

KATYDID

EXT. - EVENING - FOREST CLEARING

We see KATYDID, a young female, age approximately 10 years, light brown, medium-length, unkempt hair, fair complexion, girl-next-door-cute, gangly and coltish, but too thin, dirty-faced and wearing a too-large ragged dress, a too-small, tattered, unbuttoned sweater that has seen better days, with ripped and torn leggings, and two different shoes (boot, sneaker) with unmatched socks.

She sits alone on a log in front of a small fire surrounded by stones, in a small forest clearing, surrounded by a thin stand of scraggly trees, more open than forested in some places. The fire pit is surrounded on all four sides by large-round, ~3'-4' logs about a foot or so in diameter. There is a small, worn satchel-pack and olive drab-colored, scuffed plastic canteen at her feet. A small pile of medium-sized tree branches and smaller kindling lies next to the fire on her left, set away a bit.

It's crisply cold and early winter, late fall. Katydid is sitting motionless, slightly hunched forward, her arms at either side, as if she is holding herself fast to the log so she doesn't fall off, staring into the fire. Her expression is neutral and blank, a bit hard and cold. The only sounds heard are the sougning wind and the snap and crackle of the fire.

FLASHBACK:

The fire transforms into Katy and her mom and dad in their kitchen (maybe a sibling or two) and everyone is happy and laughing, maybe getting ready to have pizza. The mother calls her Katy, and the father is joking with her and calls her "Katydid". Then there is a flash and the lighting changes to increasingly very bright and everyone's demeanor changes to concerned and worried and then scared as they fade out and there is a switch to a quick display of nuclear bomb going off, which coincides with...

END FLASHBACK

Suddenly there is a *SNAP*, like a broken twig, coming from off in the forest toward Katy's right. This makes Katy startle, jerking her head in the direction of the sound, her eyes going wide, looking off into the darkness, searching for what could have made that sound. Her right hand, partly under her flared dress, shifts as she grips a small knife there, pulling it out a little. (a knife too small to do much good against anyone or anything as protection)

After a bit, she hears no more sounds and relaxes a little, releasing her knife a little, looking back at the fire, and staring into it for a time, once rubbing her hands and holding them out to the fire, before replacing them back on the log, her right near her knife.

OLD MAN GEORGE
 (off camera, short-
 distanced yell)
 Hullo th' camp!

Katy startles slightly, although not as much as before, eyes wary, somewhat apprehensive, looking off into the dark forest. She moves her hand to grip her knife again. She doesn't speak.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)
 (off camera, short-
 distanced yell)
 Hullo th' camp! Permission ta come
 in an' share yer fire.

Katy licks her lips and looks around, as if looking which way to run, gripping her knife harder and getting a better grip. She then looks off to the direction of the yells.

KATYDID
 (after a slight pause,
 small yell into the dark)
 How many?

OLD MAN GEORGE
 (after a slight pause)
 Jes th' one. I mean no harm. Jes
 saw th' fire in th' dark a'night is
 all. It'sa cold on' it is.

Katy hesitates. She pulls her knife further under her dress to conceal it.

KATYDID
 Okay, then. Show yerself.

Walking through forested brush and undergrowth is heard, perhaps some mild grunts and oaths, a little coughing thrown in. Into the light of the fire walks OLD MAN GEORGE, somewhere in late 50's to 60's in age, approx. 5' to 6' tall, dressed in filthy, tattered clothes, a button shirt and unzipped old jacket, khaki pants with patches, scuffed boots, a pulled-down, over-the-ears, olive drab helmet liner hat, and worn, torn gloves (fingerless?). He has a fairly long white-grey beard that has seen better days and is stained and dirty. He carries a medium-sized pack slung over his left shoulder that is also worn and dirty.

He has a long tree branch-like walking stick in his left hand, and in the other arm several medium- and large-round, short tree branches.

He walks up behind the log across from Katy's log and stares down at her. She stares up at him warily. Neither speaks for a short time. He breaks the silence. His voice is raspy, with audible wheezing between and around his words, and his breathing is slightly labored.

OLD MAN GEORGE

Ya here 'lone?

