

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

Written by

Glendon McCarthy

14418 N 13th St.
Phoenix, AZ 85022
(602) 710-1627
glendonmccarthy@hotmail.com

EXT. PHOENIX, ARIZONA - LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - SUNRISE

Lookout Mountain with the sun rising beyond the twinkling metro area. Desert mountains are grey, ragged outlines in the distance.

EXT. HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - SUNRISE

A small, white stucco home at the base of Lookout Mountain.

INT. BEDROOM - SUNRISE

The morning light illuminates a modest bedroom, walls covered with high adventure, mountaineering type posters. The room is neatly crammed full of the accoutrements of active, outdoor boyhood. A digital clock reads 5:14. HENRY, age 6, is burrowed in his bed. He sleeps propped up with pillows and has a cannula in his nose running to a nearby OXYGEN MACHINE that rhythmically COMPRESSES and DECOMPRESSES.

From a nearby room comes the muffled, O.S., BEEPING of an ALARM CLOCK. A moment later, Henry's CLOCK flashes to 5:15 and also begins to BEEP. Henry reaches out and switches it off.

From somewhere O.S., a DOOR is heard OPENING and CLOSING in the house. A moment later, Henry's door opens and the silhouette of his mother SARAH, early 30's, stands in the doorway.

SARAH

Henry. Henry, we gotta get going.
We gotta start early today. Mr.
Kaiser and his boys will be here to
pick you up at 7. C'mon,
sweetheart. I know you don't want
to miss going hiking.

Henry removes the oxygen tube, stretches, and crawls out of bed. He gives Sarah a hug and they move into the hall.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Henry pushes a four wheeled, medical supply cart down the hall to the living room. A kitchen is separated by a short counter. The cart contains several pieces of medical equipment and a tangle of electrical chords and hoses.

Henry manages to pull one chord free and plugs it in. The EQUIPMENT lights up and begins to PURR like a computer hard drive.

Henry removes a small black vest resembling a life jacket from the cart. He dons it and snaps the buckles shut. Two vacuum hoses run from one of the PURRING DEVICES and Henry connects these to the vest. He pushes buttons on the DEVICE and it begins to WHIR. The vest inflates and begins to rapidly vibrate Henry's torso.

Sarah enters the room dressed for the day. She holds a well used firefighter helmet in one hand and a fighter pilot helmet in the other. Both are well marked with the scrawling of well-wishers.

SARAH

Firefighter or pilot today?

HENRY

(his voice shaky from the
vest's vibrations)

Fi-i-i-re-fi-i-gh-ter-r-r.

She hands Henry the firefighter helmet and he buckles it on while climbing into a recliner.

Sarah clicks on a nebulizer motor sitting on top of the cart. A breathing mask is attached to the motor by a tube and it begins to spray a fine mist. She hands Henry the mask and he places it over his nose and mouth, breathing deeply. The vest, helmet, and mask make Henry look strikingly similar to a firefighter in turnouts and respirator.

Sarah moves into the attached kitchen and Henry picks up a remote, clicking on the TV. He flips disinterestedly through kids programs and stops on a channel showing climbers negotiating a rocky face. His eyes widen and he settles in. Sarah moves into the attached kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Sarah works at a counter exclusively reserved for prescription bottles, syringes, tubing, natural supplements and a variety of other medical supplies. She somehow simultaneously scrambles some eggs, prepares the day's medications, and packs a sack lunch.

After a moment, she pauses and watches Henry as he watches the television. Climbers hang precariously by their fingertips from an impossible height.

SARAH

None of that today, right?

Henry nods and smiles, liking the idea.

Sarah finishes preparing the days medical necessities for Henry and places a small plate of eggs and toast at a table. She looks at her watch.

SARAH (CONT'D)
That's 45 minutes, Henry. You're good. Give me some good coughs.

Henry clicks the TV off, carefully hangs the nebulizer mask on its motor, and unhooks himself from the vest. He removes the firefighter helmet, takes a deep breath, and begins to cough. After several forced coughs, he hacks up a mouthful of mucus. He grabs a clump of tissues from a box on the cart, spits into it, and drops it in the garbage.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Nice. Dr. Bradford would be proud.
OK, come get something to eat.

Henry sits at the table and picks up his fork. He does not touch the food sitting in front of him. The PHONE rings and Sarah answers.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Hello. Oh, hi Jack. You guys on your way over? Yeah, we're just finishing up. He should be ready in about half an hour. He's super excited. We got a canteen belt at the surplus store and he wanted to sleep in it. You still planning on doing Lookout Mountain? No, we haven't been to the top before. He can't wait. OK, we'll see you in a bit.

Sarah hangs up and looks over at Henry, his food still untouched.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Kaiser's are on the way.

She looks at the untouched meal.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Nothing today?

Henry shakes his head.

SARAH (CONT'D)
(sighs)
Alright. I've got the pump ready.

Sarah retrieves a child sized backpack from the medical supply counter. A narrow plastic tube runs out of it. She hands the end of the tube to Henry, which he takes while lifting his shirt. A gastrostomy tube is surgically implanted in his upper abdomen. He connects the narrow tube to it as Sarah unzips the backpack. A small feeding pump and plastic bag of formula are inside.

