

THE CRADLE

(BIG MILK: THE XYZ-FILES -- EPISODE 6)

V100

Written by

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Genre: Slipstream

Premise: Heidi revisits her childhood to retrieve a key piece of the puzzle

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FADE IN:

EXT. DAIRY QUEEN - NIGHT

The place is closed up for the night. The lights are off and the parking lot is empty.

The sound of BREAKING GLASS from somewhere around the back.

CLOSE ON:

A hand reaches through a broken window to unlatch a door.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - BACKROOM - NIGHT

Heidi opens the door and leads Casey inside the deserted restaurant.

Industrial refrigerators hum. Colored indicator lights illuminate the soft-serve machines and deep fat fryers.

CASEY
(whispers)
Is this place safe?

Heidi finds the power distribution box, opens it, and throws the main breaker. The lights go out and the refrigerators shut down. Darkness. Stillness.

HEIDI
It is now.

CASEY
Look, I know it helps that we're white and everything, but are you sure that law enforcement's been suspended?

HEIDI
It's the apocalypse. So yeah, call me crazy, but I'm going to assume we're good.

She finds an insulated food delivery bag and loads it with ice. She pushes a gallon jug of milk down into the ice and zips the bag. Then she helps herself to another gallon jug and carries both the bag and the milk through to --

THE DINING AREA --

HEIDI (cont'd)
We'll hole up here for the night and
see how things look in the morning.

CASEY
What time do you think they open?

HEIDI
Trust me, they won't be opening
tomorrow.

She installs herself in a booth, stows the insulated bag
under the table, yawns and stretches, then curls up with the
other jug of milk on the padded bench seating.

CASEY
Can I ask you something?

HEIDI
What?

CASEY
Don't you think it's kinda weird that
you consume so much dairy?

HEIDI
What, and you don't have any vices at
all?

Casey thinks for a moment.

CASEY
Well, I'm pretty lazy, I guess.
(beat)
So what's the deal with all the milk?

HEIDI
It lets me bend time and space and
see things that are hidden.

Casey can't tell if she's serious.

CASEY
Like the spice in 'Dune'?

HEIDI
More like too much cheese before
bedtime...

Her voice trails off. She snores softly, already asleep.

CASEY
Oh. Goodnight then.

He looks around for another booth, but the rest of the place is all plastic tables and hard wooden chairs.

LATER --

Casey lies on the floor between a couple of tables. He grumbles in his sleep.

Heidi's closed eyes flutter as she starts to dream...

EXT. YOUNG HEIDI'S HOUSE - DAY (DREAM SEQUENCE)

An idyllic 1950s suburban house and garden in an idyllic 1950s suburban neighborhood.

YOUNG HEIDI (7, a mini-me version of grown-up Heidi) is unsupervised and --

UP ON THE PITCHED ROOF --

-- where she scrambles awkwardly over a dormer window on her way to --

THE ROOF'S TOPMOST RIDGE

She crosses to a chimney. There's a ribbon tied around the chimney that runs back down to the ground. She hauls on it -- and a large cooler comes bumping into view.

Young Heidi sets the cooler down beside her. She takes out a carton of milk and inserts a straw. She gazes out wistfully over the deserted, sun-kissed neighborhood as she drinks...

LATER

Sunset. Empty milk cartons are strewn across the roof. A straw GURGLES as Young Heidi sucks the last of the milk out of the final carton. She tosses it away and sighs.

EVELYN (O.S.)

(calls)

Sweetie! I'm home!

Young Heidi sees her mom, EVELYN (30, with Audrey Hepburn chic, manners and appearance) open the garden gate and step into the front yard.

Young Heidi slides down the roof, flies over the guttering with a squeal of delight, and lands --

WHOMP! --

-- in the middle of a large, soft, cotton-wool bush.

EVELYN
Oh, there you are! Come on, let's see
what we can find you for supper!

She helps Young Heidi climb out of the bush, takes her hand,
and leads her inside.

INT. YOUNG HEIDI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Evelyn bustles about with plates and dishes. Young Heidi
sits at the table with a single place setting laid out in
front of her.