KATYDID

(looks around and back at
the Old Man)

Yeah.

OLD MAN GEORGE

Huhh.

They stare at each other in silence for a moment longer.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ya mind if'n I share yer fire then?

KATYDID

You got any food?

Katy licks her lips in hungered anticipation of a potential meal.

OLD MAN GEORGE

(slight pause)

No. No food. But I b'ought in some
more firewood. Figgered 'twas th'
least I could do.

KATYDID

Okay, then.

The Old Man grunts as he steps over the log and sits down on it across from Katy. Coughing some more, he places his walking stick against the log to his left, dumps the firewood on the existing pile, and removes his pack, placing it next to him on his right side. He sigh-grunts and sticks both hands out toward the fire, then rubs them together, and then back out, spreading his legs out and getting his boots closer to the warmth, as well. Katy is eyeing him warily and somewhat nervously. He seems to pay no attention to her. She alternates looking back into the fire and back at him, to keep an eye on him. She still grips her knife under her dress. After a short time, the Old Man looks across the fire at her and speaks at and toward her.

OLD MAN GEORGE

It's gonna be a bitter winter come soon. Worse than last. An' th' one afore that. We di'n't have much summer this year neither. I don' think I ever did get proper warm this year atall. Not once. Not once. Too much rain. Too much cold. What they call Nucular Winter I s'pose.

Katy looks at him, and then back at the fire, but doesn't answer or comment.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

So yer out here all by yer lonesome?

Katy looks at him like she is considering what to admit to, how much information to give, or whether to answer at all.

KATYDID

Yeah.

OLD MAN GEORGE

Huhh.

A short pause. Some more coughing from the Old Man.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

I guess tha's th' way it is these days. More of'en 'n not. You don' got no one? No Momma? No Daddy? Brothers? Sisters? *Friends*? No one?

Katy doesn't speak, just looks at the Old Man and shakes a negative, then back at the fire.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

You lost 'em then?

Katy nods a positive, not looking at him this time.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

(looking into the fire)
Yehp. You an' ever'one else. Tha's rough. 'Spec'ly fer a young'on yer age. An' a li'l girl t'boot.

Katy looks up at him with her eyes and back at the fire.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Yehp. M' parents are long gone, too.

(MORE)

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Though tha's more t'be spected 'n'
all. Me, I prefer t'be 'lone
m'self. Always have. Always will.
Tha's th' long an' short o' it.

Katy briefly eyes him again.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

(looking at Katy again)
You don' talk much, do ya?

KATYDID

(not looking at him)
No, guess not.

The Old Man picks up a piece of kindling out of her pile and pokes at the fire.

OLD MAN GEORGE

Yehp. Tha's too bad an' all. A
sweet young thang like you, all
'lone in th' world. It jes ain't
right. But what's a soul t'do?

The Old Man eyes her with a slight tilt of his head, but Katy doesn't look at him. She kind of squirms on her log a little. And noticeably swallows. After a pregnant pause, the Old Man speaks, staring unblinkingly at Katy, in a matter-of-fact voice...

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ya know, I fucked li'l girls
younger'n you.

The Old Man "eyes" Katy, and her eyes go a little wide and some near-fear settles on her face. She squirms more, and grips her knife even harder, pulling it out slightly from under her dress. She gives him a quick look and then away, but says nothing. The Old Man notices her knife.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Mebbe yer nex'.

Katy doesn't really react. She looks up at him coldly, obviously gathering as much courage and bravado as she can muster, ending with as stone-cold angry and fierce a face as she can make.

KATYDID

And maybe I cut your thing off an'
shove it up yer butt.

The Old Man reacts with obvious and true shock, his eyes going a little wide. Then he smiles, and start a small chuckle of a laugh that ends in a short coughing fit.

OLD MAN GEORGE

Tha's m' girl. My, my. Ain't you
th' li'l wild cat. Good on you.
Tha's th' way ta take a stand fer
yerself. No one else will. Not no
more.

The Old Man eyes her a few moments, sizing her up.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

No worries. Yer not m' type.
Gettin' a little long in th' tooth,
as it were. (pause) You, not me.

