

BENJAMIN BREYER

written by

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Troll Court Entertainment®
UTA/Charlie Ferraro
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EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A lonely, rundown Victorian farmhouse surrounded by six-foot-high cornfields. A neglected barn in the distance. No neighbors in sight.

Everything dark but for a flickering blue TV light from an upstairs window.

INT. TORI AND KYLE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

PAN ACROSS an array of framed photographs on a hallway wall, stretching back generations -

A recent color photo of a young man and woman on their wedding day. Sepia portraits of a homesteader family on the plains of Kansas, everyone sturdy, solemn. Black & white portraits from the '20's and '30s, lots of kids.

IN THE BATHROOM

The woman in the color photo - TORI BREYER, early 30's, in a sleeveless nightgown - studies herself in the mirror.

She doesn't like what she sees. Too plain. Too Midwestern. Too wholesome. So she tucks a lock of hair behind her ear. Unbuttons a couple buttons on her nightgown.

She makes her way -

INTO THE BEDROOM

Her husband KYLE - 30's, thatchy beard, sturdy build - lies in bed scrolling around on his laptop. A TV plays a sitcom on Nick at Nite.

Tori goes to Kyle. She gets on the bed, folds up his laptop, sets them on a stack of books on the nightstand: *Taking Charge of Your Fertility*; *The Everything Getting Pregnant Book*; *Miscarriage: Women Sharing From the Heart*.

Tori climbs on top of Kyle. Starts to kiss him. He's pleasantly surprised -

KYLE

What's going on? Are you ovulating?

TORI

(between kisses)

No. But for once let's not have it be work. Just fun.

KYLE

Hell, it's always fun for me.

He gets into it. They start messing around. Close. Intimate. A tangle of hands and limbs.

A bedside lamp flickers. The cable TV feed pixillates and stutters - jagged bursts of creepy sitcom laughter.

Tori stops short.

TORI

Um... Ow.

KYLE

(hyper-concerned)

What, what?

Her hair has become caught in his watchband. They both giggle.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Jesus, I'm sorry...

He delicately maneuvers his wrist, unclips his watch, disentangles her hair. He throws his watch on the bed.

She sits up, straddling his waist, her fingers interlaced with his. He smiles. She smiles back at him.

Then -

A chain on the bedside lamp quivers, tinkling against the light fixture.

Tori climbs off the bed. She's curious. Alert. As if the air is suddenly charged. She ventures toward the hallway.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Babe? You okay?

She looks down the dark hallway. Peering into the stillness. She turns to Kyle.

TORI

I'm fine. For a second I thought -

A DEAFENING BOOM!

LIKE A 747 ROARING INCHES ABOVE THE HOUSE. BOOKS, PERFUME BOTTLES, AND PICTURE FRAMES FLY AGAINST THE CEILING, AS IF MAGNETIZED BY SOMETHING PASSING OVERHEARD.

TORI AND KYLE ARE THROWN TO THE FLOOR. THE HOUSE RATTLES TO THE FOUNDATION.

FOR A BRIEF MOMENT THE OBJECTS IN THE ROOM HOVER IN ZERO GRAVITY -

THEN PLUMMET.

The TV crashes to the floor. Kyle's watch lands beside him.

Tori and Kyle try to collect themselves.

KYLE
You all right?

She nods, shaken.

TORI
What was that?

KYLE
I don't know, an earthquake?

She gives him a withering glance. THAT was not an earthquake.

She notices something outside. She drifts toward the bedroom window and looks out, disturbed. Kyle joins her.

They see, far off, a FLICKERING LIGHT in the woods. A thin wisp of smoke rising into the night sky.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Headlights cut through a dirt road - deeper and deeper into woods thick with trees.

Kyle at the wheel, Tori looking out the window. She wears a red wool cardigan over her nightgown. Eerie old-time music plays on a tinny dashboard radio.

As they drive, the headlights cast ominous shadows. The surroundings become more atmospheric and foreboding.

Kyle senses Tori's anxiety.

KYLE
You know, we don't have to do this.

Tori shrugs him off. She doesn't want to do this, but she has to.

A SCREECH OF BIRDS flee from the forest.

Kyle and Tori look up as an endless FLOCK OF CROWS surges overhead.

Kyle watches them pass: why are they all leaving?

The song on the radio starts to garble and short out. Kyle fiddles with the radio knobs, the dashboard lights flickering -

SPACK!

A CROW HITS THE WINDSHIELD HEAD ON - TWISTED AND SPLATTERED, THE WINDSHIELD CRACKED.