Sarah pushes the pump's buttons and it begins to cycle. She helps Henry put the backpack on and neatly coils the excess tube within the backpack before zipping closed. She then proceeds to hand him a series of medications which he ingests with impressive efficiency.

SARAH (CONT'D)
OK, go ahead and get dressed while
I finish up in here.

Henry finishes gulping down a huge glass of water and then bolts down the hall.

SARAH (CONT'D)
(calling)
Brush your teeth!

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The door crashes open and Henry flies in. He hurls open his closet, which is packed, and dives in, flinging clothes left and right.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah has carefully arranged a variety of pills, syringes, and inhalers on the counter. She rests for a moment, enjoying a sip of coffee. Henry tromps into the kitchen. He wears full combat fatigues including boots, canteen belt, helmet and an enormous backpack. He looks as though he is about to fall over under the weight.

SARAH
(laughing)
Whoa there, little fella. You're
going on a nature hike, not
invading Iraq. I think you need to
tone it down a little bit.

Henry looks down at himself and then up at his mom, not fully comprehending.

SARAH (CONT'D)
(regaining her composure)
OK, hold on, we can work with this.

She takes his hand and leads him back towards his bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah kneels in front of Henry. He now wears only camouflage pants, T-shirt, canteen belt, sneakers and hat.

SARAH
Much better. OK?

Henry nods and smiles. He gives her a hug.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Good. They'll be here in about
twenty minutes. Why don't you go
ride your bike and see if you can
do some more coughs, alright?

Henry nods and runs out the door.

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Henry rides his bike up a hill on the sidewalk in front of his home. He pumps the peddles hard and his breathing is labored. He reaches the top and stops as a van full of energetic kids pulls in front of his house. JACK KAISER, 38, steps out and waves.

JACK
Hey, Henry! Ready to do some
hiking?

Henry waves back and begins to pedal toward them. His breathing has increased and grown more raspy.

HENRY'S POV

Henry rides down the hill towards the van, but his vision is blurred. His breathing is shallow and labored.

BACK TO SCENE

Henry whizzes by the van and a startled Jack, riding nearly to his front door. He drops his bike and stumbles towards the door.

HENRY'S POV

The front door is totally out of focus now and Henry is gasping for breath. His view becomes a rapidly closing black tunnel. He takes three steps towards the door, stumbles, and falls, his helmeted head bouncing on the concrete walkway.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henry lies unconscious on his bed in tank top and boxers. Sarah kneels beside him holding the oxygen mask on his face. With her free arm she strokes his hair. He wakes.

SARAH

It's OK, baby. You're OK. Mamma's here.

Henry looks around and sees his hiking gear lumped on a chair. He looks at Sarah.

SARAH (CONT'D)

There will be another day, sweetheart. I called the Cystic Fibrosis clinic and told Dr. Bradford what happened. She's worried about you and wants to admit you to the Children's Hospital first thing tomorrow.
(starts crying)
They'll run some tests to see if it's a lung infection or what. They'll get you fixed up, baby, good as new. Mr. Kaiser said he'd take you up the mountain anytime. We just have to make sure you're healthy first.

Henry looks away.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(composing herself)
I know it's hard, baby. I'm sorry.

Henry turns towards the wall and pulls the blanket over his head. Sarah rubs his leg.

SARAH (CONT'D)

We do the best we can though, right?

Henry remains motionless.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Alright, sweetheart. Get a good night's sleep. We'll figure out what's going on in the morning. I love you.

Henry is nonresponsive. Sarah turns off the oxygen and removes the mask from his face. She rises, looks at him, and leaves the room, slowly shutting the door behind her. Henry starts to tremble under his blanket and a moment later begins to softly cry.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sarah stands outside Henry's door. She hears him begin to cry and covers her face as she too silently breaks down.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The clock reads 4:48. Henry rolls over, his eyes slowly open, and he looks at his hiking gear.

EXT. LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - SUNRISE

Henry stands dressed in his hiking gear at the base of the mountain. He looks to the summit, adjusts his canteen belt, and starts up.

EXT. LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - EARLY MORNING

Henry has made some progress up the mountain and pauses at an overlook to enjoy the view. He rests one foot jauntily on a rock as he takes a long pull from his canteen. He snaps the canteen back into its canvas holder and continues. No one else is to be seen.

EXT. LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - LATER

Henry squats on his haunches in the middle of the trail. He holds a stick and is drawing something in the dirt. He seems totally immersed in his drawing, but then looks up. He studies something fifteen feet down the trail.

HENRY'S POV

A Mojave Green RATTLESNAKE is coiled on the trail. A rocky wall on one side of the trail and a drop off on the other prevent going around.

BACK TO SCENE

Henry looks down and goes back to his drawing. He then sets the stick down and picks up a stone. He tosses it toward the RATTLESNAKE and it begins to BUZZ. Henry slowly rises and turns. A short distance away a steep, rough trail branches off and heads directly to the summit. Henry looks up the gravelly path, hikes up his belt, and begins to climb.