After a short, somewhat awkward silence, the Old Man coughs as to clear his throat, which startles Katy, and she jumps a little, ready to rabbit if needed, and the Old Man goes into another coughing fit.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Oh, Jee-zus. Th' Old Gray Mare jes
ain't what she used t'be.

The Old Man reaches over and pulls his pack in front of him and opens it. He pulls out a flask and takes a couple of swigs. He hands it out toward Katy with a questioning look, giving it a little twist-shake in his hands.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Helps with a cold night. Put some
fire in yer belly. Some hair on yer
chest.

Katy looks at him and shakes her head No.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Suit yerself. Can't say I di'n't
offer.

He replaces the flask and rummages around in his pack. He then pulls out two larger-sized (16-oz.?) food cans, one in each hand. Neither of them have labels, both are dented, one worse than the other. Katy's eyes go wide.

KATYDID

(accusingly)
You said you din't have no food.

The Old Man looks at her, forthright.

OLD MAN GEORGE

I lied.

He leans toward her.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ya su'prised any?

Katy looks at him, and then shakes her head No, looking away back at the fire. He leans back.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Yehp. Ya'll do o-kay.

The Old Man hefts the cans, gauging their weight, then holds each can up to each ear and shakes them, listening to the sound they make. He looks at one, and then the other...

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Peaches is m' guess. And if'n we're lucky, Pork an' Beans.

He puts the can that might have peaches back in the pack, giving Katy a look. She licks her lips and swallows. He then sets the pack aside and places the other can on one of the rocks next to the fire. Katy stares at the can. He goes back to warming his hands.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Yehp. It's gonna be a bitter cold on'. I can feel it in m' bones. Be nice if tha's all we had ta worry 'bout, wouldn' it?

The Old Man has another coughing fit. Katy watches him, a slight look of concern crossing her face, the once-little-girl briefly coming back to her face, and opens her mouth as if to say something, but stops herself. He regains his composure and they sit silently. Katy's stomach grumbles and she gets an embarrassed look on her face. The Old Man smiles a tooth-stained smile. Then it fades...

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

How long since ya eht?

Katy doesn't speak right off.

The Old Man reaches over and turns the can 180 degrees. Katy watches his every move.

KATYDID

(quietly)

A few days. (pause) Maybe.

OLD MAN GEORGE

Been there, done that. One too many
a'time. New World Order an' all.

The Old Man begins rummaging around in his pack. He pulls out a tablespoon-sized spoon, then looks over at Katy.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Don' s'pose ya have a can op'ner?

Katy looks at him for a moment and then reaches down and picks up her pack. She reaches in and pulls out a small, old-style hand can opener. The Old Man smiles and holds out his hand. She tosses it to him across the fire. He catches it and sits his spoon on his lap.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

I broke m' knife openin' a can o'
spin-ich while back. Wa'n't worth
it.

He then reaches over and picks up the can. It's hot so he tosses it back and forth a few times, then sits it down on the log. He takes the can opener and opens the can. Katy is watching every move intently, following the movement of the can with her eyes as if mesmerized. He takes off the top, licks it clean, and tosses it into the fire.

The Old Man picks up the can and his spoon and looks at Katy. Then he digs in and begins eating, savoring every bite, making "mmmm" sounds, and an occasional other comments, like, "Tha's good", and "Oh, yeah", etc. Katy is watching him eat, salivating, licking her lips, swallowing, and another stomach grumble, or two. Some saliva rolls down the side of her mouth and she wipes it away with the side of her hand. The dirt on her face gets smudged.

The Old Man gets about halfway through the beans, and stops, looks at Katy, looks at the beans, and looks at Katy again.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

I'm bigger'n you.

He takes a few more large spoonfuls, and then licks the spoon clean, smacking his lips.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ya got silverware?

Katy, somewhat wide-eyed, shakes her head No.

The Old Man stands up and hands the can and spoon across the fire. Katy jumps up and takes them, and then sits down.

She looks at the spoon, and then the Old Man, and leans over and rolls the spoon in the fire to clean it.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)
Smart. Ril smart.