Kyle LOSES CONTROL OF THE TRUCK. He wrestles with the wheel as the vehicle SKIDS OFF THE DIRT ROAD -

AND NOSEDIVES INTO A SHALLOW DITCH, jolting Kyle and Tori.

The truck whinnies to a stop.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Goddamnit.

Kyle and Tori climb out of the car. As he examines the damage - buckled hood, broken windshield - Tori stands cold and frightened.

She can hear, faintly, far off - RASPY BREATHING - labored, like a handsaw's back-and-forth.

TORI

Do you hear that?

As he grabs a flashlight from the bed of the truck -

KYLE

Hear what?

He shines a flashlight on the jacked-up front hood. He's not happy.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Oh, that's beautiful. My truck just got wrecked by a fucking crow.

There's no response. He looks around and notices Tori wandering deeper into the woods - as if called.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Tori?

She disappears into the brush.

KYLE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

He heads after her, raking his flashlight across the woods.

He notices trees snapped, shorn off, the edges of their branches ON FIRE. Tiny embers wafting through the air. The BREATHING getting louder.

Kyle - disoriented - spots a glimpse of Tori's nightgown fluttering past some trees. He scrambles to catch up.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Tori...

He sees her, briefly, just before she goes through some bushes, deeper into the woods.

Kyle hurries to reach her.

He shines the flashlight onto the ground and realizes he's in a SMOLDERING TRENCH.

A SHADOWY FIGURE APPROACHES behind him. He turns - shines his flashlight -

IT'S TORI!

Kyle is rattled. Tori is overcome with emotion. Almost beaming.

She takes Kyle's hand, pulling at him, beckoning him deeper into the forest. The RASPY BREATHING grows louder. A looming sense of dread.

She leads him to a JUMBLE OF WRECKAGE SURROUNDED BY FLAMES - A CRACKED POD MADE OF SOME KIND OF BLACK MINERAL, ITS SHELL RUPTURED OPEN.

She reaches into the pod and takes out -

A NAKED BABY!

A NEWBORN - MOUTH AGAPE - STRUGGLING TO BREATHE.

Kyle staggers back -

KYLE (CONT'D)

Jesus! What the fuck!

Tori cradles the wheezing baby. He's no more than three pounds. Fragile in her hands. Helpless.

KYLE (CONT'D)

What is that?

TORI

It's a child. A boy.

Kyle frets as Tori holds the baby to her. The baby stares up at Tori, needing her. Tori removes her cardigan and wraps it around the child for warmth.

Kyle stands back as Tori cradles the baby to her. The baby stares up at Tori, needing her. Tori removes her cardigan and wraps it around the child for warmth.

KYLE
Where'd it come from?

TORI
Does it matter?

KYLE
We gotta call someone. The sheriff,
child services, I don't know.

Tori is lost in the newborn child. She strokes his scalp. His breathing slows, steadies.

Kyle steps toward Tori and the baby, mystified.

KYLE (CONT'D)
What should we do with him?

TORI
Take care of him.

Kyle squirms, uncertain -

KYLE
Tori...

Tori - welling with emotion - looks up at her husband.

TORI
We've been trying for a baby for so
many years. All that pain, all that
agony and heartache.

The memory stabs at Kyle.

KYLE
I know, I know...

TORI
All those nights we stayed up
holding each other, wishing -
praying - that God or the Universe
or someone would help us. And now
it's happened. He's here. A gift.
Meant for us.

Kyle is awed, caught up in something larger than himself. He holds out his pinkie. The baby grasps it.

Tori smiles. She kisses the baby's forehead.

The family is together, complete, flames and smoldering smoke behind them. Tori and Kyle look down at the peaceful baby in her arms.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: **BENJAMIN BREYER**

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING

12 YEARS LATER.

A crisp autumn morning. Tori walks through sprawling farmland.

She calls out -

TORI
Benjamin! Time for school!

No reply.

She lets out a two-tone SING-SONG WHISTLE.

From some other part of the property she hears the same SING-SONG WHISTLE in reply. She smiles to herself.

She walks across an expanse of patchy grass and heads toward an ABANDONED BARN. She playfully whistles again.

From inside the barn, someone whistles back.

Tori opens a dilapidated door. Barn swallows SCREECH - STARTLING HER - flying past her face. She watches the birds soar through sunlight filtering through old rotting windows and roof beams.

She climbs up a ladder to an upper loft area, scanning the nooks and crevices - a game of hide and seek.

