

CHILD OF THE MOLE PEOPLE

Written by

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INT. CAVE - DAY

Darkness. Nearly pitch black. We can barely make out a WOMAN's face. Her eyes are closed in a disturbed sleep.

In the distance: A SMALL BOY'S SCREAM. It echoes faintly, then louder until the scream is right on top of us.

Eyes spring open with a gasp. Silence. No one is around except . . .

Through darkness, a vague lump of a person sits up. This is JUNO, 43, African-American. She stands with difficulty, stiff from a night spent on the ground, and checks around herself.

Pitch black in all directions -- except one. A shaft of light squeaks through the base of something near the floor.

JUNO

What the...

She groans, closes her eyes, and flexes her right hand.

EXT. THE ARCTIC - DAY

A wash of white. Juno, a dark speck amidst endless tundra.

She stands, knee-deep in snow. Ice-wind slashes her face.

A black cloak clasped around her shoulders beats against the wind. Beneath the cloak are worn jeans and a hoody. The cloak is entirely out of place -- almost unearthly.

Shivers wrack her body, her eyes whip around.

JUNO

(yells above the wind)

What the fuck?

Her right hand flexes.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Dark and stillness, again. Juno sucks in warm air. She stomps snow off her shoes, tears off her cloak, shakes it, and wraps it back around herself. Teeth chatter.

JUNO

Fucking Silvia.

She tugs a flask from her pocket and sucks its contents down. Something on her arm catches her eye.

Scrawled in black: "LEONARD CARLSON. 6:22. LAST CHANCE."

A door on the far side of the room flies open with a BANG. Light hits Juno and she chokes on her drink, blinded. Eyes dart to the door and she sees...

A SMALL BOY, 10, in tattered clothes and pants that sag, held up by a makeshift belt of twine. Behind him is a small, underground hallway lit by a fluorescent beam that protrudes from the stone above it.

The boy holds a similar light, a lantern of sorts. He gazes at Juno, unruffled by her stare.

JUNO (CONT'D)

Uh, hi?

The boy steps past Juno and raises his lantern as he enters the cave, which is smaller than it originally appeared. On one side sits a small collection of battered things: a tiny cot, wooden stool, and a crate with cans of food.

The boy releases a lever against the furthest wall and a rusty chain drops from the ceiling.

SMALL BOY

How did you get in my room?

JUNO

You speak.

(then)

Got lost. Accidentally wandered in.

The boy attaches his lantern to the chain and cranks the lever. The lantern jerks upward. It stops near the top.

The boy sits on the wooden stool. He pulls an old candy bar from his pocket and digs in.

SMALL BOY

Why's my name on your arm?

JUNO

What?

SMALL BOY

Says it. Right there.

Juno tugs her sleeve lower, her face scrunches.

JUNO

You're Leonard Carlson?

SMALL BOY

Leo.

The boy -- LEO -- continues to eat. He licks crumbs from his fingertips, careful to not drop any. Juno watches. Then --

JUNO

What time is it?

Leo checks a watch that dangles from his bony wrist.

LEO

Six in the morning.

JUNO

Six exactly?

Leo squints at it. It takes him a while to figure it out.

LEO

Six-oh-three.

JUNO

Shit. Nineteen minutes. Fuck.

Leo scrunches the empty candy wrapper and places it on a tiny pile of wrappers next to the stool.

LEO

Nineteen minutes for what?

JUNO

I don't have time to explain. Are your parents here?

LEO

Don't got any.

JUNO

Parents?

Leo nods.

JUNO (CONT'D)

Okay, a caretaker, then?

Leo squints.

JUNO (CONT'D)

An aunt? Uncle? Older sibling?
...Anyone?

Leo shakes his head throughout.

JUNO (CONT'D)

Alright, never mind. That makes
this easier, I guess...

(sighs)

Look, kid, you can't stay here.

LEO

Why?

Juno pinches the bridge of her nose.

JUNO

Can't remember the details, if I'm
honest, but if you don't leave this
place in, what I'm guessing is now
fifteen minutes, you die.

LEO

How?

JUNO

(sighs)

Don't remember, kid.

LEO

What happens to you?

JUNO

I get yelled at.

LEO

By who?

JUNO

Silvia.

LEO

How do you know I'll die?

Juno stares at the kid.

JUNO

Fuck it. I work for a company that
manages various realities in time.
We fix problems that would
otherwise lead to extreme
consequences. Your death,
apparently, counts as one. So, I
gotta get you outta here, kid.

LEO

No.

JUNO

No?

LEO

(shakes head)

It's too cold outside.

Juno stares, jaw clenched. Leo stares back. A standoff.

Juno sighs, drops the cloak from her shoulders, and yanks off her hoody, revealing a stained t-shirt. She shoves the hoody over his head -- Leo's arms lift to aid her -- and ties the hood tightly around his face. It frames his wide grin.

JUNO

Better?

Leo nods.

JUNO (CONT'D)

Alright. How do we get outta here?

LEO

The tunnel leads to a bunch more.

JUNO

Great. Grab any food you've got, quickly. We're gonna need it.

Leo stands, the hoodie hangs around him like a dress. He shuffles cans into a sack on the floor. Juno re-fastens her cloak. Her eyes lock on the stone ceiling.

JUNO (CONT'D)

Get any earth shakes here?

Leo shrugs. Juno releases the lever for the lantern and catches it as it falls. She grabs the bag, heavy with cans.

She turns to find Leo bundled in her hoodie with a kid-sized snow suit clutched in his arms.

LEO

I was just jokin'.

She glares at him, turns, and strolls towards the exit.

JUNO

(to self)

Fucking Silvia.

A pickaxe leans against the wall. She snatches it and grips it tightly as she leads Leo out the door.