

BLOODY MINGO

Written by

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TITLE CARD:

"Here the mountains were like the walls of a great jail which shut in the combatants." - Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, 1963

EXT. TRAIN TRACK - DAY

The UNKNOWN TRAVELER scuffles down the middle of a train track in Central Appalachia.

He looks to be somewhere in his 40s, but he's probably younger than his emaciated, weather-beaten face appears. He's dirty and his hair is wild. His clothes are threadbare and he carries all his earthly possessions in a rucksack slung about his shoulders.

On one side of the tracks is an old, red-brick building blackened by years of passing coal trains.

On the other, a highway pressed against the towering Blue Ridge mountains.

The mountains are impossibly green, every square-inch covered by the spruce-fir, oak, pine and chestnut trees that stretch for miles beyond the horizon.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The Unknown Traveler hikes along the side of the twisty mountain road, occasionally turning back to extend his thumb for a car ZOOMING past.

After a few passes, a car slows and pulls over.

The Unknown Traveler doesn't change his expression or his pace. He walks placidly up to the ride.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (O.S.)
*If you worship the beast or its
image, if you take the mark on your
forehead or hand, I tell you
brothers and sisters, you will
suffer the whole of God's wrath.*

INT. CAR (MOVING) - MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Unknown Traveler is stretched out in the backseat watching out the window.

ON THE RADIO, a country preacher, PASTOR DUNCAN RAVENHILL, thunders about hellfire and damnation through some weird A.M. frequency.

PASTOR RAVENHILL
*You'll be tormented with burning
 sulfur in the presence of holy
 angels and the Lamb, and the smoke
 of your torment will rise forever.*

Shadows shift across the Unknown Traveler's face as the trees and mountains whir by outside.

They pass by three giant crosses on a towering hill overlooking the highway.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - BOOTH - DAY

The Unknown Traveler sits alone in a booth. He's sound asleep with his head leaning against the window.

The DINER MANAGER looks down on him disapprovingly.

DINER MANAGER
 Excuse me, sir.

The Unknown Traveler stirs from sleep.

DINER MANAGER (CONT'D)
 You're welcome to wait out back.
 These seats are for paying
 customers.

EXT. ROADSIDE DINER - CONTINUOUS

The Unknown Traveler sits near the dumpster behind the diner, the mountains and forests rolling on endlessly around him.

He gets to his feet as a DINER WORKER approaches with a garbage bag full of day-old food.

The worker ignores him, tosses the bag into the dumpster and walks back inside.

The Unknown Traveler pulls the garbage bag from the dumpster and scrounges through it, filling his rucksack with stale food.

EXT. WOODS - EVENING

The Unknown Traveler picks his way through the dense forest, his feet pushing into the dark soil below.

EXT. RIDGE - NIGHT

The Unknown Traveler squats over a CRACKLING FIRE, his eyes gazing wildly into the blaze.

He's on a ridge overlooking the mountain range, the trees below looking like shadows in the dark and the spray of the great Milky Way spread out above.

His lips move like he's talking to himself. He BURSTS OUT LAUGHING at some passing thought.

A WOLF HOWLS in the distance and he jumps to his feet, HOWLS BACK.

UNKNOWN TRAVELER
Aaarrroooooooooo!!!!!!

RIDGE - DAWN

The Unknown Traveler sleeps in the grey morning light next to the ashy embers of the fire, his head on the rucksack and a thin blanket covering him.

EXT. RIVER - MORNING

The Unknown Traveler is up to his waist in water, bathing naked in the river.

He YIPS and shivers and splashes about as he washes himself in the cold water.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The Unknown Traveler is back on the move, hiking through the forest with his rucksack. INSECTS TRILL all around him.

He picks berries from a vine and squirrels them away in his pack.

He walks an overgrown dirt path that appears to have once been a road.

The path leads to a dilapidated **MOUNTAIN TUNNEL** - the pitch black maw gaping before him. There's no light coming from the other side.

The tunnel is in a state of disrepair, crumbling and overrun by weeds and roots.

The Unknown Traveler retrieves a flashlight from his rucksack and carries on, disappearing into the void.

MOUNTAIN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

The Unknown Traveler walks through the tunnel, his flashlight barely lighting the way through the all-consuming dark.

He's surrounded by the sound of dripping water. His every step is ECHOED back at him.

A shadow passes by the cave mouth behind him. Sensing it, he turns and points the flashlight back at the tunnel entrance, but there's nothing there.

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The Unknown Traveler's dim bulb leads him out of the tunnel. The thick woods pick up immediately on the other side.

He walks over flat-rock GRAVESTONES stamped into the ground. There are scores of graves between the trees, all overrun by weeds and roots.

He squats down and uses a stick to chip away at the dirt covering one gravestone. It's unmarked. They're all unmarked.

As he squats there, a THUNDERING HOWL shakes the trees and echoes across the mountain. He looks up at the branches...a wolf, if not something else.

As the Unknown Traveler picks his way through the trees, a quiet comes over the forest. The bugs have stopped trilling, replaced by something like a LOW-GRADE, METALLIC HUM.

He comes upon something peculiar - broken down fencing and barbed wire surrounding a **MASSIVE HOLE** in the Earth. The hole is about 10x10 with a retaining wall that goes down about 15 feet. Beyond that, it's blackness with no end.

The fence is covered by overgrowth and trampled down at one point. There's a decades-old, rusted-out sign saying, "FEDERAL LAND, NO TRESPASSING, VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED."

There are strange stone structures set up at various points around the hole, all crumbling and in disrepair.

The Unknown Traveler tramples over the collapsed portion of the fence.

DEEP DARK PIT - CONTINUOUS

He gazes into the hole. He points his flashlight down there but the hole swallows the beam.

He picks up a good-sized rock and chucks it in.

The rock disappears into the void. There's no report of it ever hitting the bottom.

He LOCKS EYES with a black owl in the trees looking down on him, and then carries on his way.

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

As he strides through the forest, a thick fog builds among the trees, making the trek confusing and tricky.

The Unknown Traveler freezes at the unexpected sight of a man staring back at him.

It's his own REFLECTION. There's a mirror propped against the trunk of a tree. A strange sight this deep in the forest.

The wind RUSTLES the branches and he squints at the distant sound of TINKLING BELLS.

UNKNOWN TRAVELER

Hello?

He pushes on, encountering an elaborate **MIRROR GARDEN** deep in the remote woods - some leaning against tree trunks, others dangling by wire from the branches.

MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

He spins as he walks, catching his reflection in every direction.

He's a little spooked, every forest sound taking on a menacing air.

UNKNOWN TRAVELER (CONT'D)

Somebody there?

No response. The Unknown Traveler's head swivels, his growing concern reflected back at him in the surrounding mirrors.

He walks deeper into the mirror garden. The mirrors surround him everywhere and stretch further than he can see through the fog.

RIVERBANK - CONTINUOUS

The Unknown Traveler slides down the bank onto the rocky shoals of the BUBBLING RIVER.

He rests against a mossy boulder that sits on the shoreline.

He squints into the distance and sees something strange through the fog on the other side of the river.

There's a woman standing on the opposite river bank.

This is THE WITCH, although you wouldn't guess it by looking at her.

The Witch is about 60 years old. She looks like a normal, older woman in a white gown. She could be anybody's Granny.

Still, there's something eerie about her standing there in the fog.

She's waving at the Unknown Traveler in an exaggerated motion, as if she's waving to someone a mile away. Her arm makes a grand sweeping motion from one side to the other, like she's trying to flag down an airplane.

In her other hand, she's holding a small, rusted-out contraption that looks like a **BIRDCAGE**. The cage is in the shape of a dome with a square base and a crank at the bottom.

The Unknown Traveler studies her. He doesn't like what he sees, so he ignores her waving.

He takes a knee at the riverbank and splashes water on his face, sips from the palm of his hand.

He looks up and she's still there, waving dramatically.

Begrudgingly, he raises a hand, signaling back at her. She stops waving at his recognition, stands there watching.

He looks down at the water, where his own face is reflected back at him.

A DARK SHADOW comes over his reflection in the water like an eclipse. Someone has crept up from behind and is looking down on him.

He whips his head around, his eyes filling with fear and confusion as we...

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

LEX CAUDILL, 30s, runs full tilt through the trees ahead of TWO EMS WORKERS, one of whom carries an emergency services backboard.

Lex has a natural beauty and an athletic build. She's dressed in the classic brown sheriff's deputy uniform.

They run toward the horrific cries of a man WAILING in pain as if he's being tortured. His awful shrieks fill the forest and echo across the mountain.

They run past LOGGING WORKERS milling about gravely in small groups. Everyone they pass nods solemnly and makes way.

They round a bend and come upon TWO LOGGERS kneeling at the side of TOMMY CONNOR (30s), who lays on his back HOWLING in pain.

The men are positioned against a rock face and surrounded by giant, sawed-off chunks of fallen tree.

Lex SKIDS to a halt at Tommy's side. The EMS workers unpack their gear.

LEX

I'm here Tommy, I got you now.

Tommy is SCREAMING and crying and the pain shoots through him with every labored breath. There's a good deal of blood too.

TOMMY

(wheezing)...I (sucking
air)...can't (sucking
air)...breathe!

Lex looks up at the towering rock face.

LEX

He fall?

LOGGER #1

Nah, he was bucking a horizontal
windfall and it swung back on him.
Pinned him against the rock face.

LOGGER #2

Root wad moved funny. Damn thing
should've fallen straight down but
it snapped back on him. We had to
cut him loose.

Tommy HOWLS as an EMS worker gently pushes on his stomach and legs.

EMS WORKER #1

Grip my finger with your hand.

Tommy squeezes the finger.

EMS WORKER #1 (CONT'D)
That's good. Now move your feet.

Tommy wiggles his feet.

EMS WORKER #1 (CONT'D)
Spine's intact but ribs and pelvis
are smashed up pretty good.

TOMMY
Goddamn widow-maker got me!

LEX
Not a widow-maker, Tommy. Audrey's
gonna be putting up with your shit
for a long time coming.

Tommy SNORTS laughter, then SCREAMS in pain.

TOMMY
Gaaaahhh damn you Lex don't make me
laugh!

EMS WORKER #2
Let's get him on the board and over
to the clearing.

LEX
Hang in there. Chopper's on the
way.

They gently roll Tommy onto the backboard as he CRIES OUT.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Lex drinks alone at the bar in the small-town dive. She's out
of her uniform and into blue jeans and a flannel.

A HANDSOME MAN approaches the bar and orders a whiskey.

Lex sits upright, eyeing him and trying to get his attention.

The man looks her over and flashes smile. He pays for his
drink and walks off.

Lex slinks back in her seat.

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex checks herself in the mirror as she washes her hands.

She spots blood on the back of her hand.

LEX
Goddammit Tommy.

She rubs it out under the water.

INT. LEX'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Lex walks into her ranch-style home.

She closes the door behind her and leans back against it, taking in the silence and the dark.

It's so quiet you can hear a CLOCK TICKING from another room.

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lex pulls a frozen dinner from the freezer and punches holes in the plastic with a fork.

She pops it into the microwave and leans against the counter, waiting as the food warms.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex sits on the couch eating her food and watching some TRASH REALITY TV SHOW.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Lex is in sweats and a t-shirt now, curled up on the couch.

She's still watching trash TV, but she's got a glass of wine and she's hopelessly swiping on a dating app.

No...no...no...God no...

BEDROOM - LATER

Lex is in bed sleeping with an eye mask covering her eyes.

The nightstand light is on, so the room is brightly lit.

She lays there, unmoving in the silent house, when suddenly...

She BOLTS UPRIGHT and rips the eye mask off in a panic.

There was no sound to disturb her, but she's spooked as she scans the room for a threat.

LEX
Hello?

The house returns only silence.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex lays on the couch with the mask half-covering her eyes.

The light from a bad LATE NIGHT TV INFOMERCIAL is splashed across her face and reflected back through her glazed eyes.

It looks like her eyes will finally close and sleep will take hold, but she JOLTS awake and continues on through the perpetual half-sleep/half-awake state of the hopeless insomniac.

EXT. MINGO COUNTY POLICE STATION - MORNING

A bland brick building with a few cars and cruisers scattered about the lot, the mountains and forests all around.

INT. MINGO COUNTY POLICE STATION - CUBICLE - MORNING

Lex has bags under her eyes and the delirious look of someone who was up all night.

She sits at her desk and scrolls her email with a tight grip on a hot coffee.

OFFICER COLBY STETSON (20s), an eager, clean-cut up-and-comer, pops his head in.

OFFICER COLBY
Morning Lex. Sheriff wants to--

He trails off at the sight of Lex's puffy, sleepless eyes.

OFFICER COLBY (CONT'D)
...see you.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lex sits across from SHERIFF JEREMIAH HUDSON (60s).

The Sheriff is a good old boy. A thick fella with a robust mustache and gin blossoms on his red face from years of drinking. His eyes are settled deep in his skull.

SHERIFF HUDSON
Hear from Tommy or Audrey?

LEX

His logging days are over. Dancing days too, but he'll make it. Hopefully get a nice settlement.

The Sheriff grunts his approval.

SHERIFF HUDSON

We got a situation up in the Cranberry Wilderness. A body without a head.

LEX

That our territory?

SHERIFF HUDSON

Hell, I don't know. It's no-man's land but this damn thing's being passed around. Landed on us when the music stopped.

LEX

Victim must be important.

SHERIFF HUDSON

Nope. A drifter. A roustabout. A nobody. But it's an election year and the governor wants to make a show of caring about the least among us. I know it's an ask, but you'll have resources. Run up a tab. Get out in nature. Or stay with your folks - don't you have family in those parts?

LEX

No sir.

SHERIFF HUDSON

No? I thought your--

LEX

No.

Sheriff Hudson knows different but he lets it go.

SHERIFF HUDSON

Well. It is a violent, lawless place. The people there seem to have an inborn disgust for discipline and order. We've had reports of cannibalism. Satanism and old time religion.

(MORE)

SHERIFF HUDSON (CONT'D)

A lot of marrying close to home, if you know what I mean. The people there possess a primal savagery.

LEX

I'll be careful, sir.

SHERIFF HUDSON

No sprawl, understand? Keep it clean. I can't have any sprawl.

LEX

Shouldn't we let the investigation determine the scope?

SHERIFF HUDSON

No. Sprawl.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lex carries a bag of burgers past DOCTORS AND NURSES.

She swings into a patient room but finds it empty.

She flags down a NURSE.

LEX

I'm looking for Tommy Connor. The logger. He was--

NURSE

I'm sorry but we lost him.

LEX

What? No, that's...I was just--

NURSE

He wasn't clotting and we couldn't stop the internal bleeding. Are you with the family? His wife is just down the hall.

