

NATURE OF THE BEAST

written by

Chris DelliCarpini

FADE IN:

EXT. TABLE ROCK PARK - SOFTBALL FIELD - DAY

The August sun has burned the grass to death.

Nothing but the wind moves in this no-man's land.

At the horizon, the Sierra Madres cut the whole town off from the rest of humanity.

A crunching sound. Scraping. Gasping.

ABSALOM

a gangly teen, crawls toward the first-base dugout -- the only shade in sight.

His black Metallica tour shirt and grimy mullet cover ghost-white flesh and dark blemishes.

In fact, his skin's peeling away, the cracks clotting with purplish blood. Sounds like bacon sizzling.

Absalom gasps for breath as he claws across the field. He'd scream in pain if he had the strength.

His head hangs low, his face almost in the grass.

MYSTERY POV

Racing up from behind. Closing fast.

Absalom glances back. Rapid footsteps stomp the grass behind him.

Absalom tries to crawl faster. But he's too weak and getting weaker.

A shadow overtakes Absalom. He rolls over, raises a hand to ward off his pursuer.

Bloodshot eyes bulge out of Absalom's rotting face. Through a mouth of fangs he hoarsely croaks at

LAURA

who towers over him, a long, wooden stake in her hands. Thirtysomething, but the gray-streaked hair adds ten years. A crazed look in her eyes. Clothes dark with dried blood.

She raises high the stake.

But before she can strike, someone tackles her from behind.

KIMBERLY -- twentysomething, the ponytail makes her look younger -- wrestles Laura to the ground.

The stake goes flying. Kimberly scrambles after it. She grabs the stake and springs up, turning on Laura.

KIMBERLY
Can't do it.

LAURA
Been doing it all day. All week.

Laura reaches for the stake. Kimberly swats her hand away.

KIMBERLY
That's Absalom. He was your student.

LAURA
(points behind her)
They were all our students.

KIMBERLY
He's Joshua's brother.

Absalom weakly groans in agony. Face to the ground, he crawls for the women.

Still training the stake on Laura, Kimberly goes over to Absalom.

LAURA
You out of your mind?

KIMBERLY
He needs our help.

LAURA
They don't want our help.

Laura grabs for the stake's point. Kimberly jabs at her. Laura retreats, clutching her now-wounded hand.

Absalom crawls to Kimberly's feet. She sets down the stake -- away from Laura -- and kneels down to pick Absalom up.

KIMBERLY
Absalom. It's Miss Kimberly.

Absalom rises to his elbows, head still down. Kimberly lowers her head, whispers to this poor soul.

KIMBERLY
It's gonna be okay.

With a spurt of energy, Absalom grabs Kimberly's arms and springs up, snarling in her face.

Kimberly screams, tries to scramble back. But Absalom won't let go. He snaps at whatever part of Kimberly's nearest.

Laura runs up, delivers a swift kick to Absalom's rib cage. He immediately crumples, rolling over like a dying cockroach.

Kimberly hysterically sobs on the ground. Laura runs to her, crouches down and embraces her colleague.

LAURA

We're going to get out of this.

KIMBERLY

How?

Absalom tries to roll over. Laura sees him. She gets up, grabs the stake.

She stands over his head, plants a foot on each of his flailing arms.

LAURA

Sorry, Absalom.

Absalom croaks out his defiant last words:

ABSALOM

My name is Legion.

Absalom laughs, hoarse, defiant.

Kimberly watches, eyes wide with horror.

Laura raises the stake. She plunges it into Absalom's chest.

Purple blood gushes from Absalom's mouth. Kimberly covers her face.

Laura leans on the stake, driving it down another foot.

Laura steps back, watches Absalom die. She drags Kimberly to her feet.

LAURA

We need more stakes.

AT THE PARKING LOT

The women trudge to an old Toyota pickup truck. Beside it sits a van, doors wide open.

The women get in the Toyota. Laura starts the engine. The truck leaves in a cloud of dust.

In the grass outside the van, a row of stakes rises from a half-dozen impaled teenagers.

EXT. MORIAH FARM SUPPLY - DAY

The Toyota passes a weather-beaten roadside billboard:

WELCOME TO MORIAH, Pop. 314
 "In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen"
 Genesis 22:14

Across the road squats Moriah Farm Supply, a cinder-block warehouse as forbidding as a Soviet prison.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

The Toyota passes the charred gas pumps' canopy -- all that remains standing.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Laura drives, stone silent. Through radio static comes fragments of a cheery DEEJAY:

DEEJAY
 Request Line's open, 555-KPAX --

Kimberly dials her cell phone, waits for a signal. And waits. And waits. She chucks the phone out the window.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREETS - DAY

The Toyota cruises past houses that never looked good, but never looked worse. Not a soul to be seen.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER - DAY

The Toyota rounds the corner, passing the debris-strewn lawn of the church. The structure still stands; you can recognize the steeple. But the defaced, blood-stained sign now reads: "CHURCH OF THE RED."

