

Captain Cataclysm

EXT. FOREST - DAY

In the early daylight, birdsong rings through an old forest. Light floods through the trees, casting shadows over the forest floor, which is knotted and covered in old branches.

A humming breaks the quietness of the forest and a white van plows down the path. A logo on the side of the van reads "FOREST CONSERVATION AND MAINTENANCE".

The van grinds to a halt. Three foresters, MATT, STEVE and ANDY (all early to mid 30s), wearing dark green overalls and hardhats, climb out. Strolling back and forth across the path, they observe the layers of foliage. MATT kicks away a stray branch.

MATT

Bloody hell. This has been left
for a proper long time hasn't it.

Steve and Andy mumble in agreement.

Matt crouches down and continues to shuffle through the knotted foliage. He pulls back a branch to reveal a slab of metal embedded into the ground.

Furrowing his brow, he sweeps away more foliage to reveal a small handle and keyhole. He knocks on it with a gloved hand. An unusually hollow sound is produced.

MATT

Hey boys, come look at this.

INT. BUNKER - DAY

In a dark, windowless space, six CHILDREN are lying sound asleep in beds. Their faces are peaceful and innocent, undisturbed by the tapping noise from above.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Steve and Andy are stood peering over the trapdoor, Matt still crouching beside it.

STEVE

Must be an old wartime thing.

ANDY

Strange, no one's been to this
part of the woods for years.
Could be anything down there.

The three men suddenly look at each other simultaneously. They all think of the same thing at the same time. Something is very wrong.

INT. BUNKER - DAY

NOAH, a bearded man in his 60s, is asleep, shrouded in nearly complete darkness. All is quiet, until a loud RUMBLING noise erupts from above him, causing the low ceiling to SHAKE like an earthquake. Noah jerks up in bed, his eyes wide and alert.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

On the surface, the van's engine hums as it resumes its journey down the forest path, passing the trapdoor, which is now marked by a pole wedged into the ground next to it.

INT. BUNKER - DAY

Noah looks up towards the shaking ceiling. His body is overcome with absolute terror.

NOAH

No. No! It's too soon!

Jumping out of bed, his arms flail around to switch on an electric lamp. Sheets of paintings laid out on the desk beside him spill onto the floor.

NOAH

No, no, no!

The children, whose beds are at the other end of the long bunker, each begin to wake up. There are an equal number of girls and boys, all completely diverse in appearance and race. They are SUZANNE (12), JIANG (11), SONJA (9), BEN (9), ANIKA (6) and TOBY (5). Climbing out of their beds, they all huddle together like siblings as they watch the old man's outburst.

Noah takes the lamp and rushes towards the children, stopping just below the trapdoor on the ceiling.

The rumbling stops. Noah stops, breathing heavily. The room is completely silent.

NOAH

Oh Lord. Oh God, it is too soon.
I am not ready.

Noah looks towards the six children, who are staring blankly at him. He speaks to them, yet his words seem to be directed elsewhere.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I thought we had more time.

Jiang is holding the youngest children, Anika and Toby, under his arms. Their faces are blank with perplexity.

JIANG
What's going on?

Noah looks up towards the trapdoor, as if confronting it.

NOAH
Dear Father, I thought we had
more time.

SUZANNE
Are we in trouble?

NOAH turns his head towards the children and slowly walks over to them. He manages a slight smile, his eyes still wide with anxiety.

NOAH
We...we aren't in any trouble,
children. But we *must* prepare for
the Lord's judgement. It has
already begun.

The children's faces remain blank. Nothing is making sense.

Noah paces down the bunker, switching several electric lamps on. The lights reveal more features of the room: a large rug, a shabby couch, a ticking grandfather clock, and other various pieces of old furniture. Effort has been made to make the space resemble a suburban home, despite the hostile concrete walls and the low ceiling.

NOAH
Now, for those of you who are
strong, I need you to fetch those
sandbags piled up by the far
wall, and then stack them up
below the trapdoor, up there.

He points towards the trap door. The children do not move.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Quickly now!

Jiang seizes Sonja and Ben's arms and leads them to the sandbags.

Noah walks back over to Suzanne, Anika and Toby.

NOAH (CONT'D)
The rest of you...you must count
the food we have stored and how
many months supply we have to go
on.

SUZANNE
Will we have enough?

NOAH

We will find a way. Even if it means eating a can each a day, we will manage with what we have. It is the only way.

TOBY

(solemnly)

My mummy said I have to eat three meals a day, so I can be big and strong.

Noah looks down directly at Toby.

NOAH

Well your mummy is not here. I am responsible for getting you big and strong now. Do you understand me?

Toby says nothing, he stares emptily back at Noah who stares at him with a frightening intensity.

