

DOWN TO EARTH

Written by

Drew Peardon

Address: 1803 - 3830 Brentwood Road NW, Calgary AB, Canada
Phone Number: 1(403)609-7125

FADE IN:

EXT. CAMPSITE - AFTERNOON

In a large forest clearing, AVA, GRACE, and LILY are sitting at a large table with several other people. Everyone else is talking to each other jubilantly. Other tables have various foods and gifts piled on.

The three little girls sit there silently. Grace is smiling widely; Ava is frowning despondently; and Lily is just staring blankly, a small bruise visible under her left eye.

Grace excitedly adds more links to her multi-colored chain necklace. Ava does the same, but with noticeably less enthusiasm. Ava is smiling more from obligation than from genuine enjoyment.

Suddenly, Ava and Lily notice a small fox standing at the edge of the woods. They stare at the fox, and it seems to stare back at them. The sounds of everyone talking gradually fade away, until there's only a vaguely sinister hum.

Ava and Lily stare at the fox, unblinking and intently, for what feels like an eternity. The background unfocuses into a blur, leaving Ava, Lily and the fox as the only subjects in focus.

Suddenly, Lily gets up and runs towards the fox. The fox dashes into the forest, Lily follows it. Both Lily and the fox seem to dissolve from view as they run deeper into the dark forest. Ava stares after them with a look of melancholy.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - MORNING

Ava, now 19 years old, wakes up sitting at her desk at the back of the lecture hall, her head resting in her arms. The PROFESSOR is droning on with his lecture. Ava is wearing her heavy hooded sweater, practically buried in it. Her purple and pink-striped hair just slightly poking out from under her hood. Her large green eyes just barely opening after her nap.

PROFESSOR

Current anthropological evidence suggests that human civilization first developed in the Tigris-Euphrates river system in what is now known as Iraq.

Ava's eyes drift over to her classmates. She sees a young man with his laptop open to a bunch of pornographic images.

She sees another young man with his laptop showing an over-the-top Neo-Nazi conspiracy website.

Glancing over to the other side of the classroom, she sees a young women writing a social media post, riddled with several insults and slurs.

Another couple of young women are texting with each other under the table.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

For the first time, humans massed together and combined their many talents to create something far greater than any of them. Forming a society wherein they can become the best versions of themselves.

Ava roles her eyes in disgust. She then shuts them and falls asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY DORM ROOM - EVENING

Ava is sitting at her laptop computer scrolling through Twitter. Several tweets are shown containing slurs, while others are responses to some horrible recent event.

Suddenly, a window pops up asking if she'd like to FaceTime with her sister GRACE. Ava sighs in annoyance, and reluctantly clicks "yes." Grace appears on her screen.

GRACE

Hey big sis! You up for next week's family reunion?

AVA

Not really Grace. I think I'll be sitting this one out.

GRACE

Oh, come on, Ava.

AVA

Sorry, I just don't feel like going.

GRACE

Is it because of Zack? You gotta get over that asshole.

AVA

It's not just him. I just want to get away from people for a while.

Grace frowns and lifts her necklace into view. It's a simple chain with many links of many different colours.

GRACE

But what about our little tradition? We both add another link to our chains for every new friend that either of us have made. I've got at least five more links to add since last year! You always loved that.

Ava lifts her necklace into view.

AVA

I've always hated it. I've never added any links of my own. I've always added ones for just your new friends. I never make any new friends.

GRACE

Well, you never really try to. At least not since Lily ran away.

AVA

It has nothing to do with Lily. It's because all the people I meet are assholes and idiots. Why should I try to make friends when people are so rotten.

GRACE

Come on, Ava, people aren't so bad once you get to know them.

AVA

Yeah, once you get to know them, they turn out to be worse.

Ava hangs up on Grace before she could reply. She then opens a file marked "LILY," revealing several photos that Ava starts to click through.

The photos show Ava and Lily as children, playing together. Lily appears happy in the first few photos, but as they go on, she expression becomes blank, her body becomes more emaciated, and her face shows visible bruises.

Ava sighs wistfully, and then opens a video file. It shows a teenage Lily, emaciated and bruised, staring into the camera.

LILY

I've had it Ava. I've had it with the world. With other people. There's a forest not far from where I live. It's green all year round, it's a paradise. I'm gonna go live there now. If you ever get sick of the world, I'm open to you joining me. It's at the end of the trail we used to hike down all the time.

The video ends on still image of Lily cracking a little smile. Ava stares wistfully at Lily, with her dark bronze skin, her bright silver hair, and her golden eyes.

Zoom in on her laptop screen until Lily's golden eyes fill the frame.