The nurse points down the hall at AUDREY (30s), who is crumpled in a chair, her body WRACKED by sobs.

A PRIEST stands at her side comforting her.

Audrey looks up, her face and eyes puffy and mascara running down her face.

She locks eyes with Lex, who looks back at her in horrified, death-haunted silence.

INT. LEX'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lex folds her clothes and packs a duffel bag.

She pulls clothes from the dresser and an old photograph falls onto the floor.

She picks it up and studies it. It's weathered, yellowed, from the early 1990s. It's a picture of Lex as a young girl being held by her mother and father, VERNON and GLADYS, who are in their 20s and dressed in the style of the time.

She's not smiling in the picture and neither are her parents. Everyone stares back vacantly from the photo, giving it a haunted feel.

There's a house sound, a little POP/CRACK. Lex is spooked back to reality, her eyes scanning the room and ears pricked.

She carries on packing.

COUCH - LATER

Lex is half-asleep on the couch, the eye mask covering her face as a LATE NIGHT INFOMERCIAL drones on the TV.

She JOLTS awake and lifts her eye mask. She tries to go back to sleep with one eye open.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADS - MORNING

It's a grey, overcast day.

A GOD'S EYE VIEW as Lex drives her police cruiser along the winding roads beneath towering mountains and oceans of trees, coal trains passing in the distance.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Lex listens to AM NEWS RADIO as she maneuvers the switchbacks and twisty mountain roads.

On one side, there's a small guard rail protecting against the steep drop-off. On the other, a cliff face with warnings of falling rocks.

She passes the three giant crosses on the towering hill overlooking the highway.

She drives through man-made mountain tunnels, the eerie glow of daylight in a tunnel.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - BOOTH - DAY

Lex sips coffee and looks out on the gloomy day.

She doesn't know it, but we do - she's seated in the same booth as the Unknown Traveler, following in his footsteps.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Lex pulls into the dirt driveway of the Lonely Logger Inn, a crumbling motel nestled against the mountain tree line.

The motel is from another era, with shiplap and faded signage.

INT. LONELY LOGGER INN - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex unlocks the door. It swings open into another time.

She's hit by a musty scent and dust particles dancing in the air like she opened the vault to a tomb.

Wood-paneled walls, dime store art, a TV with rabbit ears and a dial, all faded browns and yellows. There's a desk pushed against the wall.

She drops her bag and flips the TV on. The fuzzy signal produces a black and white TV show.

MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Lex is asleep.

It's dark in the room but for the static from the TV.

She violently jolts awake, unsure of where she's at.

She flips the nightstand light on and sits up on the edge of the bed. She rubs her face in exhaustion.

EXT. COUNTRY MEAT PROCESSOR - MORNING

Lex is in uniform. She exits the police cruiser and looks out on a ramshackle cabin with adjacent barn between the trees.

It's a filthy set-up - all decaying wood, electrical generators, and blood-stained coolers and freezers.

A MAD BARKING DOG emerges from the barn and gives Lex the business. She CLICKS her tongue and gets down on a knee.

The dog runs over and Lex pets him as she eyes the surroundings.

Lex walks cautiously toward the barn.

She passes a gutted deer carcass strung on a tree branch, and rubber garbage cans full of animal innards that teem with insects and flies.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lex pushes into the barn, which has hanging chains, rope, rusty old tools, scissors, saws, prods and hoses. Animal hides are nailed to the walls.

The sound of a BONE SAW comes from a room obscured by clear rubber blinds splattered with blood and grime.

She pushes through the blinds to find TRAPPER JOE (30s) at the bone saw cutting through a chunk of animal flesh.

He's a disgusting man - blood and dirt caked on his apron and protective eyeglasses.

Lex stands there for a beat, unnoticed.

Trapper Joe finishes cutting the meat. He turns off the bone saw, wipes his bloody hands on his clothes and removes his goggles, all without acknowledging her.

TRAPPER JOE
It's in the fridge.

MEAT LOCKER - CONTINUOUS

Trapper Joe opens the door to the meat locker and they walk inside, breath billowing beneath the sodium bulbs.

Giant slabs of animal meat hang from hooks.

Lex is appalled by the setup.

The Unknown Traveler's naked body - or what's left of it - is laid out on a slab in the corner of the frosty room.

She inspects the body. The neck is still there but there's no head. The chest cavity is exposed and the body's been ripped, torn and gored from top to bottom.

LEX
This is where you store the
victims?

TRAPPER JOE

It's stored properly, ma'am. Thirty-six degrees to slow decay. You can check the thermometer yourself.

LEX

It's next to the animal meat.

TRAPPER JOE

It's shared air, ma'am. You're sharing the air now too. The body and the meat are stored properly.

Lex continues inspecting the body.

TRAPPER JOE (CONT'D)

Forensics team was out yesterday. Prints, DNA and photographs. Didn't find no ID and didn't conduct no autopsy. Pretty obvious what happened, I guess.

LEX

What's obvious about it?

TRAPPER JOE

Well you can see right there his head's gone missing. Body washed up at the Cumberland Bridge. Fish going after the traces.

LEX

They remove his organs?

TRAPPER JOE

No organs to remove. Animals and critters got to 'em. They do not abide the customs of men, not when it comes to remains.

Lex inspects the neck.

LEX

This wasn't an animal attack. His head was sliced off with a blade. You get a lot of these?

TRAPPER JOE

Yes ma'am. Most are animal attacks. It's dangerous land out here, even for experienced mountaineers.

LEX

How many do you get a year?

TRAPPER JOE

Oh, about a dozen. Storage and disposal keeps me afloat through the lean times. That's why I want it clear that the body is stored properly. I follow the standards and keep it at 36 degrees.

LEX

That's fine, I'm not questioning your work. Do most of the bodies look like this?

TRAPPER JOE

Oh yes ma'am. A lot of 'em missing heads. Missing hearts and livers. Mostly unidentified drifters. Vagabonds or passers by. No family comes asking. I store 'em all at 36 degrees and I dispose after 10 days, which is customary and proper. Store and dispose, that's what I'm paid to do.

LEX

You don't keep records?

Trapper Joe lights up.

TRAPPER JOE

Oh yes ma'am, I keep excellent records.

STORAGE CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Lex and Trapper Joe stand over a stack of boxes.

TRAPPER JOE (CONT'D)

You will not find better records in all of Old Appalachia. Not in an archives and not in a library. I appreciate your communicating this to whomever you report.

Lex opens a box, thumbs through it.

TRAPPER JOE (CONT'D)

This fella had a few belongings. One shoe still on his foot. A wet piece of paper tucked into his sock. The whole deal is documented in accordance with the professional standard.

(MORE)

TRAPPER JOE (CONT'D)

I do hard labor but I take care
with the reading and writing bits.

Lex nods her approval.

EXT. COUNTRY MEAT PROCESSOR - LATER

Lex loads a crate of documents into the trunk of her cruiser.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lex sits in the front seat and digs through a bag containing the Unknown Traveler's shoe and sock.

There's also a crumpled piece of purple paper in a Ziplock sandwich baggy.

She examines the paper - the ink has run all over the page from being submerged in water. It's totally illegible.

INT. LONELY LOGGER INN - ROOM - NIGHT

Lex loads the crate of documents onto the desk.

She unfolds a map of the region and pins it against the wall.

She flips through the files, taking notes and spreading the papers in piles across the floor.

The files reveal case after case of headless victims, all belonging to unidentified vagrants.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Lex walks through the trees.

She stops as her boot makes a SQUISHING sound in the soil.

The soil is a dark maroon color, like it's soaked with blood.

*Drip...drip...drip...*the sound of light rain around her.

She looks into the tree branches above and finds entrails, guts and gore strung like lights on a Christmas tree.

There's a body suspended there too, split open, rib cage exposed and mauled beyond all recognition.

She winces in disgust as she's hit with a splash of gore on her face and...

INT. LONELY LOGGER INN - ROOM - NIGHT

Lex calmly opens her eyes. She's splayed out in bed.

It's dark in the room but for the static on the TV.

Her files are spread across the room, with pages pinned to the wall beneath the map. There are a few tacks pushed into the map.

She flips the nightstand light on and sits on the edge of her bed. She rubs her face in exhaustion.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - BOOTH - MORNING

Lex sits in her booth at the diner over coffee.

She stares out at the rainy, grey morning.

EXT. ROADSIDE DINER - PARKING LOT - LATER

Lex approaches her cruiser, looking tired and worn.

As she's pulling the handle on the door, her attention is drawn to something near the road.

SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Lex approaches a telephone pole papered with ads and fliers.

She pulls a purple flier from off the poll, examines it. It matches the inky, waterlogged flier found on the Unknown Traveler.

It's an ad for a pentecostal tent revival led by Pastor Duncan Ravenhill down at Tacket Creek.

There's a picture of the handsome pastor smiling in the photo and looking up to heaven.

We CLOSE on the photo of Ravenhill as we hear the DISTANT SOUND OF CLAPPING, SINGING AND CHANTING...

EXT. TENT REVIVAL - NIGHT

Lex walks through a field toward a white tent - a massive, carnival-style structure held up by long wooden stilts. Pit fires burn around it.

Beyond the tent is a rundown TRAILER HOUSE.

The sound of CLAPPING, SINGING AND CHANTING grows louder as she approaches.

Dozens of POOR FOLKS hang around a sign that says "Holy Ghost Revival, Presented by Pastor Duncan Ravenhill."

Lex stands out among these folks, everyone giving her a suspicious eye as she passes.

INT. TENT REVIVAL - CONTINUOUS

The crowd inside is whipped into a frenzy, SINGING, DANCING AND CLAPPING.

Some folks are SPEAKING IN TONGUES, their babbling unintelligible. They rock and sway with their eyes closed and arms raised to the heavens. Everyone is on their feet in various stages of religious ecstasy.

PASTOR DUNCAN RAVENHILL (40s) leads the service from a makeshift stage upfront. He's dancing, bobbing around this way and that, his head shaking and eyes closed.

Ravenhill is a handsome and charismatic leader, although there's something off - like he's rotting from the inside, with pale skin and yellow eyes.

He leads with confidence, stalking the stage in front of a backing band of SINGERS WITH TAMBOURINES doing an uptempo rendition of the old spiritual "Every Time I Feel the Spirit."

RAVENHILL AND THE CROWD

*Every time I feel the spirit moving
in my heart I will pray...yes,
every time I feel the Spirit moving
in my heart I will pray...*

Lex stands in the back of the tent behind the wooden benches filled with churchgoers.

Two churchgoers arrest her attention - JESSE PRESLEY (30s) and his adorable daughter AINSLEY (5).

They're dressed like poor mountain trash. Jesse is handsome, with the chiseled frame of a mountaineer. He's got a LARGE BIRTHMARK on the side of his face.

Jesse puts his arm around Ainsley and she smiles up at him as they sing and sway.

Lex smiles.

RAVENHILL AND THE CROWD (CONT'D)

*Upon the mountain when my Lord
spoke, out of God's mouth came fire
and smoke...Looked all around me,
it looked so fine, til I asked the
Lord if all was mine...*

A church deacon, ROY, with a gnarly beard and greasy hair, stands next to the stage with another rough-looking church deacon, MASON.

Roy spots Lex. He whispers something to Mason, who locks in on Lex. She returns their gaze.

RAVENHILL AND THE CROWD (CONT'D)

*Jordan River, chilly and cold, it
chills the body but not the
soul...There Is but one train upon
this track, it runs to heaven and
then right back...*

The song ends but the crowd keeps the rhythm going, CLAPPING AND SWAYING.

Roy and Mason take the stage carrying baskets. They set one basket down on either side of Ravenhill.

They flip open the baskets. Each basket contains a VENOMOUS SNAKE - one a timber rattler, and the other a cottonmouth. The snakes squirm and hiss menacingly.

PASTOR RAVENHILL

The Bible says anyone who believes,
anyone who is baptized will be
saved, but anyone who does not take
the healing waters of the Lord will
be punished!

Churchgoers call back with "AMEN" and "HALLELUJAH."

Ravenhill dips down and scoops up a snake in each hand.

He looks down on the snakes, mesmerized as they twist up his arms.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)

And you who believe will do these
things as proof. You will speak in
unknown languages. You will touch
the sick and the sick will be
healed!

Ravenhill holds his arms up and lightly dances, bobbing up and down as the snakes writhe about his arms and neck.

The churchgoers are RHYTHMICALLY CLAPPING, some SPEAKING IN TONGUES or SHOUTING "PREACH"!

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)

And you will pick up snakes and
drink poison without being hurt! I
tell you, sure as I stand here, I
saw Satan fall like lighting from
the sky!

One of the snakes STRIKES at Ravenhill, sinking its fangs into his forehead. He CRIES OUT IN PAIN. He drops the snakes and falls to his hands and knees.

Lex is jolted by the sight. The music stops. The crowd GASPS and backs away. The snakes fall to the ground and thrash around him, HISSING menacingly.

Ravenhill HEAVES on all fours, his head hanging down and face hidden.

Lex pushes through the crowd but Roy steps in front of her.

LEX

He needs medical attention.

ROY

You need Jesus.

Lex pulls her cell phone and starts to dial. Roy snatches it from her hand. She looks at him, shocked by his brazenness.

ROY (CONT'D)

This is not your business. Now
stand back.

Lex's attention switches back to Ravenhill, who slowly lifts his head. The crowd GASPS again.

One side of his face is swollen beyond recognition, ballooned to a ridiculous size. His eye is swollen shut and half of his forehead has grown to the size of a grapefruit.

Ravenhill staggers to his feet, snagging the snake that bit him. He sways, struggling to get his bearings.

Snake in hand, Ravenhill anchors his legs and raises his arm.

PASTOR RAVENHILL

Hear me now sinners! I've been
given authority to walk with snakes
and scorpions and to overcome all
the power of the enemy so that
nothing will hurt you!

Ravenhill's ghoulish face scans the crowd. His crazed gaze falls on Lex. A twisted smile breaks across his swollen face, his eyes wild as the snake slithers along his arm.

Lex returns his gaze, awestruck and a bit fearful.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)

Go away Satan! Go away Satan! Go
away Satan so that we may worship
the Lord our God!

INT. TRAILER HOUSE - LATER

There's no electricity, so the shack is dark but for the glow of oil lamps.

There are tin cups and plates scattered about, bottles of booze. Old furniture breaking down, stripped of paint.

The centerpiece of the living room is a makeshift recording studio and a radio box positioned on a shelf beneath a picture of Jesus.

Ravenhill sits on the couch nursing a swollen head. Roy stands over him with a syringe to draw anti-venom from a vial.

Lex observes from a chair across from Ravenhill, whose swollen face looks ghoulish in the glow of oil lamps.

PASTOR RAVENHILL

We have the venom taken out. Guess
this one had a good bit left in
him.

