

INVISIBLE GORILLAS

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FADE IN:

EXT. GORILLA HOUSE - DAY

A 'Beware of the Invisible Gorillas' sign stands proudly in the yard of untrimmed bushes. A white plastic bag attached to the head of the sign CRINKLES in the wind.

The exterior of the house has seen its better days with the chipping paint, molding wood, and the rusted chain-link fence that has started to fall inward.

A cardboard box acts as a castle in the center of the yard.

The quiet of the morning is broken by the charging CRY of a boy heading into battle.

JACKO (4), barefoot and in need of a bath, rounds the side of the house with a flimsy cardboard sword at hand. He cuts through the air as he tries to defend his cardboard kingdom.

A car RUMBLES towards the house, interrupting his play. Almost instinctively, Jacko scrambles towards his box.

Through a peephole he's cut in the cardboard, Jacko watches the gate. MAN 1 (40s) leaves his car running and approaches the opened gate. He grasps the Teddy Ruxpin that's been hung on it. He messes with the back and appears to take something out of the bear before he shoves something back in.

After the exchange with the Teddy Ruxpin, Man 1 returns to his car, HONKS twice and then drives away.

PAPA (28), emerges from the house.

A new bout of excitement causes Jacko to burst through his box. He clambers around Papa's feet.

JACKO

Papa, there's a gorilla-

Papa shakes Jacko off. He continues to the gate as Jacko tries to keep pace.

JACKO (CONT'D)

- was really big. An' had bloody teeth. Tried to eat you, me, and, mama, but I best-

Papa takes the Teddy Ruxpin that's been strung up by its neck and turns it over in his hands. It's missing the cassette deck in the back. Papa sorts through the broken back stitch and pulls out a wad of cash.

JACKO (CONT'D)
Did you hear me, Papa? I best. I
protect us!

Papa hums to the rhythm of his unintelligible counting.

JACKO (CONT'D)
I count too. Six, seven, eight,
ten, nine-

Papa shoves the money into his pocket and glares at Jacko.

PAPA
Shut up, Jacko. Go play.

Papa sets a firm hand on Jacko's head and tries to push him away. Jacko saddles right back up to continue watching him.

Papa looks around the street before he takes a bag of small, brightly-colored tablets out of his other pocket. He shoves it into the empty cavity of the bear.

The Teddy Ruxpin hangs once more as Papa turns on his heel to head back inside. He takes a phone out and dials a number.

Jacko chases after him but gets distracted.

Papa's distant voice is hardly discernible.

PAPA (CONT'D)
Pickups ready-

Not watching for traffic, Jacko runs across the road. His dirty feet patter against the asphalt as he hones in on the single thing he wants. A car is headed in his direction.

Jacko grabs the abandoned ball laying by the storm drain just as the car barely misses him. He gives the ball a tentative bounce and smiles as it returns into his arms.

He runs back across the road and adds the ball into his collection of used toys. He returns to his play.

EXT. GORILLA HOUSE - DUSK

Jacko naps in his cardboard box. His new ball is tucked close to his stomach and a line of drool connects to the handle of his sword.

The distant RUMBLE of an older vehicle breaks the silence. The old breaks SQUEAL, but to Jacko it sounds like a gorilla WAILING. His eyes snap open as he scrambles to look through the peephole of his box. His hands clutch his sword.

He looks in time to see MAN 2 (30s) dropping the Teddy Ruxpin, running to his car, and peeling away without honking.

Jacko instinctively calls out loud enough for Papa to hear.

JACKO
HONK! HONK!

Jacko looks through the peephole. Nothing changes.

He sucks in a deeper breath. Louder this time.

JACKO (CONT'D)
HONK! HONK!

Papa bursts through the front door and makes his approach to the bear. Jacko doesn't interrupt as he watches from his box.

Papa pulls the money out from the Teddy Ruxpin and mumbles his counting. Jacko joins in.

JACKO (CONT'D)
Two, three, four-

PAPA
MOTHERFUCKER!

Jacko flinches as Papa chucks the bear against the gate and takes his phone out of his pocket. Jacko doesn't understand the words, but he can hear the yelling fade into the house.

Jacko looks at the swinging Teddy Ruxpin, his BREATHING the only sound in the box. Observantly, he mimics his father.

JACKO
Motherfucker.

The word makes him grin.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Dirt-covered feet step inside the house. The state of the home is even worse on the inside than it is on the outside. The laminate flooring is raised along the edges. Wallpaper sags with moisture. Punched in holes go unexplained.

Jacko can hear a ruckus in the kitchen. Multiple voices talk over one another. There's YELLING and THUMPING.

He walks down the hallway and traces a finger over the crayon artwork tapped on the wall. The first few are of his kingdom. The last is of a vicious gorilla with red eyes and blood dripping teeth. He pauses and bares his teeth back at it.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jacko stops at the doorway to peer inside. MAN 3 (30s) holds Man 2 down by the sink as Papa pours water over his face. Man 2 kicks out and SCREAMS past the water.

