

PUFFER

By

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1 INT. LOUNGE ROOM - EVENING 1

The lounge room is a dim shabby non-descript lounge room. Slumped in a well worn EASY CHAIR is an equally shabby and non-descript OLD MAN. Next to the chair is the remains numerous beer bottles and an overflowing ashtray. The man is watching the TV, zombie-like, as a documentary showing tropical fish is playing.

TV ANNOUNCER

... The Tetraodontidae, or Puffer Fish, is a relatively shy and timid species. This trait, coupled with a highly maneuverable yet quite slow swimming style, unfortunately makes them a target for larger more aggressive predators...

2 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING 2

A timid looking YOUNG GIRL sits next to a FISHBOWL on a table. Inside the bowl is a lonely PUFFER FISH, looking slightly too big for the bowl. The girl rests her head on her arm, gazing towards the fishbowl, lost in a daydream.

The YOUNG GIRL is jolted out of her daydream by the OLD MAN, SHOUTING at her from the living room.

3 INT. LOUNGE ROOM - EVENING 3

The man has clearly been drinking, and slurs his speech as he alternates between cursing to himself and barking out complaints to the young girl. His gaze remains fixed at the TV however.

4 INT. HALLWAY - EVENING 4

The YOUNG GIRL hurries herself, getting ready to leave the house, putting on her hat and a large PUFFY COAT. In the background the OLD MAN continues abusing her from the living room.

5 INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT 5

The YOUNG GIRL is wandering through a grocery store purchasing food items. She is/has been clearly crying.

She comes to the meat aisle, and with a combination of disappointment and defeat, sees that the store is sold out of steak.

6 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 6

The YOUNG GIRL serves the man a CHICKEN DINNER. The OLD MAN is not pleased with the dinner and starts shouting at the YOUNG GIRL.

The OLD MAN angrily throws the plate across the table and ungainly rises out of his seat. As the man stumbles out of the room, he curses at the YOUNG GIRL and swings at the FISHBOWL, knocking it down, causing it to smash on the floor.

7 INT. KITCHEN - LATER 7

The YOUNG GIRL is kneeling on the floor next to the broken glass, spilt water and her lifeless PUFFER FISH. YOUNG GIRL is crying.

8 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING 8

It's the next day and we see the YOUNG GIRL serving the OLD MAN his dinner again. The OLD MAN is ranting again. Grumbling and complaining. This time the dinner is a small but beautifully prepared PLATE OF FISH AND CHIPS.

In the background we hear the TV still going. It's an unintelligible documentary type program again.

The OLD MAN proceeds to gorge himself, looking begrudgingly pleased with the dinner. Suddenly he is aware that something is not quite right. He starts to feel faint and his vision goes blurry.

TV ANNOUNCER

(in the background)

... The puffer's unique and distinctive natural defenses help compensate for their slow locomotion. It is not believed that puffers produce toxins themselves, rather it is caused by a build up of the poisons that the fish ingest on a daily basis...

The last thing the OLD MAN sees is the girl standing across the table from him, smiling sweetly, putting on her hat and puffy coat, before he keels over face first into his plate, stone cold dead.

9 EXT. HARBOUR - EVENING

9

The YOUNG GIRL is sitting on a ferry with her SUITCASE packed beside her. She is resting her head on her arm, smiling and looking dreamily out across the open expanse of the ocean.

10 EXT. HARBOUR - EVENING

10

*** alternate ending ***

We see a CLOSE UP of the YOUNG GIRL with the ocean in the background and we hear the sound of seagulls, ships and other ocean life. The girl is gazing out dreamily to the ocean, smiling this time.

As we zoom out the YOUNG GIRL gets up and we see her turn and start to push a wheelchair beside her. In the wheelchair sits the OLD MAN, now clearly paralyzed with a tube running from his nose. The YOUNG GIRL starts walking down the jetty, pushing the wheelchair in front of her. Still smiling.