Ravenhill winces as Roy sticks the needle into a vein in his neck, hits the plunger.

Ravenhill lets out a long "aaaaaaahhhhhhhh."

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)

How can I help you deputy?

Lex pulls out her phone and shows him a morgue photo of the Unknown Traveler.

LEX

I'm investigating this man's death.
No ID. Nothing on him, other than
one of your fliers.

Ravenhill considers it through his good eye.

PASTOR RAVENHILL
Hard to say without the head. Roy?

Roy looks at the photo. Shakes his head no.

LEX
Any of your flock go missing?

PASTOR RAVENHILL
We have regulars, but far as I know they're all accounted for. We get a lot of transients, too. Irregulars who I can't account for. You should talk to Otis Netherby, if you can find him.

LEX
Who is he?

PASTOR RAVENHILL
Some folks just call him Uncle Otis. He keeps a little community in the woods.

ROY
More like a cult.

PASTOR RAVENHILL
I don't like that word because there's some liable to use it on us. But I'll say it's a strange little community filled with strange people.

Ravenhill studies Lex.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)
Are you washed in the blood of the lamb, Deputy?

LEX
Excuse me?

PASTOR RAVENHILL
Are you a believer?

Lex shakes her head no.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)
Didn't figure you for one. But I can promise you, there is a war for the kingdom of heaven happening right here.

(MORE)

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)

This land, our land, it's a hot spot for spiritual warfare. Devils and angels. Witches and portals. The unholy damned. Otis and his crew, they're set up in the middle of it, for one reason or another.

LEX

Can you point the way?

PASTOR RAVENHILL

I'd just be pointing at the hills. They move around, stay off the grid. You could try the valley behind Cheyenne Peak. Maybe the Gracy Ravine. You'll know when you find 'em.

LEX

Thanks for your time.

Lex gets to her feet, turns for the door.

PASTOR RAVENHILL

Deputy.

Lex turns back to him.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)

I wouldn't go out looking for him on your own. It's not safe.

Lex shoots him a look. She's heard this a thousand times.

LEX

I appreciate your concern but I'm--

PASTOR RAVENHILL

I don't mean because you're a woman.

Ravenhill gets to his feet, staggers briefly, then regains his footing. He squares up with Lex, breathing labored.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (CONT'D)

There's an evil burrowed in the ground here. It will snatch you up and pull you apart. Done it to scores that came before and it will continue long after you're gone. It's the Great Churn, Deputy. God is concerned for your soul. The cosmos he created is totally indifferent.

Lex studies his face. He's dead serious.

INT. LONELY LOGGER INN - ROOM - DAY

The radio plays.

Lex's files are spread across the room - photos of headless bodies and reams of notes.

The map over her desk has taken on a new dimension - the tacks pushed into the map form a circle around a remote area of the forest.

The Unknown Traveler's picture is pinned downstream of the circle. She uses a marker to trace the path upstream, which takes her to a point adjacent to the circle.

She marks the point with an X and surveys her work.

LEX

He really does keep good records.

Lex pulls up a map on her laptop.

There are no roads where she's going. It's all green, unincorporated land.

Curiously, there are BLACK BLOCKS on the map where a small portion of the valley is blotted out.

Lex gazes at the puzzle on her wall.

ROOM - LATER

The lights are out and Lex is asleep in bed, files and papers strewn about the room.

THE MINER (40s) walks silently past Lex's bed for the bathroom. It's dark, so we only see his shadowy silhouette, but he towers over the room.

The Miner is a giant man, nearly 7-feet tall, in old-time long underwear and dirty overalls. He's so large he must suffer from gigantism. He's almost too big for the room.

We stay on Lex as she sleeps, but we hear him move into the bathroom. Lex's eyes open as the bathroom light FLICKS ON.

She sits up in bed, confused and afraid, listening to the sound of GENTLE SOBBING coming from the bathroom.

She grabs her service revolver from the nightstand and creeps toward the bathroom, the sound of WEEPING growing louder.

The bathroom door is cracked open. She slowly pushes inside.

The shower curtain is drawn but the Miner is so large it doesn't conceal his entirety. He's SOBBING in the shower.

Lex creeps inside and rips the curtain back.

She jumps back at the sight of this giant - his massive, head is completely bald. His head and face and hands and overalls are covered in black soot.

There are no whites to his eyes - they're black all the way through.

She points the gun at him but he's not threatening her - he's weeping and frightened and looking questioningly at her.

THE MINER
How did I get here?

He stops crying, confused and pleading.

THE MINER (CONT'D)
Can you help me?

Lex looks on him in confusion and horror, unsteady on her legs with the gun half-pointed.

THE MINER (CONT'D)
I shouldn't be here.

ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex is asleep in bed. She opens her eyes from the dream.

She's momentarily confused - the room is dark but the bathroom light is on.

She sits up and looks at the light coming from the bathroom.

There's no sound, but her blood runs cold as she notices something else - in the corner of the dark room, buried in the shadows, face concealed and barely perceptible, stands the Witch.

The Witch is waving at Lex with her whole arm, big broad strokes.

Lex scrambles for the nightstand light, flips it on and the Witch blinks out of existence. There's nothing there.

Lex's head crooks back to the bathroom, because she hears the sound of SOBBING AND WEeping.

She pulls her revolver from the nightstand and creeps toward the bathroom.

The door is cracked open, just like in the dream, the weeping and sobbing from the other side...

She pushes inside, walks toward the bathtub. The curtain is drawn.

She RIPS THE CURTAIN BACK, ready to fire...but there's nothing there.

She listens...the weeping is somewhere further off, echoing through the vents.

She notices something in and around the tub. It's black soot - handprints along the tub and a light dusting around it.

She wipes the coal dust from the tub and inspects it.

Exhausted, she sits on the tub and hangs her head.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - NIGHT

Lex walks into the diner.

It's the middle of the night, so the place is mostly empty.

She slumps into her booth, the same one she unknowingly shared with the Unknown Traveler.

The WAITRESS swings by.

WAITRESS
What can I getcha darling?

LEX
Decaf, please.

WAITRESS
You got it.

The waitress walks off and Lex nestles into the corner against the window.

ROADSIDE DINER - BOOTH - MORNING

The sun is up and the diner is flooded with morning light.

Lex is sound asleep, cold coffee in front of her.

She's out cold, even as the diner is coming to life with the breakfast crowd.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - MORNING

Lex drives a dirt road into the backwoods.

She approaches a TRAILER PARK in a state of shocking disrepair.

Decades-worth of trash and rusted-out artifacts. Roofing, bicycles, siding, tires and children's toys littered about the burnt out trash pits.

She gets a nasty look from a shirtless TATTOOED MAN smoking by one of the trailers as she passes.

She pulls up to a rundown trailer. It's decades old, caked in grime and water stains.

She looks out on it, the bad memories washing over her.

EXT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Lex surveys the rundown landscape as she approaches the door.

Her eyes linger on a pink teddy bear in the yard with all the other trash. It's stained with mud and dirt, leaking its cotton-ball insides from a gash in the side.

The Tattooed Man stalks about his trailer, watching.

From inside the trailer, we hear a DEEP COUGH.

Lex KNOCKS.

GLADYS (O.S.)
Who is it?

LEX
Lex.

GLADYS (O.S.)
Who?

LEX
Lex! Your daughter.

Silence for a beat.

GLADYS (O.S.)
Alexandra?

Lex pulls open the door.

INT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Lex steps inside the two-bedroom double-wide and is immediately hit with an awful stench.

She covers her mouth and nose and looks in horror at the state of the place. Gladys HACKS away from the back.

A hoarder lives here. Every inch of the place is covered in trash. Random collections of papers, wrappers, empty shampoo bottles, crusty tin cans, stacks of filthy dishes and old toothbrushes. Jars filled with milky liquids and gelatinous semi-solids.

GLADYS (O.S.)
(hacking) Back here!

Lex steps cautiously through mess. A rat scurries, burrowing into one of the piles of trash.

Lex stops in the doorway of a tiny bedroom, examining it.

It's filled to the brim with trash, but pasted on the walls is evidence that a young girl once lived there. Faded pink posters peel off the wall behind the mounds of trash, and little girl toys are mixed in with trash.

She continues back to the second room.

GLADYS CAUDILL (50s) is splayed out in bed surrounded by mountains of trash, empty liquor bottles and thousands of cigarette butts.

Gladys looks years older than she actually is. She's shriveled and wrinkled, teeth rotting and hair thinning.

Lex stands in the doorway watching her hack and struggle to catch her breath. Lex is disturbed. She feels pity.

LEX
Jesus, Mom.

Gladys raises her arms.

GLADYS
Help me up.

Lex maneuvers through the trash and assists in bringing her mother to an upright position.

Gladys is light-headed from sitting up.

She lights a cigarette.

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lex clears off a chair around a table crowded with junk.

There's one box that's old but doesn't appear to be junk. An unopened dining set.

Lex cringes as Gladys pours straight booze into a filthy cup.

LEX

That glass is filthy. You've got
new ones right here.

Gladys plops down across from Lex.

GLADYS

That's the good stuff for when your
daddy comes home.

Gladys gulps down her drink, GLUG GLUG GLUG. It must be eight shots. Lex winces.

LEX

For when dad comes home?

The booze hits Gladys hard. She burps, slumps, slurring almost immediately.

LEX (CONT'D)

He died in a plane crash 20 years
ago. He's not coming--

Gladys SLAMS her hand down on the table.

GLADYS

Stop that talk! They never found
his body. Lots of folks go missing
and lots are found. People you
never thought'd be back. Hell
you're here, aren't you?

LEX

It's delusional. You never dealt
with it.

GLADYS

Just like you never dealt with your
visions.

Lex is bothered by the remark and Gladys can tell.

Gladys leans in, studies Lex's eyes.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
You've seen him too, haven't you?

LEX
Who?

GLADYS
Big fella. Always crying. Doesn't like it here.

Lex sits stone-faced.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Yeah, you've seen him all right. You've got the same connection to the land as me. I should've known you were around. Frequencies run stronger when we're close.

LEX
They're night terrors. Same as before.

Gladys shakes her head, a sneering disappointment.

GLADYS
It's visions. Why do you think I drink? It's not normal to share visions. Not normal for a person's dreams to bleed into the real world.

Gladys dips and sways in her seat.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
How do you sleep at night, seeing this stuff?

LEX
I didn't come to argue with you about visions.

Gladys SNEERS.

GLADYS
You never believed. I have it. Your daddy has it. You and your twin brother...

Gladys nods off, chin on her chest.

Lex watches in disgust.

ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex stands in the doorway of the room where she lived as a little girl. It's full of garbage.

She cautiously maneuvers through, finds some old trinkets on the dresser that might've meant something to her when she was young.

Buried beneath the piles, she uncovers a dusty old photo album, yellowed by time.

She opens the first page and studies the pictures of her and her parents from when she was a young girl.

She appears haunted as the dim memories reignite.

EXT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

The door snaps shut behind Lex as she walks out of the trailer with the photo album.

She's walking toward her car but stops short, her attention arrested by an empty field out back.

FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Lex walks through the tall grass, photo album in hand.

There's a small burial ground behind the trailer park overrun by thickets and weeds.

She finds a gravestone stamped into the ground that says "Henry Caudill, Born Jan. 2 1988, Died Jan. 2 1988"

She squats down, touches it. Meditative.

INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - DAY

Lex pushes a cart through the store.

She's stocking up: A backpack, caving helmet with headlamp, water bottle, harness, ascenders, descenders, carabiners, trench knife, stove.

CASH REGISTER - CONTINUOUS

Lex adds some mountain, cave and mine maps to her order as the attendant scans her items.

EXT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - CONTINUOUS

Lex slams the trunk on her haul.

She stretches a mountain map out on the trunk and studies it.

EXT. CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

A GOD'S EYE VIEW of Lex's car as it rolls along the winding mountain roads deep into the Appalachians.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Lex is on a dirt road deep in the woods, off the grid, forests stretching out forever on both sides.

Lex hits the brakes. She backs up.

She passed right by a little opening in the woods where the grass is tamped down from vehicle traffic.

She takes the side path deeper into the trees.

CAR/DIRT PATH - CONTINUOUS

Lex drives slowly along the overgrown dirt path, the same one the Unknown Traveler once walked.

She stops in front of the dilapidated MOUNTAIN TUNNEL.

She gets out of the car and walks up to the tunnel mouth, gazes into the pitch black maw.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - MOUNTAIN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Lex drives slowly through the mountain tunnel.

Her beams don't go very far. It's dark and long and narrow.

CAR/WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Lex's car emerges from the tunnel.

The road ends and forest picks up, so she parks and gets out.

She pulls from the trunk, stuffing her hiking and caving gear into a backpack. She snaps the police radio to her belt.

She looks up at the towering trees above.

A THUNDERING HOWL shakes the trees and echoes across the mountain...a wolf, or maybe something else.

She pushes on through the forest, INSECTS TRILLING.

She walks through the overgrown graveyard, with its flat-rock gravestones stamped into the ground.

As Lex picks her way through the trees, a quiet comes over the forest.

The bugs have stopped trilling, replaced by something like a LOW-GRADE, METALLIC HUM.

She comes upon the broken down fencing and barbed wire surrounding the massive hole in the Earth.

She's startled momentarily by a PACK OF FERAL HOGS that trample through the trees nearby.

DEEP DARK HOLE - CONTINUOUS

She steps over the trampled portion of the fence to the edge of the hole.

Lex's walkie-talkie ERUPTS with static. A dispatcher voice tries to break through, but it's all garbled.

Lex answers back.

LEX

Lex Caudill, dispatch repeat.

It's all FUZZ AND STATIC with some garbled words.

LEX (CONT'D)

Dispatch repeat.

The fuzz wobbles, a VOICE underneath trying to break through.

It's a man's voice, very formal. It sounds like a stump speech from a distant era.

WALKIE-TALKIE

The hardy pioneers who braved the dangers of the the wilderness...made the desert to blossom as the rose...churches for worshippers to praise their creator...bury the ashes of their dead.

Lex knocks the receiver, switches channels but the message continues with static and fuzz.

LEX

Dispatch can you hear me?

WALKIE-TALKIE

Our petitions scorned...entreaties
disregarded...we begged and they
mocked when our calamity came.

Lex switches off the walkie-talkie, but the dispatch briefly continues, seeming to echo out of the hole.

WALKIE-TALKIE (CONT'D)

We defy them.

The broadcast shorts out. Lex is puzzled.

She studies the stone structures around the pit. She gazes into the abyss.

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Lex pushes on through the woods.

MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

She freezes at the unexpected sight of a woman staring back at her.

It's her own REFLECTION in a mirror propped against the trunk of a tree. It's strange.

The wind RUSTLES the branches and she squints at the distant sound of TINKLING BELLS.