Noah pats Toby lightly on the arm, a patronising gesture.

NOAH

Good boy.

Noah stands and walks towards his bed and desk at the far end of the bunker, leaving the three children standing motionless and alone.

INT. NOAH'S BED - DAY

Noah sits on the bed, facing the unkempt desk. A sense of madness overwhelms his area of the bunker, with various paintings plastered all over the walls and scattered on the floor. Each one depicts a vivid apocalyptic scene, comets crashing into mountains, fire engulfing forests, etc.

He picks up a half finished painting from the floor and sets it down on the desk. Closing his eyes tightly, he sits back slightly, mumbling incoherent words under his breath, like a prayer.

Opening his eyes, he picks up a brush and a palette of paints left out, and resumes his ritual. Each brush stroke is aggressive and shaky like the sound of his breath, as if experiencing an intense adrenaline rush.

Anika watches Noah from across the room, her eyes wide and bewildered. Noah does not notice her watching him. He carries on painting, muttering feverishly under his breath.

Suzanne takes Anika's hand and guides her to the stockpile of tinned food in the far corner. Anika looks back at Noah for a moment before she is led away.

INT. BUNKER - LATER

Jiang, Sonja and Ben are finishing piling the sandbags up to cover the trapdoor and the surrounding ceiling. Toby stands close to them, just watching.

Suzanne is sat on the floor by the stockpiled tins, writing calculations on a sheet of paper. Anika is sat idly beside her, holding her hands stiffly in her lap.

INT. NOAH'S BED - DAY

Noah holds up his finished painting, staring at each detail intensely. It shows a family sitting together on a green mountain, far above the world which is engulfed in flames. He props it against the wall on the desk, right in the centre, pride of place.

Noah grins. This is his masterpiece.

INT. BUNKER - DAY

Noah walks over to Suzanne, Anika and Toby. He takes the sheet of paper from Suzanne, holding it close to his face.

NOAH
(mumbling under his breath)
Yes...excellent, we should have
just enough.

He hands the paper back to Suzanne, who nods. Noah looks at the three children.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Listen, I want to apologise for
my...little outburst earlier
today. It was...

Across the room, Toby STABS into one of the sandbags with a kitchen knife. He stares at it as it deflates and spills over the floor.

Everyone turns around rapidly to look at Toby. Noah's face clenches with anger for a moment, but then it softens.

NOAH
Don't do that, my boy.

Toby stares back at him, devoid of emotion.

TOBY
I'm not your boy.

Noah's face clenches again. He composes himself, and his face softens again.

NOAH

Don't do that. Will you give that knife to me?

Toby remains still for a moment, then slowly walks towards Noah. He holds out the knife and Noah takes it from him.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Little boys should not use knives like that.

Noah crouches before Toby. With his other hand, Noah takes Toby's hand in his. Toby's eyes are fixed on the ground.

NOAH

What's the matter?

TOBY

I want to go home.

NOAH

My dear boy, this is your home.

TOBY

(adamantly)
I want my mum.

Noah pauses.

NOAH

Do you remember what I told you?
Your poor mother cannot look after you anymore.

TOBY

(stubbornly)
Why?

Noah pauses again, gathering his thoughts.

NOAH

Do you still talk to God every night like I asked you?

Toby hesitates. Then nods, his lips firmly pressed together.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Well...he has decided it is time to...to clear the world of all its sins, all the bad things we humans have created. But this isn't a bad thing...you should all be so excited! You are the ones who will survive. Isn't that something?

Noah stares at all the children around the room. They stare back at him in complete silence. The silent exchange is awkwardly long. No one is on the same wavelength.

Noah stands, his head low, and scratches the back of his scalp. He mumbles nervously.

NOAH

Alright.

Noah pauses, then lifts his head.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Follow me.

INT. NOAH'S BED - DAY

Noah is sat on his bed, the children sat on the floor surrounding him. He picks up the finished painting of the family on the green hill and shows it to them.

NOAH

This is the last vision the Lord sent me. Do you like the picture? I painted it myself.

Noah puts on a smile. The children don't respond. Giving up on the smile, he points to the figures on top of the hill.

NOAH (CONT'D)

That's us you see. We're all happy because we have been chosen.

Noah pauses to look at the children, who still do not react.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Do you remember what it was like to be together with your families?

Pause. The children begin to nod slightly.

NOAH (CONT'D)

We are happy here because God has chosen to bring us all together. As a new family. Would you want to be down here, with a family that abandons you? Would you want to be all alone?

Noah points to the fiery chaos below. The children stare at the painting and shake their heads slightly.

NOAH (CONT'D)

No, of course not.