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

The Toyota passes two police cars, frozen in a long-ago head-to-head collision.

The doors to Town Hall are closed. But spray-painted graffiti covers the walls:

SABBATH BLOODY SABBATH

THE LAND IS FULL OF BLOOD,
AND THE CITY FULL OF PERVERSENESS

SCHOOL'S OUT FOR SUMMER

EXT. FAMILY VALUE HARDWARE STORE - DAY

The Toyota sits in the middle of the street.

Kimberly sits by an abandoned El Camino pickup truck, its gas cap open. She saws with a pocket knife through a length of garden hose.

Laura exits the Convenience Store with two baskets of canned crap. She sees Laura and stops.

LAURA

I told you to find some stakes.

Kimberly saws away. Laura dumps her baskets in the Toyota. Kimberly tries to shove the hose into the tank.

LAURA

(re: pickup)

Say you sucked enough for a full tank. What's that, a couple hundred miles?

Laura sits down on the El Camino's open tailgate.

LAURA

Still a hundred miles from anywhere.

Kimberly wedges the end of the hose in, barely. She sucks as hard as she can. Laura leans over, to get in Kimberly's face:

LAURA

You want to wait on the side of the road 'til a state trooper finds us? In a truck that isn't ours? Just tell him what happened here, what we've been doing?

KIMBERLY

This was your idea.

Kimberly sucks too hard, gets a mouthful of gas. She drops the hose and retches. Laura catches her. Kimberly coughs herself back to life.

KIMBERLY

I'd rather die than kill another
one of them.

Laura looks to the horizon, gauges the sun's descent.

LAURA

Then stick around about an hour.

Laura gets up, heads for the hardware store. Kimberly
reluctantly follows.

INT. FAMILY VALUE HARDWARE STORE - DAY

The afternoon sun only dimly lights this small store. The
women step over trampled-on supplies that litter the floor.

LAURA

I swear to God, they trashed this
place just to fuck with us.

Laura grabs a broom off the floor. She steps on the shaft
and breaks off a very sharp stick.

Kimberly shows up with a full shopping bag. Laura rummages
through the contents. She pulls out a huge roll of duct
tape.

KIMBERLY

Thousand and one uses.

Laura dumps the tape back in the bag. She turns for the
entrance to the back storeroom.

LAURA

Lumber's got to be back there.

Kimberly holds her back.

KIMBERLY

And what else?

They both look into the lightless storeroom. Laura checks
her watch again.

LAURA

They won't be up for an hour.
Probably.

Laura stares into the darkened storeroom. Kimberly steps
back to the counter. Laura notices.

LAURA

Thought you wanted to die.

Laura disappears into the darkness.

Kimberly sets down the bag. She spies the telephone and dead desktop PC, in the corner by the cash register.

She picks up the phone's receiver. Nothing. She drops the receiver, pokes at the PC's keyboard. Nothing.

IN THE STOREROOM

Laura fumbles in the shadows. She takes out a small flashlight and illuminates the room, one spot at a time.

The light tracks along empty shelves.

LAURA
Not my lucky day.

She turns to examine another corner, when

MARTHA

jumps her from behind. She still wears her store apron, but sports fangs and a face to match Absalom.

She bares Laura's neck and tries to bite down. But Laura jabs her with the broom-stake and flees into

THE MAIN STORE

where Kimberly drops the phone, turns at the noise.

Laura races past the counter for the exit. But Martha catches her from behind.

Kimberly comes around, grabs a garden spade from the wall. She whacks Martha until the fiend lets go of Laura.

From the back room come paw JED and son ENOS, fangs flashing.

Kimberly plants a foot in Martha's back and races out of the store right behind Laura. The whole family chases after them.

EXT. FAMILY VALUE HARDWARE STORE - DAY

The women stumble out of the store. They race into the street, into the setting afternoon sun.

The family follows -- and that's when the sizzling starts again.

Martha, Jed, and Enos all recoil, wracked by pain. Laura and Kimberly stop and watch these writhing, helpless monsters.

The three stagger back, stumble over the sidewalk, and crawl back inside the store.

BEHIND THE TRUCK

The women catch their breath.

KIMBERLY

Did you ask about the lumber?