She pushes on through, spins as she walks, catching her reflection in every direction.

The mirrors surround her everywhere - hung from branches, propped against trees.

She's a little spooked, every forest sound taking on a menacing air.

RIVERBANK - CONTINUOUS

Lex maneuvers her way down the bank to the river.

She reaches the shoreline near the mossy boulder, the same spot we last saw the Unknown Traveler.

She takes a knee, inspecting the rocks under her feet.

The rocks are stained maroon and there's a trail of blood leading to a tree near the shoreline.

She gazes up into the tree.

She unstraps her backpack, slides on plastic gloves and unloads her mobile toolkit.

She inspects the boulder - it's smeared with blood and skin. There's also a giant, soot-stained handprint.

She brushes the fingerprint, lifts it with film from a smooth portion of the rock and stashes it in her toolkit.

She scrapes skin and blood off the rock and deposits the evidence in little vials.

Lex is lost in her work, and it takes her a beat to hear the sound of TINKLING BELLS approaching.

She looks over her shoulder to find something eerie - FIVE CHILDREN, all 5 to 10 years old, standing near the tree line.

The children are tethered together by a rope around their waists, making a daisy chain. There are little bells at different points on the rope that jingle when they walk.

Ainsley, the young girl Lex spotted at the tent revival, is among the children on the rope line.

The children stand stone-faced and watch Lex with eerie calm.

Lex stands, raises her hand and waves.

The children do not wave back.

LEX

My name's Lex. I'm a sheriff's deputy.

AINSLEY

You shouldn't be out here alone.

LEX

So I've heard. Your parents around?

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The children walk single file through the trees, the bells TINKLING along the way.

Lex follows a safe distance behind.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

The children lead Lex to a shanty town deep in the woods.

It's spooky, like a cross between an abandoned former mining town and Spahn Ranch.

There are tarpaper shacks and dilapidated wood sheds scattered throughout the trees. A path cuts through the middle of the town, like an old time Main Street.

The sheds and shacks have colorful DUTCH HEX SIGNS painted on the side. One little shack looks like a chapel, another might be a schoolhouse.

The little town is powered by electric generators. There are speakers atop the sheds playing OLD TIME FOLK SONGS that echo eerily through the trees.

On the far end of Main Street is a lone pole staked to the ground, a thick beam like a telephone pole standing vertically. The whipping post.

There's a moss-covered water well with a rack, a rope and bucket. One old car parked nearby.

There are mirrors everywhere - leaning against the shacks, stretching deep into the woods, hung from branches and beams. You can't escape your reflection or the reflections of others.

A COUPLE DOZEN PEOPLE make up the townsfolk - all dirty, poor, and thin, men and women in overalls keeping busy by chopping wood, repairing shacks, carrying crates of food, drawing water or snapping the necks of chickens.

Their sunken eyes fall disapprovingly on Lex from inside shacks or from the trees as she passes by.

The kids run into the schoolhouse as a poverty-stricken woman, BONNIE, stands in the doorway.

LEX

Excuse me.

BONNIE

Come on children, inside.

Bonnie gives Lex a nasty look as she ushers the children inside and shuts the door on her.

Lex approaches BLAINE (40s), a menacing lumberjack-type splitting wood with an axe.

LEX

Hi there.

Blaine doesn't look up, he just keeps splitting wood.

LEX (CONT'D)
Lex Caudill, Mingo County police.

Blaine keeps chopping, no eye contact.

LEX (CONT'D)
I'm looking for Otis Netherby.
Uncle Otis. Can you direct me to
him?

BLAINE
Not talking to you. Won't nobody
talk to you, so just keep walking.

LEX
You could save yourself a lot of--
Blaine tosses the axe and gets in her face.

BLAINE
You're not understanding, lady.

OTIS
That's enough Blaine.

UNCLE OTIS (40s) has crept up on them. He's big, burly dude
with a gnarly beard and dirt-stained long-johns under his
coveralls. He's got a scar on the side of his face and one of
his eyes droops.

Blaine looks a little frightened, like he was caught doing
something he shouldn't have been doing.

BLAINE
I didn't tell her nothing, Otis.
She just came up on me--

OTIS
I know it. I'll take it from here.

Blaine gives Lex a nasty look as he takes up the axe and
returns to his work.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Come with me.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Lex sits in a straight-backed, cane-bottom hickory chair at a
wooden table in the one-room shack.

Otis grinds herbs with a mortar and pestle at the stove.

OTIS
The old fashioned way.

He pours hot water over the leaves, serves tea for two, and takes a seat across from Lex.

LEX
How can I help you?

Lex pulls out her phone, shows him the picture of the Unknown Traveler's corpse.

LEX (CONT'D)
Do you recognize him?

Otis shakes his head no.

OTIS
No ma'am, not one of ours.

LEX
I found blood and skin down at the riverbank. Far as I can tell, y'all are the only ones around.

OTIS
I don't doubt that he was killed here. A lot of ways for a man to lose his head. A lot of ways to have your guts ripped out and strung from the trees. But you won't tie any of it back to us.

LEX
I already have. Victim had a flier for Pastor Ravenhill's pentecostal revival. I saw some of your folks there.

This catches Otis off guard.

OTIS
Is that right. Who'd you see?

LEX
Little girl and a man with a birthmark on his face.

OTIS
Well. They weren't supposed to be there, and I'll be sure they don't return. But we had nothing to do with this man's death.

LEX
Any idea who did?

Otis smiles, a gleam in his eye.

OTIS
You haven't touched your tea.

Lex eyes the tea suspiciously.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Sassafras and Creeping Charlie.
They sell it for \$10 a pound in
town but it comes out of the
mountain for free.

Otis senses her reluctance, so he takes a sip of his.

Lex sips, nods her approval.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Of course I know who did this.
Let me guess. No teeth marks on the
neck. Head sliced clean off?

LEX
That's right.

OTIS
You're looking for the Witch. The
Kybalion Witch, to be more
specific.

Lex grows flushed, angered, even as Otis continues on,
straight faced and having a good time with her disbelief.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Yes ma'am. She haunts these hills
and raises the dead to do her
bidding. Let me tell you, there are
a lot of dead to pull from. Beneath
the ground here it is nothing but
layer upon layer of human strata.
It's a cursed, death-haunted land.
Portals that open and shut with the
moon. Your feet are touching the
surface of hell. Step wrong, you
might just fall through.

LEX
I was hoping you'd shoot straight
with me, Otis.

OTIS

But I am shooting straight, Deputy.
I can call her here if you like.

Lex sits stone faced, ready to call his bluff.

Otis gets up from his straight-back, cane-bottom hickory chair. He steps behind it.

LEX

What are you doing?

He takes the chair by one of its upright posts and tilts it so that only one leg touches the floor.

He never breaks eye contact as he twists the chair back and forth, so the lone leg touching the ground GRATES against the floor. There's a rhythm and a pattern to the way he twists it and to the grinding sound it makes. It's hypnotic.

Otis gazes at Lex menacingly as he does this. It seems to get darker outside, clouds passing in front of the sun.

Lex grows unnerved by the display.

LEX (CONT'D)

That's enough.

Otis continues twisting, grinding in his way. A bullying grin spreads across his face. Lex has seen enough.

LEX (CONT'D)

I said stop it!

Otis sets the chair on all four legs, a sneering laugh.

OTIS

That don't do nothing. It's just an
old folk ritual.

He returns to his seat.

OTIS (CONT'D)

But I'm not fooling about our
witch. She hunts like an animal.
Waits for her prey to separate from
the pack. Gets you alone, that's
when you see her. Always feeding,
always getting stronger. Making her
meat puppets do the killing until
the day she's strong enough to
inhabit one for herself. Then
she'll stalk the Earth as a flesh
and blood killer.

LEX
She's not flesh and blood now?

OTIS
I don't know what she is, Deputy.

LEX
If it's so dangerous out here, why
don't you pack up and leave?

Otis SCOFFS, seems to take this personally.

OTIS
We settled this land because there
is an apartness about us. We were
here before this was a country and
we'll be here long after your
society collapses.

Lex and Otis stare each other down.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Now I thank you for your time.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - LATER

Lex walks back through the town, the old folk music echoing eerily from the speakers.

She spots Jesse, the man with the birthmark from the tent revival. He's walking through the woods tethered by rope to Ainsley.

Jesse pulls Ainsley close as Lex approaches.

Lex smiles and waves and bends down to talk to Ainsley.

LEX
Hi there. What's your name?

Ainsley is shy, looks up at her dad, who nods back at her.

AINSLEY
Ainsley.

LEX
Ainsley, that's a beautiful name.

Lex extends her hand to Jesse, who looks around nervously before quickly shaking.

LEX (CONT'D)
Lex Caudill.

Jesse nods, kicking at the dirt, fidgety and shy.

JESSE

Jesse.

Lex studies him. She finds him interesting.

LEX

You mind talking to me for a quick minute?

JESSE

I appreciate you but I can't talk. Otis, he speaks for us. We're not supposed to talk to outsiders.

LEX

I understand but this is a police matter. It's not up to him. You have to speak to me.

Jesse shakes his head, kicks at the dirt.

LEX (CONT'D)

Tell you what. Everyone's warning me not to be alone in the woods. Do me a favor and walk a lady to her car?

Jesse looks around, doesn't see anyone watching.

JESSE

Yeah OK. But you gotta wear this.

Jesse holds up a length of rope.

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Ainsley walks in the middle tethered by rope on each side to Jesse and Lex.

LEX

Otis keeps a tight grip, huh?

JESSE

It's for our protection.

LEX

What's he protecting you from? The Witch?

Jesse glances down at Ainsley, nods cautiously.

LEX (CONT'D)

Is that why the town is set up this way? The mirrors and ropes and symbols.

INTERCUT: *Children in the woods tethered together picking berries...men hunting in the woods tethered together by rope...women painting the elaborate Dutch Hex signs on the sides of their shacks.*

JESSE

Mirrors to have eyes on our own.
Keeps every angle covered. Rope so we never separate. We all sleep under the same roof. The hex diagrams, they ward off evil spirits, or so they say.

INTERCUT: *Men bathing together in the river...a group of women washing clothes together in the river...townsfolk setting up mirrors in the woods...townsfolk around a fire at night singing songs.*

JESSE (CONT'D)

Otis keeps the music playing to project a sense of gathering and community. We are always together, always a group. None of us is ever alone.

INTERCUT: *The entire town laid down for bed at night in one shack, rows of people in different rooms, laying side-by-side with the children tethered to bed posts by rope with bells.*

They come to Lex's car at the mouth of the tunnel.

Lex untethers herself.

LEX

Do you know who killed the man at the riverbank?

Jesse shrugs.

JESSE

I don't know who killed him but I know why he died.

LEX

And why is that?

AINSLEY

He was alone.

Lex considers this.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - MOUNTAIN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Lex fires up the engine and pulls away.

In her rearview, Jesse and Ainsley stand together watching her leave.

As Lex approaches the mouth of the tunnel, just as Jesse and Ainsley are about to fall out of view, Otis and Blaine step out of the woods behind them.

INT. POLICE PROCESSING LAB - DAY

Lex fills out paper work in front of the crime lab ATTENDANT.

She seals the vials of skin and blood in an evidence bag, and seals the fingerprints in another.

She pushes it across to the attendant.

INT. LONELY LOGGER INN - ROOM - DAY

Lex sits among her files going cross-eyed from the sprawl.

Exhausted, she drags herself onto the bed.

She flips through the photo album. It's the world's most depressing photo album, full of images underscoring the poverty and unhappiness of her childhood. No smiles, no warmth.

She closes the book. As she's returning it to the nightstand, an envelope falls out of the back end.

Curious. She retrieves the envelope, which is addressed to Gladys and has a postmark from 1994.

She pulls out a picture of a YOUNG BOY, 6 years old. It's a one-sided profile of his smiling face over a birthday cake. He's surrounded by friends.

There's a note: "We are so proud of our little man, and so thankful that you blessed us with this gift." - Isaac & Phyllis Presley"

Lex's visage darkens.

She checks the envelope. There's a return address.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Lex pulls her car up to the curb in front of a nice, two-story residential home.

DOOR STEP - CONTINUOUS

Lex KNOCKS.

ISAAC PRESLEY (60s) opens the door to her.

ISAAC
Can I help you?

LEX
Deputy Lex Caudill, Mingo County
Police.

PHILLIS PRESLEY (60s) creeps up behind Isaac, looks on curiously.

Lex produces the picture and the note.

LEX (CONT'D)
May I come in?

Isaac and Phyllis give each other a look.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex sits on the couch in the living room across from Isaac.

It's a nice house, upper middle class. Phyllis brings the tea and pours for Lex.

ISAAC
Is he in some kind of trouble?

LEX
No. None that I know of. This is
strictly personal.

PHYLLIS
He was only a week old when we took
him in. We knew he was a twin but
the parents...your parents... only
put him up for adoption.

Lex nods along, her mind reeling, a thousand mile stare.

ISAAC
I take it this is news to you.

LEX

They told me he was stillborn.

Phyllis puts her hand on Lex, comforting.

Lex nods at an old picture of Isaac and Phyllis with two grown children, a MAN and a WOMAN.

LEX (CONT'D)

Is that Henry there?

ISAAC

Those are our natural born children, Jason and Jennifer.

PHYLLIS

When we adopted Jesse, we didn't think we could have children of our own, but the Lord blessed us.

LEX

Jesse?

PHYLLIS

It's from my side of the family.

Lex smiles politely.

LEX

Of course. Does he live around here?

ISAAC

We haven't seen or heard from him.

PHYLLIS

We tried our best. We loved him and cared for him. He ran away in high school. Isaac drove out to Indianapolis to pick him up when he ran out of money, but he just ran away again shortly after. We did everything we could--

Phyllis becomes emotional.

ISAAC

He'd show up time to time asking for money. We helped him at first.

PHYLLIS

You have to understand, we didn't know if drugs were involved, or crime.

ISAAC

You can't support them forever. One day when he showed up, I turned him away. That was the last we've seen or heard from him. That was...oh, I don't know...five or--

PHYLLIS

It was six years ago.

LEX

I'm sorry to make you dredge this up. I know it's difficult.

ISAAC

Why don't you get her a more recent picture, Phyllis. Maybe that will help.

Phyllis walks out. A quiet awkwardness falls on the room.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

We gave him every opportunity.
Every advantage.

Phyllis returns and hands Lex a picture.

PHYLLIS

This was his 16th birthday. Things sort of came apart after that.

We CLOSE on Lex's face. She's shocked by what she sees.

The picture shows a young version of Jesse from the encampment - with his full face in view, we can see the birthmark. There's no doubt it's him.

Phyllis touches Lex's knee, startles her.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

And to think. We could've had you instead.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

The mountain town is stone silent.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

The entire community is laid out in rows, sleeping on the floor or on rickety cots. All the rooms are packed full.

