



FRESH BLOOD SELECTS

# **RUNT**

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FADE IN:

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY

An impenetrable sheet of white snow blankets the world. The gnarled silhouettes of trees, looming ominously.

A Snowy Owl perched peacefully on one of the branches.

The creature's eyes widen in alarm, beats its wings and suddenly flies off.

As a shape comes bounding, materializing out of the snow.

A WOLF PUP.

Running for it's life, zigzags between trees.

Not far behind, something big, four legged and fast is giving chase.

Both shapes swallowed by the snow.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Darkness.

The car light clicks on casting a pallid orange glow.

A WOMAN climbs into the driver's seat, carrying with her an 870 REMINGTON rifle.

She drapes the rifle across her lap.

There's no panic.

Rhythmic breathing. Slow and steady.

Begins to adjust every mirror fastidiously, obsessively. Leaving bloodied fingerprints on the glass.

Fixes her gaze to the passenger seat to reveal a tote bag. It reads, "Merrin's Magical Toyland".

Hesitates a beat before turning the key over.

The engine jumps to life.

The garage door opens. Chains GRIND and the motor WHINES and SCREECHES.

White morning light gradually fills the garage.

The woman stares at herself in the rearview.

Only catching the reflection of her dark brown eyes,  
encircled by black rings.

Calmly places the rifle onto the backseat.

She slides the car into reverse and backs out into the road.

As she's reversing, a MAN stumbles into the garage.

He waves his arms and SCREAMS but his voice is drowned out by  
the howling wind outside.

His clothes are soaked with blood and there's a gaping wound  
in his shoulder.

He makes the go after her, instead --

Collapses to one knee, mouth opening to SCREAM again.

Bleeding into...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING

SCREECHING wind. Whipping and swirling. Snow and dirt casting  
a thin haze.

The very same car winds its way through a country road.

The road is surrounded by an impenetrable wall of Douglas  
Firs. Thick pine needles dusted in a thin layer of white  
snow.

Reveal the driver of the car.

MERRIN SHAW, late 20's. Expressionless. Eyes locked straight  
ahead. Looks drawn, hollow.

Static blasts through the radio.

Every now and then she will absently straighten her shoulder-  
length blonde hair.

Grips the wheel too tightly. Knuckles white.

She twitches --

As the radio comes back to life.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
It's shaping up to be that kind of  
a weekend, folks.  
(MORE)

RADIO VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Expect plenty of turgid weather  
 moving through the Midwest, rapidly  
 spreading into Canada. Record lows  
 are expected with temperatures  
 dropping to well-below freezing.  
 Brrrrrr-

Merrin kills the radio, puts the wipers on.

They SWISH and SCRAPE against the glass.

A sign up ahead, barely visible. "Destiny's Cove".

EXT. DESTINY'S COVE - MORNING

The car has pulled off onto the shoulder of the road,  
 overlooking a bluff.

A spectacular view, mile upon mile of forest. A snow-capped  
 mountain range as the backdrop.

Merrin has parked the car directly under a gnarled and  
 massive Honey Locust.

She switches on the high beams, revealing...

Engravings etched in the thick bark.

The words, "MARRY ME" with a down arrow drawn directly below.

MEMORY FLASH:

*Hazy, oversaturated light, ethereal and dream-like. The  
 golden glow of sunlight.*

*A better time.*

*DOUG GORDON, 29, shaggy black hair, big chested - could get  
 lost in his arms.*

*The same man, last seen with a six inch gunshot wound in his  
 shoulder.*

*He's on one knee in front of Merrin. Grasping her face in  
 surprise.*

*Positioned directly where the arrow has been indicated on the  
 Honey Locust.*

*She nods her head profusely. Tears of joy running down her  
 cheeks.*

*As Doug slips a ring on her finger.*

END MEMORY

Grey, dark and stark. Merrin's phone lights up - she's just received a message.

Eyes the phone, contemplating if she should even bother.

She does.

DOUG (V.O.)

Merrin...

(labored breathing)

It's Doug. Merrin pick up. You...  
you- think about what you doing.  
You gotta turn yourself in, Merr.  
You gotta do that. Not for me...  
for him.

(coughing fit)

For him...

In the background, the sound of police sirens BLARING.

DOUG (V.O.)

I-I can't see- I can't fucking see.

Wait, I... he's blue...

(screaming)

Why is he blue?!!!

The phone goes dead.

Merrin stares at her hand which is now trembling.

She switches off the high beams.

Backs the car out of the parking spot, and returns to the road.

The car suddenly jolts to a halt.

The window rolls down, Merrin twists the wedding ring off her finger and throw it into the road.

Snow gradually covers the ring until it's gone.

EXT. BRIDGE - LATER

The car crosses over a short, suspended bridge that acts as the primary entry point into the town.

"Welcome to the town of Derrington, pop 48".

EXT. FOREST ROAD - LATER

The car has veered off the main drag, cutting through a narrow dirt road.

Carved out between the endless rows of Firs.

Pine needles CRUNCHING under the tires.

CLEARING

Merrin slows...

Arrives at a clearing, devoid of trees. Acres of snow laid out in front of her, in stark contrast to the forested area.

The wind relents for a few moments. The snowy haze dissipates.

Set back upon a hundred meters from the car, reveal a LOG CABIN.

This isn't some frontiersman's abode. Far from it.

Two storeys, luxurious, like something out of a travel magazine.

A FROZEN LAKE nearby. The surface smooth like fine glass.

Standing off from the main house is a small wooden garden SHED.

Merrin takes a beat to take all of it in.

MEMORY FLASH:

*Younger Doug, carries a younger Merrin in his arms, face blindfolded.*

MERRIN

*This isn't what I had in mind when I said 'sweep me off my feet'.*

DOUG

*Nearly...*

MERRIN

*I hate surprises, about as much as I hate pickles.*

*A few more steps.*

DOUG  
Getting closer.

MERRIN  
Douglas Stuart Gordon!

DOUG  
Just a few more...

He places her on steady ground.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Steps.

And removes the blindfold.

Merrin's eyes widen at the awesomeness that meets her,  
speechless.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
I signed the papers yesterday.  
Welcome to our new holiday home.

MERRIN  
(stars in her eyes)  
You just said, 'our'.

JUMP TO:

INT. LOG CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Clothes are thrown off, bodies intertwining. Falling together  
onto a soft rug. The warm glow of a fire CRACKLING in the  
fireplace.

Merrin MOANS.

Doug searches her eyes.

DOUG  
Let's make a baby.

END MEMORY:

EXT. LOG CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin gets out of the car, tote bag slung over her shoulder.

The wind picks up for a moment, nearly knows Merrin off her  
feet.

She regains her balance and approaches the front door.

Pushes snow out of her eyes, works the key through the lock.

INT. LOG CABIN, LIVING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

The door struggles to open, the slightly expanded wood making it a bit of a struggle.

Finally the door gives, and Merrin is pushed inside by a gust of wind. Shuts the door.

Merrin turns on the heat on each of the panelled gas heaters that are affixed to the walls.

The sound of gas RUSHING through the pipes fills the room.

The interior is filled with warm browns and earthy tones. Rugs, big leather chairs, fireplace, a short flight of stairs.

The main centre piece a wolf-pelt blanket on the wall. Eerily, the wolf's head face is part of the decorative item, green eyes that watch over everything.

Merrin runs her hands over the furniture.

A place overloaded with memories. Wedding photographs, family ski trips.

Doug and Merrin on a hunting expedition, Doug with the very same Remington Merrin shot him with.

Once again Merrin's phone RINGS, lets it go to voicemail.

NATALIE (V.O.)

Tell me it's not true. You and Doug? The cops called, I told them they must have the wrong person, because my big sister wouldn't do something like that- she makes toys, she doesn't shoot people. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus dweeb. Look I know you're probably at the cabin, and I know life sucks, so just- just call me okay?

Smiles with nostalgia as she picks up photo taken with her sister NAT, mischievous, a handful.

She puts the photo down, adjusts it so it's perfectly aligned with the others.

Reaches into her bag, and pulls out a DVD.

Slides it into a media player, hooked up to a flatscreen.

A homemade movie shot by Doug.

On the screen, a very pregnant Merrin in a hospital gown, being laid out on a gurney.

DOUG (O.S.)  
Smile honey!

Tries to push the camera out of the way. Grimaces as her body is wracked with a contraction.

MERRIN  
I hate you!

DOUG  
More than pickles and surprises?

Merrin gives him the finger.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
(to unborn baby)  
Mommy didn't mean that.

MERRIN  
Yes she did-

A harried DOCTOR whips into frame.

DOCTOR  
Call the OG and inform labour ward  
to bring us a pack.

As she's wheeled away, she latches onto Doug's hand.

MERRIN  
Doug. Tell me it's going to be  
okay.

DOUG  
It's going to be perf-

JUMP TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

A sweat-drenched Merrin has just finished giving birth, exhausted.

The Doctor hands Merrin her baby, wrapped in a blanket.

DOCTOR  
*It's a healthy baby boy.*

*Merrin begins to weep.*

INT. LOG CABIN, LIVING AREA - PRESENT

She hits stop on the remote, an air of resignation.

Lost in the wave nostalgia, staring at her sad reflection in the blank TV screen.

Turns around suddenly.

A loud KNOCKING on the door.

She checks through the keyhole, and then looks at the blood still on her hands.

KITCHEN

Quickly scrubs her hands, as the KNOCKING persists.

FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin opens the door and is greeted by the friendly face of JUDD "CRUDD" CRUDDHANDLE, 60's.

CRUDD  
Miss Shaw.

Merrin forces a smile, hands still damp.

MERRIN  
Mr. Cruddhandle.

Craggy faced, a huge red ski jacket. Plaid schoolboy hat. Bits of snow stick to grey stubble, not a man to mince his words.

CRUDD  
That's Crudd to you kiddo.

They hug.

MERRIN  
Please.

Merrin ushers him inside and out of the cold.

CRUDD  
Some weather.

He shakes the snow off his hat, points at her.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
Somethin's different, you're  
different.

MERRIN  
Different? Different how?

Merrin's hands behind her back, keeping them from Crudd's  
line of sight. Nerves frayed.

CRUDD  
Lighter in the stomach, if you'd  
pardon the expression.

Relief flooding through Merrin.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
Little boy I hear.

MERRIN  
Luke...

The crimson-tainted water drips from Merrin's fingers.

CRUDD  
One of the bible's favorite sons.

Judd tucks the schoolboy hat back into the back of the pants,  
replacing it with a wide-brimmed hat.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
I've been doin' the rounds.  
Reckoned on a day like this, I'm  
better served as sheriff  
Cruddhandle. Though when you get to  
my age being the town's jack of all  
trades ain't exactly whipped cream.

MERRIN  
Thank you, Crudd. I think we have  
this one covered.

Judd looks at her with a smile.

CRUDD  
Alright then. Before I forget.

Judd holds out a small wooden spinning top, old, and worn.  
Vintage.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

Doesn't look like much. But this was my first, and that happens to mean somethin'. I passed it onto Katie, and Katie to hers. Hate to see the 'mites have their way with it.

MERRIN

That's- that's very kind of you.

CRUDD

Happy to pass it along-

MERRIN

He's um, upstairs. Doug too. Took an age to get him settled. The baby I mean...

Laughter.

CRUDD

Well, you give them my best, and baton down those hatches, kiddo. She's a real squall.

He gives her a firm pat on the shoulder.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

Need anythin', you get on the horn.