At the table, MAMA (21), WOMAN 1 (30s), and WOMAN 2 (20s) are unfazed as they mix stuff in bowls, shift white powders, and continue production down the line.

PAPA

I say when you can breathe-!

MAN 2

Please-

More water cuts off his pleads. He GURGLES.

PAPA

Get him up!

Man 3 hauls Man 2 upright. Papa grabs the man's jaw and gets in his face.

PAPA (CONT'D)

I'll take your fucking tongue. See
if you can come up with excuses
without it-

Jacko enters slowly. He approaches Mama and pats her thigh. She doesn't look at him as she presses powder into tablets.

MAN 2

(sobbing)

I have the money-

Papa grabs Man 2's tongue and pulls a knife from his pocket.

JACKO

Mama-

Mama glances at Jacko then. She tips back in her chair, opens the nearby fridge, and withdraws a half-empty bottle of milk. She sets it in his hands and sends him on his way.

Jacko leaves the kitchen. Man 2 SCREAMS.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jacko lies in bed with an old knit blanket. The chaos in the kitchen VIBRATES the walls of the bedroom.

A small crack in the door sends a line of light towards Jacko's eyes. He watches the light intently as he chews on the nipple of his empty bottle. A habit formed from hunger.

The fighting pauses. A door opens. There's a distant CRASH.

Jacko tenses, he stops chewing and breathes loudly.

A beat before his door opens. Jacko quickly closes his eyes and feigns sleep. A shadow approaches. The bottle is pulled from his mouth before a hand runs through his hair.

MAMA

You aren't sleeping.

Jacko grins at Mama's knowing tone. He cracks an eye open.

There's a THUMP in the hallway that neither of them acknowledges.

MAMA (CONT'D)

You can't leave your room tonight-

Someone YELLS in agony before it's muffled. Jacko nods his understanding.

JACKO

Mama, check for gorillas.

Mama pets Jacko's greasy hair before she obliges and bends down to look under the bed.

MAMA

No gorillas here, Jacko.

JACKO

You sure?

MAMA

Positive. The only gorillas are the invisible ones outside.

JACKO

I best. I tried to stop one today.

Another muffled SCREAM interrupts their conversation. Mama sighs and ruffles Jacko's hair. She starts to leave.

MAMA

No leaving till morning, okay?

Jacko nods. The door is shut.

The muffled SHOUTS and SCREAMS follow Jacko into his sleep.

The sounds of the house morph. Human YELLING, BEATING, and SCREAMING change into the angry ROARS of gorillas. The sounds grow thunderous as the rage boils over.

There's a BANG. A gorilla SCREECHES. Then: silence.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Jacko sits up in bed. He yawns as he moves to the door. He peeks out into the hallway and pauses. There's no noise. He takes a tentative step out.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacko enters the bathroom. The mirror is smashed, the faucet is bent sideways, and the shower curtain has been torn down.

Along with the built-up limescale, the bathtub is marked with streaks of blood. Jacko isn't fazed as he goes about relieving himself.

He looks over all the hand-shaped bloodstains. He fixes his pants before he reaches a curious hand out to rest over one of the marks. It's much larger than his own.

Jacko shrugs, flushes the toilet, and exits the bathroom.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jacko tiptoes across the hall and peers into the kitchen. The mess from the previous night has been cleaned up.

Jacko goes to the fridge first. It's empty.

He moves onto a lower cabinet. He opens it to find a bag of bread. Blue mold spots the edges.

At the counter where the toaster sits, Jacko pulls himself up onto the lip of it. His dirty toes slide against the laminated cabinets. He uses one arm to maintain his height while his other works quickly to set two pieces of bread into the old toaster. He presses down the lever before he drops back to his feet.

As he waits for his food, Jacko grabs a knife from the drawer. The toaster POPS. He grins.

Once more, Jacko lifts himself onto the lip of the counter. He blindly stabs into the toaster with the knife and manages to withdraw his two pieces of barely toasted bread.

Jacko leaves the knife on the counter and exits the kitchen.

EXT. GORILLA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jacko looks around the yard before he steps into the morning dew-covered grass. He sits in the soggy cardboard box and eats his toast. A curious eye glances through the peephole to look at the Teddy Ruxpin that continues to hang.

EXT. GORILLA HOUSE - DUSK

Jacko slashes his sword through the air.

JACKO
I got you gorillas!

He kicks the ball towards the gate and makes an EXPLOSION noise with his mouth. He cheers his actions on.

JACKO (CONT'D)
Take that motherfuckers!

He starts raining his sword down against the ground. The play turns violent. He GRUNTS in effort as he finishes off the invisible gorilla before him.

The opening of the front door interrupts him. Papa exits the house with a bag slung over his shoulder.

JACKO (CONT'D)
Papa-!

Jacko excitedly runs. He stumbles, hits the grass, but is up in an instant to chase Papa who doesn't pay him any mind.

JACKO (CONT'D)
Got the gorillas, Papa!

