It's got a National
Guard station.

MARINE

I... uh-

HARLEY

(squeezing his hand)
When your boy's old enough, he can
enlist there. Have a nice day.

EXT. LAKESIDE CABIN - NIGHT

A small, weatherboard house looks onto a LAKE. Harley emerges
from woods surrounding the house, carrying firewood.

Harley flicks a ZIPPO LIGHTER, starting a campfire. She
cracks open a beer and sits against a tree.

Using a HUNTING KNIFE, Harley shaves strips from a thin
LENGTH OF WOOD about half her height.

LATER

Harley finishes a can and throws it into a pile of empties.

She staggers, drunk. She drops the knife. Somehow, her hands
have become BLOODY. She wipes them on her jeans.

Harley anchors her boot in front of the shaved wood and bends
it. The wood arcs with tremendous resistance.

Holding this position, she secures a string to the top and
holds up an impressive homemade HUNTING BOW.

Harley nocks an arrow and aims at a beer can on a log.

PHOOM!

She misses horribly. Checks her bow suspiciously.

Harley turns to a GRAVE overlooking the lake.

HARLEY

Laugh some more, asshole.

Harley exits frame. Returns with a bolt action RIFLE.

INT. LAKESIDE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

BRETT EASTLAKE, early 30s, sleeps peacefully. Jet is asleep on the bed next to him.

GUNSHOT! Brett jumps awake.

He peeks through window blinds at Harley, in the yard, swaying drunkenly with her rifle.

Brett doesn't panic. He sighs. Rubs his eyes.

BRETT

Shit.

EXT. LAKESIDE CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Harley wheels around, nearly shoots Brett.

BRETT

Friendly! Jesus.

Harley laughs. Brett doesn't. We get a good look at Brett now. He's 200 pounds. A former linebacker in high school.

BRETT

You get him?

Harley leans the rifle against the log.

HARLEY

Who?

Brett picks up the rifle and checks the chamber.

HARLEY

(agitated)

It's safe.

BRETT

You wanna come back to bed?

HARLEY

Hold on.

Harley places a beer can on her head, preparing for the William Tell trick.

BRETT

No, no-

HARLEY

Come on.

BRETT
I said never again.

Harley gets into position.

HARLEY
You're a decent shot. Let's go.

BRETT
Tired of this crazy shit, Wheels.

HARLEY
Don't fuck with my fun, okay? Just do it.

Brett puts down the rifle.

BRETT
I ain't pointing a gun at you.

HARLEY
Maybe, deep down, you don't wanna miss.

BRETT
It's called love.

HARLEY
Huh. Momma hates you, army rejects you, so you latch onto me. Right?

And that's done it. Seething, Brett grabs Harley's bow.

BRETT
How's this thing work again?

Harley hesitates. Too proud and drunk to reveal that she's suddenly afraid.

HARLEY
It shoots arrows.

Brett nocks an arrow and draws back the string.

BRETT
Sure you wanna do this?

HARLEY
You're a pussy.

Brett RELEASES... deliberately high over Harley's head.

Unamused, Harley throws her beer at Brett.

Brett wipes beer from his face. Boiling inside. He places the bow at his feet.

BRETT
Stop punishing yourself and come
the fuck back to bed.

Harley SLAPS herself.

Brett grabs her. Harley keeps hitting her face.

BRETT
Stop it. Stop it!

Brett hugs her from behind, pinning her arms.

BRETT
Calm down. Just take it easy.

Harley head-butts him. Brett backs off, lip bleeding.

HARLEY
Wanna hurt me now, don't ya?

Brett spits and heads back towards the cabin.

He stops to collect Harley's knife from the ground.

HARLEY
Here!
(throws empty cans at him)
They're pretty sharp. Better keep
'em away from me.
(scavenging clumsily)
How about sticks? They're a little
pointy too. Take em!

Harley keels over. Lands face down.

HARLEY
(talking into the dirt)
That ain't even how I'd do it.

Heart aching, Brett stops.

HARLEY
I'd make sure.

Brett walks away.

Cheek to the dirt, Harley stares at the grave by the lake.

She gives the dead man a sarcastic salute.

EXT. LAKESIDE CABIN - MORNING

Harley wakes up, slumped against the tree. She notices a BLANKET has been draped over her and buries her face in shame.

INT. LAKESIDE CABIN/BEDROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Jet has the bed all to himself.

Harley peeks into the bedroom.

Jet sees her and leaps off.

HARLEY

It's okay. You're not in trouble.
Mommy definitely is.

Harley slinks away.

HARLEY (O.S.)

You gonna make me breakfast?

KITCHEN - A SHORT TIME LATER

Band-aids covering her hands, Harley shovels cereal towards her mouth.

She looks up at a wall, where a perfectly polished HOMEMADE HUNTING BOW is mounted.

Harley dumps her spoon in the cereal and skirts her chair around so that her back faces the hunting bow.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - MORNING

Harley marches along a road lined with forest. Jet keeps pace at her side. A packed logging truck ROARS past.