Noah puts the painting back down on the desk.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Now, very soon things are going to be loud and scary again, that was the first warning phase. I need you all to try not to be afraid this time. I need you all to have faith in me. I was very very mean earlier. I was shouting and being very scary. I know that. But do you know why?

Noah pauses. The children look back at him, their faces now more attentive than before.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Because I wanted to make sure we would all be safe. I was just as scared as you all were. I was scared...that I would lose you...

Noah pauses again. His mouth opens slightly, as if his own words resonate within him, recalling a deep, repressed feeling. He looks down at his lap.

NOAH (CONT'D)

...And I promised myself, and God, that I would never lose you. I believe you are all truly wonderful children, and that God has brought us all here for a reason. So here's my promise to you.

Noah takes Anika and Toby's hands, the other children looking on with a solemn, lost look in their eyes.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I will always, always be here for you. And I will keep you all safe for as long as I live, no matter what happens to the world. I will keep you safe, and we will always be together. Do you understand me?

Noah looks at the children. After a pause, Anika smiles warmly at Noah. So do the other children, as if for the first time. This stirs something very deep and profound inside him, like an old memory or a lost love.

He smiles proudly, a smile belonging to a man who has everything he has ever wanted.

BANG

The smiles on everyones faces are instantly wiped off. All the children gasp. There is silence, then another BANG coming from the trapdoor. Then another.

Noah stares at the trapdoor, his eyes are wide with anxiety but he breaks into a smile.

NOAH
(whispering)
It's here. Oh God...it's here.

The BANGS continue to hammer on.

SUZANNE
Why is it making that noise!

NOAH
Remember what I just said. Don't be afraid. This is God's plan, we will all be safe.

Anika and Toby start to cry. Noah closes his eyes.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Everything is going to be okay, children. Remember? Everything is-

BANG. The sandbag that was split by Toby allows the trapdoor to break open. A pair of hands push the remaining sandbags over.

Five POLICE OFFICERS holding guns climb through the open trapdoor, kicking the sandbags to the side. They begin to stride towards the far end of the bunker where Noah and the children are sat, holding onto each other like a family.

POLICE OFFICER
Police! Hold your hands up sir!
Step away from the children!

The children SCREAM and scramble to their feet. Noah remains on the floor, staring at the scene in horror.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Sir put your hands in the air!

Noah does not move. Three of the officers head towards the children and grab hold of them. The other two point their guns at Noah's feeble figure.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Stand up sir.

Noah looks up at the two officers, a palpable look of pain in his eyes. He stands, trembling. The officers lower their weapons proceed to handcuff him.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Sir, you are under arrest. You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned, something which you later rely on in court, and anything you do say may be given in evidence.

NOAH

But they're mine.

POLICE OFFICER

You're coming with us sir.

The two officers grab Noah and walk him towards the exit. He tries to resist, but his movements are too frail. He turns his head back towards the children, his mouth open and trembling. He tries to form words, but nothing comes out.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The officers pull Noah up the ladder and out of the bunker. He squints in pain as the blinding whiteness of the sky appears before him.

They march him through the trees towards a large field where three police cars are parked, waiting.

Matt, Steve and Andy are stood a few metres away outside the white van, watching the action unfold, their mouths open in disbelief. Steve films the moment with his phone.

Noah turns his head back. The children are being guided out of the bunker one by one, finally reunited with the daylight after their captivity. They are all staring in awe at the trees and the sky, eyes and mouths wide open in both pure delight and bewilderment.

The children do not notice Noah being marched away. Yet he does not take his eyes off them until the officers are pushing him into one of the police cars.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

A police officer straps Noah into the car. The officers are talking to each other loudly, yet they can barely be heard. The world is totally drowned out for Noah. He stares forward, eyes filled with tears.

The car starts and pulls away from the forest. From inside the car, Noah watches the world unfold before his eyes.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE POLICE CAR - DAY

The reflection of the trees skim across the window. They flash across Noah's face, and a teardrop falls from his eye.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

As the car continues to drive, a sweeping landscape of hills and mountains appear outside the window.

The naturalistic environment slowly transforms into a surreal painted scene. The sky turns bright red, and a comet made up of broad brush strokes collides with one of the mountains, which erupts into a fiery red volcano. Similarly painted fires spring up across the mountains, balls of flames dropping like rain from the sky. The car drives on.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE POLICE CAR - DAY

Through the window, Noah's face streams with tears and desperation. He continues to stare at the cataclysmic spectacle unfolding around him, the end of his own world prevailing before his eyes.

As the journey continues, his face seems to become older and weaker. He transforms from a pleading and desperate old man, to hardened and blank vessel, devoid of any hope or life that remained within him.

The car drives on.

THE END.