He notes the blank, drawn look on her face.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

Hey kiddo, you don't look so fresh.

MERRIN

Not enough sleep.

CRUDD

I bet. No one said bein' a mother was easy.

EXT. LOG CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin watches from the front door as Crudd's Range Rover pulls away, within moments is sucked into the whiteness.

Closes the door, and turns her gaze upstairs.

INT. LOG CABIN, UPSTAIRS AREA - DAY

Two bedrooms on each end of the corridor, a slab of perfectly varnished wooden flooring.

INT. LOG CABIN, MAIN BEDROOM - DAY

The bed is made up, linen fresh and crisp. The bedroom window looks out over what would've been a garden.

The skeleton of a partially constructed swing set.

An adjoining bathroom with all the amenities of a five star resort.

Merrin opens the closet, finds a safe.

Inside the safe an unopened bottle of 1945 Mouton-rothschild, with a note pinned to it.

"To 50 years of marriage".

MERRIN

Yeah, right.

Closes the safe, exits the bedroom and shuts the door behind her.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin face right up to the mirror, breathing irregular.

She fights to calm herself, and gets her breathing under control.

Water DRIPS out of the faucet and into the bath.

Merrin about to it shut off --

MEMORY FLASH:

*Merrin uses a portable shower head to gently rinse Luke, he giggles and smiles.*

MERRIN

*Water makes everything better...*

*Merrin blows water out of her mouth, much to her baby's delight.*

*The warm water trickles off his perfectly smooth, soft head.*

PRESENT:

Merrin hears her cell phone RINGING on the sink top.

Doug's name flashing again.

Merrin turns the faucet on full blast, and places her phone under the water.

The phone shorts out.

INT. LOG CABIN, BABY'S ROOM - DAY

Handcrafted wooden crib, with a musical mobile dangling above.

The room painted in a tasteful shades of blue.

Like the crib, the toys that fill the shelf are vintage and have been handmaid with painstaking detail.

She makes some adjustments to the toys, straightens a knitted elephant that has fallen over.

MEMORY FLASH:

*Merrin Doug paint the room together, plastic tarpaulin spread across the floor. Paint marks on their clothes.*

*Doug struggles to assemble the crib, he connects the wrong piece and it crumbles into a pile like a game of Janga.*

JUMP TO:

BABY'S ROOM

*The room has been complete, inch perfect. The door opens.*

*Merrin enters with her baby in her arms, and places him in the crib for the very first time.*

*Softly hymns Bette Midler's "Baby Mine".*

MERRIN

*Baby mine, don't you cry.  
Baby mine, dry your eyes.  
Rest your head close to my heart,  
Never to part, baby of mine...*

*His tiny hands paw at her nose.*

PRESENT

Merrin kills the light, throwing the room into darkness.

Powers up the mobile, a mixture of lights and music.

The shapes and pictures dance around the room in a colorful collage.

Merrin sinks into a rocking chair, positioned in the corner.

Methodically begins to unpack the contents from the tote.

Blanket, wine glass, a photograph of Merrin holding her baby, bottle opener.

Finally, four bottles of the most potent sleeping pills money can buy.

Temazepam, Triazolam, Zaleplon, Zolpidem....

Merrin opens the bottle of Mouton-rothschild, and pours the velvety red wine into the glass.

Takes a sip, relishing the taste.

With that done, she pours the pills onto the blanket and mixes them together.

The mobile stops, no music or lights.

Darkness in the room, save for the anemic light coming through the window.

Outside, Wind RUSHES and the thick bows of the Firs CREAK and MOAN.

Merrin takes a handful of pills, along with the glass of wine.

Moves to the window, prepares to enjoy her final view. The gorgeous expanse of lake.

MEMORY FLASH:

*Doug and Merrin skate on the ice, she's a natural. Spins circles around him.*

*He tries to grab onto her but falls on his ass.*

*Their laughter echoes for miles.*

PRESENT

About to pour the pills into her mouth, Merrin stops.

Squints, and strains.

Something is now moving on the lake, just an indiscernible black speck.

Tucks the wine opener into her pocket.

INT. LOG CABIN, WORK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin's work space, various design drawings of toys. A few prototypes that she's been working on.

Amongst the toys is a pair of bright red kid's binoculars.

She picks up the binoculars, and puts them to her face, pointing them towards the window.

For a moment Merrin stares, does a double take.

She looks at the pills, which are now in her pocket and then back to the ice.

EXT. LOG CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin opens the car, and removes the Remington from the backseat.

EXT. SLOPE - MOMENTS LATER

The snow-swept land, impenetrable. The cabin is hard to make out through the storm.

As the silhouette of Merrin crests the hill, face outlined by her parka.

Every step she takes is a fight.

The snow gets deeper, millimeter by millimeter with every passing minute.

EXT. LAKE - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin reaches the edge of the lake, focused.

The subject of Merrin's attentions is revealed.

A WOLF PUP.

The helpless animal is barely moving, streaks of frozen blood surround its body.

Merrin very carefully treads across the lake, getting closer...

Closer...

The ice begins to splinter and fissure, and Merrin has no choice but to retreat back to the edge.

Merrin needs to find a new route to reach the pup.

She spies a metal signpost on the opposite end of the lake, with the words "ICE NOT SAFE".

The signpost sways back and forth in the strong wind.

OTHER SIDE OF THE LAKE

Merrin uses the signpost as leverage, one hand on the post, the other stretching for the pup.

It's small chest pumps uneasily, emitting small intermittent bursts of mist from its nostrils.

The signpost gives, giving Merrin added range.

Her hand is mere centimeters away.

Just a little bit further, as she manages to haul the pup towards her.

Cradles the injured animal in her arms.

Parts the thick layer of fur to find it's soft flesh bloodied with bite marks.

A far away HOWL chills her to the bone.

EXT. LOG CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin pushing through the snow, scaling the smallish slope leading to the cabin.

Doing her best to shield the injured pup.

Merrin finally reaches the top of the slope, a few feet from the cabin.

She turns around, sensing something.

Her eyes drift to the surrounding Firs. There's nothing there.

INT. SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Entering, Merrin fills a wicker basket with firewood, and carries it out of the shed.

The shed is replete with gardening equipment, tools and spare gas cannisters, etc.

INT. LOG CABIN, LIVING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin loads a few pieces of wood into the fireplace, adding much needed heat to the fire.

She turns to the pup, lying across the thick rug. There's a bucket with hot water, some antiseptic and bandages.

A piece of cotton wool hovers above the injured area.

As Merrin attempts to apply the ointment, the pup snaps his jaws weakly at her.

MERRIN

Hey, easy, I'm not gonna hurt  
you...

The pup is still apprehensive.

Gently applies the antiseptic to the pup's wounds.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

There. You see? That wasn't so bad.

The pup is snow-white, coat matted with dried blood.

Scrawny, not much meat on the bone. One of his ears has a jagged edge on the tip, and his tail is like a brush missing its bristles.

A runt.

Wraps the pup's midriff in bandage, akin to folding a nappy on a baby.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Over, under, and around. Over,  
under and around.

She finishes wrapping up the pup, and smiles faintly.

KITCHEN

Merrin pours some long life milk into one bowl, and some Kibble into another.

The pup just looks up at her with his adorable brown eyes.

MERRIN

What?

It takes him a while to catch on, but he finally digs in.

With utter exuberance, he laps up the milk. It splashes all over his coat.

In his haste, tips the bowl over.

Milk pools across the neat floor. Merrin shakes her head, grabs a cloth to clean it up.

Gets on her knees, to find the pup's face right in front of hers.

They look at each other for a moment, and then touches her nose with his paw.

Merrin touches her nose, the feeling all too familiar. Her eyes glassy with emotion.

The sentiment vanishes quickly as she lifts the pup up.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The pup on the passenger seat.

MERRIN

Crudd will know what to do with you.

The pup giving her big eyes.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Don't- don't do that, the puppy eyes.

With the sun sinking rapidly, darkness spills across the landscape.

EXT. CRUDD'S SUPPLY STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

The car pulls up. The place is typical of a small town mom and pop.

Merrin marches to the front door, before knocking she looks back at the car.

She KNOCKS firmly.

MERRIN  
Crudd?... Crudd. Hey it's me. It's  
Merrin.

She tries to peer into the store, it's dark inside.

KNOCKS even harder.

The door RATTLES and shakes, as a sign drops out of nowhere, unravelling from the inside.

"CLOSED"

INT. CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Merrin piles back into the car, frustrated. The pup licks her hand, and wags his tail.

Angered, Merrin flings the door open.

MERRIN  
Get out of here.

The pup just pants and continues to wage his tail.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
I can't give you what you want.

But he's not going anywhere.

She opens the passenger door, and removes the pup, placing him onto the ground.

Merrin gets back into the car, turns the engine over. Backs away, the pup looking sad, lonely and vulnerable in the headlights.

Breaking Merrin's heart. Stops the car, having second thoughts.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
Shit.

Quickly gets out again, grabs the pup and puts him back in the car.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Don't get too comfortable.

Merrin restarts the car.

The engine starts and then dies out, starts and then dies out.

With each turn of the key, the headlights brighten and then fade.

Brighten, fade...

Merrin jolts backwards.

A fawn staggers in front of the car, literally a deer in the headlights.

The young animal is badly injured, scratch marks, bits of flesh missing. Large, moist eyes pleading.

Darkness again, the lights cut out.

When they come back on the fawn is gone, a puddle of blood in its place.

I/E. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The car winds, swerves and skids across the snowed-over road, barely clinging on.

As the vehicle vanishes into the impending darkness, making the journey home.

INT. LOG CABIN, BABY ROOM - DUSK

Distressed she paces back and forth, Crudd's spinning top in her hand.

She peers over the balustrade, and sees the pup downstairs playing, chasing his tail.

Watches him for a beat, and then returns to the room.

Peers out between the curtains, nothing for miles.

Merrin flicks the spinning top.

The point of the spinning top, drives into the surface of the table. It seems to sink into the wood itself.

She kneels, watching it intently. Deciding her next course of action.

Runs her hands through her hair, pulling at her face.

Suddenly the room fills music and light, the mobile has turned on.

For a moment, Merrin listens. She rises, and stands over the crib.

A sign.

Quietly turns the knob off, and the room settles back into silence.

MERRIN

Okay...

STAIRWELL

... Merrin comes down the stairs.

MERRIN

Here's what's about to happen.  
We're going to wait this storm out,  
and then, and then, well, Crudd's  
gonna find you here, and...

LIVING AREA

No sign of the pup.

MERRIN

I never said you had to like it.

Merrin WHISTLES, but still nothing.

Peers under and behind the sofas, not there.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

But some choices are not ours to  
make.

The cabin is all together too quiet, the sound of wood  
CRACKLING in the fireplace.

A noise in the kitchen diverts Merrin's attention.

## KITCHEN

Rustic, cherry wood counter tops with an island in the centre. Bay windows with a view, lanterns dangle from the ceiling.

There's nothing to indicate the young wolf is there.

Except for a doggy door, the plastic covering sways back and forth and a few milky paw prints.

Merrin takes a knee, eye level with the entrance...

Each time it opens, it presents her with a view of outside.

Opens and closes... opens... closes...

Outside sees the pup is on his haunches, head tilted upwards. He lets out a sad HOWL that sounds more like a croak.

## EXT. BACK OF THE CABIN - DUSK

Merrin shoulders the rifle.

She's nearly propelled off her feet by the vicious wind, approaches the pup.

But he's not there anymore.