Harley's path is blocked by a PARKED CAR.

SANDY WHITLOW, mid 30s, leans against the car, smoking. Sandy is bubbly but her smile hides profound sorrow. Harley treats Sandy with pity.

Sandy clocks Harley and rushes to embrace her.

SANDY

Heard you was back from the Gulf.

HARLEY
Been a little while now.

SANDY
I shop over at Franklin. The
megastore.

HARLEY
It's okay. I should'a called.

SANDY
Don't be silly! You had a war to
win.

Sandy points at Harley's bandaids. One has come loose.

SANDY
Oh, Jeez. You're not... from the
war?

Harley rushes to fix the plaster.

HARLEY
Just chopping onions.

Sandy laughs awkwardly. Harley humors her.

SANDY
I'm such an idiot. You're on your
way to work-

HARLEY
Brian's pretty flexible.

SANDY
Well, let's grab some beers then
and go to the hill.

HARLEY
Not that flexible.

SANDY
Sucks being an adult, don't it?

HARLEY
I wouldn't know.

Sandy laughs. Her eyes avoid the woods. Harley notices.

SANDY
This is the spot. So they say.

HARLEY
I heard the whole town pitched in.

SANDY

Everyone was real nice. Even kids who picked on him and whatnot. They all searched but... people got jobs and kids of their own, so...

Harley doesn't know what to say.

SANDY

Say, Brian says your shepherd used to find bombs, or people trapped underground?

Harley puts two and two together.

HARLEY

Old Jet used to be FBI.

SANDY

Cool.

HARLEY

He was ... a cadaver dog.

SANDY

Huh. Well... bones. At least I could bury them.

HARLEY

Four years. And the town, the whole town-

SANDY

Right. The bullies and their parents. Yep. They all pitched in. But none of 'em are you, Harley.

HARLEY

Sandy-

SANDY

I just... it'd be nice to lay him to rest. Officially.

HARLEY

People make careers outta this. I ain't got the first clue. I'm not... (capable)

Sandy's smiley act resumes.

SANDY

Hey, it's cool. I wasn't... Just an idea. So... look at you, man. Wow.

Sandy gets in her car. Harley lingers by the door.

SANDY
You don't miss the marines?

HARLEY
I ain't one for looking back.

SANDY
Huh. That's all I do.

Harley notices a pink MINNIE MOUSE WATCH on Sandy's wrist.

SANDY
Don't even work no more, but I
never take the stupid thing off.
Stevie had the blue one. Funny...
the junk you end up cherishing.

HARLEY
I'm real sorry I never called.

SANDY
My phone was probably cut off
anyway.

Sandy smiles warmly.

SANDY
Hey, you want a lift into town?

HARLEY
I'm good. I walk.

SANDY
There's the bad bitch I knew.
(revs her engine)
Alright, you owe me a beer.

Harley walks away, clearly affected.

EXT. STONERIDGE MAIN STREET - DAY

Harley ties Jet to a sign in front of the grocery store.
Brian comes out with a bowl of water and a jerky treat for
Jet. A daily ritual.

BRIAN
Heya, Jet. Who's a good boy?
Morning, Harley.

Harley watches two 12-year-old boys ride past on bikes.

HARLEY
Gimme a minute, Brian.

BRIAN
Sure thing.

INT. STONERIDGE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MORNING

Harley approaches the front desk, where a FISHERMAN, 65, chats to SAM, 38, a deputy.

FISHERMAN
Up Snake River, I tell ya. It was a forty-four inch flathead catfish.

SAM
Well that'd be a state record.

FISHERMAN
If I'd've taken my camera, ya see-

SAM
Go on in, Harley. He's at the computer.

HARLEY
Thanks, Sam.

FISHERMAN
Morning, Harley.

HARLEY
Hey, Fred.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sheriff DENNIS HOTAK, 58, chicken-types on a PC circa 1991. Harley leans against the door, smirking at his typing skills.

DENNIS
And you could do better?

Harley shrugs.

DENNIS
If ya gonna interrupt my busy schedule, at least butter me up with a beer.

Harley smiles.

LATER

Dennis unfolds a map of local wilderness trails on his desk.

DENNIS

Right. That's where he was last seen. There's Quarry Road, where all the kids take their bikes.

HARLEY

This the river?

DENNIS

Yeah. We searched inside this whole perimeter. No bike, no clothing. No Stevie.

Harley scans the map.

HARLEY

Dredge the river?

DENNIS

Six divers. Seven days. If we'd found any evidence of homicide, or foul play, this woulda' been a whole other game. But, Stevie is still considered a missing person.

HARLEY

Thought a missing kid'd warrant more effort.

DENNIS

I know it sounds cold but, the salary for a deputy in this county is eighteen-thousand dollars a year. To say we're under-resourced is a grotesque understatement.