Ava closes her laptop, walks over to her garbage can, and looks into it.

On top of the pile of trash lies a crinkled photo. The photo shows Ava and her ex-boyfriend Zack sitting on the beach, Zack wearing a pair of black and red swim trunks, Ava wearing a blue bikini. Zack's left arm extends out of frame, indicating that he's taking a selfie. His right arm is wrapped around Ava's waist, with his hand reaching up between her breasts. Zack's face suggests insufferably smug self-satisfaction, while Ava's face suggests profound discomfort, as if she's squirming in a futile attempt to get away.

Ava stomps her foot on the photo, pushing it down further into the garbage can. She stomps it again for good measure.

Ava then collapses into bed and drifts to sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - MORNING

Ava dreams about being at the family reunion. Everyone but her grabs a new chain link off the table.

The links transform into people, who then sit down at the table. They in turn produce their own multicolored chains.

Everyone starts linking their chains together. When Ava tries to link her's, it dissolves in her hands.

Ava's surroundings dissolve into a dark room with a single, messy bed.

Ava sits on the bed, curled up into a fetal position, as all her clothes dissolve away.

A shadowy, distinctly male figure creeps up behind her. It's eyes just piercing red points of light.

One of it's shadow-like hands reaches over her face, covering her mouth and nose.

AVA

Zack?!

Ava lets out a muffled protest as another shadowy hand grabs her throat.

The shadow grows several arms, each one wrapping around Ava's nude body, almost completely consuming her.

Suddenly, a blast of white light appears, and Lily, also nude, walks out of it.

Lily extends her hand towards Ava. Ava reaches out and takes Lily's hand.

Suddenly the room dissolves away into a beautiful forest clearing filled with flowers and woodland creatures.

Ava, still nude, stands up and stares at her surroundings in awe and relief.

Ava then sees the fox from her first dream standing at the edge of the clearing.

Ava and the fox stare at each other. The fox's eyes suddenly turn into the piercing red lights of the shadowy figure.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Ava wakes up from her dream. She sits up in bed, staring into space contemplatively for a little while.

Ava gets out of bed and goes back to her computer, opens it back up, and begins a web search on a map app.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY COMMON AREA - NOON

Ava is sitting at a table with her laptop in front of her. In one window, she's scrolling through a map app showing her old hometown. Another window shows the last image of Lily from last night's video. CALEB walks up and sits next to her. He casually glances over at her laptop screen.

CALEB
Planning a getaway?

AVA
Mind your own business Caleb.

CALEB
Sorry, you've just been so distant lately.

Caleb notices Lily image on Ava's screen.

CALEB (CONT'D)
Are you hoping to find your runaway friend?

AVA
Not really, I just want to get away from people for a while. I just admire Lily. She doesn't need anyone but herself. That's how I wanna live.

CALEB
Is this about Zack?

AVA
No! Of course not!

CALEB
Look, I'm sorry about what happened with Zack. I hadn't seen him since middle school. I just assumed he was still a nice guy. I would never have introduced you to him otherwise.

AVA
Yeah, well, I don't blame you. You didn't know that most "nice guys" think of girls as nothing more than walking masturbation aids.

CALEB

Yeah, yeah, I've heard all the talk about self-proclaimed "nice guys." I just never imagined Zack as one of them.

AVA

Based on what I've read, I think he's more the kind of guy who'd proudly call himself a "Chad."

CALEB

Well, I'm tempted to use the "not all men" defense. But I suppose that's the last thing you'd want to hear right now.

AVA

You suppose correctly.

CALEB

Well, Grace's invited me to your family reunion as her "plus one." Considering it's only been one year since she and I have started dating, that's a pretty big step. Are you sure your not going this year?

AVA

I'm sure. I'm sick of having to deal with people all the time. I just want to spend some time off the grid.

CALEB

So, living off the land? Like Lily?

AVA

Not to that extreme. I'll be taking a tent and supplies. But who knows? After I graduate, maybe I'll move to a cabin in the middle of the woods.

Caleb shrugs, and then gets up to leave. As he walks away, he turns back towards Ava.

CALEB

Well, you know you can't stay away from people forever. Like it or not, we're all connected to each other.

AVA
I'll see about that.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST ROAD - MORNING

Ava is riding her motorcycle up the forest road. There's a huge camping backpack strapped to her back.

Ava turns off the road into a clearing. She parks and locks her motorcycle.

Ava walks into the woods with her backpack.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL

Ava walks down the trail until she comes upon a clearing that's almost identical to the one from her dream.

She smiles in relief at her surroundings.