Merrin lets out an ear-popping WHISTLE. Takes a moment to orientate.

Another strained HOWL answers her call, but coming from the front of the cabin now.

## FRONT OF THE CABIN

Merrin rounds the corner, and sees the shape of the pup on the tip of the slope.

The pup glances at her, ignoring Merrin and then continues to HOWL.

Merrin closes in, and then stops.

A large SHAPE creeps into Merrin's eyeline, a few feet away from the pup.

Merrin points the rifle, it looks awkward pressed against her shoulder, as if she's about to tip over.

Finger tightens on the trigger, about to squeeze off a shot.

Merrin stops and lowers the rifle.

The shape is revealed to be a gigantic ELK, the lack of antlers distinguishes her as a female.

It stares at Merrin, and then at the pup.

The pup moves towards the elk, who shows no fear or agitation.

The two animals consider each other - a delicate dance.

Elk and wolf are now a foot apart, the elk dwarfing the diminutive pup.

This time it's the elk that makes the next move. She nuzzles the pup, gently pressing him against her considerable hide.

The pup in turn, responds.

For a moment, the two animals remain huddled together, when...

The elk is startled. Her eyes expand into terrified saucers, and she scurries off into the distance.

The pup tries to pursue but doesn't get far.

Merrin nabs the pup.

INT. LOG CABIN, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin on her knees, occupied with the doggie door. There's a latch that extends over the plastic flap.

The pup behind Merrin, watching her work, eyes never leaving the back door.

Merrin secures the latch, a flimsy plastic bolt that holds the plastic flap secure.

Turns to the distressed pup, WHINES.

MERRIN

I know.

He WHINES louder.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

I know.

Merrin leaves the kitchen. The pup paws listlessly at the latch.

EXT. SMALL HOLDING, FRONT DOOR - EVENING

Crudd doing the last of his rounds, speaks with the OWNER of the house.

CRUDD

You or yours need anythin', you get on the horn.

Shakes the owner's hand, and walks back into the house.

INT. CRUDD'S SUPPLY STORE - EVENING

Crudd enters the musty store, shelves packed tightly with the types of odds and ends roadside stores are synonymous with.

Clunky 70's styled, cash register.

A poster on the wall behind the teller's desk.

A fat dude in a cut off, sits on the toilet and reaches for toilet paper, "The job is never finished until the paperwork is done".

BACK OFFICE

Paperwork galore, receipts and junk mail. Crudd slides in behind the cluttered desk.

Looks at the only photo on his desk - him and his daughter KATIE, Crudd looking a few years younger.

A muffled noise suddenly comes through a police radio on the far end of the table.

VOICE (O.S.)

Come in, over. Come in-

He leans over and grabs the mic, clearing his throat.

CRUDD

Yeah, this is, uh, this is Judd Cruddhandle over-

Crackling, then a voice breaks through.

WATSON (O.S.)

Crudd, this is Sheriff Dan Watson, Chippewa County-

CRUDD

Well how the heck are you, Dan?

WATSON (O.S.)  
About ten feet under-

Crudd looks at the storm raging outside.

CRUDD  
She's a mean sonofabitch.

WATSON (O.S.)  
You don't say.  
(beat)  
That sheriff hat of yours still  
fit, Crudd?

CRUDD  
What's this about, Dan? You must be  
pretty darn desperate to be callin'  
an old hack like me.

WATSON (O.S.)  
We have a situation.

INT. CRUDD'S JEEP - NIGHT

Crudd's Jeep powers it's way through the increasingly  
treacherous terrain.

WATSON (V.O.)  
Few hours ago a woman shot up her  
husband with a Remington. He's  
alive... not by much.

He uses a cloth to wipe the front windscreen.

WATSON (V.O.)  
We have our reasons to believe  
she's hiding somewhere out in your  
neck of the woods. See where I'm  
going with this?

CRUDD (V.O.)  
What 'bout the boys in blue over  
there in Fish Creek?

Watson laughs.

WATSON (V.O.)  
Fish Creek? Fish Creek is a red  
zone.

CRUDD (V.O.)  
This woman... does she happen to  
have a name, Dan.

WATSON (V.O.)

I believe the name's Shaw. Merrin  
Shaw-

CRUDD (V.O.)

I'm going to need you to repeat  
that for me.

WATSON (V.O.)

Merrin Shaw. Blonde hair, shoulder  
length. 120 pounds.

The old man SIGHS heavily, the WHOOSH-WHOOSH of the wipers  
against glass.

Outside, a gigantic Fir topples over.

INT. LOG CABIN, MAIN BEDROOM - EVENING

Merrin looks out across the lake, the wind is relentless, and  
the view is now almost non existent.

One of the Firs near the lake, bends and bows perilously. On  
the verge of collapse.

A shiver runs through her body, rubs the goose pimples on her  
arm.

Merrin walks to the wall and feels the heating panel. It's  
cool to the touch.

She loosens the nozzle on the heating panel, increasing the  
flow of gas.

INT. LOG CABIN, LIVING AREA - EVENING

Merrin fiddles around with an old radio, trying to get some  
kind of reception.

It's crackly, the voice of the host drifts in and out in a  
series of incomprehensible babble.

As the radio plays in the background...

KITCHEN

Merrin refills the empty bowl of Kibble, and tops up the  
milk.

She SHAKES the bowl, but the pup doesn't come.

CLACK-CLACK

She turns to the back door, to the doggie door.

A look of disbelief, the latch has somehow been removed.

EXT. LOG CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

One again the pup has made his way outside, and is crouching in the exact same position as he was last time.

Gazing over the slope, longing in his eyes.

Rifle slung over her shoulder, Merrin takes up a position alongside the pup.

MERRIN

When will you get it?

She picks up the pup.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

They don't want you.

They turn, going back into the cabin, as...

Dark shapes ascend the slope, slowly moving up the base. More elk.

At least five of them, a herd. Moving as one.

They stop, holding their pose. Focused on the soft lights coming from the cabin.

They retreat into the white, blustery ether.

INT. LOG CABIN, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin pushes a cooler box in front of the doggy door, blocking it off. He's definitely not getting out again.

The pup WHINES miserably at Merrin's new harsher course of action.

She spins and takes the pup by the side of his face, emotions running high.

MERRIN

You don't get to go back.

The anger seeps out of her voice, becoming mournful resignation.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

I had my reason. I never asked for another one.

Merrin gives the cooler box, a final definite push against the door.

The pup is still determined to somehow bypass the object, pushing his body into it.

He refuses to stop, keeps pushing and clawing at the cooler box.

KNOCKING at the front door, Merrin turns. Unsure if she heard it at first.

Followed by three more firmer KNOCKS.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin places the pup in the bathroom.

MERRIN

Stay.

She shuts the bathroom door.

LIVING AREA

Merrin peeks through the spy hole, steps away from the door, composing herself.

The KNOCKING persists.

She opens the door, finding Crudd there. Grim faced, his friendly demeanor now a thing of the past.

He steps inside, closing the door.

MERRIN

You had a change of wardrobe...

Looks at the old, and worn sheriff's hat. Pathos in his voice, the hint of a smile.

CRUDD

Each year, they offer me a new one,  
and each year I respectably  
decline. It's hard to let go of  
things we care about...

His wrinkled, crows-nest eyes find Merrin.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
 Doug's not upstairs is he, kiddo?  
 (beat)  
 Is he?

Her silence says it all.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
 Where's the baby?

Merrin shakes her head, not wanting to even broach the subject.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
 Where is he? Where is the child?

Crudd takes a step closer, looming over her.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
 Pain has been known to take good  
 people down bad roads.

Holds out her hands for Crudd, so he can cuff her.

MERRIN  
 I'm not a good person.

Crudd removes the cuffs from his utility belt, and fastens them around Merrin's wrists.

CRUDD  
 Word from Kingsley Memorial is that  
 Doug's gonna live.

MERRIN  
 Did you say live?

She laughs caustically.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
 Live...

Crudd turns the doorhandle, getting ready to lead Merrin outside.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
 Wait-

BATHROOM

The door opens, the Pup eyes out the new arrival with cautious skepticism.

CRUDD  
You keep interesting company.

MERRIN  
I found him on the lake...

Crudd takes in the abundance of empty pill bottles, grasping the implications.

CRUDD  
Good thing you did.

Crudd crouches, beckoning the pup.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
He's a grey, although rabbit might be a more fitting description.

Rubs the Pup's head, the pup laps up the attention.

CRUDD (CONT'D)  
There's wolf sanctuary in Brookeville, I'll see to it that he gets there.

ENTRANCE HALL

As they make their way to the front door.

MERRIN  
You asked me about my son. He's at Goodhope Cemetery. Plot number 345681.

Crudd looks at her.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
It's called Galactosemia. Three hundred thousand to one, those are the odds of it happening. My own breast milk poisoned him. There's no medical explanation, no why or how, it just happens, and it happened to me.

They reach the front door.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
After we saw the doctors, we went straight to bed, I guess there were no more words left in us.  
(MORE)

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Then I'm waking up, it's two in the morning, and it's Doug, his knuckles are kneading into my back. He's just kind of looking at, like he's looking at me for the first time, and that's when it started.

CRUDD

What started?

MERRIN

He told me Luke's death was my fault, he kept saying it, blaming me, and I didn't know what to do, how to make him stop saying the cruel things he was saying. Suddenly my pain didn't matter anymore, only his, and that's not fair, that's not right.

CRUDD

Take your time...

MERRIN

It was only when he put his hands on me, he'd never done that before, that it happened, I ran, locked myself in his study, thinking I would be safe behind a locked door, I wasn't. He took a baseball bat and went to work. I grabbed the first thing I could, which happened to be a loaded shotgun. Perhaps I didn't need to pull the trigger...

Her eyes bristle with pain.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

I wanted to hurt him, Crudd, make him feel the pain the same way I did, so that's exactly what I did. I made a choice.

Crudd looks at Merrin, his craggy, lined face still like an oil painting.

He reaches for Merrin's wrists, gently cupping them in his hands and begins to unlock Merrin's handcuffs.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

What- Why are you doing that?

CRUDD

'Cause I figure you're a good person.

EXT. LOG CABIN - NIGHT

They walk towards Crudd's Range Rover, Merrin rubbing her raw wrists.

Crudd pushes up his sleeve, revealing a tattoo - a black shield with a white star in it, inside the star is an American Indian headpiece.

CRUDD

23rd Infantry Division, a reminder of the choices I made, and the choices I vowed never to make again.

MERRIN

You were military?

CRUDD

The My Lai Massacre, hundreds of South Vietnamese were slaughtered, kids, young children, whole families, generations laid to waste. You've never seen men's eyes like that, so full of hate.

Crudd rolls his sleeve down.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

That day I chose hate you see, I took life indiscriminately, encountered a part of me I hope I never get to meet again. The things you do will never go away, all you can do is promise not to repeat them.

A few feet away from the Range Rover, a moment of silence.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

There's an old Cherokee legend that goes 'round these parts.

His weary eyes bore into Merrin's.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

A grandfather was teachin' his grandson about life.

(MORE)

CRUDD (CONT'D)

He says to the boy, " *Ulisiatsutsa*, there's a fight goin' on inside of me. A terrible fight between two wolves, one is evil, anger, self-pity, greed, the other is good - joy, peace, love, hope."

A new found gravitas in his voice.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

A minute goes by, the boy looks up at his grandfather and asks him, "which wolf will win, *Edudu*?" The old Cherokee, with as much love and wisdom as he is indeed capable of, replies, "the one you feed".

