

THE RED FESTIVAL

Written by

Noemi Briones

EXT. STREET - DAY

Raquel and Alex park the car and step out. Raquel checks her phone, which shows 6:37 PM. Alex looks at Raquel excitedly and smiles.

RAQUEL (20 years old, film student, black hair, curious, and very intelligent).

ALEX (21 years old, wavy hair, funny and kind. He enjoys photography and attends the same university as Raquel).

Raquel observes the town streets. Houses with weathered wood and signs of dampness stand before her. Many red candles glow brightly in windows and doorways. The town looks rustic and forgotten by time.

RAQUEL

I think we're in the middle of something.

Several people walk along the street, watching them closely with strange expressions. The sky is filled with dark clouds. A thunderclap rumbles, echoing through the area, and Alex jumps in fright.

ALEX (LOOKING AT THE SKY)

Weird welcome, huh?

INT. STORE - LATER

Raquel looks at the store expressionlessly, her skin prickling. She opens the shop door. Alex pauses for a few seconds, glancing outside with curiosity, and after several moments, he enters the establishment.

ALEX

Don't you think it's weird that this is the only store in town?

RAQUEL

Honestly, no. End of the day, it's a town outside of the city.

ALEX (SARCASTIC)

In the middle of nowhere, you mean.

RAQUEL

Perfect for my project. Plus, you need this as much as I do. I don't know, I really need to get this right. I want my documentary to stand out in some way.

ALEX (LOOKING INTO HER EYES)
It'll go well, relax. I think
you're incredibly talented.

RAQUEL (SARCASTIC)
And how does that help me?

ALEX
Ok. I'll leave. Bye.

Raquel smiles and puts several items in her cart. Outside, it starts to rain intensely.

RAQUEL (LOOKING OUTSIDE)
Shit. I didn't think about this.

ALEX (EXAGGERATING)
And on top of that, there's no
signal. We're doomed. This is the
end of the world.

RAQUEL
Shut up, Alex.

They approach the cash register. Raquel gives a half-smile to the man standing behind the counter.

STORE CLERK (Tall, bald, untrimmed beard, disheveled appearance, and a serious expression).

RAQUEL (CONT'D)
Good afternoon, sir.

STORE CLERK (WITH DISDAIN)
Is this all?

Raquel nods as she pulls a 20-dollar bill from a red purse. The man looks her up and down.

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)
I haven't seen y'all around here.
You tourists?

RAQUEL
Yes, sir. We were looking for a
calm place and found this spot.

STORE CLERK
Several like you come here every
year to snoop around. Many of them
are rude and arrogant, but if
you're interested, the town will be
celebrating a festival tomorrow.

(MORE)

STORE CLERK (CONT'D)

You're welcome to join if you'd like.

Raquel and Alex shut up and look at each other.

RAQUEL

That sounds incredible, thanks... and out of curiosity, do you know of any place where we could stay tonight?

STORE CLERK

At the end of the street, I have a small hostel. Give me a few minutes to close the store. Nobody should come in at this hour anyway. My name's Abel, by the way.

RAQUEL

Pleasure. My name's Raquel, and this is my friend, Alex.

The rain lets up a bit, and the sky is completely dark. Alex steps out of the store with the groceries. From his pocket, he pulls out a cigarette and a lighter. He smokes as he observes the empty streets of Redhills. The fog at the end of the street obscures his view beyond. The candles remain lit. Alex shivers from the cold.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)

You ok, Alex?

Alex nods without looking at her. Abel locks up his shop and motions for them to follow him. They all walk in silence until they arrive. In front of them stands an old, antique-looking building.

INT. ABEL'S HOSTEL - NIGHT

ABEL

It's here, come in. I'll make something to eat.

ALEX

Thanks so much. Finally, someone who's worried about my stomach.

Raquel and Alex sit down to eat in the common dining room of the hostel. Abel joins them, and they engage in a pleasant conversation the entire time.

RAQUEL
Thanks a lot, Abel. Everything was
delicious.

ABEL
You're welcome, Raquel. Thanks to
you both for the company.

Raquel grabs everyone's plates and heads to the kitchen. Alex
follows.

ALEX
That man is a phenomenal cook.

RAQUEL
Come on and help me already.

Raquel hands him a kitchen sponge. Alex grumbles.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)
Crybaby.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)
You all ready to start your
documentary?

