

WHY ARE WE AFRAID OF BEARS?

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FADE IN

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

A HIKER (22), male, fit athletic build, marches alone along a mountainside trail. He carries a back pack and a canteen. The hiker stops to survey the area. He takes off his backpack and sets it down, takes a seat beside it.

He unfastens the canteen from his belt, twists off the cap and takes a sip. He pulls a strip of beef jerky from his shirt pocket and takes a bite.

He gazes about and savors the moment. The clear blue sky is full of fluffy, white sculptures that drift by. An eagle soars overhead. Across the valley is a snow-capped mountain. Far below is a roaring river at the base of the valley.

He spots a hunting cabin about a hundred metres below him. Beside the cabin, he sees a small garden full of wildflowers, strawberry bushes, and a large grizzly bear.

...And the bear sees him. It stands on its hind legs and stares, as if it had been watching for some time.

The hiker's initial reaction is to freeze. Perhaps he thinks that if sits motionless, the bear will ignore him. If those are his thoughts, his thoughts are wrong.

After a beat, the bear charges. It's panic time. He abandons his backpack and canteen and runs straight up the hill, over the rugged terrain. The bear is much faster than he is.

The hiker looks over his shoulder.

The bear comes upon the backpack. It stops and sniffs it.

The hiker pauses to catch his breath.

The bear resumes its pursuit. The hiker resumes the sprint of his life.

EXT. FURTHER UP THE MOUNTAIN

As the hiker scrambles up the hill, the bear makes significant progress to close the gap between them with every heartbeat.

In desperation, the hiker decides to climb a tree.

Dumb idea.

The furry terror climbs the tree after him. It travels vertically much faster than the hiker. It is instantly at his heels and swipes at his hiking boots.

The hiker escapes onto a branch. As the bear reaches for him, he slides farther out on the branch. The farther out he moves, the more the branch bends.

Eventually, the bough breaks and the hiker falls about five metres to the ground. He checks himself over for a beat, then looks into the tree. He sees that with its sharp claws, the bear navigates the tree like it's a ladder.

The hiker looks around for a safe haven, an escape route, anything. He spies a hollowed out log and sprints for it. After a short, headfirst slide, he scrambles into the log.

INT. LOG - DAY

It's a snug fit but comfortable. The sound of his HEAVY BREATHING is soon accompanied by that of THE BEAR'S. He looks down at his feet, out the log. The bear looks back in at him. It reaches for the hiker who is safely out of reach.

...Or so he thought. A claw snags a shoelace. As he is pulled, the hiker fights the slide to no avail. He reaches down and unties the shoelace. The hiking boot is pulled off his foot.

With his newfound freedom, the hiker crawls farther into the log.

EXT. LOG - DAY

The bear inspects the shoe before it slings it to the side. It reaches in again.

INT. LOG - DAY

The hiker stares down at his feet until he sees the bear leave. After a moment, he relaxes. He's completely safe until a set of bear claws comb his hair.

The log is open at the other end.

The hiker slides away from the massive paw that reaches for him. The bear again disappears from view.

EXT. LOG

The large, muscle-bound animal braces itself against the log. It uses its power to rock the log back and forth. The log rocks a little too far and rolls down the hillside. It gets away from the bear.

EXT. LOWER DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

The log bounds down the rocky hillside until it crashes into a large boulder. It is fractured by the impact and is no longer a bear shelter.

The hiker pushes the shattered planks away and rises to his feet. He sways and braces himself against the large rock. Although his head spins, he can see that the bear is still in hot pursuit.

He also spots the hunting cabin about a dozen metres away. The hiker makes a mad dash for the cabin. He is much closer to the cabin than the bear. Unfortunately, the bear is much faster.

The hiker is still groggy from the log ride and he has only one shoe. He staggers and hobbles along as best he can.

He trips, stumbles and falls. He tries to get back up but the spinning world will not cooperate. The slant of the mountainside does not help. Every attempt to return to his feet ends with a flop.

He crawls, hunched on all fours. He is not moving quickly but he's moving.

He glances up the hill for the bear. It has halved the distance between them and has not slowed at all.

He looks toward the cabin. He's almost there. He rises to his feet and is able to run the last few metres.

EXT. CABIN

He arrives and falls against the door in plenty of time. He tries the door handle. To his delight, it is not locked. He opens the door and steps inside.

INT. CABIN

Once inside, the hiker SLAMS the door closed as the ursine monster is less than thirty metres away.

He slides a plank across the back of the door onto latches. He fights to catch his breath as he gasps and heaves.

After a beat, the door splinters in a violent explosion. The hiker is catapulted across the cabin, lands face down on the cabin floor.

He rolls over and sees the massive grizzly hover over him. The bear drools in anticipation of a tasty snack.

With its powerful jaws and big, sharp teeth, the bear adroitly removes the package of beef jerky from the hiker's shirt pocket and leaves.

EXT. CABIN

The massive grizzly bear strolls out of the cabin with its prize clenched safely in its teeth. It disappears into the wilderness.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Stew's beef jerky. It's worth the chase.

HIKER (O.S.)

Dammit! I was saving that!

FADE OUT