He takes Merrin by the hand, imploring her.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

The one you feed.. do you understand, kiddo?

He lets the words hang, now right alongside the Jeep. Prepares to unlock it and escort Merrin inside.

Sees the five familiar shapes standing in front of the Jeep - blocking it's path.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

Elk. Damn pests.

Crudd WHISTLES, but the elk don't move. Fires his gun into the air, but they won't budge.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

Here, keep her warm.

Throws Merrin his car keys. Reaches for his flashlight on his utility belt.

He presses forward, quickly fading out of Merrin's line of sight.

FURTHER AHEAD

Crudd approaches the elk, gun drawn.

CRUDD

Go on then.

*Instead of backing away, the elk are move towards him.*

Moving into a faint patch of moonlight. Crudd's body locks into place.

He signs the cross on his chest.

CRUDD (CONT'D)

Lord Jesus.

They shapes are not elk.

They're WOLVES.

Snarling, malevolent shapes, moving as one with the shadows.

AT THE JEEP

Merrin in the passenger seat, the warm air blowing. A GUNSHOT cuts through the silence, getting her attention.

She wipes the condensation off the front windscreen, revealing CRUDD.

Running as fast as he can towards the Jeep, waving his arms. Shouting something, but there are no words, drowned out by the spiteful wind.

MERRIN

Crudd?

Merrin gets out of the car, Crudd getting closer. The panic on his face becoming more and more visible.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

CRU-

He's suddenly wiped out of view, tackled at a million miles an hour by one of the wolves, dragged into the darkness.

Fingers shaking, nerves frayed, Merrin tries to get back into the Jeep.

But the doors have locked automatically. Presses the unlock button on the keys.

Nothing.

The doors aren't opening.

When she looks up, sees the menacing shapes sizing her up. Approaching from both flanks and from the front.

Merrin steadies her breathing, needing to somehow extricate herself from this dire situation.

## MERRIN (CONT'D)

Shit.

And then they come for her, bounding, fleet footed and ferocious.

Her choices diminish by the second, until she's left with only one.

She rolls underneath the Jeep, out of harms away. Safe...

Merrin SCREAMS --

As a claw sinks into the meat of her shoulder, and starts to drag her out from underneath. Jaws snapping desperately, trying to rip her throat out.

Merrin searches for something, anything to use as a weapon.

She reaches for her pocket, remembering the bottle opener she had pocketed earlier.

With a CRY of exertion, Merrin rams the bottle opener into the animal's eye.

The wolf backs off. A moment of silence, it seems to have done the trick.

Just the sounds of the wind carrying through the forest.

Merrin inches her head out.

All of a sudden the car is utterly and totally surrounded by half a dozen wolves.

Doing their best to crawl under the car, clawing, and biting, and SNARLING, spittle spewing lustily.

Merrin tries to make herself as small as humanely possible. The wolves centimeters away.

## MERRIN (CONT'D)

*Baby mine, don't you cry. Baby  
mine, dry your eyes... rest your  
head close to my heart,  
Never to part, baby of mine...*

BANG!

Another gunshot. Crudd's last stand.

The wolves sprint towards the sound, buying Merrin enough time.

Merrin waits, not moving an inch, making sure the coast is clear.

Pokes her head from underneath the car, and sure enough, the wolves are gone.

Swarming upon Crudd, being torn to shreds. His sacrifice not lost on Merrin.

As she zeroes in on the cabin.

INT. LOG CABIN, LIVING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin, infused with adrenalin, recovers her breath. Slides to her haunches, back up against the front door.

MERRIN

Crudd...

Closes her eyes for a moment, holds her shredded shoulder.

The sound of PITTER-PATTER, Merrin opens her eyes to see the pup approaching.

He's dragging a long string of toilet paper behind him in his path.

The pup looks up at Merrin like he has done absolutely nothing wrong.

There's no reaction from Merrin, until there's the tiniest hint of a smile.

The pup rolls onto his back, wanting tummy rubs. Tongue hanging out of his mouth.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

I know what I'm going to call you.

I'm going to call you Rabbit.

(liking it)

Rabbit...

\*Note: pup will now be known as Rabbit\*.

Merrin finishes, stands up. Rabbit is still on his back, expecting more tummy rubs.

SMASH!

Bodies collide against the front door. The double-thick Redwood stands firm.

A moment passes.

A huge, blood smear coats the glass. Icky lines of blood ooze down the window.

Merrin gets to her feet, takes a few steps to the window.

SMASH!

The maimed body of the injured wolf - the one with the corkscrew in its eye - reverberates against the glass.

She lets out an inadvertent YELP.

The maimed wolf is barely alive, twitching helplessly on the ground.

Appearing seemingly out of nowhere is a massive WOLF. Yellow eyes settling on Merrin.

This is MOTHER. A 160 pound Grey Wolf. The alpha female. Smart, cunning and a pure killing machine.

She's pure white, blending in with the snow-drenched tundra.

She fades in and out of view with each gust of snow like a ghost, just her yellow eyes illuminated in the darkness.

Mother stands over her young.

Her yellow eyes meet Merrin's, boring into her.

As Mother locks her massive jaws around her injured young's neck, and cinches through flesh and fur.

The young wolf twitches once and dies.

Mother looks up, mouth drenched and wet with her own young's blood.

And flings the dead body into the window.

Mother drags the dead pup back towards her, and throws him into the window again!

The Mother paws at the glass.

It's clear she's testing for any weaknesses in the glass.

And then launches the body into the window one more time for good measure.

Merrin quickly closes the curtains and backs away.

Rabbit WHINES softly.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
They did this to you.

Merrin looks at the pup, sporting the exact same white coat as Mother.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
She did.

INT. LOG CABIN, LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Kneels before the pup, and goes about tying a red ribbon with a bell attached, around his neck.

A way for Merrin to keep track of him.

She finishes tying off Rabbit's new collar.

Rabbit tries his damndest to shake his new collar off.

MERRIN  
Lose the attitude, it's for your  
own protection.

TING TING

Gives her a look, "how can you do this to me?"

As Merrin rises she staggers, grabs her injured shoulder. Faintness washing over her.

INT. BABY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin stands in front of a wall mirror, slowly peels her shirt off.

The material sticks to the wound - the dried, crusted blood acting as an adhesive.

Merrin grits her teeth.

Examines the claw marks. The wound is open and inflamed, bacteria-filled, raw.

The scratches are wide enough as to require stitches.

In the reflection of the mirror, the crib looms large, taunting her.

Merrin sucks in a breath, and starts to move her fingers closer to the wound.

The nubs of her fingers jab at the sticky, wetness.

The pain is nearly enough to knock her out, tears rolling down her cheeks.

But still Merrin keeps digging.

She staggers, grabs onto the dressing table for support.

Observes the tears on her face, letting them remain where they are.

Moving to the window, Merrin looks out. The storm is in full force, unrelenting.

Waiting for her patiently near the tree lines - Mother and her pack. Taunting Merrin.

They HOWL.

At the same time Merrin lets out a SCREAM, mixing with the HOWLS, an uneasy cacophony of pain.

Pulls her fist back to punch the glass.

Fist stops mid-punch.

The yellow eyes of Mother reflecting back at her, floating over her own eyes - becoming one.

A moment passes...

The sound of something being knocked over, and Merrin snaps out of it.

Rabbit has one of Luke's toys in his mouth. The hand-stitched elephant.

Flings the toy across the wooden flooring and chases after it.

Merrin takes the elephant away, and wipes off the copious amounts of saliva.

MERRIN

Not that one.

INT. CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Light enters the darkness of the closet, Merrin appearing. Pulls a cord and a lightbulb comes on.

She gets on her tiptoes, and reaches for an old rag doll from the top shelf.

Without looking, she throws the rag doll over her shoulder.

Rabbit doesn't need a second invitation, chases after it and shakes the doll around.

The bell TINGING madly.

Merrin is about to switch off the light and leave.

She hesitates.

Gets back on her tiptoes, fingers feeling around blindly for something.

Her fingers make contact with the mysterious object, managing to pull it down.

A shoebox. Merrin clicks the light off, and closes the closet door.

#### BABY'S ROOM

Merrin sits on the rocking chair, shoebox on her lap.

She pries the lid off, revealing a plethora of memorabilia. Photographs, cards, amongst other things.

Various photos showing Merrin's stages of pregnancy, each labelled accordingly by the relevant month.

A small diary-sized note book with the words, "my first memories" on it.

Merrin opens the book.

Pictures of the first four months of Luke's life - Merrin cradling the baby, Doug holding him aloft like the stereo from 'Say Anything'.

Her younger sister Nat posing in a selfie with the baby.

MERRIN  
(nostalgic smile)  
Poser.

She flips through the other pages, but the rest of the book is empty.

Blank.

She closes the diary, holds it protectively to her chest and places it on the chair.

Watches Rabbit absently as he rips the guts out of the hapless rag doll.

The pup sneezes, the stuffing getting into his nose.

A wave of cold air rushes over Merrin. She shivers and rubs her arms.

Notices that there are small plumes of mist now coming out of her mouth.

Merrin checks the wall panel - it's cool to the touch. Turns the knob, and presses her ear against it.

#### VARIOUS ROOMS

Merrin checks the panels in all of the rooms, they are cool to the touch and devoid of gas.

Checks the windows, a thin layer of frost is beginning to form a sheen on the glass.

#### BEDROOM

Opening the main closet, Merrin takes out a huge armful of Doug's clothes.

#### LIVING AREA

The radio continues to play intermittently in the background.

Merrin feeds the clothes into the fireplace. Looks at the rug, the same rug her and Doug made love on.

Rolls the rug up and stuffs it in with the clothes. Throws some paraffin over them and lights the pile.

They ignite instantly.

For good measure Merrin throws some photographs of her and Doug in with them.

The photos curl, and burn, their faces melting.

CUT TO:

Merrin startles awake from a restless slumber, the fire has nearly died. The radio is off.

Rabbit is asleep, spread out in front of the fireplace.

The temperature in the room has dropped to below freezing, the mist from Merrin's mouth is thicker and more dense.

Her body shivers uncontrollably. Outside the storm shows no signs of relenting.

Merrin stands up, grimacing, feeling for her injured shoulder.

#### BEDROOM

Once again, opening the closet to fetch more of Doug's clothes to add to the fire.

As she reaches to grab a coat from the hanger, Merrin stops.

A sound, indiscernible.

Merrin cracks the bedroom door open, exposing a slither of corridor.

The muffled sound floats from the far side of the corridor, teasing.

Looks over her shoulder, the closet is now closed.

#### UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR

Creeping out of the room, Merrin follows the sound - an eerie children's tune coming from the baby's room.

MERRIN

Hello?

Merrin jumps.

The bedroom door SLAMS behind her.

The lights begin to flicker in steady increments and then come back on.

Merrin suddenly finds herself standing right in front of the baby's room.

Under the door, an array of different color lights. More music...

But the music has a scratchy, muffled quality about it, as if its being played underwater.

Merrin slowly turns the door handle.

#### BABY'S ROOM

The room is a color show of lights and music courtesy of the mobile.

The light rotates in an anti clockwise direction, casting swathes of primary colors on Merrin in three second intervals.

Red.

Black.

Yellow.

Black.

Blue.

Black.

The pattern repeats.

The toy elephant that she adjusted on the shelf earlier, is once again slumped over.

Merrin stands it upright.

She steps cautiously towards the crib with a smile on her face.

Behind her, the elephant topples over once again.