RAQUEL (CONT'D)
Yes, everything's ready. I want to
ask Abel's permission, first.

ALEX
Yeah, that'd be better... You're
very good at what you do, honestly.
I admire you.

RAQUEL
I admire you too. You know, I have
to confess that I used to see your
photos in the faculty newspaper and
think about how cool the person
behind those pictures must be.

ALEX
If you're telling me that, then it
has to be true. I like you a lot,
Kel.

Raquel and Alex look at each other intently. Raquel gives him
a warm smile.

RAQUEL
I think you should go to sleep. You
must be really tired. I'm going to
stay a little longer.

Alex nods as a yawn escapes his mouth.

ALEX

Rest up. I'll see you in the morning.

Alex leaves the kitchen, leaving Raquel alone. The sound of the faucet echoes in her head. Abel approaches from behind and taps her shoulder with a finger. Raquel jumps in fright.

ABEL

Sorry for scaring you.

RAQUEL

Hmmm... no, no, no, don't worry about it. I was just... thinking.

Raquel dries her hands on a towel and turns to Abel.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something?

ABEL

Yes, of course.

RAQUEL

I just don't know. I'd really like to document the festival a little bit. Do you think that's possible?

ABEL

Yes, of course.

Raquel heads to one of the rooms. A bed, a nightstand, and an antique-looking sofa decorate the space. Raquel walks around the room. A cold breeze drifts in through the window, and Raquel shivers instinctively.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Raquel and Abel walk through the town.

RAQUEL

It's incredible that Alex hasn't woken up yet.

ABEL

I saw him in the early morning, talking to some of the girls in town.

RAQUEL

And he didn't even tell me anything. What an idiot.

ABEL

Leave him alone. He's probably having fun around here. Reminds me... I'd like you to meet someone. He can help you with what you've told me.

They both walk until they get to Abel's store. There's a young man standing at the counter.

LUCAS (blond, big eyes, in his 20s, friendly)

ABEL (CONT'D)

Meet my son, Raquel.

RAQUEL

Mmm, hi. Pleasure. My name's Raquel.

LUCAS

Hi. My name's Lucas. Come on. There's lots to see around here.

Lucas and Raquel head toward the hills surrounding the town.

RAQUEL (POINTING AT HER CAMERA)

Is it ok if I film this place?

Lucas nods.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)

Do you know why they call it Redhills?

LUCAS

I honestly don't know. You could say that no one knows for sure, but there are legends.

RAQUEL (FILMING LUCAS)

Yea? What do the legends say?

LUCAS

Something about strange things happening in these hills centuries ago. People from the town would disappear without a trace...

(MORE)

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Many said there were evil creatures lurking around the town or something like that... that they were hungry and demanded to be fed.

RAQUEL

Wow.

LUCAS

There was a raid; the town planned to hunt these creatures. But, as expected, everything went to hell. Many people died, and RedHills became what it is now... an abandoned place that only brings bad luck. That's why no one visits us.

RAQUEL

And why are you still here?

LUCAS

Redhills and Abel's store are all that I know.

RAQUEL (SMILING)

You should come visit San Francisco one day.

Raquel observes the hills intently. The trees are enormous and lush.

EXT. RED FESTIVAL - NIGHT

Raquel sits, carefully studying the wide, flat terrain surrounding her. They are in the middle of the forest. Everything is cloaked in darkness except for the tables adorned with hundreds of red candles and the wooden platform illuminated by torches in the center of the site.

ABEL (EUPHORIC)

Before commencing with our annual festival, I want to give my thanks to everyone for being here today.

The crowd applauds with excitement.

ABEL (CONT'D)

The Red Festival was created to honor those who offered themselves in sacrifice so that we could live in Redhills today.

(MORE)

ABEL (CONT'D)

Their blood is sacred to us. I ask you to raise your glasses and toast to them.

The townsfolk cheer and drink wine from their glasses. Raquel tries to record, but she is stopped.

LUCAS

You shouldn't film the festival. Nobody here likes cameras.

Raquel lowers her camera and looks for someone.

RAQUEL

The guy I came here with should be here, but I don't see him.

LUCAS

He left you?

RAQUEL

No, no I don't think so. All his things are here. Plus, he wouldn't do that.

LUCAS

Is he your boyfriend?