Katy then digs in hungrily into the beans, barely even chewing them.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)
Slow down now. Don' wan'em comin' back up. That'd be a waste o' some good beans. Weren't much pork, though.

Katy looks at him and tries to slow down. He takes some more swigs from his flask, has another coughing fit, and takes another swig. She finishes the beans, scraping the can clean, and then licking the spoon clean like the Old Man. Katy stands and hands the spoon and can back to the Old Man. He stands and takes the spoon but ignores the offered can. They both sit back down and she sits the can aside.

The Old Man eyes the spoon and then sticks it in his mouth, sucking on it, making more "mmm" sounds, licking it exaggeratedly, and finishes with a dramatic flourish, smacking his lips, eyeing Katy to see her reaction. She attempts to ignore him. He chuckles a small laugh and places the spoon in his pack and the puts the can opener in, as well.

KATYDID
Hey.

The Old Man hesitates, smiles slightly, taking the opener back out of his pack, turns and tosses the can opener a few times in his hand. He looks at Katy, eyes the can opener, and then tosses the opener to her. She catches it and puts it in her pack.

KATYDID (CONT'D)
Thanks.

OLD MAN GEORGE
Yer verra welcome, li'l miss. *Thank* you right back at ya. Yer parents grewed ya up right. The li'l time they had ta do it.

Katy picks up her canteen and takes a drink. Always keeping an eye on the Old Man.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Now we're friends an' all, what's
 yer name? I figger we should be on
 a firs'-name basis if'n we're
 sharin' a can o' beans an' a fire.

Katy looks at him but says nothing and puts her canteen away.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)
 M' name's George. Jes plain ol'
 George. Tha's all. Jes George.

George looks at Katy expectantly. She doesn't answer right
 away. But then decides it's okay to do so.

KATYDID
 Katy.

OLD MAN GEORGE
 Well, now. I do b'lieve tha's what
 I would'a guessed if'n I had a mind
 ta.

The Old Man looks off into the darkness for a second, furling
 his brow in concentration and memory recall, perhaps with a
 little pain thrown in, scratching at his dirty beard.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)
 I had a daughter once ya know. Her
 name was Katey. I ain't thought
 'bout her inna long while. Since
 B'fore. When she was young, like
 you, I called her Katydid.

At that, Katy's eyes go wide and her mouth opens into an "O"-
 shape in wonder and awe. She is speechless.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)
 I see I'm not th' only one ta use
 that pet name. Was it yer Daddy and
 Momma who called ya "Katydid"?

Katy looks down, back at the Old Man, and nods her head Yes.
 Then looks away back at the fire.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Yehp. Probly bes' not ta dwell on
 such things. Jes let it go. Let it
 go.

The Old Man stretches his arms wide and yawns.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Well, grasshopper, I don' know 'bout you, but it's way past m' bed time. So if'n you don' mind, I do b'lieve I'll be hittin' th' sack as they say. Be nice sleepin' by a fire ferra change. Get a li'l warmth in these old bones. You done good buildin' this here fire. Done ril good.

The Old Man grabs a few logs and puts them on the fire, then reaches into his pack and pulls out a ratty old dirty blanket that's seen much better days. He positions his pack on the ground, grunts as he gets down off the log, and lies down facing the fire with his back against the log, covering himself as best he can with the blanket and using his pack as a pillow, sighing a long, tired sigh. He then has another coughing fit, and finally settles down, with a final oath...

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Jee-zus Lord.

After a short time, Katy reaches into her pack and pulls out a similarly ratty, too-small blanket, but not as dirty. She positions her pack like a pillow in the same direction as the Old Man, and lies down against the back of the log, covering herself with the blanket. She's holding her small knife in both hands under the blanket, almost like a prayer. She can see around the fire at the Old Man. She doesn't close her eyes. He opens an eye and looks at her a few seconds.

OLD MAN GEORGE (CONT'D)

Rest easy. Ya got no need ta worry from the likes o' me.