Merrin looks into the crib, and sees a bundle wrapped in a blanket.

#### MERRIN

Luke...

Tiny, pink, wriggling fingers reaching out to Merrin. Face cloaked by the blanket.

Emits a small CRY.

She reaches into the crib, and gently picks him up.

Merrin sits on the rocking chair, and unbuttons her blouse to breast feed.

But Luke doesn't want to feed, squirms in Merrin's grasp. CRYING getting louder.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
Ssshhh... hush now little Starling.  
Hush for mommy.

A swathe of red light washes over them, beat.

She tries to get Luke to feed again, peeling the blanket off of him.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
*Baby mine, don't you cry.*  
*Baby mine, dry your eyes.*

Yellow light passes over, another three second interval.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
*Rest your head close to my heart,*  
*Never to part, baby of mine...*

Her soft, gentle voice does the trick. The baby stops crying.

The room falls into silence, Merrin rocks him back and forth.

Merrin adjusts Luke, titling his head gently with the palm of her hand.

At the same time, the blue light sweeps over them. It seems to remain there for longer than three seconds.

An eternity.

Merrin's mouth opens, a scream hitches in the back of her throat.

Luke's face is bulging, swollen and blue, his tiny eyes popping out of his skull.

His mouth opens and closes like a fish taking in air bubbles.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
No...

A noise squeezes out between his pursed lips.

A soft, gargled HOWL.

The HOWL grows louder, clearer, and --

LIVING AREA

Merrin is startled awake, coated in sweat. Pale, very possibly running a fever. Face wet with tears.

Rabbit HOWLS, licks the tears off her face, and nuzzles her awake.

She gently pushes him away.

MERRIN

Yeah, I'm awake, I'm awake.

The house is freezing like an ice box. Merrin immediately wraps herself in a blanket, teeth CHATTERING.

Fresh blood and puss has secreted out of the wound in her shoulder.

BATHROOM

Merrin pukes into the toilet, flush with nausea.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin heaps some sugar into a glass, fills it with water and downs it.

The radio nearby on the sill, music playing.

With renewed energy Merrin digs inside a cupboard under the sink, pulls out a leaflet.

An instruction manual to fix the heating, various diagrams explaining how to go about it.

The song ends, and the voice of the DJ comes through the radio --

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

To the Beliebers, tweeners,  
Swifties, that's what us old folk  
like to call rock music, Blue  
Oyster Cult and "Don't Fear The  
Reaper". Up next, Jeff Reeves with  
your latest weather.

Merrin puts the manual down, and adjusts the radio frequency.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

Thanks Chris, wait, we're, uh,  
we're just receiving breaking news  
from the National Weather Service.

The radio cuts in and out at this critical point. Merrin shakes the radio, no dice.

## UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR

Now at a higher point in the house, Merrin holds the radio above her head, the voice on the radio is now clearer.

## RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

The SPC has issued a severe storm warning across the Midwest and parts of Canada, posing a threat to life and property. Surges can be expected to last anywhere from thirty-six to forty-two hours, residents are being strongly urged to stay inside their homes...

With her infected shoulder, and the freezing cold assaulting the cabin, she knows that's time she doesn't have.

## MERRIN

Thirty six hours...

Looks at the pup, holding the now decapitated rag doll in his mouth.

The plumes of mist from Merrin's mouth grow bigger with each exhale, temperature rapidly decreasing.

## MERRIN (CONT'D)

(to herself)

We not gonna make it.

Again, gazes out the window at the waiting wolves. They're not going anywhere.

CRASH! -- BOOM!

The wolves scatter.

A puff of snow mushrooms like an atomic bomb.

A nearby tree is uprooted, crashing through the power lines, the entire cabin reverberates.

Every single light in the cabin cuts out.

Darkness, freezing cold... and death are their only certainties.

## INT. LOG CABIN, WORK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Plumes of mist seen through the beam of a flashlight. Merrin huddled over her desk, studying the manual intently.

Merrin closes the manual, rolls it up and stuffs it into her back pocket.

Taps her fingers on the desk, thinking. She stands...

She looks out the window, turning her attention to the shed outside.

Somewhere in the distance, another tree comes crashing down.

#### BEDROOM

Merrin is suited up in her parka, slides the window up, assaulted by snow and freezing wind.

The shed is situated across from the bedroom, thirty feet or so.

The incredibly long, and thick branch of a Fir leads directly to it.

Merrin gets ready to climb out, but before she can go...

Rabbit WHINES, and paws at Merrin's leg.

She crouches, eye level with Rabbit. The pup places his paw on her nose.

Merrin doesn't recoil this time, allows the paw to linger there.

MERRIN

Yeah, me too.

Places her hand over his paw.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Me too.

#### EXT. LOG CABIN, BRANCH - SAME

Merrin wraps her face in a face-scarf, hurdles out of the window, and shuts the window behind her.

Rabbit perched on his back legs, face watching her longingly through the window.

His warm breath fogs the window.

## BRANCH

Merrin uses her backside to shift across the branch, both legs dangling off the edge.

A strong headwind makes every movement an enormous undertaking, snow and sleet blowing right into her eyes.

The blustering wind sways Merrin and the tree from side to side.

Every fibre in her body urging her not to look down.

Focused on her target - the garden shed. The end of the branch drops off onto the roof the shed.

Movement beneath catches Merrin's attention.

Fights the urge not to look. Pushes herself another few feet forward.

However Merrin can't resist, and looks...

The wolves track each and every movement, waiting for one mistake.

As she moves, they move. Jumping up and down, baying for her blood.

It's enough to distract her, loses concentration as a SCREECHING gust throws Merrin off balance --

She topples over and falls!

Grabs onto the branch, sinking her nails into the moist bark.

Pain rips through her, tendons and fibre being stretched to their limits in her damaged shoulder.

Merrin SCREAMS in agony.

The wolves match her SCREAMS with bloodthirsty CRIES of their own.

Blood drips from her shoulder, sending the wolves into a mad frenzy.

Her legs flail wildly, wolves jumping up and down.

Fingernails beginning to lose traction, the pain unbearable.

Catches a glimpse of Mother's piercing yellow eyes. They give Merrin the energy boost she needs.

Using all of her remaining strength to pull herself back onto the branch.

Turns her attention back to the shed, and with renewed resolve --

END OF THE BRANCH

Now at the end of the branch, there's a short drop off to roof.

The roof is pitched, adding to the danger.

Merrin swings her legs onto the branch, and gets into a squatting position.

Grits her teeth and launches herself onto the roof.

She lands with a THUD.

Immediately begins to slide off, the wooden roof greasy with ice.

Grasps desperately for anything to stop her descent. Below a drop-off to certain death.

With no time to act Merrin rams her left hand through a jutting, rusted NAIL, at least two inches big.

Comes right out the other side of her hand.

Merrin bites down on her tongue so hard that she's spitting blood.

But it does the job.

Immediately stops her fall. Hooked to the roof like a fish, legs hanging off the edge.

The wolves literally snapping at her heels.

Begins to pull herself back up the roof, until she's steady. Has to painstakingly slide her hand out of the nail.

Finally free, Merrin starts to kick the roof as hard as she can.

The wooden slats splinter and break...

With a few more kicks, Merrin has managed to break a hole in the roof.

INT. GARDEN SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin drops into the shed, sprawling hard onto the concrete surface below.

She gathers herself, eyes adjusting to the dark and murky interior.

At the back, two large gas cannisters. That's where she's going.

On her way, grabs a dirty rag and wraps her bloodied hand.

Merrin studies the cannisters, pulls out the scrunched instruction manual from her back pocket.

Spreads it across the filthy floor, and goes about her work.

The sound of the wolves outside, GROWLING and pacing. Their bodies fleeting shadows seen through the slats.

MERRIN

Unscrew the repair sleeve from the  
12 inch repair coupling stock...

Merrin fights to unscrew a copper pipe that feeds into the empty cannister, affixed to a nozzle.

The pipe is the main gas line that feeds into the rest of the house.

But it won't budge from the nozzle, Merrin quickly scrambles for the toolbox.

Empties it, tools scatter. To her delight, there's also a box of rifle shells in the bottom compartment.

Pockets them, finds a wrench and fights to loosen the nozzle.

The pipe pops out.

Merrin shifts her weight, pushing the empty cannister away and replacing it with the full one.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Clamp and turn...

Places the pipe onto the nozzle. Tries to attach it, but it keeps popping out.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Clamp. Turn.

Pops out again.

Merrin snaps to attention at the sound of CRASHING.

A body throws itself against the door. The wood gives ever so slightly.

Tries her best to refocus.

As another body collides with the door.

They're testing the strength of the door just like Mother tested the window.

Merrin's hands are now shaking, finding it nearly impossible to attach the pipe into the nozzle.

Pieces of wood start to splinter, shards litter the ground.

The impact of half a dozen wolves taking its toll on the rotting door frame.

Time is against Merrin, every second is now working against her.

A paw punches through the soggy wood.

Merrin sucks in the biggest breath she can, and steadies herself, shutting the world off around her.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Over, under and around... over  
under and around...

Works the wrench, in small circular motions. Her hand stops shaking.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Over, under and around...

It's working, the pipe is beginning to screw on.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Over, under-

CLICK, the pipe locks on.

Merrin turns the valve on the cannister, met with the sweet sound of gas working its way through the pipes.

As the door begins to give way, wood popping and swelling.

A few more hits and the pack will be inside the shed.

Merrin looks at the hole in the ceiling, and moves the work bench directly underneath it.

Stands on the bench, and begins to climb through the hole.

EXT. SHED, ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Framed through the hole, Merrin pulls herself up. Veins popping with exertion.

Beneath, in slow motion.

The wolves swarm inside the shed..

Leap as high as they can into the air, getting some serious hang time.

Their serrated teeth gnash perilously close to Merrin's foot.

Close enough to latch onto, jaws stretched open, about to grab her ankle.

Back to normal speed.

Merrin draws her foot away just in time.

The wolf's jaw CLATTERS together as it tastes thin air.

Merrin draws a breath, regards the wolves and then swings her body back onto the tree branch.

Begins the trek back to the cabin.

INT. LOG CABIN, WORK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The window slides open, a freezing Merrin climbs back into the warmth of the cabin.

Water runs off the windows, the frost beginning to melt.

Merrin empties her pockets, putting the rifle shells on the table.

To her surprise, no Rabbit there to greet her.

UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR

Merrin is stopped in her tracks.

Droplets of red on the floor. They dot the corridor, leading to the stairs.

Merrin follows the bloodied path with an impending sense of doom.

MERRIN

Rabbit?

And in the far recesses of the houses --

TING TING

LIVING AREA

The blood is more numerous, gaining momentum towards the kitchen.

TING TING

KITCHEN

It looks like a bloodbath, red smeared everywhere. Movement behind the centre island piece.

Merrin slides a knife out of its block, approaches...

TING TING TING TING

Merrin makes a small arc around the counter, to get a better view.

She just stares.

Picks up a bottle off the ground...

An empty bottle of red food dye.

Relief surges through her, instinctively latches onto Rabbit.

Licking the contents off his best friend, the headless rag doll. Covered from head to tail in dye.

Rocks the pup in her arms, pressing her face into the side of his neck.

MERRIN

Okay, you're okay...

He looks up at Merrin, admonishing her for cutting into his playtime.

DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM

Merrin hovers over the bathtub, Rabbit is in the tub, bounces around like a pin ball.

But Rabbit is completely in his element, beyond excited. The furthest thing from tough love.