Ava then puts her backpack down, pulls out a small tent, and starts setting it up on the spot.

Slowly dissolve to a fully set-up camping spot, which Ava stares at with pride.

AVA
This is what it means to "get away
from it all."

Ava gazes at the forest surrounding her. Suddenly, she sees Lily gazing back at her from behind a tree.

AVA (CONT'D)
Lily?

Lily quickly ducks behind the tree. Ava walks towards the tree and looks behind it. There's no sign of Lily. Ava looks back and forth in confusion.

Ava then hears the sound of rushing water, and walks towards the sound.

EXT. HOT SPRING

Ava wanders through the forest until she comes upon a beautiful clear hot spring surrounded by smooth stones. There's a small stream on one end, and a small waterfall on the other.

Smiling brightly, Ava quickly slips off all her clothes, tossing them into a pile under a tree.

Now wearing nothing but her necklace, Ava wades into the spring and starts swimming around.

She swims under the waterfall and surfaces. Ava sighs in contentment as she lets the water flow over her nude body.

Ava swims across the spring, and suddenly notices Lily, also nude and bathing in a small alcove of the spring.

Before Ava can call out to her, a fox jumps out of the woods and lands right next to Lily.

Lily tries to grab the fox, but it jumps away and runs back into the forest.

Lily leaps out of the spring and chases after it.

AVA
Hey! Lily! Wait!

Ava climbs out of the spring and runs after Lily and the fox.

EXT. DEEP WOODS

Ava loses sight of them as they run through some bushes. Ava runs through the bush, but accidentally leaps over a small, hidden cliff.

AVA
Hey!

Ava lands feet-first in the middle of a pit of wet, gooey, grayish-brown clay. Her nude body splashes into the mud until it's just past her knees.

AVA (CONT'D)
What the hell?!

She begins to slowly sink deeper and deeper into the clay.

AVA (CONT'D)
Oh shit!

Ava panics and begins to bend her body in all directions. Her thighs sink about halfway into the mud.

Ava spots the fox standing idly at the edge of the pit.

AVA (CONT'D)

You! You led me into this you
little bastard!

The fox stares, then lets out a few high-pitched yelps. It then darts away into the forest.

Ava growls in anger. Her legs have now been completely consumed by the clay. She grimaces with discomfort as her bare bottom and crotch area slowly sink below the surface as the quicksand continues to suck her body further into it.

Ava stretches her arms out and starts slapping her hands against the surface. She desperately tries to find solid ground, but her hands just repeatedly splash into the muck.

Quickly regaining her composure, Ava whips her head back and forth, searching for some way to save herself as the muck's surface approaches her waist.

AVA (CONT'D)

Help! Can anyone hear me? Help! I'm
sinking!

Suddenly, Lily emerges from the forest. Ava's mouth hangs open in awe. Lily stands with the sun shining behind her beautiful nude body, with it's deep bronze skin, long silver hair, and piercing golden eyes.

AVA (CONT'D)

Lily! You're really here!

LILY

Ava! You came after me!

Ava's navel sinks below the surface of the mud. This snaps her out of her awe. She reaches her right hand towards Lily.

AVA

Please, help me!

Lily gasps in panic. With one hand grabbing a nearby tree branch, she reaches her other hand towards Ava's.

Ava's hand is just outside of Lily's reach. It falls further out of reach as Ava sinks deeper and deeper into the mud. Her bare breasts now resting on the surface.

AVA (CONT'D)

Come on! Help me out!

Lily reaches out further towards Ava. Suddenly, the branch she's holding onto breaks off. She falls down sideways into the mud.

Her legs completely consumed by the mud, Lily desperately struggles to get her body upright. Both she and Ava now side-by-side, sunk up to their chests.

AVA (CONT'D)

No! No! Someone! Please help us!

Suddenly, the tree that Lily was holding onto falls down. The tree lands across the quicksand pit, it's base still partially rooted to the ground outside the pit.

AVA (CONT'D)

Yes! Thank you! Good job Lily!

As the quicksand slowly sucks the two women's bare breasts below the surface; Ava stretches her arms towards the tree, but it's just beyond her reach.

AVA (CONT'D)

Damn it!

Ava sinks up to her armpits, her arms still stretched out in front of her. Below the surface, Lily wraps her arms around Ava's waist, holding herself tightly to Ava from behind.

AVA (CONT'D)

Come on! So close!

A sudden flash of realization appears in her eyes.

AVA (CONT'D)

Wait! Of course!

Ava whips off her necklace. Holding it tightly in her fist, she swings it like a grappling hook towards the tree.

Ava misses the tree as the two women's shoulders vanish below the surface of the mud.