Jesse cuddles with Ainsley, who is sound asleep and tethered by the ankle to the cot.

Jesse is suddenly RIPPED TO HIS FEET by Otis and Blaine.

They cover his mouth and WRESTLE him toward the door.

Ainsley SQUEALS but Bonnie the schoolteacher is right on top of her, cradling her and soothing her and holding her tight.

BONNIE
Sssshhh. It'll be over soon, dear.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Otis and Blaine drag Jesse out of the shack and down the dirt path toward the pole planted at the far end of the town.

Jesse fights against it but Blaine lands a BLOW that buckles him.

OTIS
Don't fight it Jesse, you'll only
make it worse.

THE WHIPPING POST - CONTINUOUS

They push Jesse against the pole so his chest is pressed up against it.

They tie his hands together on the other side so he's embracing the pole.

They rip the shirt off his back.

JESSE
No no no, hold on now--

Otis growls in his ear from behind as Blaine checks his grip on the a cat-o'-nine-tails whip.

OTIS
Sssshhhhhh...You know the rules.

JESSE
I didn't tell her nothing, Otis.
You gotta--

LASH! Jesse HOWLS in pain as Blaine whips him, the leather ripping into his skin.

OTIS
Again!

LASH! LASH! Jesse SCREAMS out into the night.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Ainsley lays in frozen terror with Bonnie draped over her.

Bonnie has her hand wrapped over Ainsley's mouth.

Ainsley's eyes are popped in terror and brimming with anger.

We hear the distant sound of Jesse's LASHING and his agonizing CRIES.

Ainsley jolts with every lash, pinches her teary eyes shut with every howl.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A body wrapped in a tarp and bound tight by cords is dragged through the woods by rope.

We follow the rope to find Trapper Joe is at the helm, tied to the Unknown Traveler's body by a harness around his torso.

He leans forward, grunting as he drags the body through the trees.

He reaches the massive hole in the Earth, takes off the harness and catches his breath.

DEEP DARK HOLE - CONTINUOUS

He drags the body to the edge of the hole.

TRAPPER JOE
So long, partner.

He rolls the body into the hole. It disappears into the blackness.

There's no report of it ever hitting the bottom.

Trapper Joe gathers the harness and rope, begins the journey back through the woods.

He stops suddenly, puzzled by the sight of a kindly old woman watching him from a distance between the trees.

The Witch is holding the rusted out cage in one hand. Her other arm waves back and forth at him in an exaggerated motion, like a metronome.

TRAPPER JOE (CONT'D)
What the hell.

Trapper Joe is spooked by the sight of it. He tentatively raises his hand, signaling back to her. The Witch stops waving, just stands there and stares back at him.

Trapper Joe continues on through the trees, a little faster now and looking over his shoulder.

He does a double-take. The Witch is gone, but something else in the woods makes him halt in his tracks.

This time it's the Miner staring out at him through his black eyes among the trees.

TRAPPER JOE (CONT'D)
Can I help you with something?

No response.

TRAPPER JOE (CONT'D)
Freak.

Trapper Joe continues walking. The Miner moves to cut him off.

Trapper Joe stops and the Miner stops.

TRAPPER JOE (CONT'D)
Don't fuck with me, all right? Run
along now.

Trapper Joe continues on and once again the Miner moves to cut him off. They both stop.

Trapper Joe is freaked now.

The Miner moves first this time, his giant strides coming right at Trapper Joe.

Trapper Joe turns and RUNS. He drops his things and sprints through the trees, the Miner barreling after him.

Trapper Joe doesn't make it far before The Miner catches him and shoves him from behind. He goes spilling into the dirt.

The Miner is right on top of him, his massive, black-sooted hands wrapped around Trapper Joe's neck and pressing him against the trunk of a tree.

Trapper Joe is gagging and wheezing...the sickening sound of his neck and spine cracking as the Miner shakes him and bashes him against the tree trunk.

Trapper Joe squirms, kicks, scratches and fights back with everything he's got.

The Miner rears back and CRACK! A blow to the head so violent that Trapper Joe's face partially caves in. Trapper Joe's eyes fill with blood and he TWITCHES against the tree.

A chain holding the The Witch's rusted-out cage is lowered from the tree branches above.

The Miner unhooks it from the chain.

There's a latch that releases the square floor of the cage, allowing it to pull out. The edge of the floor is sharp and rusty, with a crank attached to it.

The Miner fits the cage over Trapper Joe's head like a helmet, the injured man gurgling against the tree.

The Miner takes the crank in his hand and in a SWIFT MOTION, thrusts the floor back into place at the bottom of the cage.

It SLICES through Trapper Joe's neck like butter, decapitating him and catching the head in the cage.

Blood pours down Trapper Joe's body from his neck.

The Miner sets the cage with the head off to the side. He looks into the dense tree branches above.

The Witch is crouched amid the branches of the tree.

She's no longer a sweet-looking old woman. We see her in all of her ghoulish glory - skin hanging off her face, black eyes and rotting teeth.

She makes a GUTTURAL THROAT-CLACKING sound, an ancient croaking noise that a velociraptor might make before it eats your face.

The Miner lifts the headless body into the trees, and it's snatched up by the Witch.

Gore falls from the tree branches and splashes down on the Miner. The sickening sound of bone, sinew and flesh being torn apart and greedily eaten.

INT. LONELY LOGGER INN - ROOM - DAY

Lex sits at her computer looking over documents in her email, the phone pinned to her ear.

LEX
Yeah...looking now...

Lex listens to the attendant on the line.

ATTENDANT
The blood and skin are a positive match to our John Doe. The fingerprint, on the other hand...looks like you caught a stray.

LEX
A stray?

ATTENDANT
I'm surprised we even had it in the database. Belongs to a Garrett Huntsman. Sending you his records now.

Lex opens a new email and downloads the mugshot.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
Mug shot is from 1921. He was arrested for insurrection during a labor war in Mingo. He died in 1944.

The mugshot is an old time photo of a man who tops out near 7 feet tall with a massive bald head. It's the Miner.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
No idea how the prints would've been preserved like this. Must've been coated in amber. Very strange.

Lex recognizes the Miner from her dreams. She stares back in stunned silence.

ROOM - NIGHT

Lex sits in bed, her back against the headboard.

The TV is playing some static transmission of an old show.

All of the lights are on. Lex fingers a plastic cup of whiskey with one hand and her gun with the other.

She draws deep from the whiskey.

ROOM - MORNING

Lex is asleep in the same position - back against the headboard and hand on the gun.

The TV and lights are still on. Her chin is slumped against her chest. If she slept at all, it was brief and uncomfortable.

She opens her eyes, blinks into the morning light.

She hunches over on the side of the bed and rubs her face, exhausted and sleepless.

ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex straightens her uniform in the mirror, sets her hat on her head and takes a deep breath.

She opens the door to leave and is startled by what she finds - there's a lone BLOOD-SMEARED HANDPRINT on the door and a bloody GOAT'S HEAD on the doorstep.

Lex observes the head and the handprint, stoic.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - BOOTH - DAY

Lex is bunched in the corner booth with a coffee in front of her, hat pulled over her eyes for a nap.

Sheriff Hudson and Officer Colby Stetson walk in. They take a seat across from her.

Colby CLEARS HIS THROAT and she stirs awake, looking guilty.

Sheriff Hudson observes her quietly.

Lex sips her cold coffee.

LEX
I'm fine.

SHERIFF HUDSON
You don't look it.

LEX
I'm making progress.

SHERIFF HUDSON
So I heard. Hundred year-old finger prints.

LEX
I found the spot where he was killed.

(MORE)

LEX (CONT'D)

Happened right in the middle of
this weird little mountain town.
Definitely something off about
these folks. They know who did it.
I'll know soon.

OFFICER COLBY

Want to take a pass with the
bloodhound?

LEX

Not yet. More police will spook'em.
Let me scout the hills one more
time, then we'll bring y'all up.

SHERIFF HUDSON

What else.

LEX

It's not just the one. Dozens of
nameless drifters gone missing in
the same--

SHERIFF HUDSON

I'm gonna stop you right there.
When I hear about dozens of missing
and hundred year old fingerprints,
that starts to sound like sprawl. I
don't want sprawl. No sprawl, you
copy?

LEX

No sprawl.

SHERIFF HUDSON

And for God's sake, would you get
some sleep? You look like hammered
dog meat.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DIRT PATH - DAY

Lex bumps along the overgrown path toward the mountain
tunnel.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - MOUNTAIN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

She drives through the mountain tunnel, the car beams barely
denting the darkness.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lex walks into the encampment, the MUSIC ECHOING and mirrors all around.

She carries a heavy load in her backpack.

The town looks empty, it's quiet other than for the music.

She catches sight of Ainsley through a window in one of the cabins.

She walks up to the window. Ainsley sits at a table whittling with a knife.

Lex smiles, lifts her hand to say hello. Ainsley smiles, waves back.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Lex sets her backpack down and steps over to the table where Ainsley is whittling little animal figurines.

LEX

These are so cool, Ainsley.

AINSLEY

That one's a horse.

LEX

I can tell. It's perfect.

Ainsley smiles at her.

LEX (CONT'D)

Is your daddy here?

AINSLEY

He's asleep in the back.

ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex finds Jesse passed out on a cot.

He's laying on his stomach with no shirt on. His back is bandaged up, some blood seeping through.

Lex is horrified. She approaches, kneels at his side.

Jesse's eyes open.

LEX

What happened?

Jesse GROANS, pushes into a sitting position.

JESSE
You can't be here. Did anyone see
you?

Lex grows furious as she inspects the damage.

LEX
No one saw. Otis do this?

JESSE
You have to go. Quickly before they
get back.

LEX
Tell me what happened.

JESSE
We have our own way of doing
things. You wouldn't understand and
I didn't ask for your help. This
doesn't concern you.

LEX
It does concern me.

Lex produces the picture of Jesse as a boy, along with the
note. Jesse takes it from her, studies it.

JESSE
How'd you get this?

LEX
It was in my Mom's photo album. I
visited your adoptive parents and--

JESSE
Why would you do that?

Lex shifts, uncomfortable.

LEX
My parents told me you died at
birth. I needed to know.

Jesse is overcome, mind reeling.

LEX (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, this was a mistake.

Lex gets up and walks for the door.

JESSE

Hang on.

Lex stops. An awkward silence hangs in the air as they struggle for words.

LEX

This is weird, isn't it?

Jesse SNORTS laughter.

JESSE

I'm not one for emotional, uh, words...Yeah it's weird.

Lex cracks a half-smile.

Ainsley watches from the doorway.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Twins, huh?

LEX

January 8.

JESSE

Ainsley, come over here.

Ainsley comes over.

JESSE (CONT'D)

This here is your Auntie Lex. She's my sister. My twin sister.

Ainsley nods.

JESSE (CONT'D)

She's family.

Lex squats down, gives Ainsley a hug and beats back tears.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lex walks through the little town, backpack strapped. Music ECHOES, her reflection everywhere.

She encounters Otis, Blaine and a handful of others returning from a hunt. They're tethered together by rope on the side of an old shack.

LEX

We need to talk.

OTIS

OK.

LEX

Alone.

Otis nods, removes the rope from his waist.

OTIS

(to his people) I'll be right there.

When Lex and Otis are alone, she violently puts a forearm to his chest and THRUSTS HIM back against the shack. She presses a trench knife to his neck.

LEX

Touch him again and I will gut you, understand?

A grin spreads across Otis's face. She throttles him again.

LEX (CONT'D)

Don't touch either of them. I'll know if you do and I will bury you in these woods. Tell me you understand.

Otis nods, she releases off of him. He's calm as can be.

OTIS

You're the one endangering them. Coming around here, putting ideas in their heads. You're a danger to all of my people and I can't have that. I'm the one protecting them. I'm the one keeping them safe.

LEX

You got a funny way of showing it.

OTIS

You don't know shit about our way of life. Everyday we wake up surrounded by death. You're just a little girl lost in the woods gonna get eaten by a wolf, or something worse.

LEX

I know your game. Touch him again and you'll pay.

Lex stalks off.

Otis seethes as she walks off.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Lex hikes through the trees in her backpack, bugs TRILLING all around.

She gazes up at the tree branches, the sunlight breaking through.

Lex walks through the gravestones tamped into the ground.

She stops at the sight of about a half-dozen FERAL HOGS split open, their guts strewn across the ground. They're covered in flies and maggots.

She walks through the mess. The hogs weren't killed for food - all the meat is still on the bones, but their guts are strung about the headstones and trees like birthday streamers.

ROCKY CLEARING/CAVE MOUTH - CONTINUOUS

Lex emerges from the craggy hills and encounters a rocky point with a narrow slit that leads underground.

Sitting next to the slit, as if guarding it, is a GOAT'S HEAD teeming with flies and maggots - just like the one from her doorstep. There's also a bloody HANDPRINT on the rock next to the opening in the ground.

Lex sets her pack down, kneels at the opening and uses her flashlight to peer into the slit.

It leads to an underground cave.

Lex straps the caving helmet to her head. She drops her feet into the opening and slides in. It's going to be tight.

She lowers herself, wiggling and writhing to squeeze through.

We stay on the hole after Lex has disappeared down in it.

FOOTSTEPS circle the mouth of the cave.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

The cave would be pitch black if not for the beam of sunlight cutting through the slit in the ground.

Lex's headlamp gives her only a few feet of visibility.

The cave is barely tall enough for her to stand upright.

She takes a memo pad and pen and marks an X on a blank sheet. She counts her steps under her breath as she walks.

She stops to read the writing on the cave wall. The word "KYBALION" is scrawled on the wall and there's a symbol - a circle inside of a square inside of a triangle.

She rounds a turn, marks the memo pad with the number of steps and the direction she's turning.

It's pitch black but for her headlamp.

The cave grows narrower and the roof lower. She's bent over now and it's slow-going over the rocks.

Another turn...another mark on the notepad...and another and another...the dark growing and the cave shrinking.

She comes to a small tunnel that would require getting on her hands and knees.

LEX

No thanks.

Lex turns to go but freezes at the sound of a VOICE ECHOING from the tunnel.

LEX (CONT'D)

Hello?

No response.

LEX (CONT'D)

This is Deputy Lex Caudill with the Mingo County police.

No response.

LEX (CONT'D)

I'm coming in.

She gets on her hands and knees and maneuvers through the small tunnel, the headlamp glowing in the darkness.

As she crawls, a shadow passes behind her. She whips her head around but the tunnel is too tight to see back that way.

LEX (CONT'D)

Who's there?

She presses on, reaching an opening to a small chamber. She spills out and pushes to her feet. She marks the memo pad.

Her face freezes in disbelief.