EXT. LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - MID MORNING

Henry scrambles slowly but steadily up the steep trail. He breathes hard. He stops, pulls his inhaler from his pocket, and takes a long drag before returning it to his pocket and continuing.

EXT. LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - LATER

The steepest, loosest part of the trail yet and Henry is on all fours, scrambling. Two feet forward and one foot back, the dust is thick and he is coughing. He wipes the sweat from his face with a forearm and reaches for his inhaler, but it slips through his fingers and slides twenty feet down the trail. His coughing is worse, but he looks to the oh-so-close summit and pushes on.

HENRY'S POV

The trail ahead is in and out of focus. His breathing is shallow with a noticeable wheeze. Then the blackness of the tunnel as it begins to close on the light.

BACK TO SCENE

Henry's hand slips and his face strikes the dirt. He lies gasping and then slowly lifts his dirt smeared face. There is an abrasion on his forehead and are tears in his eyes. He again looks toward the summit, hangs his head, and cries.

EXT. LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - LATE MORNING

Henry coming back down the main trail, tired, head down. He carries his web belt in one hand, canteen dragging in the dirt. His inhaler is in the other.

EXT. LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - MOMENTS LATER

Henry walks around a boulder and comes to an abrupt halt. A MAN, late 50's, is sprawled face down across the trail. Henry takes in the Man with a suspicious eye. Henry looks around for help, but none is to be found. He picks up a large stick and moves cautiously towards the Man. Henry crouches next to the unmoving Man and cautiously shakes him several times. There is no response. Henry grabs the Man's shoulder and with surprising strength hefts him onto his back. He has an abrasion on his head similar to Henry's. The Man's eyes open.

MAN
(groans)
Help. My heart. Help.

Henry stands quickly. The suspicion is gone now and he looks again for aid. The Man begins to gesture towards his pants.

MAN (CONT'D)
My phone, my phone.

Henry reaches down and shakily pulls a cellphone from his pocket.

MAN (CONT'D)
911. Please. Call 911. Please.

Henry looks at the phone. The screen is shattered from the man's fall. Henry shows the Man and hands it back.

MAN (CONT'D)
(groans)
Oh, no.

Henry looks around and begins to rise, but the Man grabs his arm.

MAN (CONT'D)
(pleading)
Don't! Please, no. Don't go. I'm alone.
(crying)
Please don't go. Don't leave me here. Please don't. Don't leave me alone. Please.

Henry crouches back down, not sure what to do. The Man releases his arm and grabs his hand. After a moment, Henry begins to stroke the Man's hair the same way Sarah stroked his the night before.

MAN (CONT'D)
(calmed)
How old are you?

Henry looks away.

MAN (CONT'D)
(absently)
You alone?

Henry nods.

MAN (CONT'D)
(incredulously)
Folks?

Henry shakes his head. The man's eyes widen, but he then relaxes.

MAN (CONT'D)
(half coughing, half
chuckling)
I respect that. I do.

The man takes a long look at Henry and then looks away.

MAN (CONT'D)
(long pause)
I had a boy once. Long time ago.
Not now. Let him go.

The Man moves an arm over his face.

MAN (CONT'D)
(breaking down)
I let him go. Here I am now and I'm
all alone and I let him go.
(sobbing)
Oh God, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

The Man removes his arm, wiping his eyes, and looks at Henry.

MAN (CONT'D)
(quietly but desperately)
Forgive me. Oh, please forgive me.
I let him go. Will you please? Will
you please forgive me?

Henry stops stroking the Man's hair and nods.

HENRY
I forgive you.

Tears stream down the Man's face and he nods. Henry offers his canteen to the Man. The Man nods and Henry puts the canteen to his lips and he drinks. Henry then pours water over the Man's abrasion, washing some of the grit and blood away.

MAN

Thanks. Thank you.
(labored but calm)
You go on now. I'm alright. You go on home to your folks now, before you get into trouble up here. I'm OK now. Go on home.

The man is peaceful and his hand goes limp. His eyes close and the gradual rise and fall of his chest slows to a stop as he dies. Henry pauses, taking in what's happened, and then resumes stroking his hair.

FADE TO:

EXT. LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - LATE MORNING

Henry kneels on the trail, the man's head in his lap. He continues to stoke his hair.

O.S., voices from down the trail and two hikers come around the corner. They halt abruptly and take in the scene. Henry looks at them and then down at the Man. He gently puts the Man's head down and slowly rises.

EXT. BASE OF LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN - NOON

Henry comes down the trail with two firefighters. He has a blanket over his shoulders and a firefighter carries his canteen belt. Sarah is with a police officer at the bottom of the trail. She sees Henry and runs to him, crushing him in her arms.

SARAH

Are you okay? Are you okay?

HENRY

I'm okay.

Sarah hugs him and cries tears of relief. They begin to move down the trail. Henry pauses and looks back at the mountain. As he turns back, he has the faintest smile.

FADE TO BLACK.