She lets out a whistle. Elsewhere, closer now - the whistle replies.

She thinks she hears a creak from one of the floor boards.

She smiles, climbs down into a grain pit area -

BENJAMIN leaps from some higher level and tackles Tori onto a moldering mess of hay.

Tori winces, laughing -

TORI (CONT'D)
You're getting too big for this
game!

Tori stares into Benjamin's eyes. He's gangly, 11 going on 12,
hair uncombed, his eyes alert.

TORI (CONT'D)
But you'll always be my baby boy.

Benjamin smiles. He rises and lifts Tori to her feet -

BENJAMIN
Took you long enough to find me.

Kyle - wearing jeans, work gloves in his hand, fresh from the
fields - enters the barn. He's got a noticeable limp.

KYLE
What are you guys doing in here?

BENJAMIN
I was just hiding and stuff.

KYLE
C'mon, you know the barn is off
limits.

Kyle double-checks the padlock on a hinged trap door built
into the floor of the grain pit area.

KYLE (CONT'D)
All these loose boards and nails
and shit, I just don't want you to
break your neck.

TORI
He knows that. We were about to
leave.

Kyle puts his arm around his son -

KYLE
Sorry if I gotta be the big bad Dad
now and again...

Benjamin rolls his eyes. The family heads out of the barn into
the vast farmland and the morning light.

PUSH IN on the trap door in the barn, giving off a FAINT,
THROBING HUM. INSISTENT. FOREBODING.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

A SCIENCE TEACHER stands next to a video projection - images of bees and wasp dance off of her in the darkened room.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Wasps and bees. Both members of the same insect family, both with two pairs of wings, both with stingers.

As the teacher lectures, a pretty girl with frizzy hair - CAITLYN - peers over at Benjamin making childlike doodles in his notebook - variations on his name and initials.

SCIENCE TEACHER (CONT'D)

Can anyone tell me any differences between them? Mr. Breyer?

Benjamin looks up at her.

BENJAMIN

Well, um... bees are pollinators, wasps are predators.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Good, good.

BENJAMIN

Wasps are more aggressive. More dangerous. One species, *Polistes sulcifer*, is what's called a brood parasite.

A blue-eyed boy, ROYCE, exchanges glances with a kid with a FAUXHAWK, the two of them stifling a snicker.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

These wasps have lost the ability to build their own nests, so they use brute force to get other wasp species to raise their young. They make them feed their babies beetle larvae and maggots.

An awkward silence from the class. Royce pipes up -

ROYCE

Yo man, how'd they taste?

The classroom ERUPTS in laughter. Benjamin is bruised.

As the teacher tries to quiet the class, Caitlyn leans over to Benjamin and whispers -

CAITLYN

Don't worry about that idiot. Some
day he'll be working for you.

Benjamin takes this in. Caitlyn returns to her notebook. He
smiles to himself.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tori washes dishes in the sink, steam rising. The kitchen is
off dining and living rooms that haven't changed in generations
- peeling wallpaper, heavy dark furniture, old porcelain dolls.

A LOUD THUMP from upstairs.

Tori turns off the sink. Listens.

She calls upstairs -

TORI

Ben?

A grandfather clock TICK-TOCKS.

Then, from somewhere in the house, she hears -

A LOW MURMURING NOISE. GHASTLY. SINISTER.

Tori is creeped.

She makes her way toward a back STUDY off the living room.
Kyle is slumped on an old couch, sleeping, the TV playing some
old movie with the sound off.

Tori whispers -

TORI (CONT'D)

Kyle, do you hear that?

He mumbles incoherently.

She returns to the living room.

She hears a SMALL CLATTER outside - trash cans maybe.

Then a PAINED GUTTURAL MOAN.

She opens the back screen door and goes -

OUTSIDE THE FARMHOUSE

A jagged breeze. Wind chimes trill. Tori stands on a wraparound porch.

She scans the backyard area. Bare light bulb behind her. The fields a blanket of darkness.

She zeroes in on a rusty swing CREAKING BACK AND FORTH.

Is that what she heard?

Then, across the yard, SOMEONE WALKS THROUGH HER PERIPHERAL VISION.

Tori jolts as she watches BENJAMIN BEE-LINE INTO THE BACKYARD, OBLIVIOUS TO TORI, OBLIVIOUS TO EVERYTHING, in a kind of zombie trance. It's chilling. Unsettling.

TORI

Benjamin?

He keeps walking through fluttering sheets on the clothesline.