PAPA
Not now, Jacko.

Jacko taps Papa's leg with his sword and shakes his head. He notices Papa's busted knuckles as he gets into his old car.

JACKO
No, I did good. I got 'em. I best,
Papa. I best-!

Papa slams the car door despite Jacko's reaching hands. The door nearly gets his little fingers. He glares at the offending block between them.

JACKO (CONT'D)
Lemmie go too, Papa.

Jacko tugs at the door handle. Papa pulls back from the driveway and starts down the road. Jacko isn't having it and hurries up the driveway to get on his old big wheel.

He pedals quickly behind the shrinking figure of Papa's car. Jacko's persistence is not deterred until he hits a pothole. One of his back wheels CRACKS and falls off the plastic bike. Jacko is sent sideways - his hands and knees take the brunt of the fall against the asphalt.

Getting back to his feet, he looks down at the scrapes that are slowly starting to drip blood. He doesn't cry yet.

The tears are saved for when he notices his broken big wheel. He cries as he picks up the broken back wheel and grasps the handle of his bike. He starts to drag the toy back home. His cries grow as his desperation gets the better of him.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jacko runs into the room. Mama, Woman 1, Woman 2, and Man 3 work together just as they did the night before.

Jacko cries as his bloodied hands pat against Mama's thigh. Blood stains her pants but she doesn't appear to notice.

WOMAN 1
He's always been too impulsive-

WOMAN 2
(annoyed)
He's going to get one of us killed.

MAN 3
Don't say shit you wouldn't say to his face. He's the reason any of us got this-

WOMAN 2
Where is he then, huh? We do the dirty work and he goes and fucks around with the money.

Jacko presses his snotty nose against Mama's ribs - a plea for comfort. She tips back her chair and reaches for his bottle on the counter. She gives it to Jacko and sends him on his way. He doesn't leave, he just cries harder.

MAMA

(to Woman 2)

We get our cut eventually. Don't ever question his methods.

(to Jacko)

Jacko, go to bed.

Jacko shudders through his cries and does as directed.

He pauses at the sound of something CLINKING. He watches as Man 3 pours the colorful candies into a tin, scratches something onto a paper, and seals it.

Man 3 sets the tin in the upper cabinet beside the oven. Jacko leaves the kitchen.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jacko sits in the back corner of his bed. His empty bottle dangles from his lips as he chews the nipple.

He glances down at his knees. The blood trails have dried against his skin. He scratches some of the blood away and looks at the collection of it under his nail. The bottle falls from his lips as he curiously wipes away more.

An inquisitive sniff of the dried blood on his hands has his nose scrunched in distaste. He wipes it against his shirt and looks at the crack in the door again. Nothing happens.

Jacko sighs and looks over the edge of his bed. He takes a calming breath before he lowers his upper half down to peer under it. From his dangling perch, Jacko surveys the underside of his bed. Aside from a collection of dirt and dust-bunnies, it remains clear of any threats.

JACKO

No gorillas.

Jacko settles himself on the bed and curls up for the night. He shuts his eyes. The sound of the CONVERSING adults in the kitchen morphs into the CHATTERING of gorillas.

INT. GORILLA HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jacko tiptoes into the kitchen and surveys the space before heading to the fridge. It's the same as yesterday. He tries the lower cabinets. All are empty, save for the cabinet under the sink, which is full of bottles of unknown substances. An aerosol can topples out - Jacko doesn't touch it and instead turns back to the upper cabinets.

He pulls himself all the way up onto the counter and starts to rummage through the shelves.

Jacko shuffles to the right until he stumbles by the oven. He tiptoes along the edge of the range. His toes balance on the grates as his fingers hold onto the range hood. One foot slips. He steadies himself on a knob and keeps on shuffling.

At the last cabinet, Jacko finds the tin from the night before. He giddily hugs it to his chest and jumps off the counter.

Jacko sits on the floor and pries open the tin to find the colorful candies. He inspects the small shape. The residual pink dye rubs off on his grimy fingers.

A gorilla face is stamped onto the pink tablet. Jacko bares his teeth at it and LAUGHS. He takes the small piece of paper next and inspects the numbers. He pretends to read.

JACKO

"Three, four, five, six, seven,
eight, ten, nine" - so many gorilla
candies.

Jacko giddily shoves a handful into the pocket of his shorts. The RUMBLE of Papa's car stops him short of shoving the whole tin's content into his pockets.

In an instant, he is up and running towards the front of the house. His excited CHEERS and CRIES for his father chase him and slowly disappear.

In the kitchen, we remain on the dangerous details.

MONTAGE:

- The aerosol can with an explosion hazard label.
- The unknown powder that coats the top of the kitchen table.
- The knife that remains by the toaster.
- The frayed toaster cable that is plugged into the wall.
- The spots of dried blood on the vinyl.
- The turned knob on the oven.
- The abandoned ecstasy pills on the floor with their gorilla stamped in details.

FADE OUT.