On the far end of the chamber is an AIRPLANE FUSELAGE baked into the cave wall, with layers of rock above and below.

Only the middle section of the fuselage is visible, the cave walls picking up where the front end and back end of the plane would be.

The emergency door to the fuselage is exposed, as are a few dusty windows.

Lex approaches, runs her hand along it.

She flicks on her flashlight, wipes dust from one of the windows and peeks inside.

She follows the beam toward the back of the plane and freezes in terror...all the seats are empty but there's a DEAD MAN strapped into one of the seats.

She recognizes him - it's her father, VERNON (30s), the same age he would've been when he disappeared in a plane crash.

Lex is shaking, can't believe her eyes.

LEX (CONT'D)
Mental images. Mental images in the
dark. Get your shit to-

The Witch's face SUDDENLY POPS INTO the window, milky eyes staring back into the flashlight beam.

Lex JUMPS OUT OF HER SKIN, falls back and trips, hits the ground. The flashlight SMASHES OUT.

LEX (CONT'D)
Fuck!

Lex is scrambling, fumbling, scurrying for the tunnel.

LEX (CONT'D)
No one down here. Mental images.

She crawls through the tunnel, quick panicked breaths, her headlamp illuminating the fear on her face.

She spills out of chamber tunnel and gets to her feet, rests with her back to the cave wall, chest heaving.

She leans down to look back through the tunnel and FUCK!
There's the Miner's black eyes staring from the other end.

Lex is in a full-blown panic now, shaking as she fumbles for her notebook. She drops it down a crevice.

LEX (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Lex takes off, panicked and sweating in the darkness...taking lefts...taking rights...wrong turn...back the other way...flinching as she smashes her helmeted head against the cave ceiling.

Spinning...pushing ahead...belligerent...turning down one corridor...turning down another and...

SLIP! Down she goes, her foot lodged in a crevice.

Lex looks at her foot in panicked disbelief. She's wedged past her ankle in a crevice in the cave.

The cave is SILENT other than Lex's heaving.

She tries to pull her foot out but it's stuck and her lower leg is bleeding, ripped up pretty badly.

LEX (CONT'D)

No no no no.

Lex's head swivels this way and that to make sure she's alone as she winces in pain.

The cords in her neck stretch tight as she struggles to pull free...

She freezes at the sound of CROAKING from down the way.

It gives her a jolt of adrenaline and she rips free, the foot coming out of the boot as she HOWLS IN PAIN.

She hobbles away, makes a turn and there it is - daylight through the crevice.

She's hobbling, the CROAKING noise following close behind.

She nears the opening and trips on the rocks. She CRIES OUT as she hits the ground, the CROAKING growing nearer.

She pushes to her feet and the CROAKING abruptly ends as a HAND THRUSTS DOWN INTO THE HOLE from above.

Lex grabs the hand and she's yanked up to the sunlight.

ROCKY CLEARING/CAVE MOUTH - CONTINUOUS

Otis and Blaine pull Lex through the crease.

She collapses on the ground, HEAVING in a blind panic. She pulls her gun on them, pointing back and forth.

They step back, putting their hands up.

BLAINE
Whoa whoa whoa easy there!

OTIS
Give her space.

Lex is confused, running on adrenaline. She tries to push up to her feet but she falls and GASPS.

Lex breathes into the dirt and finally relaxes, the tension releasing from her body.

She sits up, looks at her ankle.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Can I take a look?

Lex nods. Otis feels at it.

OTIS (CONT'D)
I don't think it's broken or
nothing, just tore up the skin.
Come on. We'll get it wrapped.

Otis offers his hand. Lex begrudgingly takes it.

INT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Lex sits on a chair with her leg elevated on the table.

There's a bowl of fruit on the table and a butcher knife.

Otis cleans the wound with soap, a rag and a bucket of water.

OTIS
Wanna tell me what you saw down
there?

LEX
The dark got to me. My mind filled
in the blanks.

Otis SCOFFS.

OTIS
Not gonna believe your own eyes,
huh? Must be tough going through
life that way.

LEX
You don't believe me?

OTIS

No, I don't. I believe you saw the Kybalion Witch, or one of the meat puppets does her bidding. Maybe she showed you a vision from your past. A siren song to reel you in.

LEX

If she's so powerful, why does she only come for you when you're alone?

OTIS

She's getting stronger everyday, feeding on the disbelieving loners go wandering through our woods.

Otis takes an apple from the bowl.

OTIS (CONT'D)

This here. We both agree it's a red apple?

Lex nods.

OTIS (CONT'D)

Apples are red, water is wet, time moves forward, and the government's coming for half your money. Everybody sees these things and we know them to be true. It's the stuff societies are built on.

Otis sets the apple down next to the knife, takes to bandaging Lex's ankle.

OTIS (CONT'D)

It's different with haints or entities or whatever you wanna call 'em. They move through dimensions we only glimpse from an angle. Now, with two people or more, it can be difficult to agree on what you see. My mind might be open to seeing something that's shut off to you. When folks can't agree on what they see, the haint's got no power. But when you're alone, that's when you see the absolute truth. When you're dialed in and vibrating on just the right frequency...

BAM! Otis snatches the knife and splits the apple in two with one clean swing of the knife.

OTIS (CONT'D)

That's when it has power. So if you catch sight of her, you look the other way. Because soon as you acknowledge her, as soon as she knows she's been seen, then it's already too late. She's got you, and madness or death will follow.

Lex swings her leg down.

LEX

How do you beat it?

OTIS

Beat it? You don't beat it. You live with it. That's all you can do.

Lex considers this as she tests her ankle.

LEX

See that right there. That's how I know you're a fraud. Follow me. Can't nothing be done. Only I can protect you. It's every cult leader's playbook.

Otis smiles condescendingly.

OTIS

I wish you were right, Deputy. I really do.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

Lex sits in her cruiser swigging from a pint of bourbon.

Her eyes are locked on Gladys's trailer. She's seething with rage as she swills.

She takes a final swig, then pushes out of the car.

She stalks toward Gladys's trailer and snags a shovel laying in the yard, keeps walking.

FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Lex plunges the shovel into the ground at the gravestone.

She digs, sloppy and angry, fueled by hate.

The dirt piles up next to her as she hits the casket. It's a very shallow grave, only a couple feet down.

Down on her hands and knees now, a crazed look as she pushes the dirt off the top of a tiny coffin.

In the distance, Gladys comes spilling out of the trailer running toward the field.

GLADYS

Hey!

Lex pays her no mind, studies the coffin with trepidation and disgust.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Stop that!

Lex puts her fingers against the lid.

Gladys lumbers toward her, hands on her hips and breathing labored.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Evil tramp, you leave it be!

Lex puts her arm over her nose as she flips open the lid.

She relaxes at the sight - no bones, no body. Just a baby's things: A hospital bracelet. A tiny blue outfit. And a picture of newborn Lex and newborn Henry cradled in Gladys's arms in a hospital bed, Vernon hovering nearby.

Lex pushes to her feet and studies the picture as Gladys arrives. They stand face to face.

LEX

You're a sick woman.

GLADYS

We couldn't afford to raise two kids at once. We chose you, not that you showed any appreciation for it.

LEX

You told me he died. You and Dad both. You kept the lie going.

GLADYS

You can't blame people for the stories they tell to get along. Wasn't easy for us to give him up.

LEX

You know...I actually blamed myself for his death. Like I sucked the life out of him in the womb. All these years, blaming myself for killing the one person in the world I might've had a connection with.

GLADYS

That's your own burden. I didn't tell you that and neither did your daddy. It's got nothing to do with me.

Lex smiles calmly, incredulous at this hateful woman.

LEX

That's right. It's nothing to do with you. But you'll be dead one day real soon, Gladys. All alone here. Nobody around to bury you. That's your burden. And it's got nothing to do with me.

Lex stalks off.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lex falls into the front seat of the car.

She studies the picture.

She punches the steering wheel, it's all she can do to keep from crying.

She fires up the engine, hits the gas and kicks up dirt as she PEELS OUT and drives away.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Gladys is shit-faced, stumbling drunkenly through her home and MUMBLING nonsense to herself. The occasional BURST of laughter at a thought passing through her scrambled head.

She climbs over a pile of garbage to get to the kitchen.

She sways and spills as she pours whiskey into a glass.

TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Gladys sits with a drink and polishes her handgun.

She raises it, closes an eye and mock fires.

She guzzles whiskey.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - CONTINUOUS

Gladys kicks out the front door carrying the gun.

She sways and stumbles toward the field.

FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Gladys MUTTERS unintelligible to herself as she takes up the shovel and covers the little coffin in dirt.

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Gladys sways as she walks toward the tree line swilling from a pint bottle.

She stands among the trees and points the gun at the moon.
She pinches an eye shut and FIRES A COUPLE OF ROUNDS.

GLADYS

Gotchu!

Gladys stumbles down a dirt path through the woods, the moon lighting the way.

She stops and squints down the way.

Far down the dirt path, the Witch stands waving in her big, exaggerated motion. The cage dangles from her other hand.

Gladys mockingly waves back, spilling her drink as she moves her arm from side to side in the same exaggerated motion.

The Witch stops waving and stares back at her.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Goddamn tree people.

Gladys's attention is drawn to the sound of a BABY CRYING behind her.

She turns to find a baby swaddled in a blanket and laying in middle of the dirt path, crying.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Hello?

She walks to the baby and kneels next to it, setting her gun and drink in the dirt.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
How'd you get here?

She lifts the baby and soothes it, rocking. She looks closer at the baby in the moonlight. She GASPS.

The baby has a birthmark on its face, just like Jesse.

JESSE (O.S.)
Mom?

Gladys spins around and is shocked to find full-grown Jesse walking toward her in the moonlight through the trees.

GLADYS
Henry?

Jesse walks up to her.

JESSE
It's Jesse now, Mom. My new parents
named me Jesse. What are you doing
with that?

Gladys looks in her arms and is shocked to find she's cradling roadkill.

She YELPS and drops it.

GLADYS
I don't know...I might've had too
much to drink.

She brushes away the blood and fur.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
What are you doing here?

JESSE
I came to see you.

GLADYS
How did you...

Jesse approaches.

JESSE
It's OK, Mom. I'm not mad.

Jesse takes Gladys in his arms, gives her a big hug.

She hugs him back, frightened at first, but then relaxing into it and resting her head on his shoulder.

GLADYS
Oh baby, I missed you.

JESSE
I missed you too, Mom.

Jesse's arms strengthen around Gladys. It's fine at first, but then it becomes alarming. Tighter and tighter...

GLADYS
Jesse you're--

Gladys twists her face up, only to find she's in the Miner's arms, not Jesse's. His black eyes looking down on her.

Gladys wheezes beneath his grip, struggles for breath.

The Miner SQUEEZES tighter and now Gladys can't breathe at all. She tries to wriggle away but she's in a vice grip and lifted off the ground so her feet don't touch.

The Miner SQUEEZES tighter and now her bones are CRACKING...she's making a ghastly sound as the air escapes her in awful wheezes...the whites of her eyes run red...she's coughing up blood as her ribs collapse and spine snaps and she goes limp in the Miner's arms.

The Miner carries her lifeless body over to a tree. The cage is lowered from the tree branches by a chain.

The Miner unlatches the floor of the cage, draws it out. He fits it over Gladys's head, grips the crank and...SLICE! Her head catches in the cage and blood spills over her neck.

The Miner lifts the headless body into the branches.

The ghoulish, bloodthirsty, red-eyed version of the Witch is crouched amid the dense tree branches.

She makes a GUTTURAL THROAT-CLACKING sound and snatches the body into the trees.

The body disappears in the dense branches amid the sickening sound of flesh ripping and gore splashing on the ground.

EXT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Lex pulls up to the Lonely Logger Inn, headlights shining.

EXT. LONELY LOGGER INN - CONTINUOUS

She stands at her door.

The goat blood has mostly been cleaned off the door and sidewalk, but there are still faded stains on both.

She doesn't want to go in there.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - BOOTH - MORNING

Lex is out cold in the booth, her phone VIBRATING on the table in front of her.

She stirs from sleep, looks at her phone.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Lex drives the twisty mountain highway, her face gripped by sorrow and anger.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - TREE LINE - DAY

Lex approaches the crime scene, yellow tape tied to trees and COPS milling about.

Sheriff Hudson is among them. He notices Lex and moves swiftly to keep her away from the scene.

SHERIFF HUDSON

You don't need to see that.

LEX

What'd you find?

SHERIFF HUDSON

It's ugly. A bear, most likely. Not much left of her.

LEX

You're sure?

SHERIFF HUDSON

100 percent. She was armed. Spent a couple rounds. No foul play here, just the terrible force of nature.

The Sheriff studies her.

SHERIFF HUDSON (CONT'D)

Were you close?

Lex shakes her head no.

SHERIFF HUDSON (CONT'D)
Family's complicated.

Lex looks back toward the trailer.

Her eyes fall on the field and the little grave where she once believed her twin brother was buried.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - FIELD - MORNING

A PREACHER reads from a Bible over the small unmarked grave where Jesse was once believed to have been buried.

PREACHER
We ask that you watch over her and
hold her in your tender care as we
cherish the memories of her life.

Lex gazes angrily at the gravesite. Sheriff Hudson is there, along with a very small CROWD of random rednecks.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
Keep her by your side and leave
your peace with the family in this
time of mourning.

FIELD - LATER

The service is over and the crowd is scattered.

Lex stands looking down on the pitiful burial site.

Sheriff Hudson sidles up.

SHERIFF HUDSON
I hate to talk shop, but...

LEX
I'm ready to take a pass with the
bloodhound.

SHERIFF HUDSON
Sure. I can have Colby up there as
soon as tomorrow.

Lex nods.

SHERIFF HUDSON (CONT'D)
You've done good, Lex. Finish this
up and let's get you home.

The Sheriff walks off.

In the distance, Lex spots Jesse and Ainsley looking on.
Her face brightens. She waves them over.
Ainsley runs up and flings herself around Lex.
Jesse watches, smiling.

EXT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Lex and Jesse sit on the stoop watching Ainsley struggle to get upright on a rusty little bicycle in the yard.

JESSE

What you gonna do about all this?

Lex shakes her head.

LEX

Easiest thing would be set it on fire. Nothing worth keeping here.

JESSE

What about the investigation. You sticking around long?

LEX

Not much longer. We'll take a dog into the the hills tomorrow. We don't turn anything up, that'll be it.

JESSE

I don't expect you'll find what you're looking for.

LEX

You think I'm hunting a witch, don't you?

Jesse considers this.

JESSE

I'll go with you. Nobody knows the land better than me. Would be nice to spend some time before you go.

Lex smiles.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TUNNEL - MORNING

Lex and Jesse stand outside her police cruiser gearing up, stuffing their backpacks, checking flashlight batteries and the headlamps on helmets.