MERRIN

Alright, alright keep your fur on.

Reaches for the portable shower head, and holds it over Rabbit.

Merrin takes a moment before turning on the faucet.

Water spurts out of the shower head, the red dye instantly washes out of Rabbit's fur.

After the initial frenzied excitement, Rabbit calms down. Enjoying the water running through his body.

A moment of calm and serenity.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Water makes everything better.

As Merrin continues to wash Rabbit, red-tinted water SLURPS its way down the drain.

INT. LOG CABIN, KITCHEN - LATER

Merrin with a mop and bucket washing the red dye out of the floor.

The gentle SWISH-SWISH of the mop is strangely relaxing.

In her pocket, the remainder of the sleeping tablets.

Merrin looks at them, cradling them in her palm as if they are precious diamonds.

She puts the mop down and approaches the sink.

And then Merrin dumps the pills into the sink and down the garbage disposal.

Returns to mopping the floor, SWISH-SWISH...

Out of the darkness Merrin notices something rolling towards her.

MERRIN

Huh?

It's one of the rifle shells.

Rabbit emerges not long after, panting excitedly.

Rabbit looks at Merrin expectantly, Merrin looks at him.

She rolls the shell to the other side of the kitchen, Rabbit immediately chases after.

It takes his little paws a moment to gain traction, legs going a million miles an hour but not going anywhere.

After a few seconds, he returns with the shell in his mouth and drops it at her feet.

The game is officially under way.

#### LIVING AREA

Merrin has started the fire again, a warm orange glow bathes the room. A pile of clothes nearby.

She continues to play fetch with Rabbit, absently tossing the shell, other things on her mind.

The pup's energy is boundless, returning every few seconds with the shell.

Rabbit drops the rifle shell, Merrin tosses it across the room again.

As Rabbit returns once again, breathing harder.

Rabbit, exhausted, gives up, places his head on Merrin's lap. Yawns.

Merrin feeds the fire with more of Doug's clothing, takes a moment to collect her thoughts.

#### MERRIN

I can still see the photographs in the doctor's office. Two perfect little girls, his perfect wife with her perfect blonde hair, and a dog, a fucking Golden Retriever, and there I am... and all I can think about is how perfect my life used to be, and about my baby, my sweet baby all alone in the dark way down where, wrapped and packed inside one of those fridges that hummed too loudly, being preserved like a piece of mignon.

Merrin stares into the fire, contemplating her past and future. Runs her hand over the exhausted pup's head.

Merrin looks at the sleepy pup.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
And here you are.

He licks her sore hand, as if Rabbit knows she's talking to him.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
She's out there, your own mother,  
risking everything, but what if,  
what if what she's doing is not an  
act of hate, but an act of love?  
It's the only love she knows...

Emotion wells in the depths of her eyes.

The soft sounds of SNORING, Rabbit is in dream land, safely nestled on Merrin's lap.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
Hush little Starling...

Merrin's eyes slide closed, her body relaxes, quickly falling into a slumber.

A few moments peaceful moments pass by.

Merrin's body retracts, her eyes instantly open. Rabbit is also on full alert.

Both of them listening intently.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
I know you heard that too...

The noise can now be heard more clearly.

BEEP BEEP

Merrin goes to investigate, her trusty aid Rabbit right at her side.

BATHROOM

The cellphone has dried out and has somehow started up again.

A text message indicates that Merrin has three new voice messages.

She listens, the first two are from Doug which Merrin instantly deletes.

The third one is from Natalie --

NATALIE (V.O.)

So, hey, it's me, Nat, your sister... again. Your phone is off, duh, obviously. Coming to you live from somewhere just outside of Chillworth County. By the way I kind of borrowed Bradford's Subaru without asking, and it totally crushes snow.

Merrin reacts.

NATALIE (V.O.)

The radio says the worst of the storm is behind me, and if it isn't, who cares right?

MERRIN

(dawning horror)

No...

NATALIE (V.O.)

Seriously, do you really think a few flakes of snow is going to stop me, okay, like really big ones, but hey, whose gonna let a bit of weather come between us?

(serious, the cheeriness  
leaving her voice)

You were there when I was at my worst, the drinking, the rehab, all of it, you were there sis, you stuck with me. Now it's my turn. I love you big sis.

The call ends.

Merrin turns the blinds up and looks outside, the wolves have returned to the perimeter of the house.

As fast as Merrin's fingers allow her, attempts to dial Nat's number.

The phone RINGS.

Once... twice...

MERRIN

Please pick up, please pick up,  
pick up.

Three times... four...

NATALIE (V.O.)  
Hello-

MERRIN  
Thank God.

NATALIE (V.O.)  
Mer?-

MERRIN  
Nat, I need you to listen to me  
very carefully, I need you to turn  
around right now. Turn around  
Natalie-

NATALIE (V.O.)  
What are you-

MERRIN  
Shut up, and listen to me! Pull  
over, find a rest stop, a motel-  
whatever, just... whatever you do,  
do not come here, do not come to  
the cabin. It's not safe. Tell me  
that you understand. Nat?

There's no response on the phone.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
NAT?! NAT?

When Merrin looks at the phone, it's dead. The phone has shut  
off.

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
Goddamn you!

She frantically tries to turn the phone back on, but there's  
no juice.

LIVING AREA

Merrin scrambles for a phone charger, and plugs it into the  
wall.

Attaches it to the phone, but of course that's not going to  
work. There's no electricity.

Merrin slams her fist on a small table, knocking the lamp  
shade to the floor.

The broken light sparks an idea.

## WORK ROOM

The view is able to give Merrin a line of sight to any vehicle that would be approaching the cabin.

The rifle, and the shells an arm's reach away.

As Merrin reaches for a partially assembled toy, one of Merrin's prototypes - a rather sad looking tortoise.

MERRIN

That's Loopy. Loopy is about to become your new best friend.

To keep Rabbit occupied, Merrin throws the tortoise towards him.

Rabbit digs in.

Each time he bites down, Loopy's head pops into its shell and then pops out, confusing the pup.

With Rabbit taken care of, Merrin checks the clock on the wall, trying to come up with some plan of action.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Chillworth to Derrington, that's roughly fifty miles, two hours, with this weather, and Nat's driving she could be here in...  
(wracking her brain)  
Thirty minutes.

Merrin starts to work the flashlight, flicking it on and off in a rhythmic manner.

She keeps stopping and starting, struggling to remember whatever it is she's trying to do.

Rabbit gives her one of his customary curious sideways glances.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

What? It's been a while, more than a while...

Laughs to herself.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

One summer, when we were kids, Nat and I made it our business to stay one step ahead of our parents, so we got creative.

(MORE)

MERRIN (CONT'D)

It was like we had this secret language all to ourselves.

Merrin repeats the flicking motion until it's seamless, like it's second nature.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

I blame dad, he was an Eagle Scout.

As the flashlight begins to stutter, fade, and then die.

Smashes the flashlight repeatedly on the desk.

Merrin disconnects the mobile from the crib, and rushes out of the room.

WORK ROOM

Merrin has positioned the mobile right in front of the window.

Keeps an eye on the clock.

MERRIN

Get creative.

Merrin eyes some of her tools, a couple of screw drivers, tiny pliers.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Let's see what makes you tick.

Applies the screwdriver to a small panel on the mobile, and opens it up.

There's a few flashing LED lights with some wiring.

Merrin does some quick rewiring and then screws the panel back on.

Begins to fiddle with the dials on the mobile, shifting the function from automatic to manual.

Presses a few buttons.

Merrin has replicated the same coded message she was performing with the flashlight.

The light occurs in bright, red strobes, much like a police siren.

Merrin turns another plastic knob marked "auto function", and locks it into place.

The mobile is now operating by itself, the same coded message repeats over and over.

An automated warning signal.

Suddenly a children's song blares from the mobile, "Rockabye baby".

This sends Rabbit into a frenzy, jumps and tries to attack the mobile.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Really?

Merrin manages to shut the music off, and Rabbit returns to Loopy.

She scopes the frozen landscape stretching out before her, and checks the clock again.

On the lookout for her sister.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Now we wait.

Loads a shell into the chamber of the rifle, pushing it deep into the loading sleeve.

INT. NAT'S SUV - LATER

NATALIE "NAT" SHAW, 25, free spirit. Purple hair, Elven features. Butterfly tattoo on her hand. Health juice crammed into the cup holder.

Various food wrappers belonging to organic food scattered liberally. A woman who has gone from one extreme to the other.

She's hunched over the steering wheel, the seat hoisted like a high chair.

Her small frame is disproportionate to the cavernous interiors of the Saburu.

Nat rocks out to her iPod playlist, masking whatever anxiety she might be experiencing.

The treacherous weather, and snow flurries makes visibility testing.

Tries Merrin's number, but just goes to voicemail.

INT. LOG CABIN, WORK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rabbit stirs, and WHINES. Hops onto his hind legs, and leans on the window frame, sensing something.

Merrin strains her eyes, on full alert. No indication where the wolves are.

Finger tightening on the trigger.

MERRIN

Natalie...

INT. NAT'S SUV - MOMENTS LATER

Cutting through the same clearing Merrin did earlier, avoiding debris and fallen branches.

Pumps the wipers, clearing the windshield of leaves, a papery mulch is smeared across the glass.

The path begins to slope upwards...

Taking her towards the crest upon where the cabin is situated.

Nat is driving blind, the Suburu encased in a vortex of white.

The white clears, the highbeams cutting through.

She pumps the brakes, and squints, confused by what she sees.

NATALIE

Sorry. What?

Although faint, Nat can now see the red lights flashing in the window.

INT. LOG CABIN, WORK ROOM - SAME

Merrin, eyes on the Suburu's headlights. The car just hovering.

MERRIN

Turn around, turn around, turn around Nat...

The car idles.

Instead of reversing, the SUV edges forward!

Merrin SLAPS her palm on the window.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Fuck!

NAT'S SUV

Unable to read the coded message properly, Nat continues to edge the car forward. Deciphering the message.

Digs lipstick from her handbag, and uses the windscreen as her canvass.

NATALIE

D.A.N.G.E.R

(beat)

H.O.M.E. G.O.

Reads the message back --

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Danger. Go. Home. GO. Go. Go. Go.

Nat contemplates the implications. Places her hand on the gears.

WORK ROOM

Merrin is frozen to the spot white-knuckling the trigger, eyes ratcheted on the car.

MERRIN

That's right, go home Nat.

A lingering beat, not sure of Nat's next move.

The highbeams of Nat's Saburu suddenly begin to flash back at her - another coded message.

Merrin trying to make out the various blinks, her concern turning to joy.

The Suburu begins to back away from the cabin.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Good girl.

All the tension leaves Merrin, her finger loosens on the trigger.

The SUV gradually getting further away.

INT. NAT'S SUV - MOMENTS LATER

Nat reversing, wheels kicking up clouds of snow. Phone to her ear, struggling to hear.

NATALIE

Yes, can you, can you hear- this is  
Natalie Shaw- no, Natalie-

With her concentration on the phone call, Natalie doesn't see two shadows darting past either side of the car. Fluid like quicksilver.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

No mister-operator-person, no it's  
not fine to put me on hold. My  
sister's in- operator? Opera-

As she's put on hold --

Everything jerks violently, the phone flies out Nat's hand. Head colliding with steering wheel.

She takes a moment to regain her senses.

A horrible, SHRIEKING CRY of distress from the rear of the SUV.