YOUNG HEIDI
Why don't you ever eat with me?

EVELYN
Oh Sweetie, we've talked about this.
It's not that I don't want to.

YOUNG HEIDI
Then why don't you?

EVELYN
Do you know how hard I have to work
just to take care of you?

YOUNG HEIDI
Yes, but --

EVELYN
-- No. You have no idea.

Her harsh words sting. Young Heidi looks like she might cry.

YOUNG HEIDI
It's hard work for me too. Stuck here
all day by myself.

EVELYN
(softens)
Look, it's just more convenient for
me to eat on the way home from work,
okay?

YOUNG HEIDI
Where do you go anyway? What do you
even do?

Evelyn deflects her questions by serving the food.

EVELYN

I made a special treat for you tonight: cheese casserole with baked curds. And for dessert, would you like junket or blancmange?

LATER

Evelyn clears away the empty plates and dishes. Young Heidi chases the last spoonful of blancmange around her bowl.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Now hurry up and finish. It's time for bed.

YOUNG HEIDI

Will you tell me a story?

EVELYN

I'm too tired for a story. And aren't you too old?

YOUNG HEIDI

Please?

INT. YOUNG HEIDI'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Young Heidi sits up in bed as Evelyn reads to her from a picture book called 'Goldilocks and the Three Spoons'.

EVELYN

...She was very hungry so she picked up the biggest spoon of all, which was an old wooden ladle. But when she tried to scoop out some yogurt, what do you think? The ladle was too big to go into the pot! So she picked up the dessert spoon instead, but even though it *looked* like it ought to fit, somehow it didn't!

YOUNG HEIDI

Why was the mouth of the jar so narrow?

EVELYN

Well, that's just how they package yogurt in Europe, Sweetie.

YOUNG HEIDI

But why?

EVELYN

I guess no-one really knows why.

YOUNG HEIDI

There has to be a reason.

EVELYN

Don't you want to know what happened next?

YOUNG HEIDI

I already know. She tried the plastic spoon and it fit and she ate as much yogurt as she wanted. The end.

She scooches down into the bed, turns her back to Evelyn and stares at the wall.

EVELYN

Well, that's not quite the end.

Young Heidi remains unresponsive. Story time is evidently over -- and Evelyn is happy enough to call it a day.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Good night then. I'll see you bright and early in the morning.

Evelyn backs unobtrusively out of the room, turning off the light and closing the door as she goes.

After a few moments, Young Heidi slips out of bed and pads silently to the door. She opens it and peeps out...

EXT. YOUNG HEIDI'S HOUSE - GARDEN - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Young Heidi finds the cooler beneath the chimney stack. She unties the ribbon and tugs it free of the chimney. Gathering up the ribbon in her arms, she heads for --

THE GARDEN GATE...

SUNRISE

From her hiding place in the bushes, Young Heidi watches Evelyn come trotting briskly down the garden path.

Evelyn reaches the gate and opens it. But it's not a gate at all: it's a solid door that's been painted to look like a gate set in a wall that's been painted to look like a street.

Evelyn steps through the door and disappears into the darkness beyond. The door automatically swings shut --

But before it closes completely, Heidi just has time to throw one end of the balled-up ribbon through the gap.

The door clicks shut. Heidi tries it anyway: it's locked.

She pulls on the ribbon, reeling it in, jerking it this way and that, until -- it catches!

She pulls carefully, hardly daring to breathe... CLICK!

The door swings open. Heidi inches cautiously forward.

INT. COVERED ARENA - CONTINUOUS (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Young Heidi emerges into a large, gray, dimly-lit, circular space. Her eyes go wide with amazement as she takes it all in.

Twelve identical doors are set into the walls at regular intervals, and in the center of the arena stands a KIOSK.

One side of the kiosk has a big blank panel with the word EXIT written above it and a big green button next to it.

Unseen machinery throbs somewhere far below.

It's a strange, scary place.

And then Young Heidi spots her mother:

Evelyn is standing in front of the next door along. Oblivious to Heidi's presence, she smooths her already immaculate outfit, opens the door and steps through.

