Movie: Wrong Turn (2003)

 Three Finger

Synopsis

Inspired by our December 12 trek through New Mexico, *The Hills Have Eyes, Wrong Turn* is a horror movie depicting medical student, Chris Flynn, and his unfortunate rendezvous with five motorists stranded in the West Virginia "holler." Just when you might be tempted to argue that *Silent Hill* (2006) is a more deserving horror movie in West Virginia, we are made aware of the role of the main character. Since the medical student has WV license plates, he most likely attends West Virginia University. Any horror movie depicting a WVU medical student warrants top billing in 52in52 (with all due respect to *Silent Hill*)!

While it's near impossible to mention 'West Virginia' and 'medical student' in the same sentence without thinking about Morgantown (or Charleston), it's the film's rural setting that allows for a sinister, if not prejudicial, backdrop for horror, with the archetypal, prosocial warning to "be careful taking the path less beaten." Scott even references *Deliverance* (1972) despite that film being set in Georgia (he would have done well to check out April 3 on our 52in52 itinerary). While the history of the cannibalistic, half-feral, mutants is disclosed in subsequent sequels, the following post is based solely on the original film.

How it relates to the field of psychiatry

Wrong Turn serves to review the algorithm on how to diagnostically approach mental illness. The 3-step process includes ensuring that a patient's chief complaint is not due to a) another general medical condition or b) the direct physiologic effects of a substance. The DSM-5 lists potential substances as medications, drugs, or toxins. Only after these are ruled-out should a psychiatrist c) attribute the patient's symptoms to mental illness.

A. Rule-out Another Medical Disorder

As early as the opening credits, we are reminded of the effects genetics play in the predisposition of mental illness. Signs and symptoms such as "psychosis" and violent outbursts" appear in a montage of newspaper articles along with hints genetic predisposition.

B. Rule-out the Direct Physiologic Effects of a Substance

Immediately following the opening credits, we see Chris Flynn driving to Raleigh. The music on the car radio references whiskey, and serves as foreshadowing to alcohol's influence on the plot. When his route is blocked by a chemical (toxin) spill, viewers are left to wonder if the highway is a corridor for the transport of hazardous materials and if so, whether exposure to previous spills are the cause of the mutants' pathology. In this sense, *Wrong Turn* may be viewed as a rhetorical case study of a substance- or toxin-induced psychotic disorder. Soon after he crashes into the hikers' truck, they refer to Fran and Evan as "stoners," and Jessie calls Chris a "mule."

C. Mental Illness

Once A and B above have been ruled-out, psychiatrists will begin to formulate the most likely diagnosis based on current, recent, and past signs and symptoms. Since it's established that the prominent symptoms are psychotic, our most likely and differential diagnoses will come from the Schizophrenia and Related Disorders chapter.

Since *Wrong Turn* is likely a case study of a toxin-induced psychotic disorder (choice B above), elaboration on a primary psychotic disorder is beyond the scope of this post. Interestingly, alcohol use also figured prominently in many adaptations of the blood feud between the West Virginia family, the Hatfields, and their Kentucky rivals (McCoys). *Wrong Turn* then is another cautionary tale in West Virginia folklore about the hazards of excessive alcohol use.

Key Words: West Virginia, holler, cannibalism, Deliverance, substance-induced psychotic disorder, Hatfields and McCoys, alcoholism, Joss Whedon, Cabin in the Woods

Characters from Wrong Turn fitting into Joss Whedon's Archetypes	
Cabin in the Woods archetype	**Character from *Wrong Turn***
The Slut	Francine
The Athlete	Jessie Burlingame
The Scholar	Chris Flynn
The Fool	Evan
The Virgins	Scott and Carly (we had to improvise)