EXT. NAT'S SUV - MOMENTS LATER

Nat stumbles out, and moves to the back of the SUV.

There's a bloodied ELK, taken the full impact of a six thousand pound vehicle.

*It's the same mother elk seen earlier.*

A gash in the animal's side, blood spiraling into pure white snow.

Round, glassy brown eyes staring helplessly at Nat.

NATALIE

Oh fuck, oh fuck. I'm sorry, I'm  
sorry, I'm so fucking sorry.

Strokes the elk's head. Doing her best to comfort the injured creature.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

I know, I should've been paying  
attention, but that's me, always  
doing two things at once...

The elk's eyes begin to widen, paralyzed by fear.

Something stirs in the elk's shimmering eyes, the reflection of four silhouettes.

Steady GROWLS becoming louder and more aggressive.

Nat pauses, too terrified to turn around but unable to help herself.

Swivelling her neck millimeter by millimeter until she's staring at her would-be attackers.

NATALIE (CONT'D)  
(whispers to elk)  
I'm sorry.

Natalie makes a dash for the open door, bundles into the car. The strong wind makes it hard to close the door.

Fights to close it, her life depending on it, nearly...

Two paws press into the glass window, just as Nat manages to shut the door.

Mother perched on her hind legs, tall and imposing.

Those listless yellow eyes meeting Nat's.

NATALIE (CONT'D)  
Bite me.

Without a moment's hesitation, Nat fires the car into reverse.

Tires spin, the engine ROARS.

But she's not going anywhere.

The back tires have now lodged themselves into the dying elk, like a meat blender, they spin relentlessly tearing the animal apart.

The elk SHRIEKS.

Blood and innards geysers into the back window, blocking Nat's view.

The back wiper comes on making even more of a bloodied mess.

Nat throws the car into drive, the wheels fighting against snow and elk meat.

Suddenly the SUV tears free!

Accelerates forward, back towards the cabin again.

In her panic, fights to get the highbeams back on. Repeatedly flicking the wrong switches.

Without them she's driving blind.

INT. LOG CABIN, BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin scoops handfuls of water into her mouth, alerted by Rabbit's hysterical WHINES.

WORK ROOM

The pup is frantic, clawing and tapping on the window.

To Merrin's shock she can the lights of the SUV now rushing back towards her!

MERRIN

What is she doi...?

INT. NAT'S SUV - MOMENTS LATER

As Natalie finally gets the highbeams on --

Revealing a massive snow bank, the base of the slope leading to the cabin.

The car plows into the mass of snow, head on impact at eighty miles an hour.

The front windscreen explodes in a cascade of glass as Nat's body is propelled through it.

But she doesn't get all the way. Half her body is in, and the other out.

The car alarm sounds. Black smoke pours.

WORK ROOM

Merrin grabs for the rifle, using the scope to get a better view.

Frantically struggles to locate the wreck though the intermittent gusts of snow.

Pans the scope left and right, left and right.

Locates Nat, and the wreck.

Nat is unconscious, jackknived between windscreen and the snow bank in front of her.

Merrin's mind going at a million miles, makes to leave.

MERRIN

I'm com-

The words get caught in her throat...

The pack of wolves materialize out of the thick, oily smoke slowly circling the wreck.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Leave her alone.

Throws the window open, reaching for the rifle and pointing it outside.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Here! Over here!

Merrin anchors the weapon and pulls the trigger.

BLAM!

Except her infected shoulder takes the full brunt of the recoil.

Tides of pain rip their way through the entirety of Merrin's body.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

AAAAAAHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Time slows.

She collapses backwards on the brink of passing out, fighting to stay conscious.

Fighting to keep her sister alive.

NAT'S SUV

Nat comes to, her face a veil of blood, face pincushioned with broken glass.

Teeth and saliva spilling out of her mouth.

Blinks the blood out of her eyes, tries to move.

She can't. She's hemmed in. Escape would mean she would have to drag herself up the bank.

Nat does her best to extricate herself, reaches for the snow but can't find any grip.

Tries again, but it's fruitless.

A moment passes.

Sensing something, Nat tilts her head towards the top of slope.

MOTHER is there.

Backlit by the moon, giving her an aura of mythic proportions.

The wolf makes her approach.

Unable to speak, Nat can only make a series of terrified GURGLING sounds.

Until Mother is right above her. The mist from her nostrils baring down upon Nat.

Their eyes lock.

Tears cut through the blood on Nat's cheek. Death upon her. The smoke thicker, adding a hellish tinge.

#### WORK ROOM

Merrin making a final desperate attempt to rouse herself, dragging the rifle towards her.

She presses the boiling hot muzzle directly into the wound on her hand.

The smell of burnt flesh pungent, holds it there, keeps holding...

It does the job, the overwhelming rush of agony jackrabbits Merrin back into action.

Springs to her feet, takes another quick glance through rifle's scope.

The plumes of smoke flowing from the engine masks any shot she's able to take.

When the smoke parts, revealing all.

No sign of Mother, although Nat is still there.

Her face has been torn off, hair scalped.

And then Nat's hand twitches.

*She's still alive.*

Merrin drops the gun, steps back, and pukes. Shaking her head non-stop, can't quite absorb the nightmare she has just witnessed.

MERRIN

No...no...no...no.....no...no...no.

Does her best to regather herself.

Takes another look through the scope, her sister continues to twitch and gyrate with death spasms.

The suffering unmeasurable.

Merrin sets up the rifle, squints through the scope.

Nat swivels her mangled face, so that she's looking directly towards Merrin.

Imploring Merrin to put her out of her misery.

Merrin's hand trembling on the trigger.

She releases her finger from the trigger, unable to go through with it.

As Merrin looks through the scope again, she can see Nat holding a long shard of glass.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

NAAAAAT!

Nat stabs the glass into her jugular and ends her misery.

LIVING AREA/KITCHEN

Merrin stumbles down the stairs, in a trance, eyes glazed over.

Rabbit follows at Merrin's side, feeding off her misery. But she pays him no mind.

She reaches the entrance of the kitchen.

Stares into the murky depths, pale patches of moonlight casting a ghostly blue glare.

Merrin suddenly sprints towards the sink.

Scratches, claws, shoves her fingers into the garbage disposal.

Trying desperately and frantically to regather the pills she flushed away.

Finally Merrin gives up.

Slides down against the back of the island, and tucks her knees to her chest.

Drops her head between her knees, chest heaving. But there are still no tears.

The packs' chilling HOWLS a stark reminder.

Rabbit nestles next to her --

MERRIN

Go... just go...

He nudges Merrin with more urgency until she pays attention.

He has placed something at her feet.

Merrin picks it up, taking her a while to register what it is.

It's the mangled hand-stitched elephant.

Gets to her feet, and then drops the toy to the floor.

UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR

Merrin arrives at the baby's room. At the entrance, bits of puffy white stuffing.

BABY'S ROOM

Merrin enters, dumbfounded at what she sees.

All the toys in shreds and chewed up, stuffing like snow everywhere.

The baby journal has been through it too.

Nothing has been spared.

She tries to recover what's left, fitting the torn pieces together but quickly gives up.

Rabbit wags his tail, not a care in the world - all just a game to him.

Merrin gently picks the pup up, and strokes him. Darkness wallowing in her eyes.

#### LIVING AREA

Carrying the pup, Merrin makes her way to the front door.

#### MERRIN

"These things happen for a reason",  
Merrin." People used to say that a  
lot to me, a lot. Catch a bad break  
and they'll tell you we're just  
flotsam being pushed by the ebbs  
and flows of the greater cosmos,  
God's puppets, that there's no such  
thing as coincidence.

Her voice trembles with rage, disillusionment and bitter disappointment.

#### MERRIN (CONT'D)

I so badly wanted to believe, so I  
did, I kept telling myself this was  
what fate wanted, our paths crossed  
for a reason.

The pup WHINES and begins to squirm in her arms, sensing all is not well.

#### MERRIN (CONT'D)

Fate did bring us together... to  
set the record straight, to tell me  
what I had always known.

At the front door, she peers through the peep hole.

Mother, flanked by her pack. Waiting like harbingers of death.

#### MERRIN (CONT'D)

I'm not remarkable. You're not  
remarkable. Life isn't remarkable.  
What life is, is cold, cruel...  
it's empty...

Merrin begins to unlock the front door.

## MERRIN (CONT'D)

Empty.

Rabbit wriggles and contorts as if his life depends on it. That's because it does....

*Merrin is making an offering.*

About to open the door and offer him to the pack --

Rabbit bites down Merrin's injured hand, she drops the pup and he runs upstairs, disappearing somewhere in the house.

Merrin watches him scurry away, but doesn't bother to give chase.

## KITCHEN

Merrin slides a gleaming knife out of its block, holding her wrists out, closing her eyes.

The only thing she can see are Mother's floating, yellow eyes. Buried in the depths of her consciousness.

Opens her eyes, bracing herself.

Allowing the cool steel to rest against her flesh.

In the corner of her eye she can make out the mangled elephant.

The zipper on the back of it, pulled down, revealing a piece of folded paper poking out.

Merrin puts the knife down and removes the paper, tenderly unfolding it.

It's an ULTRASOUND.

She sits at the table, and rubs the crease lines out with as much care as she can.

Runs her fingers over the shape of her unborn child.

Merrin turns the ultrasound over.

A letter has been inscribed at the back, "to my unborn child".

Merrin reads the rest of the letter, the cold, empty expression on her face thawing.

Whatever the words are, they've had a profound effect on her.

Merrin begins to cry, a pained BELLOW of despair. Letting go of everything.

Her body shaking in fits and spurts. The tears falling in big, ugly droplets, unstoppable, making no effort to stem the onslaught of emotion.

She allows the pain to carry her, until she's exhausted herself.

Instead of despair there is now resolve.

#### LIVING AREA

Merrin opens all the curtains, a rallying call. Stands right up against the main double window.

Mother meets her face to face.

Their reflections merging as one.

Mother steps back, sinking back into the snow, invisible again.

#### INT. LOG CABIN, VARIOUS - MOMENTS LATER

Merrin goes room by room and finds as many lightbulbs as she can.

Unpacks all of the glasses from out of the kitchen cabinet.

She strips away all of the carpets from out of the living area, and coats the wooden flooring in greasy cooking oil, as well as the stairwell.

Breaks all the lightbulbs and glassware and scatters the shards all over the living area.

*Merrin is setting a trap.*

She removes the wolf-skin pelt off the wall.

#### UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR

Merrin secures the elephant's head back to it's body with masking tape.

Gently places the toy at the end of the corridor.

A peace offering to Rabbit.

## FRONT DOOR

She unlocks the door, and places it on the latch. Cold wind WHISTLES into the cabin.

The door BANGS.

## TOP OF THE STAIRS

Merrin takes up a position at the top of the stairs and drapes the wolf pelt around herself.

Takes the rifle that is leaned up against the balustrade.

She sits, and pops the wolf head at the back of the pelt so that it covers her face.

Points the rifle at the front door.

The door RATTLES and BANGS.

RATTLE RATTLE

BANG

RATTLE RATTLE

BANG

Merrin on edge, waiting for the door to explode open at any moment, poised on focused.

MERRIN  
And she huffed...

RATTLE RATTLE

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
And she puffed...

BANG

MERRIN (CONT'D)  
And she blew her house in-

The door is decimated, the latch torn loose. The sound as loud as a GUNSHOT.

The first three wolves pile into the house, they've taken the bait.

They slip and slide on the greasy surface, can't find their footing and when they do glass punctures their paws.