AVA (CONT'D)

Come on! Come on!

Their necks sink out of view and their chins begin to press against the surface. Lily chokes out a brief sob.

Ava swings her necklace, still held tightly in her fist, towards the tree again. This time, it grabs hold of a branch.

AVA (CONT'D)

Yes!

Ava's voice is muffled as her mouth sinks below the surface. Her ears and her nose soon follow.

Ava's eyes dart back and forth frantically, before her whole head sinks below the surface. Lily's head soon does the same.

The mud quickly flows over the spots where their heads were just sticking out.

The only sign that Ava was even there is her necklace. It's still hooked onto the dead tree, her knuckles just barely visible to indicate her still gripping it.

The two women are then shown from within the pit, their bodies fully submerged. The shifting, undulating mud repeatedly revealing and obscuring their closely entwined nude bodies.

After some time, Ava's left hand breaks above the surface and grabs the tree.

Ava's head emerges from the mud. She gasps and coughs repeatedly before taking many quick, shallow breathes. Lily's head emerges behind Ava's, but remains silent.

As the thick mud slowly flows and drips away from her face, Ava just manages to blink open one of her eyes a little.

Ava slowly pulls herself and Lily along the tree until they reach the edge of the pit.

Grabbing the tree roots, she pulls her body out of the mud. Lily, her arms still wrapped tightly around Ava's waist, is pulled out alongside her.

The two women collapse to the ground in exhaustion. They lie on the ground, panting, for several moments.

Ava crawls out of Lily's embrace on her hands and knees. She slowly manages to stand up. The thick mud slowly flows and drips off of her body.

Moving slowly from a hunched-over position to standing erect, she tilts her head towards the sky.

Ava gazes back at Lily, who's looking up at her longingly. Ava offers her hand, with her necklace still wrapped around it, to Lily.

AVA (CONT'D)

Thanks for the help.

Lily takes Ava's hand and stands back up.

LILY

No problem. Ava.

The two women then tightly hug each other in a soothing embrace

CUT TO:

EXT. HOT SPRING - NOON

Ava and Lily are back in the spring standing under the waterfall. The water flows over both of their bodies, washing away the thick mud. They knead their hands through their hair and over their faces. Ava is still gripping her necklace in her right hand.

Gradually, all the mud is washed away, fully revealing their nude bodies.

With all the mud washed off of her, Ava swims to the edge of the spring lays back against it.

Ava's eyes stare contemplatively at her right hand still tightly gripping her family necklace.

She finally opens her hand and starts turning the necklace over in it, examining it.

Lily swims towards the shore where Ava is sitting. While still waist-deep in the spring, Lily stands in front of Ava.

LILY

I remember those necklaces. You got it from your family right?

AVA

Yeah. It's kinda traditional.

Ava flashes back to her dream of the family reunion. The smiling faces of all the people in attendance each flash before her eyes.

Ava then puts the necklace back on, and stares up towards the sky.

Lily swims over to Ava and sits next to her.

LILY

I'm glad to see you again. I've really missed you.

AVA

Well, I was kinda hoping to run into you. But I wasn't expecting it. I just wanted to get away from people. That's all.

LILY

I see.

AVA

So, what's it been like, living out here on your own?

LILY

It's been horrible! I ran out of food awhile ago and started stealing from the campsites all the way on the other end of the woods! I ran after that fox because I was hoping to catch and eat it! I've been sick a few times, and could do nothing but lay down in my tent in agony while waiting for it to pass!

Lily then turns her head towards Ava, who stares back at Lily with a look of bemusement.

LILY (CONT'D)

And, I've really missed having someone else here to talk to. Honestly, I've wanted to get back to civilization for a while now. I just don't know the way back.

AVA

Well, I can bring back home with me. You can stay in my dorm for awhile until you can get back on your feet.

Lily smiles at Ava.

LILY

That would be nice. Thanks.

After a few moments, the two women climb out the spring.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY DORM ROOM - EVENING

Ava is sitting at her laptop. Lily is sitting on the bed behind her. Ava opens FaceTime and send a call to Grace. Grace answers.

GRACE

Hey sis! What's going on?

AVA

Nothing, just wanted to let you know that I'll definitely be coming over to the family reunion next week.

GRACE

Really?! That's great!

AVA

It's no problem really.

Ava and Lily exchange glances.

AVA (CONT'D)

I'll also be bringing a friend over, if that's ok.

GRACE

That's great to hear! Well, I hope you got that alone time you wanted.

AVA

Oh, I think I got about all of the alone time I would ever need. I guess I just needed to get more down to earth.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END