

FOREST GROVE

Written and Directed by Maya Churi

Official Selection 2005 Sundance Online Film Festival

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Running time: 38 minutes

Forest Grove can be viewed in its entirety at:

www.forestgrovestates.com

SYNOPSIS

Forest Grove tells the story of Charlie, a fourteen-year-old boy who swims across his gated community, an idyllic residence where happiness is secured and security is guaranteed. Hopping from pool to pool he encounters various neighbors, meets strange inhabitants, and even falls in love. But the Arcadian world of Forest Grove is not as picture perfect as Charlie once thought. Forced to flee the community Charlie's world comes crashing down when the secrets of his past rise to the surface.

CREDITS

Written, Directed and Produced by
Maya Churi

Photographs by
Jim Denault

Design by
Michelle Perreault

Animation by
Jason Snell

Architecture by
Riley Triggs

Music by
Jason Snell

Information Architecture by
Fiona Brandon

Editing Consultant
Josh Cramer

Model Makers
Maya Churi
Riley Triggs
Mikolaj Szoska
David Kilpatrick
Ariel Churi
Ivan Talijancic

Additional artwork by
Mikolaj Szoska

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Forest Grove was inspired by a trip to Texas. During the initial approach into the San Antonio airport, the view from the sky was of hundreds of new homes winding their way around cul de sacs. In some areas the homes were not even finished and the cul de sac sat empty, surrounded by dirt. In other areas each new home was dotted with its own glistening blue swimming pool, like markers on a map. The image brought to mind John Cheever's short story *The Swimmer*. But it wasn't until Maya visited an exclusive, high security, gated community that same weekend that the story came together.

To emphasize the spatial experience of living in a gated community the set for the story is an architect's model of Forest Grove. The model is approx. 8ft. x 12ft. and includes 36 houses, 12 swimming pools, a community center, and a guards station, as well as the single road that leads out of the community and straight to the shopping mall. Still photographs were taken of miniature styrene plastic people enacting the scenes and then edited/animated (with the use of Flash) to create a complete story which is accessible online.

ABOUT CHARLIE

Charlie is an introverted teenager who spends more time watching other people than experiencing life himself. Outwardly he seems like a timid, normal kid but a closer look reveals that Charlie has an angry side. Charlie's mother left him and his father not so long ago and his last memory of her is a conversation about swimming and Forest Grove. This memory is his inspiration to swim across the exclusive community.

Charlie's mother always felt unsafe. She felt that she and her family lived in a bad neighborhood where life was insecure. Across the street from their house Forest Grove – a high security, gated community – is being built in front of their eyes. Charlie has spent a lot of time sneaking into the community, wanting the same things his mom wants. But they can't afford it. Hearing his mother talk

about how depressing their home is and how wonderful Forest Grove is makes him believe that inside the gates of Forest Grove is perfection. Meanwhile outside the community bad things happen. After all, his mother left him. That sort of stuff doesn't happen inside Forest Grove, he thinks. In Charlie's mind he wants to live in Forest Grove. He's there so often that the residents think he lives there. All of this comes to a head when the neighborhood bullies force Charlie out of the community. As he runs through the streets outside of the community, past the gas stations and fast food restaurants he eventually ends up in the vast and lonely mall parking lot. He panics. As he stands there, unable to breath, it hits him that nothing is perfect.

ABOUT THE FOREST GROVE COMMUNITY (from *The Daily Herald*)

Forest Grove was built in 1971 over the once deserted town of Forrester Park. The town had been abandoned since 1918 when a locust infestation killed all the crops and all the industry along with it. But in the late sixties a man named John Grove bought the land and designed a community which was to be comparable only to Eden itself. In the speech he gave when he broke ground he said, "Forest Grove will be a place where you can sit by your crystal blue pool and wash away the recollection of the outside world. A place where kids can grow up knowing that their home is the safest place on earth, like a warm bed at night, tucked tightly, safe and secure. A place where there is no pain and no fear."

Imagine waking up each morning in the luxury of a community master planned to meet your every need and desire. A place where the birds are always singing and the sun is always shining. A place where you can socialize with other residents in the community lounge, play golf on a private course set among acres of virginal woodlands or splash around in a crystal-blue pool, washing away the recollection of the outside world. A place with the community spirit of a high school cheerleading team and the charm of a small country town. A place where happiness is secured and security is guaranteed. Forest Grove is a place where the good life, is a way of life.

John G. Grove has created a sanctuary comparable only to Eden itself. Inspired by the gardens he visited in Europe as a child Mr. Grove has designed a community filled with imported Live Oaks, Crepe Mertels and Mimosa trees. Set within these luxurious plantings, are houses that he

designed himself, houses that fit the needs of any growing family. "I've always felt the community is something that needs to be nurtured and protected, like a child. My goal for Forest Grove is to create a safe space that facilitates the positive features of living in a close-knit community." Mr. Grove states.

Understanding that safety and the peaceful co-existence of residents comes first for any family, Mr. Grove has implemented several security features into the design and layout of the community itself. In Forest Grove, the community is under constant security surveillance and every home comes standard with a security system. There is a security staff that patrols the community 24 hours a day and manages a house check program which is very popular with residents. The program ensures that a security officer does a daily walk around their home during absence. In addition, there is a community run Disturbance Control Committee that monitors the comings and goings of teen residents, especially when it comes to curfew. But probably the most impressive aspect of Forest Grove is the 10-foot security fence that surrounds the entire community. "The fence is built of patented high-grade steel" Mr. Grove points out, "The steel is so strong that it can withstand all the elements, insuring against any form of trespassing, vandalism or robbery."

But security isn't the only reason to move here. Forest Grove is a place where beauty and good will are part of everyday life, where nature and altruism define daily existence. The Club, Forest Grove's exclusive recreational center features an 18-hole golf course, tennis courts, state-of-the-art gym and an Olympic size swimming pool. The Club also offers nightly activities for children and adults, movies, talent shows and field trips to museums and the theatre. And eating is not to be taken lightly in Forest Grove. The casual dining room offers a delightful buffet of fresh foods and the formal dining room gives couples the opportunity to spend a romantic evening together, without having to go very far. Late nights are often spent in the cigar lounge and bar where lively discussions are apt to take place. So, whether enjoying an afternoon swim with your family, having a delicious dinner with friends and neighbors or spending a night at home without interruption, the Forest Grove lifestyle offers you a feeling of peace, security and relaxation.