Laura's too spent to respond. She chucks the broom-stake in the Toyota's payload, as does Kimberly the spade.

EXT. SCHOOL TRAILERS - NIGHT

Moonlight shines on a roadside sign: COMING THIS FALL:
MORIAH PUBLIC SCHOOL.

In the field sits the temporary school: a pair of double-wide trailers, the Classroom Trailer and the Lab Trailer.

Inhuman howls and screams puncture the stillness.

AT THE CLASSROOM TRAILER

the blinds are drawn, except for one window. Laura peers out at the landscape, then turns away.

INT. CLASSROOM TRAILER - CLASSROOM ONE - NIGHT

Laura peels off her sweat-soaked clothes, tosses them in a corner.

LAURA

We find a fence somewhere, pull the slats off it.

(to herself)

How the hell do we sharpen the boards?

Across the classroom, Kimberly sits on a sleeping bag against the wall. She reads aloud by flashlight from a pocket Bible:

KIMBERLY

"When he got out of the boat, at once a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him....

In T-shirt and panties, Laura turns, sees the light.

LAURA

Would you turn that off?

Laura crouch-runs past the window, to where Kimberly lies.

KIMBERLY

"He asked him, 'What is your name?'
He replied, 'Legion is my name.
There are many of us.'" Think
Absalom said "My name is Legion."
Must be a different translation.

Laura snatches the flashlight.

LAURA

(trying not to shout)
You want them to see us?

Kimberly stows the Bible.

KIMBERLY

You might find Scripture a source
of strength.

Kimberly lies back on the sleeping bag, turns on her side,
away from Laura.

LAURA

Sure. Look at where it got you.

Laura lays down beside Kimberly turns to spoon her.
Kimberly switches to her back.

KIMBERLY

We should find the Head Vampire.

Laura drops her head, shakes it in despair.

KIMBERLY

Someone started the whole thing.
Destroy him and everyone else turns
back to normal.

LAURA

Get that from Genesis?

KIMBERLY

They don't always bite the neck.
But they sure can't stand sunlight.

LAURA

This is a disease, alright?
They're not vampires.

KIMBERLY

So why do you stake them?

LAURA

How else are we going to kill them?

KIMBERLY

So you admit we're killing people.

Laura doesn't answer. She turns her back to Kimberly.

Outside, a girl screams. The screams grow louder. More than one screamer.

Kimberly rushes to the window.

LAURA
You want them to see you?

Laura yanks her back.

KIMBERLY
"Them" could be "us."

EXT. CLASSROOM TRAILER - NIGHT

A LOCAL GIRL (15? 12?), arms flailing, runs right for the Classroom Trailer. Jed and Enos snarl as they gain on their prey.

She heads right for the window. The boys head right for her.

INT. CLASSROOM TRAILER - CLASSROOM ONE - NIGHT

The Local Girl runs up to the window. She pounds at the Plexiglas, but can't break it.

Laura drags Kimberly back into the shadows.

The Boys tackle the Girl. She fights and claws at them like mad. Her face against the window, she can see into the room.

POV LOCAL GIRL

Plainly visible in the moonlight, Kimberly fights to free herself from Laura.

KIMBERLY
Can't leave her out there.

LAURA
She could be one of them already.

Silhouetted by the moonlight, you can't tell anything about the Girl's features.

Kimberly breaks free, runs to the classroom door. Laura tackles her from behind. They wrestle.

KIMBERLY
They don't eat each other.

LAURA

You an expert all of a sudden?

A piercing scream from just outside. Both women pick themselves up off the floor and gawk.

IN THE WINDOW

The boys bite down hard on the Local Girl's neck.

Blood spurts onto the window, obscuring their crimes in a dark smear.

Laura and Kimberly try, but they can't see beyond the blood.

The pounding on the Plexiglas fades. The shadows at the window descend.

Laura crawls forward, trying to listen. Sounds like dogs fighting over scraps outside.

She grabs the broom-stake and peeks over the windowsill.

The boys jump up, fighting with each other over their kill. They chase each other across the scrub land.

Laura stands, sees over the blood smear.

On the ground outside, the Local Girl's body lies twisted and motionless.

Kimberly spins Laura around, socks her in the jaw.

KIMBERLY

We could've saved her.

Laura massages her sore jaw

LAURA

Be lucky if we save ourselves.

Laura holds up her hands: Peace. She approaches, and Kimberly doesn't attack.

LAURA

Tomorrow. We pick up all the stakes we've used. We use them again, and again, 'til we're done.

KIMBERLY

Then what?

No answer; Laura casts her eyes downward.