A K-9 CRUISER emerges from the tunnel, Officer Colby Stetson at the wheel.

MOUNTAIN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

The gang are geared up and ready to go.

Colby has BANDIT THE BLOODHOUND, a very good girl, by the leash. He presses the Unknown Traveler's shoe and sock to Bandit's snout.

OFFICER COLBY
That's it girl, you got it.

LEX
Stick together. Just a day trip, so
we'll pack it in at sundown.

OFFICER COLBY
She'll find something. Always does.

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Bandit pulls Colby through trees, sniffing all over.

They push through the cemetery, the remnants of the hog slaughter staining the ground.

DEEP DARK HOLE - CONTINUOUS

They skirt the hole in the ground and Bandit gets spooked. She WHINES and cowers and pulls them away.

OFFICER COLBY (CONT'D)
What's wrong, girl?

JESSE
Stay away from that. Something
wrong about that hole.

OFFICER COLBY
What you mean wrong?

LEX
He means there's a lot of weird
shit out here. Hell, somebody left
a goat head on my doorstep the
other day.

JESSE

That was me.

Lex and Colby look at Jesse in stunned silence.

Lex approaches Jesse, concerned.

LEX

What do you mean it was you?

JESSE

I did it to protect you.

LEX

How would that protect me, Jesse?

JESSE

It's in the Bible. Angel of Death passed by the homes of those who put blood on their doors. We do it for all the haunted spaces around here. What? I was helping.

Lex is troubled but she nods her understanding.

LEX

Let's keep moving.

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Colby and Bandit lead, with Jesse and Lex bringing up the rear.

JESSE

We wandered for a while. Camped out in the woods most nights. Otis gave us something steady. Took us in. We connect with them more than I ever did my real family.

LEX

You have real family now. You have me, OK?

JESSE

I know it. But Otis been good to us and I appreciate him for it. Food and shelter, that's all we need. Schooling for Ainsley.

LEX

That's not real schooling, Jesse.
He's filling your head with
superstition. It's a way to control
people.

JESSE

I've seen things out here, Lex. I
promise you, I know it's true.

LEX

What have you seen? Night terrors
and visions? I get all of that too.
It's in our blood. But there's
nothing out here. The killer we're
looking for is flesh and blood. Not
a forest ghost and not a witch
calling up the dead through a damn
portal.

Lex stops, turns to Jesse.

LEX (CONT'D)

Just promise me you'll keep an open
mind. If it turns out Otis was
lying to you.

Jesse nods.

JESSE

I promise. I'll keep an open mind.

Bandit starts BARKING like mad.

OFFICER COLBY

Got something! Over here!

EXT. MINE - CONTINUOUS

The mine is an ancient, dilapidated relic from the the coal
rush days, with rotting wood supporting the entrance to the
spooky gash in the hills.

Metal tracks - bracers nailed into the rock surrounding the
mine entrance - spill out of the darkness like spider legs.

Someone's been using the entrance as a dumpster. It looks
like a tent city, with clothes, shoes, books, bags, and food
wrappers all strewn about.

Bandit pulls Colby around the trash heap, sniffing.

Lex and Jesse gaze into the gaping black maw leading to darkness.

LEX
You know this mine?

Jesse shakes his head no.

Bandit barks over the Unknown Traveler's rucksack.

LEX (CONT'D)
I can't put you in danger. You mind
waiting out here with Bandit?

JESSE
You'd be putting me in danger
leaving me alone. I'm going in with
y'all. I'm not staying out here.

MINE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Colby ties Bandit to a tree, gives her a good rub.

OFFICER COLBY
We'll be right back, OK girl? You
did good.

The gang is geared up - galoshes, helmets with head lamps,
gloves and caving tools strapped to their bodies.

Lex tests the decaying wood at the entrance. She calls out.

LEX
This is Deputy Lex Caudill with the
Mingo County Police Department!
We're coming in!

Her words ECHO through the caverns.

The group ventures inside.

INT. MINE - CONTINUOUS

This is a frightening old mine.

The gang slogs through a foot of water, their headlamps
casting an eerie glow through the corridor.

There are chains hanging vertically from the ceiling every 10
feet or so, crumbling support beams along the wall and
ceiling, and chain-link pressed against the side of the cave
precariously holding back the fallen rocks.

Filthy yellow rubber - a ceiling leak diverter to collect water seepage - hangs loose along a laundry wire strung through the corridor.

The water recedes the deeper they go into the mine.

They shine their lights on the cave walls where long-dead miners left their marks for posterity: "Elijah Boone - Oct. 23, 1912," etc.

They walk over half-buried rail tracks in the ground, rope and cable hanging from the roof or strewn about the floor.

They follow makeshift steps, down, always down further into the dark. The mine walls are a moist collection of oddly colored clay - all maroons and yellow-browns and deep green.

They enter a CHAMBER with tunnel systems spidering out in every direction, a shallow stream running into one opening.

LEX

Let's follow the water.

They track through the tunnel, which spits them out into the underground headquarters of the mine.

Their jaws drop in awe at what they see.

MINE HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

It's like an abandoned city that's been preserved underground - tram buckets for slag rock, old heating pipes, hoists, gears, cranks, and an old locomotive.

There are concrete doorways on either side of the cave leading into cement block rooms built into the rock walls.

JESSE

It's beautiful.

CHANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They walk through a concrete door into the changing room, which is truly spooky.

It's like a gymnasium locker with a high ceiling. The room has muddy tile floors, a few ancient chairs, and clothes dangling about 10 feet in the air.

The outfits hang in rows, a few dozen in total. They're hung by ropes attached to pulleys on the floor. They look like levitating ghosts.

LEX
What is this?

JESSE
Wardrobe chains. The miners would
get soaking wet down here, so
they'd hang their clothes to dry.

OFFICER COLBY
Creepy shit.

PARTY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lex and Jesse walk through the other concrete door into a room strewn with modern day bottles and cans.

Jesse squats down over a fire pit, fingers the ashes.

JESSE
Fire was recent.

CHANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Colby wanders among the forest of hanging clothes, which sway spookily on their hooks.

No visibility beyond each outfit he walks through.

MINE HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Lex peers down a mineshaft that's guarded by a failing, rusted-out gate.

Her head lamp illuminates the moisture and particles in the air that fall endlessly into the pit.

As Lex peers into the abyss, a frightening sight passes behind her.

FERAL BOB is a real human being and possibly the filthiest hobo to ever walk the Earth. He's caked in soot. His hair and beard are locked into one wild tangle. He's gaunt, and the flash in his eyes is pure madness.

He passes silently behind her in the shadows, visible for only a brief instant.

Lex whips her head around, but Feral Bob has already passed into the shadows.

A chain hanging from the ceiling SWINGS menacingly where Feral Bob passed.

CHANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Colby walks among the hanging clothes. He hears footsteps.

OFFICER COLBY

Lex?

He pushes on, swiping at the outfits hanging in front of him when FUCK!...he swipes an outfit away and finds himself face-to-face with FERAL AMOS.

Feral Amos is just like Feral Bob, caked thoroughly in soot and dirt, crazed bloodshot eyes, and rotting teeth.

Feral Amos is holding a chair and he SMASHES it across Colby's face. CRACK!

Colby drops like a sack of wet cement.

PARTY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jesse hears Colby's THUD and walks out to investigate.

MINE HEADQUARTER - CONTINUOUS

Lex is crouched over the hoist and crank in the corner of the cave, inspecting the ancient machinery.

CHANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Colby is in bad shape, GASPING for breath and pushing his feet across the slippery tile trying to get away.

Feral Amos is on top of him with the chair, landing BLOW AFTER BLOW until he's barely moving.

MINE HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Lex squats in front of the crank as Feral Bob materializes from the shadows behind her.

She has no idea that he's towering over her just a few feet away, seething, crazed, rabid and about to pounce.

We hear Colby CRY OUT and in a flash, Lex pulls her gun and whips around, face to face with Feral Bob.

They lock eyes. Feral Bob looks insane. Lex is scared but she has the gun.

LEX

Don't--

Feral Bob takes off into the dark. Lex takes chase.

CHANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Colby is in a bad way, spitting blood and half conscious and using every last ounce of strength to crawl away.

Colby weakly goes for his gun but Feral Amos drops the chair and falls on top of him, pinning his arm to the ground and taking him by the throat, CHOKING HIM OUT.

CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Lex chases Feral Bob through the dark and twisting tunnels, her headlamp just barely keeping Feral Bob within view.

He knows the tunnels and he's ducking and weaving, taking fast turns through the mine.

Lex's foot catches at full sprint and she takes a TUMBLE, skidding on the cave floor. Her gun goes skidding.

She CRIES OUT in pain, but quickly gathers herself and pushes to her feet, limping for the gun.

She's bending over to reach for it when Feral Bob sprints out of the darkness and TACKLES her to the ground.

They SCUFFLE, rolling and kicking and punching and grasping desperately for the gun.

Feral Bob bites her arm and she CRIES OUT, but it gives her a jolt of adrenaline and she HEAD BUTTS him. It barely fazes him. She does it again, again and again until the SNARLING man is finally dazed.

She takes control of the gun and sticks it in his chest.

LEX (CONT'D)
Don't fucking move!

As Lex heaves on top of Feral Bob, she hears the SCUFFLE from the changing room.

She drags Feral Bob to the cave wall and cuffs him to the pipe running along the wall.

She runs.

CHANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Colby's eyes are fluttering as Feral Amos puts the final squeeze on him.

Colby is just about to tap out for good, when Jesse materializes from beneath the dangling clothes with a pipe.

WHACK! Right across the side of Feral Amos's head.

Feral Amos goes down but he's running on meth, and he leaps up at Jesse. WHACK!

Feral Amos falls back. Jesse keeps on him, WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK! A pipe to the head over and over and over again.

Colby is coming out of it, gathering himself on the floor.

Jesse is going feral on Feral Amos, pipe to the head over and over again, unrelenting.

Feral Amos's head is pulped behind recognition, the pipe is coming down on a mash of blood, skin, skull and brain.

OFFICER COLBY

Jesse...

The pipe keeps coming down. WHACK WHACK WHACK!

LEX

Jesse!

Lex rushes him, catches his arm and drags him off.

Jesse lies stunned in Lex's arms, face splattered in blood.

The group sits in stunned silence.

LEX (CONT'D)

Listen to me very carefully. I did this, OK? Jesse was never here. That work for you Colby?

Colby nods, spits blood.

OFFICER COLBY

He saved my life. Whatever we need.

MINE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The ragged gang emerges from the mine, squinting into the harsh daylight.

Colby is beaten and bruised. Jesse is blood-splattered. Lex and Feral Bob are dusted up from their scuffle.

Lex has Feral Bob by the collar, his hands cuffed.

She pushes him to the ground in front of the mine.

She squares up with Jesse, puts her hands on his shoulders.

LEX
I told you. No ghosts in these
hills. Only flesh and blood
killers.

Jesse nods, a begrudging smile.

JESSE
You're right.

Lex and Jesse jump at the sound of Colby HOWLING in anguish.
Colby stands over the leash at the tree where he tied Bandit.
There's no dog on the leash, only blood surrounding the tree
where he was tied.
Colby rushes Feral Bob, jumps him and starts WAILING on him.

COLBY
Son of a bitch!

LEX
Hey!

Lex and Jesse pull Colby off of Feral Bob.
Colby seethes, his chest heaving.
Colby pushes to his feet, pacing, furious.

COLBY
You fucking animal!

Feral Bob stares back, smiling crazy through bloody teeth.

LEX
Come on. Let's pack this stuff up
and get the hell out of here.

INT. LEX'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Lex walks into her house, drops her duffel at the door.

She closes the door behind her and leans back against it,
taking in the silence and the dark.

It's so quiet you can hear a CLOCK TICKING from another room.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lex's room is quiet and dark.

She's sound asleep beneath the covers, out cold and positively SNORING.

Finally, she sleeps.

INT. POLICE STATION - CUBICLE - MORNING

Lex is in uniform at her computer, looking fresh.

Officer Colby ducks in, his face still bandaged in spots but the bruises starting to heal.

OFFICER COLBY
Sheriff wants to see you.

Lex gets up from her chair, pauses as she passes.

LEX
I'm gonna head up to check on Jesse tomorrow. You want to come?

OFFICER COLBY
I owe that man a beer.

Lex smiles as she passes.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lex sits across from Sheriff Hudson.

SHERIFF HUDSON
Prints came back from the bag and the shoe you found at the mine. They match our headless man. That's all we need to nail this feral fucker. You did it Lex. It was an impossible job, but you did it.

LEX
Did he confess?

SHERIFF HUDSON
No confession but the man is positively out of his mind. Ranting and raving about ghosts in the woods. Witches and such. But this one's buttoned tight. We got him.

The Sheriff shifts uncomfortably.

SHERIFF HUDSON (CONT'D)
As far as his friend...your paper
work, your story...it'll all check
out? Because if there's anything I
should know...

LEX
It'll check out.

The Sheriff nods.

SHERIFF HUDSON
Thing is...our feral friend, he
says there were three of you.

Lex doesn't flinch. She's going to make him say it, if he
wants to say it.

SHERIFF HUDSON (CONT'D)
Course it's like I said, he's
crazier than a shit-house rat.

INT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - SHACK - NIGHT

Jesse cradles a sleeping Ainsley, moonlight spilling through
the window.

She's tied to the cot at her foot by a rope with a bell.

He strokes her hair, gently kisses her head.

He gets up, quietly tiptoes past sleeping townsfolk.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Jesse quietly closes the door behind him.

He stands on the porch, cautiously looks out on the empty,
quiet night.

He takes a step off the porch, his pulse quickening.

He walks into the night, braver with every step.

MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Jesse stands under the trees between the mirrors, his
reflection looking back at him from every angle beneath the
moonlight.

He exalts in the moonlight, closes his eyes and breathes in.

He continues on the through the trees, smiling and happy.

JESSE
She's right.

He's buzzing now, head tilted up to the sky. Total freedom.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - MOUNTAIN TUNNEL - MORNING

Lex and Colby are dressed as civilians as they drive the bumpy dirt path up to the mountain tunnel.

LEX
Hold your breath.

Colby takes a deep breath, his cheeks puffed out as they enter the darkness.

Lex laughs.

WOODS/MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Lex and Colby hike through the trees and the mirror garden.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lex and Colby trudge into town and it's immediately obvious that something's wrong.

The town is BUZZING WITH ACTIVITY, people gathering rope to tether together, folks meeting in small groups murmuring and hurrying about with urgency.

Lex and Colby approach Blaine, who is walking toward the water well.

LEX
What's going on?

BLAINE
Surprised you'd show your face.

LEX
Why's that?

BLAINE
It's Jesse. He's gone missing.