Confused, YELPING and frothing at the mouth. Mixture of pain and bloodthirsty rage.

Trying their fucking best to bound up the stairs and tear Merrin's throat out.

Merrin in the zone, calmly lines up a shot - making sure not to do further damage to her injured shoulder.

FIRES!

Misses.

Reaches into her pocket, grabs a shell and reloads.

FIRES

Wolf #1 takes a gut shot, the twelve calibre makes a mockery of its insides.

But the wolves #2 and #3 are undeterred.

Now reaching the base of the stairs, the glass and grease is especially numerous slowing them down.

Lining up her next shot, Merrin reaches into her pocket to reload.

In the process, she tips the rest of the shells spill out of her pocket, rolling to the bottom of the stairs.

She watches helplessly.

The two wolves find their feet, scaling towards her. Bloodied paw prints patterning the floor.

Merrin crab walks against the wall, trying to create as much distance as possible.

Suddenly something comes rolling towards her.

It's a rifle shell.

Rabbit has brought one to her exactly like the game they played earlier.

Inserts the bullet into the loading sleeve and squeezes the trigger.

Hits her mark. Skull hit. Brain juice slapping against the walls.

Merrin holds out her hand without looking.

He delivers another shell.

Load and fire.

This one takes off wolf #3 hind leg. The creature desperately tries to crawl towards Merrin.

Merrin stands over the incapacitated wolf, and raises the rifle like a club.

Brings it down on the creature's head, over and over, spraying her face with wolf blood.

Out of breath, takes in the scene.

The living area is war zone of flesh and fur. All the wolves accounted for...

*Except one.*

Picks a shell off the middle step, and aims the rifle. Nerves shredded.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Come on.

The Mother could spring at her at any moment.

Steps in front of Rabbit to shield him.

The decimated door barely on its hinges, sways back and forth creating an uneasy soundtrack.

Merrin spins towards the window, alerted by something colliding against it.

*Her sister's head.*

Only serves to distract Merrin --

As Mother leaps through the front door.

Merrin squeezes off a shot that goes hopelessly wide. With no time to reload, she resorts to flinging the rifle at the wolf, throwing her off course for a split second.

Merrin scoops the pup into her arms and they make a run for it upstairs.

BEDROOM

Hotfoot into the bedroom, Mother baring down on them. Leaping over the stairs three at a time.

Her prowess is majestic.

CLOSET

Merrin secures the closet's double-doors with a deadbolt.

Wooden slats giving them a view of the room.

Within seconds Mother's supine shadow crosses into the room. She paces, sniffing.

Merrin closes her eyes, praying under breath.

Her prayers are answered.

Mother begins to move away from the closet and towards the bathroom.

She stops, swiveling her muscular neck and fixing her gaze on Merrin.

Her lips pull back, dozens of razor sharp teeth gleaming.

And she charges.

Merrin braces for the impact, using all of her body weight to keep the doors from bursting open.

She takes the hit, but holds firm. Massive paws, and snarling teeth tearing through the slats. Merrin evading, ducking, contorting.

Merrin SCREAMING for her very life.

As her head is yanked backwards, pinning her in place. Mother's long nails have gotten tangled in Merrin's hair.

Somehow she evades Mother's other paw, whisking millimeters past her face.

Clutching Rabbit as tightly as she can.

Merrin rips a coat hanger off the rack, without looking stabs wildly.

Finds the mark, connecting with Mother's snout. She YIPS and backs off.

Releasing Merrin from her grip.

Mother gets ready to charge again, but instead she stops.

Music floats into the bedroom.

"Rockabye Baby".

Her ears prick up, she GROWLS softly with irritation, and runs off in pursuit of the tune.

Merrin and Rabbit exit the closet, Merrin weighing up her next decision.

She closes the bedroom door, locks it.

Eyes the bathroom.

#### WORK ROOM

Mother slashes at the mobile, it spills to the floor. The song continues to play in distorted sputters.

Obliterates the mobile, silence.

#### BATHROOM

Merrin opens the window, not big enough for her to climb out, but the right size for Rabbit.

MERRIN

Some choices are not ours to make,  
remember?

She looks at Rabbit, and he looks at her. Kisses him softly on the nose.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

No puppy eyes.

At the same time he places his paw on her nose. A beat.

Merrin drops Rabbit out of the window, the soft snow cushions his fall.

He HOWLS, tearing at Merrin's conscious. Merrin has no choice but to shut the window.

There's no time to dwell on her emotions, the bedroom door THUMPS.

Merrin starts to run the shower, using only the hot water. Thick wads of steam quickly begin to fill the bathroom.

Wafting into the bedroom.

INT. LOG CABIN, BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is a murky and thick with steam. Merrin moving through the haze.

Mother continuing to throw her weight into the door.

Merrin stands at the door.

*And then unlocks it.*

She takes a beat, and then opens the door...

Mother doesn't need a second invitation, disorientated by the steam and moisture in the room.

Unable to notice Merrin behind the door, silently exiting.

UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR

Merrin quickly closes the door, places a door jam underneath. Trapping Mother inside.

KITCHEN

Turns all the dials up on the stove, gas escapes.

LIVING AREA

Merrin rushes out of the house, and into the snow.

INT. SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Finds a Jerrycan, shakes it. Gasoline SLOSHING.

EXT. BACK OF THE CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

She pours the gasoline out, creating a trail that leads all the way to the doggy door.

Merrin kicks the doggy door open, and disperses gasoline into the kitchen until the Jerrycan is empty.

Retraces her steps back to a few feet from the shed where the gasoline trail begins.

Looks at the log cabin, dirty box of matches in her hand.

Memories, the good and ugly ones giving her a moment pause.

Merrin sets the box of matches alight.

PFFFT

She drops the flaming match box onto the gasoline.

A brilliant line of blue and orange snaking over the snow, eating its way to the cabin...

Through the doggy door, and into the kitchen.

Merrin waiting, anticipating.

The downstairs window suddenly implode - deadly missiles of glass spraying like buckshot.

There's a bright EXPLOSION of light and heat. Gas and flame engaging in a deadly inferno.

The cabin ablaze within a seconds.

Merrin watching, orange glow dancing across her face.

She turns around, met with the sound of another EXPLOSION. Doesn't flinch.

Searches the immediate area for Rabbit.

MERRIN

Rabbit?

WHISTLES.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

No more windows I promise.

(worried)

You made your point.

Working her eyes throughout the vicinity.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

She can't hurt you anymore.

In a patch of orange light, she sees Rabbit's collar lying in the snow.

She picks it up, JINGLING the bell sadly.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Rabbit...

Once again looks up at the smouldering cabin. The collar hanging limply in her hands.

Merrin's face now one of awe.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

Dear God.

She drops the collar, as she sees a SILHOUETTE rapidly closing in on the bedroom window.

MOTHER in full flight, breaking through the window, escaping the flames. Sailing through the air.

Merrin turns, and runs.

BOTTOM OF SLOPE

Skidding down to the bottom of the slope.

Picks herself up with heavy legs, and cuts a path towards...

EXT. LAKE - MOMENTS LATER

Mother gaining on Merrin, the lake her salvation.

The slick, icy surface indicates that Merrin has breached the outer reaches of the lake.

Forced to slow down, to maintain her balance, Merrin wades towards the middle of the lake.

*She has a plan.*

Mother cautiously stalks Merrin, feeling her wake across the glassy lake.

Merrin is now near the far end of the lake, focused on one particular patch of ice where water squeezes through a tiny crack.

*Exactly the same patch of ice Merrin rescued the pup from in the beginning.*

Mother getting closer.

Merrin uses her heel and stamps on the ice, a fissure appearing.

The fissure starts spreading.

Merrin looks behind her, to reveal the METAL SIGNPOST.

MERRIN

That look you have in your eyes. I think I finally understand. It's not love. It never has been.

Mother takes another step forward, now encroaching onto the fissure.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

It's hate.

Any moment the ice is going to give way beneath Merrin's feet.

The metal signpost within Merrin's reach now.

MERRIN (CONT'D)

That's the thing about hate. You don't see anything else. You stop seeing what's right in front of you.

Mother launches herself, but it's too late. The fissure crumbles, the animal falls into the icy depths.

Merrin latches onto the metal signpost, pulling herself onto the embankment.

The metal post gives, and gives as Merrin scrambles for safety...

When the signpost SNAPS!

Merrin falling into the water, the cold pushes the air out of her lungs, eyes as wide as saucers.

Fighting the water, trying to propel herself to the icy shore.

As Mother thrashes towards her, all legs and jaw. The hate for Merrin her only life blood.

Merrin bobs and weaves, keeping out of striking distance.

Sees the broken end of the METAL SIGNPOST float past her. Sharpened at the end like a spear from the point it broke off.

Merrin snags it.

## UNDER THE WATER

Merrin holds her breath and ducks beneath the surface, the wolf above her wading water.

A calm befalls her, everything leading to what's about to happen next.

Thrusts the sharp pole into bottom of Mother's large stomach, exploding out of the water at the same time for maximum leverage.

At eye level with Mother, refusing to die. Her pain only makes her struggle more.

Blood making the water murky.

Merrin pushes the pole deeper and moves it upwards. Sawing through intestine. Cutting Mother wide open like a Caesarian.

Beneath the water, two fetuses spill out of Mother's midsection, tumbling into the depths, taken by the darkness.

Soon joined by the eviscerated body of their mother.

*She was pregnant.*

## EXT. LAKE, BANK - MOMENTS LATER

Exhausted, frozen, but alive, Merrin crawls to land, rolls onto her back.

The storm has cleared, the earliest signs of morning upon the vista.

Merrin closes her eyes, revelling in the moment, every breath taken holds new possibilities.

*She's alive.*

When Merrin opens her eyes, she sees RABBIT staring right back at her. He licks her face.

They touch their noses together, Merrin's head bowed. Tears dripping.

## MERRIN

It's okay. Everything's going to be okay...

The far-away SIRENS of emergency vehicles.

## NEAR THE CABIN

The burnt, curled ultrasound. Somehow has survived the fire, a small gust of wind carries it away.

The words on the back visible, a letter to her unborn child.

MERRIN (V.O.)

This is you, where it all began. My tiny miracle. From so little, I can already tell so much about you. You're perfect, you're mine.

Merrin and Rabbit sitting together, watching the smouldering remains of the cabin, choking the pale sky.

MERRIN (V.O.)

No, I'm not perfect, and I won't try to be. I'm going to make mistakes, probably a lot of them, but trust me, I'm going to do my best to make sure you don't repeat them.

Rabbit moves to the edge of the lake, as Merrin joins him, peering into the lake.

MERRIN (V.O.)

No doubt there are going to be things, lots of things, many things, beautiful things, ugly things, things that will take your breath away, and decisions, decisions, the hardest ones you will ever have to make, but here's the good news, the best part, you will never have to make them alone.

Mother's face is pressed to the surface, now frosted over with ice.

MERRIN (V.O.)

I want to protect you, I know this for the same reason I know that I love you, because I am your mother.

Her eyes have remained open, mirrors of rage and unfettered hate.

MERRIN (V.O.)

You'll have questions, and I can't promise to have the answers, there are going to be some lessons you learn on your own.

(MORE)

MERRIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The real truth, is that there is no  
truth, except for our own, and that  
can be scary. Find yours, discover,  
never look back, only ever  
forward... the world welcomes you,  
welcome it back.

The pup places a paw where his mother's dead face is. He  
HOWLS once and then twice.

*A mother's love is everything.*