RAQUEL

Hmmm no. I think we're just... friends.

LUCAS (LAUGHING)

He should appear, relax. There's lots of cute girls around here. Maybe he got lost with one of them.

Raquel forces a small laugh and takes a sip from a wine glass on the table. The musicians start playing, and people get up to dance.

RAQUEL (FEELING LIGHTHEADED)

I can't be here any longer. I need to look for him.

Abel speaks again, and the town erupts into loud applause. The sounds blend together and pound in Raquel's head intensely. She clutches her head and lets out a sharp groan. Lucas grabs her by the shoulders and forces her to sit down again.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

LUCAS
I'm not doing anything, relax.

RAQUEL
I don't feel good.

LUCAS
I know, Raquel. I know.

RAQUEL
What did you do to m-

And everything goes dark.

SUPER: 2 HOURS LATER.

Raquel blinks multiple times to clear her vision. She finds herself tied to a chair on the wooden platform. Next to her, Alex is also tied to another chair.

ALEX
RAQUEL, ARE YOU OKAY? LET US GO,
DAMN IT. YOU'RE ALL CRAZY!

Raquel looks ahead without saying anything. The voices start to sound confusing and indistinguishable.

RAQUEL
A-A-A-Alex?

Alex suddenly moves in his chair.

ABEL
Look at them closely; tonight will
be incredible! They will be the
ones... They will save us this
year. The spilling of their blood
will bring us peace.

Abel gets closer to Raquel and looks her up and down.

ABEL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Raquel.

RAQUEL
What are you talking about? What
the fuck are you talking about?

Raquel snaps out of her daze. She looks at Alex and starts moving abruptly in the chair.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

LUCAS

We don't have any other option,
Raquel.

ALEX

Let us go, please! We won't say
anything!

ABEL

It's more than that. You still
don't get it? You're the sacrifice.
Both of you. We only needed one...

Abel looks at Alex with a strange smile on his face.

ABEL (CONT'D)

But two is always better

RAQUEL

Please, don't do this!

The torch flames burn intensely. Alex and Raquel begin to
sweat.

ABEL

THE SPIRITS OF THE HILLS WAIT FOR
YOU! A feast for them. Peace for
us. Thank you.

Tears fall from Raquel's eyes. People start to cheer and
laugh.

RAQUEL (LOOKING TO ALEX)

I'm sorry. I should have never
brought you here.

ABEL

Hey no, it's not your fault, Kel.

A man with an axe in hand approaches Alex. Raquel screams
loudly. Another man unties the ropes binding Alex. Now free,
Alex stands before all of Redhills.

ABEL (CONT'D)

Anything you want to say before?

ALEX

Let her go, please! Not her. I'll
do what you ask.

Alex looks at Raquel, sadness in his eyes. Abel approaches
her, stroking her face. Raquel abruptly turns her head and
spits in his face. Abel glares at her with hatred and slaps
her hard.

RAQUEL
STOP ALREADY! WHAT'S WRONG WITH ALL
YOU?!

Alex moves forcefully and breaks free from his captor's grip. In a swift motion, he pulls a gun from his pants. Alex points it at Abel's head and realizes that the gun he found has only two bullets left.

ALEX
NOBODY MOVE! Or I'll shoot this
idiot's head off.

Abel put his arms up in the air.

ALEX (POINTING TO THE MAN) (CONT'D)
YOU, IDIOT! LET HER GO! And don't
you dare touch her.

The man with the axe carefully frees Raquel.

ALEX (LOOKING AT RAQUEL) (CONT'D)
Run.

Raquel looks at him again, confused. Tears stream from her eyes. She starts running with all her strength.

RAQUEL (WHILE RUNNING)
Shit.

Raquel reaches the town, pulls the keys from her jacket, and starts the car. She reverses and heads back to the festival. There's fire everywhere. She sees the crowd running and accelerates, mowing down several townsfolk. Raquel drives straight toward Abel. He locks eyes with her, and she runs him over with pure hatred.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)
ALEX???

Something emerges from the forest. Raquel trembles with fear. Alex lies dead on the ground. The creature gets closer and closer. Raquel jumps into the car and speeds off, glancing in her rearview mirror.

The creature drags the bodies of the townsfolk, Abel, and Alex away, disappearing into the darkness of the forest.

RAQUEL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

With tears in her eyes, Raquel continues to drive.