Lex goes white as a sheet.

LEX
(under her breath) Ainsley.

Lex takes off. Colby stays put, gazing strangely into the trees.

Colby catches sight of Bandit at the tree line.

COLBY

Bandit?

Bandit runs off into the trees.

COLBY (CONT'D)

Bandit!

Colby takes off after her.

SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Bonnie comforts Ainsley on the front porch as Lex runs up.

LEX

Ainsley.

Bonnie clutches Ainsley tight, but she rips free and throws her arms around Lex.

LEX (CONT'D)

It's OK, I'm here.

AINSLEY

I want my Daddy.

LEX

We're gonna find him. I won't leave until we do.

Ainsley nods and falls into Lex's arms.

LEX (CONT'D)

Sit tight, I'll be back.

Bonnie ushers Ainsley inside with the other children.

WOODS/MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Colby runs after Bandit, who darts in-and-out of view through the mirrors and trees.

It's a confusing chase, with Colby and Bandit seeming to cross paths or run cross-ways through the mirrors and trees.

Colby chases Bandit down to the riverbank.

RIVERBANK - CONTINUOUS

Colby stalks the riverbank, no sign of Bandit.

COLBY
Bandit! Here girl!

He stops, realizing he's being watched by a woman on the other side of the river.

The Witch stands there, gesturing big with her arm going back and forth. The cage dangles from her other hand.

Colby is unsettled. He waves back.

COLBY (CONT'D)
You see a dog? A bloodhound.

Suddenly, the river stops running. It becomes completely still, and then it starts running backward.

Colby watches in in disbelief.

He looks up at the Witch. She stares back at him.

MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lex finds Otis gearing up for a trip into the woods.

Otis is not happy to see her.

LEX
What happened?

OTIS
You poisoned his mind and he wandered off alone.

LEX
I've got another officer with me.
We'll scour the woods.

OTIS
You better. Because if anything happened to him I swear to God you'll pay.

WATER WELL - CONTINUOUS

Blaine uses the crank to lower the bucket down into the well.

WOODS/MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Colby is shaken as he stalks through the trees, his reflection passing in every direction.

He stops at the sight of the Miner towering among the trees, black eyes staring blankly.

OFFICER COLBY

Who are you?

The Miner takes massive strides toward Colby.

Colby takes off running.

The Miner chases him through the mirrors and the trees, their reflections passing every which way and all around.

The Miner gains on him, Colby digging and trying desperately to stay ahead of him when...

SMASH! Colby runs headlong into a mirror leaning against a tree trunk, right into his own reflection. The mirror shatters, glass falling all around him.

Colby lies stunned in the dirt and the glass.

WATER WELL - CONTINUOUS

Otis has his people gathered around as Blaine lowers the bucket into the well. Lex is among the onlookers.

OTIS

Stay with your group. Do not become separated for any reason.

CREAK CREAK. Blaine cranks the well, drawing the bucket up.

WOODS/MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The Miner dives on top of Colby.

Colby swings a glass shard and punctures him in the gut. STAB STAB STAB! The Miner bleeds, but doesn't relent, takes him by the neck, shaking him.

Colby keeps STABBING.

The Miner grabs Colby at the hand holding the glass shard, and he forces it back toward Colby's neck.

Colby resists, tears in his eyes as he strains to pull away.

The Miner pushes Colby's hand ever closer until the shard is pressed up against his neck.

PLUNGE! The shard goes in and the blood gushes out and Colby makes a horrific GURGLING sound.

The Miner keeps going, forcing Colby to saw his own head off.

WATER WELL - CONTINUOUS

CREAK CREAK. Blaine cranks the rusty pulley, which strains to bring the bucket to the top.

OTIS (CONT'D)

I'll take my group east to the
river bank. Blaine will-

The bucket reaches the top and the crowd GASPS.

The bucket is coated in blood and gore. Jesse's head rests on top.

Lex pushes through the crowd, horror grips her face.

She stands petrified at the sight of Jesse's head.

OTIS (CONT'D)

Take her!

Lex is overtaken by Blaine and another townspeople.

She FIGHTS back, KICKING AND SWINGING, but she's crumpled by a FIST TO THE GUT and dragged away by the mob.

Lex is dragged through the main street, fighting and barking and hollering for every inch.

She's dragged past the shack where Ainsley watches from the window.

Ainsley is screaming and crying and trying to rip free of Bonnie's grip, but Bonnie holds her back.

WOODS/MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The Miner stands holding Colby's head in his hand, blood gushing down his side.

He tosses the head.

Colby's lifeless body is dragged backward by an invisible force to the base of the tree and then up the trunk. The body disappears into the branches above.

The Witch, her ghoulish face exposed, crouches amid the branches. Her eyes are hungry and excited.

A shower of gore EXPLODES from the tree.

WHIPPING POST - CONTINUOUS

The mob straps Lex to the pole with her back against it, defiant as she struggles for every inch.

Otis pushes through the crowd, whispers in her ear.

OTIS (CONT'D)

You didn't believe but you're about to.

Otis and the mob turn their backs on her and walk away, leaving her all alone, strapped to the pole.

Lex seethes, spits in the dirt.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

It's dark out and quiet, but for the MUSIC FROM THE SPEAKERS wafting through the night.

Off-screen in the distance, we hear the sound of Lex CRYING OUT from the whipping post.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

The townsfolk sleep in the cabin, rows of people spread throughout.

Bonnie is asleep and draped over Ainsley, who lays there tied at the corner post by a rope with a bell on it.

Ainsley is wide awake listening to Lex CRYING OUT over the music.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - WHIPPING POST - CONTINUOUS

Lex struggles against her bindings, her breath billowing into the cold night.

LEX

Heellllllpppppp!!

Lex droops, hangs her head, exhausted from the struggle.

She freezes and her blood runs cold.

Off in the distance at the tree line, stands the Witch.

The Witch waves silently at Lex with her big sweeping motions.

Lex looks away, crooking her neck back and pinching her eyes shut.

When she looks up again, the Witch is gone, but there's someone else standing at the tree line.

It's her father Vernon (30s), the same age he'd have been when Lex last saw him.

Vernon stares longingly, raises one hand to wave.

Lex trembles and whimpers, she's tired and broken and scared.

Vernon walks toward her.

Lex wants to look away but she can't help but look at him.

VERNON

Sweetheart, it's me. Daddy's back.

Lex whimpers, looking down at the ground.

VERNON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I've been away so long.

Vernon stands facing directly in front of her, though Lex won't look at him.

LEX

You're not real.

VERNON

I missed you so much.

Vernon touches her arm, gently grips her. She's repulsed.

LEX

Never thought about you once.

VERNON

Hey. It's going to be OK.

Lex breaks down SOBBING, head hanging and the tears streaming.

LEX

I hate you. You disgust me and I never--

She sucks up the snot and looks up.

Vernon's gone. She's all alone.

Now it's the Miner at the tree line and he's holding the birdcage.

Lex is boiling with rage now.

LEX (CONT'D)
Stop fucking with me!

The Miner stalks toward her. Lex's anger melts to fear as he draws closer and closer, his dead black eyes locked on her.

Lex struggles against her binding but it's hopeless.

LEX (CONT'D)
No no no no...

The Miner towers over her, breath billowing out. Lex pinches her eyes shut.

The Miner unlatches the cage. Lex opens her eyes in horror.

The Miner fits the cage over her head. Lex SCREAMS.

The Miner takes the crank in his hand, leans in. He's just about to sink the blade into her neck when...CLICK!

An oil lamp goes on from behind the whipping post.

WHOOSH! The Miner vanishes, a gust of wind washing over Lex from where he was standing.

Ainsley stands behind Lex holding the oil lamp. The cage is still on Lex's head.

INT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Bonnie wakes up to find Ainsley missing, the rope around her leg sawed off by a knife.

She jumps to her feet and runs through the house.

BONNIE
Ainsley's gone!

EXT. MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - WHIPPING POLE - CONTINUOUS

Ainsley sets the lantern next to Lex.

LEX
Ainsley, thank God. Can you cut me loose?

Ainsley goes to work with her whittling knife, sawing at the rope around Lex's hands.

LEX (CONT'D)
That's it. You got this.

The rope falls. Lex rips the cage from her head and tosses it away. She drops to her knees and embraces Ainsley.

In the distance, we hear the sound of the MOB coming.

LEX (CONT'D)
Let's go.

WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Lex and Ainsley run through the woods holding hands, Lex pulling Ainsley along.

Otis and Blaine lead the MOB after them, flashlight beams cutting through the dark.

Blaine breaks off from the pack, sprinting faster than everyone else.

LEX (CONT'D)
Keep moving.

Lex is pulling Ainsley but she's falling behind.

Lex lifts Ainsley to carry her and they run awkwardly through the trees.

Blaine is making up ground fast. He's right on top of them.

Lex trips on a root and spills across the ground, Ainsley goes flying.

Blaine scrambles for Lex and dives on top of her.

BLAINE
I got her!

They roll in the grass, fighting and scrapping.

Blaine is overpowering her.

BLAINE (CONT'D)
Over here!

Blaine pins Lex to the ground, and rests satisfied on top of her when...THUD! His eyes pop and he falls over screaming, reaching for his back.

Ainsley is behind him. She planted the whittling knife square in his back at that awful place you can't reach.

Blaine SCREAMS and rolls in the dirt reaching for his back.

Lex scrambles to her feet and grabs Ainsley as the mob draws closer. They're off.

MOUNTAIN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Lex and Ainsley reach the car.

Lex pushes Ainsley into the passenger seat and fires up the engine. The MOB DESCENDS in the rearview.

Bullets tear into the rear of the car, ripping up the trunk.

LEX

Get down!

Lex pushes Ainsley onto the floor. Ainsley is terrified, CRYING as the MOB reaches them and BANGS on the car.

Otis runs side-by-side with the car, banging on Lex's window.

The tires SPIN as the car peels out.

The MOB is falling back behind them. Otis tries to hold on but he lets go, skids alongside the car as it pulls away.

They're almost clear but Blaine, a knife in his back, steps in front of the tunnel entrance as the car bears down.

LEX (CONT'D)

Hold on.

Lex hits the gas as Blaine stands there helpless, his hands extended and...THUMP!

The car runs him over. He bounces off the hood, CRACKS into the windshield and spins off the roof until he comes to a rest, lifeless on the ground in front of the tunnel mouth.

The car speeds into the dark tunnel.

Lex's eyes are wild, darting back and forth from the road in front of her to the mob receding in the rearview.

They speed off into the night.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Lex lays in the hospital bed, rain and wind beating against the window.

Sheriff Hudson takes a seat at her bedside.

SHERIFF HUDSON
How you feeling?

LEX
I'm fine. I don't need to be here.

SHERIFF HUDSON
You've had an ordeal.

LEX
Are they out looking for Colby?

SHERIFF HUDSON
The tunnel was blown out with dynamite. We can't get through. Chopper on standby as soon as the weather clears.

LEX
Ainsley?

SHERIFF HUDSON
Down the hall with social services.

LEX
I want her to stay with me.

Sheriff Hudson nods, pats her assuringly.

CORRIDOR - LATER

Lex shuffles through the hospital, comes to a room and looks inside.

A SOCIAL WORKER sits at Ainsley's bedside holding a clipboard and asking her questions.

Lex watches, a pained smile. Ainsley spots her.

AINSLEY
Aunt Lex!

Lex walks in and the Social Worker gets up.

SOCIAL WORKER
She's doing better. I'll leave you two alone.

The Social Worker leaves.

Lex sits on the edge of Ainsley's bed, tongue tied.

LEX
How are you--

Ainsley throws her arms around her, squeezes her tight.

Lex squeezes her back, tears building.

INT. CHOPPER (FLYING) - DAY

It's sunny and bright.

Lex and Sheriff Hudson, as well as a HANDFUL OF STATE POLICE, sit strapped in the chopper as it swoops over the trees.

EXT. CLEARING IN THE WOODS - DAY

The chopper lowers to the ground, rotor blades WHIRRING and bending the grass.

WOODS/MIRROR GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Lex leads the small team through the trees and mirror garden.

Everyone has their guns drawn.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (V.O.)
*The sun turned black, like
sackcloth made of goat hair.*

DEEP DARK HOLE - CONTINUOUS

The cops snoop around the trees as Lex and Sheriff Hudson stand at the edge of the pit.

It's no longer a bottomless black hole. There's a SOLID ROCK FLOOR just below the retaining wall about 15 feet down. It's not as if the hole has been filled - the bottom is made of ancient rock that looks as if it's been there for millennia.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (V.O.)
*The moon turned to blood. The stars
in the sky fell to the Earth.*

Lex is speechless, staring down into it.

MOUNTAIN ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

The gang walks cautiously through the abandoned town, guns drawn.

The speakers are quiet. There's no sign of life.

SHERIFF HUDSON
Mingo Police! Show yourself!

His words echo through the empty town.

Lex spins, eyes searching.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (V.O.)
*The heavens receded and every
mountain was removed from its
place.*

WHIPPING POLE - CONTINUOUS

The Sheriff inspects the rusty, blood-encrusted cage.

SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Lex and the Sheriff walk around an empty shack.

There are some belongings strewn about, but no signs of life.

A state policeman calls out from the tree line.

COP (O.S.)
Over here!

TREE LINE - CONTINUOUS

Lex and the Sheriff approach to find the cop with a gun pointed at the Unknown Traveler, who stands with his hands up looking very confused.

Lex wouldn't know it because she never saw his face, but he looks different - there's a paleness about him, and his face sags a bit on his skull, as if it was stitched on.

The Unknown Traveler's ragged clothes don't fit. They hang off him, and look like they might've been collected from the belongings left outside the mine.

SHERIFF HUDSON
What you doing out here son?

UNKNOWN TRAVELER
I live out here, sir.

SHERIFF HUDSON
You know this man?

Lex studies him.

She shakes her head no.

LEX
He's not one of them.

SHERIFF HUDSON
Keep walking, this is police
business.

UNKNOWN TRAVELER
Yessir.

The Unknown Traveler walks off.

As he goes, he blinks and HIS EYES GO BLACK. The look on him
is pure evil. He intends to kill.

PASTOR RAVENHILL (V.O.)
*Fall on us, rocks and mountains.
Hide us from the face of him who
sits on the throne, and from the
wrath of the Lamb.*

Lex walks over to a shack. Beneath one of the Dutch Hex
Signs, someone has scrawled the KYBALION SYMBOL into the
wood. A circle inside a square inside a triangle.

Beneath that, it says "KYBALION" in all caps.

SHERIFF HUDSON
What do you reckon happened here?

Lex traces her fingers over the symbol.

Lex and Sheriff Hudson flinch and look at the sky as a
THUNDERING HOWL shakes the trees. A wolf, or maybe something
else...

CUT TO BLACK.