HARLEY

So what'll it take to spare a few deputies from chasing raccoons?

DENNIS

Evidence. We can't search a quarter million square miles of wilderness without something to go on.

Harley thinks. Then waves off the whole idea.

HARLEY

He's probably in Cincinnati working a bar or something.

DENNIS

Wish he'd make a phone call so his
momma can get on and I can close
this file.

HARLEY

Thanks, Dennis. I'll let you get
back to your video games.

Dennis snorts in disgust.

DENNIS

My offer still stands, Harley.
Think about it. Brian can stack his
own shelves.

HARLEY

What's wrong with my job?

DENNIS

Nothing. It's just... after Desert
Storm? I just assumed you'd...

HARLEY

What? Join the Seal teams?

Dennis shrugs. It's become awkward.

HARLEY

I got shelves to stack.

INT. BRIAN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Harley stacks fruit. A few LOCALS shop around her.

LOCAL

Hey, Harley.

Harley smiles at the local.

MARINE (O.C.)

Excuse me, Ma'am?

It's the FAKE MARINE. Only he's now dressed in civilian
clothes. His son lingers beside him.

HARLEY

How can I help you?

FAKE MARINE

On our way back from Scottsville,
Sean and me... had a long talk.

(MORE)

FAKE MARINE (CONT'D)
About being honest and ... about
forgiveness.

Sean grabs his father's hand.

FAKE MARINE
Anyway, I just wanted Sean to meet
a real hero, you know? Not a faker.

HARLEY
I just drove trucks. I was nowhere
near a firefight. The real heroes
come home in coffins.

FAKE MARINE
Right. Of course.

Harley goes back to stacking oranges.

FAKE MARINE
Come on, Sean. Ma'am, for what it's
worth, thank you for your service.

HARLEY
(can't look at him)
Yep.

Harley feels everyone's eyes on her.

The orange in her hand has been crushed.

EXT. SANDY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Sandy opens the screen door to her rundown weatherboard home.

Harley waits outside with Jet.

HARLEY
Okay with dogs in the house?

Pleased, Sandy opens the door for them.

INT. SANDY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sandy leads Harley past an ALTAR with a framed picture of
STEVIE, 13, surrounded by candles and images of Christ.

SANDY
I'll make some coffee.

HARLEY
I'm good.

Sandy opens a door onto-

STEVIE'S BEDROOM

Harley brings Jet into the boy's tiny room.

The walls are decorated with posters of Slayer, Metallica and other heavy metal bands of the late 80s. Plastic is draped over everything, preserving the room like it's in a museum.

SANDY
 (indicates the posters)
 I keep 'em up in case he comes
 home.

Harley notices Sandy's feet parked in the doorway, unwilling to enter.

Harley flicks through cassette tapes of thrash metal albums.

Keenly aware of Sandy's anxiety, Harley puts each tape back exactly into place.

SANDY
 You don't need to do that.

Harley leafs through a stack of PHOTOS, taken on a disposable camera.

SANDY
 He was hunting Bigfoot.

Harley looks at Sandy. They share a CHUCKLE.

SANDY
 Boys.

HARLEY
 At least he had a project.

Harley is drawn to one PARTICULAR PHOTO of a craggy ROCK FORMATION.

HARLEY
 I know this lookout. It's up on
 Scott's Trail. Pretty far actually.

SANDY
 He was real serious. Clear picture
 of Bigfoot... probably sell for-

HARLEY
Cops searched South and East.
Everything between Quarry Road and
the river...

Harley shows Sandy the photograph.

HARLEY
This is North.

On Sandy - the penny drops.

SANDY
They searched the wrong area?

Harley thinks.

HARLEY
I don't know. Sorry. I didn't mean
to get your hopes-

SANDY
Oh no. It's fine. Really.

But the tears have already formed in Sandy's eyes. She leans
against the doorframe.

SANDY
I'm okay. Sorry.

HARLEY
You got anything Stevie'd worn?
Dirty socks, cap?

SANDY
There.

On a shelf, a folded T-SHIRT rests under plastic.

Careful to be respectful, Harley lifts the plastic and takes
the t-shirt.

SANDY
Missed it when I was cleaning.

HARLEY
I'll need to take it with me.

Sandy is clearly uncomfortable with the idea.

SANDY
Oh... um.

HARLEY
It's for Jet.

SANDY
I thought dogs remember any scent
once they've-

HARLEY
Don't work that way. From what
little I do know.

SANDY
It's just... forget it.

HARLEY
What?

SANDY
(ashamed)
Every Thanksgiving, I put the t-
shirt on a chair and set the table.
So we can spend... It's so stupid-

HARLEY
I'll find another way.

Harley offers the t-shirt back. Sandy refuses it.

SANDY
(looks at Jet)
Was he good?

HARLEY
He found a girl in Ohio once. She
was... in concrete.

SANDY
Find my boy, Harley. Bring him
home. Promise me.

HARLEY
I will. I promise.