The Old Man closes his eyes and goes to sleep, snoring. After a time, so does Katy.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP FROM
BLACK

EXT. - MORNING - FOREST CLEARING

Katy is sleeping, and starts to awaken. She quickly comes more alert when she realizes and remembers the events of the night before, and the Old Man. She looks over at him, and he's still laying there, but he's got both eyes open, wide, looking at her, his mouth slightly ajar. This startles her a little, and her eyes grow wide, but she quickly recovers, and sits up, pulling the blanket around her against the chill.

Katydid

She looks around and nothing has changed. The fire has gone out sometime in the night. She yawns. The Old Man is still looking in her direction. He hasn't moved.

KATYDID

Fire's out.

The Old Man doesn't react or respond. He keeps staring.

KATYDID (CONT'D)

I could build another one. Maybe we could have those peaches for breakfast.

The Old Man doesn't react or respond. He keeps staring wide-eyed, seemingly at her. Katy realizes something is wrong.

KATYDID (CONT'D)

Why are you starin' at me? Why don' you say somethin'?

The Old Man doesn't react or respond or move at all. He's completely still, like a statue. Katy looks at him for several moments, a growing realization crossing her face. But then a wary look, as well, that you see in her narrowed eyes.

KATYDID (CONT'D)

Hey!

No reaction. Katy stands up and holds out her knife.

KATYDID (CONT'D)

You best not be tryin' to scare me. I swear I'll cut you if you do.

No response or movement. Katy moves toward him slowly, warily, taking small steps around the other end of the fire pit, coming up toward his feet.

KATYDID (CONT'D)

I'm not kiddin'. I'll do it. You can't scare me.

Katy gets nearer the middle of the Old Man, slightly behind the fire pit, and fakes a jump toward him with her knife.

KATYDID (CONT'D)

Hah!

Still no movement. She notices his walking stick, picks it up, and roughly jabs the Old Man a few times in his side and rear area.

KATY DID

Hey! Wake up!

No reaction. She holds the walking stick in both hands and reaches out with her foot and pushes against the Old Man's upper leg area, stepping back quickly. He moves slightly, but there is no reaction on his part. So she pushes at him harder. He rolls back against the log, now at an angle, staring up into the sky and trees. His eyes are fixed and he doesn't blink, his mouth perhaps a little more ajar.

Katy leans the walking stick back against the log and slowly moves toward his head, bends down, and pokes at his face with her finger, her other hand holding the knife at ready. His skin is very cold and waxy. She stands up and looks down at him for a while.

Suddenly she kicks his torso area very hard. And then again. And again. After several kicks, she stops, breathing hard. She then walks back over to her log and sits there, staring at the Old Man, who is also staring, but not at her anymore. She pulls the blanket tighter around her and stares into the cold fire pit for a long while.

Suddenly Katy grabs her pack and canteen and stands. She keeps the blanket around her shoulders like a shawl. She then walks over to the Old Man and pulls his pack out from under his head, not too gently. His head falls to the ground and now he's staring in yet another direction.

She opens his pack and searches through it. She pulls out the can of peaches, his spoon, and some other items that may come in handy, discarding some on the ground, like filthy clothing, and the others she places in her pack.

From the bottom of his pack she pulls out a rumpled, creased, worn magazine and looks at it. At the top of the cover it says "Sweet Young Thangs", the rest covered with scantily-clad very young girls with suggestive article titles. When she realizes what it is she quickly throws it into the fire ashes, shaking her hand like it has cooties and rubbing it on her clothes.

She looks back into the pack to make sure it's empty, shaking it a little, then discards it. She zips up her pack and stands, slinging it over her shoulder. She takes one last look at the Old Man, then turns and walks off in the direction the Old Man's head is pointing, her original left.

After several steps she stops. Then turns, looking back. She quickly half-runs back to the Old Man, reaches down, and pulls his blanket over his face. She sees the walking stick and takes it. Then turns and walks quickly away for several steps before slowing.

Katy walks off slowly but with determination, into the distance, like she has somewhere to go, or something to do, or someone to meet.

KATYDID

(Voice over)

One day, in the not-too-distant future, I will tell someone I love truly, so they can best understand me, as needs be, that, since I was little, I've looked young in years, but it was an illusion, for my trials over many lifetimes of years have left me withered within and old beyond my years. But here I am.

-end-