

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A winding gravel road at a hairpin turn. The two boys enter on bicycles, one clearly ahead of the other.

ALEX (11, Brown hair) lags behind. He's small and shrimpy. His clothes are far too big for him, and the seat on the bike too low. He pedals hard but the bike still wobbles from a lack of speed.

He looks down at his feet, and looks back up to see THOMAS (12, blonde) far ahead of him, comfortably pedaling with a BB rifle slung over his shoulder. Thomas is tall, lanky, and likes getting scratched up. His clothes fit better. He fits on his bike. He lets go of the handlebars and coasts down the path.

Alex looks back down at his feet, back up at Thomas. He stands up on the bicycle and starts to pedal as hard as he can. The bike kicks into gear, Alex looks thrilled.

He shows a toothy smile as he passes Thomas, looking back at him and laughing. As Alex turns his head back to the front, he comes up on the hairpin turn and crashes into a fence.

Thomas zooms past him, laughing. Alex picks himself up and gets back on his bike.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Now walking their bikes, the boys wander through a lush forest, arriving at a pond full of dark, sickly green water. There's an aluminum pipe with runoff and clouds of gnats flying just above the surface. A pier single pier sticks out.

The boys drop their bikes by the edge of the pond. Thomas sets the rifle down. Thomas immediately picks up a rock and skips it in the pond.

Alex walks over to the rifle and picks it up, brandishing it. He looks through the scope at Thomas - now with a stick in his hand, throwing up rocks and trying to hit them with his stick. Alex sets the rifle down.

He searches the ground, picking up a variety of sticks, testing them out. He grabs one, it breaks easily, he drops it. He grabs a big log, but he cant move it. Finally, he finds the right stick. He grabs it, swings it around a few times like a lightsaber and takes off.

Thomas is still doing the same thing. Alex comes up to him and strikes a Zorro type pose with his stick, challenging him to a fight. Thomas matches his pose exactly, and the boys start hitting their sticks together.

They're both smiling, eyes wide, adrenaline coursing. They've done this before. Alex fakes like he is going one way, getting Thomas off balance - using the opportunity to hit Thomas in the leg. He yowls in pain.

But he's right back up, he straightens himself out and it's back to it - wood chips fly off, the smiles are gone. Alex looks Thomas in the eye, Thomas right back. Thomas parries Alex's stick and sends it flying. He swings his own and hits Alex across the face.

Both boys stop. Alex runs his finger over a small cut on his cheek. There's a little blood, but everyone is ok. Alex looks worried for a minute, but he smiles again, laughing it off.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - DAY

Cut to a crosshairs hovering over an apple.

Thomas walks on the ridge of a hill overlooking a clearing in the woods. Thomas looks through binoculars while keeping a stick in his hand, swinging it wildly as he gets excited. Alex is off to the side, looking through the rifle.

THOMAS
Dude, dude, come here.

Alex looks at Thomas, who can hardly contain his excitement. Alex runs over to him, rifle in hand. Thomas holds his finger up to his lips.

THOMAS
Shh!

Alex tippy toes the last few steps; Thomas goes prone, looking down the hill with the binoculars. Alex scopes down the rifle, getting ready to fire. Thomas lets go of his binoculars and looks at Alex.

THOMAS
It's mine, let me take the first
shot

Alex doesn't even look up from the scope.

ALEX
Wait, I got this

THOMAS
Dude, give it

Thomas reaches for the gun and tries to tug it away from Alex.

ALEX

Hey!

Alex pulls it back, both boys keeping both of their hands on the weapon. The metal creaks, scratching the dirt, slipping in their hands.

They both pull back and forth, causing them to roll over. Thomas finally takes it from Alex. He scopes in, searching for his target. Alex looks at him and dives on him, trying to wrest the gun back.

Grunting, flailing, covered in dried grass, Thomas lets go of the weapon, now just wrestling with Alex. Their limbs tangled, bodies rolling. The fight shifts their weight on top of the gun, and it fires. There's a whine. They stop their roughhousing. Thomas gets up and grabs the binoculars, looking down the hill.

THOMAS

OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD!

Alex looks up to see Thomas grabbing him by the shoulders, shaking him, with wide eyes and an open jaw. Alex returns his thrill with a blank stare.

THOMAS

Come on, come on!!

Thomas runs ahead, binoculars swinging around his neck, stick in hand, whacking the tall grass around him as he runs.

Thomas comes up on something on the ground, Alex shows up behind him, rifle over his shoulder.

THOMAS

Dude, that's awesome.

The boys squat down. We hear the cries of a small mammal - perhaps a rabbit. Thomas prods the rabbit with his stick, the whines intensify.

Behind him, Alex's breath quickens, his eyes searching for answers around him - the ground, Thomas completely absorbed, the horizon. Alex runs away, rifle in hand still.

He sits behind a tree, his breath still fast, chest rising and falling every moment. He looks at the rifle, the scope, the length, the metal, the wood.

Thomas is still hunched over the animal, examining. We hear a click. Alex pushes Thomas out of the way.

THOMAS

Hey!

Alex raises the weapon. He takes a breath and holds it, firing another round into the rabbit. The whining stops. Thomas looks at Alex from the ground He drops the rifle and runs away.

EXT. SHED - DAY

Alex curls up against the wall of a shed in a fetal position, crying. Long breaths, red eyes, lots of tears. His cries turn to sobs, and then barely controlled deep breaths.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The boys return to the same hairpin turn on their bicycles, Thomas pedals ahead of Alex, who makes no effort to catch up.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - SUNSET

Alex walks, looking down at his feet, crunching the leaves below him. He looks at everything around him, so full of life - birds, leaves, insects.

He walks out onto a rock, overlooking the pond.

Thomas is in the water with a swimming noodle. As Alex steps out onto the rock, he undresses. Shoes off, shirt off, down to his swimming trunks. He walks up to the edge.

THOMAS

Can-non-ball! Can-non-ball! Can-
non-ball! Can-non-ball!

The chant goes on. Alex approaches the edge of the rock. It's mossy and slippery. His feet halfway off. He looks down into the dark green water, which returns his stare. The gnats hover just above the surface, algae swaying slowly in the current. White bubbles swirl. The chant continues. Alex takes a breath, holds his nose, and jumps in.

THE END.