

D E A D S U R E

by Daryl Henry

EXT. CENTRAL CALIFORNIA COAST - DAY

VIEWS FROM ABOVE, a city of small consequence nestles at the foot of purple mountains on the verge of a cool green sea. It is early morning on an iridescent day in spring.

Accompanied by the SOUNDS of exotic ANIMALS and BIRDS, the CAMERA SLOWLY DESCENDS to:

EXT. LUXURIANT HILLSIDE ZOO - DAY

Featuring the Great Apes GROTTTO, in particular, an:

ORANGUTAN CAGE

All is peaceful, until a gangly YOUNG MAN swoops down from a tree on the end of a rope, misjudges his release and lands in a heap in front of the cage.

On the other side of the bars a mountain of red wool rolls on the ground laughing. FRANCIS JEREEN dusts himself off.

JEREEN

I'll get the hang of it yet, Bert.

The orangutan recovers. Jereen, 22, undisciplined dark hair and soulful green eyes, sits on his heels, his arms dangling between his knees. In identical poses, man and animal consider each other.

JEREEN (CONT'D)

So, how's it goin'?

Bert shrugs.

JEREEN (CONT'D)

You gettin' it on with anybody?

Bert glances over his shoulder at a trio of reproachful female orangutans, turns back to Jereen, sighs.

JEREEN (CONT'D)

Yeah, I know how you feel.

Jereen takes a candy bar from his pocket, passes it through the bars. Bert eagerly peels off the wrapper, begins to eat when:

VOICE OFF

Jereen! How many times have I told you, no people food.

(CONTINUED)

Bert quickly stuffs the rest of the bar into his mouth.

ON A PATHWAY

KARI-ANN ROUSSEAU, 40, straw-blond hair in a pony tail, confronts them in muddy boots, arms akimbo. She's wearing the same kind of green shirt with the same Zoo insignia as Jereen.

ORANGUTAN CAGE

Jereen holds up his palm toward Bert. The Man of the Forest holds up his palm, too.

JEREEN

Later.

Bert conceals the candy wrapper under his foot as Kari-Ann throws him a dirty look. Jereen disappears down the path.

UTILITY SHED

Outside is a PAY PHONE. Jereen drops in two quarters, dials. As he waits, he massages the back of his head.

JEREEN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hello, this is Jereen.

(beat)

Listen, these headaches are killing me. Can't you get me a prescription or something?

VOICE OVER PHONE

Not yet. The doctor's waiting for your tests to come back. We should know by tomorrow.

JEREEN

(discouraged)

Sure.

He hangs up, enters the shed, reappears with a shovel and pail, continues on to the:

LION GROTTTO

He enters the simulated African woodland cautiously, making sure the carnivores are safely in their cages.

A sinewy MALE LION with a bitten-off ear watches intently through bars as Jereen begins to scoop droppings into his pail.

EXT. CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX - DAY

In a eucalyptus grove. Seen better days.

(CONTINUED)

Jereen rounds a corner on a BICYCLE, head bent, teardrop helmet low over his eyes, flying.

He skids to a stop in a half-circle, climbs off, parks.

Composing himself, he enters a two-story condo distinguished by crossed US and Republic of Vietnam FLAGS above the door.

INT. JEREEN CONDO - DAY

Martial MUSIC played loudly greets Jereen as he enters a living room completely taken over by a table-top DIORAMA of the 1968 SIEGE OF KHE SAN.

Deftly positioning plastic soldiers, guns and tanks is wiry WAIN JEREEN, 56, wearing a camo T-shirt. He does not look up as:

WAIN
How's it going, son?

JEREEN
(not true)
Okay.

The lie causes Wain to look up.

WAIN
Your head okay?

JEREEN
No.

WAIN
You hear from the doc?

JEREEN
(down)
Not yet.

Wain watches his son maneuver around the diorama on his way to the stairs.

WAIN
Courage, boy. Remember, you're a Jereen.

JEREEN
Right, dad.

Jereen passes beneath a framed COLLECTION of Vietnam military medals, none for combat, goes upstairs to:

HIS BEDROOM

A virtual museum of monkeys and apes. Guarding his bed is a giant stuffed orangutan. He nudges it aside and stretches out, rubbing his temples.