

Time: Long ago  
Place: Country road  
Time of Day: Dusk

EXT: COUNTRY ROAD LEADING TO DARK FOREST – EARLY EVENING

1. Overview of deserted countryside. Low grass and rocks. Occasional trees, tall and forlorn. Two narrow winding roads cross. Beyond lies a dark forest.

**TITLE CARD: IN THE FOREST**

2. Camera spots a man, laden with a heavy load on his back, trudging towards the crossroads. Dark clouds gathering on horizon. Wind is rising.
3. Cut to closer look. MAN looks worn as if he has been on the road for long - for centuries. His face rugged and troubled. His body weighed down by the load he is carrying.

He contemplates. Tries to lift the slumping load up and he continues.

[Sound of wind.]

4. He stops to see where he is heading. A gust of wind peels off the cover over the bundle and pale hair flutters in the wind. It's a little boy! But his face is hidden/concealed.
5. MAN wipes the sweat off his face.

BOY'S VOICE

Am I weighing you down, uncle?

6. MAN hears BOY's question but does not respond. Pain in his look. He continues his journey.

[A flash of lightning. Distant thunder.]

7. A large tree in the distance offering shelter. MAN heads for it, fighting against rising wind.
8. Another gust of wind reveals BOY is blind - Nevertheless, he looks around and notes where he is.

BOY'S VOICE

We must be near the crossroads, uncle –  
So inconvenient to be a blind, don't you think ?

BOY sounds older than he looks, though it is difficult to see how he looks in the fading light.

9. MAN does not respond. Pain and conflicting emotions in his look. Finally:

MAN

Didn't know you are blind. When did it happen ?

BOY'S VOICE

Well - (laughs darkly) honestly, can't remember.

[After a while.]

Don't you remember - ?

10. As if in response, MAN wraps his cape tight around his body against the wind. BOY is now invisible.
11. MAN hurries to the large tree and halts. He leans forwards against it, head down, with his hands stretched out. His body heaving. Again a voice comes from the bundle on his back.

BOY'S VOICE

Are we lost, uncle ?

MAN

It's all right, boy.

12. MAN wipes off sweat. He collects himself and continues. Suddenly it is dark.

BOY'S VOICE

Straight ahead, uncle.  
Soon we'll come to the crossroads.  
There's a signpost.

We nearly took a wrong turn then/that time – remember ?

[A flash of lightning and thunder.]

13. Overview of MAN heading towards the crossroads.
14. Camera pans towards the dark forest, zooms in on it, then

retreats to focus on MAN. A storm is gathering a pace.

15. The signpost at the crossroads (rear view). MAN is approaching.

BOY'S VOICE

Can you see the signpost?

MAN

Sure, boy.

16. Man halts at the signpost.

BOY'S VOICE

What does it say - Can you read it ?

17. Cut to MAN'S fearful face.

[Lightning.]

18. Shot of the signpost. It is blank.

19. Lost, MAN scans all directions. BOY points in the direction of the dark forest.

BOY'S VOICE

There, straight ahead. You see it now.

20. Agonizing face of MAN. He hesitates.

[Wind starts to howl. A crack of thunder.]

BOY'S VOICE

Cold, isn't it? Just like that night, uncle

21. MAN puts on his hood and tightens his cape, determined to face the storm. BOY, bundled beneath the cape, is invisible now.

MAN starts in the direction of the forest.

22. A gust of wind whips MAN. Nearly blown away, he resists the wind, pulling the cape and the bundle even tighter around his body.
23. Camera cranes up placing MAN in vast deserted countryside. He halts and crouches to resist the wind, then starts reeling in it, with his arms wide open.
24. Cut to closer shot. He is whirling with his head held up to the flashing dark sky, shouting unintelligible words.
25. As camera cranes up again, it whirls too, spinning the sky and earth upside down. In the centre of it, MAN runs towards the black forest, with his arms spread out towards the sky -

EXT: IN FOREST - NIGHT

26. Images of trees, shrubs and ground in the forest flying by.

[Camera handheld.]

[Sound of footsteps on fallen leaves and branches. Breaking branches. Hard breathing.]

27. Closer shots of MAN's feet digging into the swampy ground. Shots of his arms pushing away and breaking the branches, his bundled back etc.

[Distant cry of a child.]

28. Cut to MAN's face.
29. Rhythm accelerates. Flying branches, ground and feet.
30. Shot of a huge dark tree in the distance. MAN's feet and camera approaching it.

31. Camera moves into closer shot of the tree's trunk and roots

[A flash of lighting. White-out for a second.]

32. Hands on the ground clutching the earth.

33. Camera tilts upwards. MAN kneels at the root of the huge dark tree, his head bowed, his hands down on the ground. His bundle is gone.

[Silence.]

34. Rapid cuts of intersecting images follow.

Strong hands digging a hole on the ground

Earth thrown out and flies away.

Piece of child's clothing thrown in.

Earth thrown over and covers it.

Another piece of clothing, desperate shovelling, in rapid succession.

Strong hand gripping the fragile waving arm of a child.

[Faint moaning cries. Lightning.]

The hand pressed against the child's mouth.

His shirt ripped open -

Small blond head pushed against the ground, face down, half covered with earth. More earth piles on.

Child's shorts, shoes, thrown into the hole.

Desperate hands shove earth over them.

[Lightning. Howling wind.]

Earth fills the hole and the ground. Dead leaves and branches gathered over it -

His shovelling hands, bending knees, heaving back, and the earth -

Movement eventually ceases. And all the sounds.

35. Cut to the hands on the ground clutching the earth (same as shot 32).
36. Camera tilts up to find MAN, now a white-haired old man, collapsed at the root of the tree. His clenched fists holding earth.
37. Morning mist lightens the forest. The old man remains still, crouched on the ground, at the root of the huge dark tree.
38. Camera cranes up and away. There remains the dark forest and deserted countryside. The morning sun begins to filter through.

Silence.

END CARD.

Turn to next page for Director's notes

In the Forest  
Director/Writer's Notes

The story is necessarily provocative. However, the exact nature of the crime, kept deliberately ambiguous, is secondary to the burden of guilt that MAN seems to have borne for centuries.

The material is in part surreal. Therefore to achieve a maximum impact, it is imperative to pin down the drama with the naturalistic details in production.

BOY would only be heard but rarely seen. Most of the time he would appear to be just a heavy bundle on the back of the journeying Man, except when a gust of wind reveals a fleeting glimpse of the boy. We need only to have a vague impression of his features. The flapping wind and failing light will help to achieve this in naturalistic terms.

The film can be shot in colour, but my preference is for the grainy tone of black and white. This will abstract the time elements and the inferred cruelty in the story to a degree, without compromising the realism.

It is vital to convey the menacing vastness of the environment in which the man journeys. I plan to mix closer shots with long wide crane shots of the dark forest and of the forlorn man trudging towards it on a deserted country road.

Editing the past crime (shots 34) requires a delicate balance keeping the effect as subtle as powerful.

Akemi Horie