Young Heidi crosses to Evelyn's door, opens it just a crack and peeps through.

HEIDI'S POV:

Evelyn walks up the garden path of a 1950s suburban house that's identical to Heidi's. A SMALL BOY (5, mop-haired and adorable) runs up to greet her.

SMALL BOY
Mommy, Mommy!

He throws his arms around her legs in a welcoming hug.

BACK TO SCENE:

Young Heidi closes the door. She looks stunned. She moves to the next door and tries again.

HEIDI'S POV:

The exact same house and yard. But this time with a GIRL of about Heidi's age who sits slumped and forlorn on a swing. Tears run down her face as she drifts idly back and forth.

BACK TO SCENE:

Heidi runs to the next door and cracks it open --

CRASH!

A CRAZED half-naked ten-year-old BOY leaps out of some bushes, throws himself at the door and stabs at Heidi with a sharpened stick.

Heidi slams the door on the Boy's arm. The stick falls from his grasp as he flinches back with a howl of pain and rage.

Heidi pushes the door all the way closed. Phew!

The Boy keeps thumping against it, but the door easily holds.

Young Heidi steps away from the door and once again considers her surroundings.

She walks across the open floor to --

THE KIOSK

She stands in front of the EXIT panel.

She reaches her hand toward the button... and then decides against it.

She walks around the Kiosk and discovers another panel: this one has a red button and a red sign that says 'AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY'.

At a loss, she steps back out onto the open, empty floor.

YOUNG HEIDI
Hello? Is anybody there?

A door SLAMS somewhere in the distance -- and two MILK NINJAS abseil down two ropes that drop down from the darkness above her.

They bundle Young Heidi into a white sack and carry her writhing, kicking body back to the Kiosk.

YOUNG HEIDI (cont'd)
No! What are you doing?! Let me go!

The Ninjas press the green button. WHOOSH! The EXIT panel slides open. They step through taking Heidi with them. The panel closes behind them.

In the sudden silence, the WHOOSH of another sliding panel.

We TRACK AROUND to the opposite side of the KIOSK and discover that the red 'AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL' panel now stands open.

Two SPACE ALIENS step out.

These guys are pale green bipeds about five feet tall and configured like a shark's egg case: each corner of their pillow-shaped bodies has a spindly limb extending vertically up (arms) or down (legs).

They look exactly like the aliens from the video game in episode 1.

They stand there placidly and don't seem to be doing much of anything, like two cows in a field chewing the cud.

HEIDI STARTLES AWAKE and --

THE DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - DAY

-- Heidi's eyes are open. She sits up. Realizing that the milk jug she's still clutching is empty, she discards it.

HEIDI
Casey, wake up. I know what to do.

She leaps to her feet and grabs the insulated bag.

Casey wakes. He moves more slowly, climbing to his feet and ironing out various aches and cramps.

HEIDI (cont'd)
Come on.

She makes for the rear door. Casey stumbles after her as best he can.

CASEY
What are we doing here? Following a
dream or a vision?

EXT. DAIRY QUEEN - DAY

Under the eaves in the rear of the building, Heidi whisks away a tarpaulin to reveal a Vespa 150 and a toolbox.

CASEY
Wow! Did you, like, know that was
going to be there?!

HEIDI
Shit.

CASEY
What?

HEIDI
No keys.

CASEY
No keys, no problem. I know this one.

He takes a screwdriver from the toolbox and removes the Vespa's front cover, then reaches in and pulls out the wiring harness. He disconnects one block, shorts out another, sets the kill switch to 'off' and --

VRRRM!

-- kick-starts that sucker into life.

EXT. HIGHWAY - VARIOUS SHOTS - DAY

The Vespa tools along the open highway, Casey in front and Heidi squeezed up tight behind. The insulated bag bounces up and down on the rear luggage rack. Good-time music plays.

FLY UP TO REVEAL what they cannot see: that suspended in the skies above the city that they're racing toward, there are THREE ENORMOUS ALIEN FLYING SAUCERS.

~ END ~