Through the backyard. Past the coop - chickens SQUAWKING WILDLY.

TORI (CONT'D)

Benjamin!

Tori follows Benjamin as he staggers toward the barn - a tiny figure in his pajamas receding into the vast darkness.

Tori can make out an eerie RINGING NOISE - keening, pulsating - emanating from inside the barn. Faintly at first, then growing.

Tori heads toward the source of the noise.

She enters -

THE BARN

Almost pitch black. Scary as hell. Tori trying to find Benjamin in the shadows. The ringing noise beckoning him.

She FINDS HIM IN THE GRAIN PIT AREA, THE TRAP DOOR IN THE FLOOR OPEN, PEERING INSIDE.

Down in the pit is the BLACK POD HE ARRIVED IN AS A BABY. The shell is putrefying. Crawling with carrion beetles.

It THROBS, KEENING.

Benjamin stands over it - MURMURING IN SOME HUSHED ALIEN GIBBERISH -

He reaches out to the pod. He MAKES CONTACT WITH IT, the keening growing LOUDER.

TORI

Benjamin.

Benjamin turns - startled - his hand grazing the metallic edge of the pod.

The keening noise STOPS.

Benjamin clutches his hand in pain. He's disoriented. Weak. Lost.

BENJAMIN

What happened?

Tori supports Benjamin. She examines his injured hand. A TRICKLE OF BLOOD runs from his finger.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

It cut me.

TORI

I know. I'm sorry, baby.

Tori uses her shirt to squeeze Benjamin's fingers, stanching the bleeding, her shirt now blotted with blood.

BENJAMIN

(in a daze)

I heard... I don't know what it was. Voices or something.

Tori looks into his eyes, searching, trying to figure out how much to tell him.

TORI

You were dreaming.

She soothes Benjamin's hair.

TORI (CONT'D)

Let's forget this happened, okay?

Tori holds Benjamin, comforting him, trying to be strong, but deep down she's frightened, a sense of something new and terrifying welling up inside of her.

INT. BENJAMIN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is dark and shadowy, cluttered with the detritus of different eras: a radiator from the 1910's, cowboy wallpaper from the '40s. Tori lovingly tucks Benjamin into bed.

She makes sure he's asleep. Kisses his forehead.

She heads out of his room, closing the CREAKING DOOR slowly, careful not to make too much noise. She turns, and -

KYLE IS BEHIND HER!

She jumps, startled.

KYLE
Everything okay?

She fidgets.

TORI
I don't know. He was... sleepwalking
I guess.

KYLE
(suspicious)
Where?

Tori catches herself, decides to protect Kyle -

TORI
Downstairs. He's fine. C'mon, you
got an early morning.

INT. CHAIN RESTAURANT - EVENING

GROWLING ENGINES.

First-person video POV of stock cars racing around a track, crashing into each other.

Benjamin and Tori sit side-by-side at the wheels of a NASCAR Racing arcade game. Tori is having a blast.

INT. CHAIN RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Three members of a wait staff CLAP IN TIME WHILE CHANTING A BIRTHDAY TUNE. We're in a casual dining place. The waiters set down a sundae with a lit candle in front of Benjamin -

WAIT STAFF
Happy happy birthday!
We whipped up something cold!

Benjamin is moody, distant. He's surrounded by Kyle, Tori, his AUNT MERILEE - 30's, sunny - and his UNCLE NOAH - late 30's, pudgy, affable.

Benjamin contorts his face, turned off by the cheery song.

WAIT STAFF (CONT'D)
Happy happy birthday!
For someone getting old!

Tori snaps a photo with her phone as Benjamin blows out the candle. The staff whoops it up, wishes him happy birthday, then heads off.

KYLE
Wow. I think they use that to break prisoners at Guantanamo.

Benjamin half-smiles.

TORI
 Sorry, I did not know they were gonna do that.

Noah puts his arm around Benjamin.

NOAH
 Was it punishment for something?
 Bad grades?

TORI
 (proudly)
 You've heard about his test scores, right? Top one percent.

MERILEE
 Top one-tenth of one percent.
 Everyone on the faculty has been talking about him.

TORI
 And he's just getting started.

She starts to get choked up.

TORI (CONT'D)
 So much ahead of you.

NOAH

Well, a boy that special deserves a special gift. This is from me and your Aunt Merilee.

He hands Benjamin a long wrapped gift. Merilee

MERILEE

Go 'head.

Benjamin tears off the wrapping to reveal a REMINGTON BOLT-ACTION RIFLE.

NOAH

Shot my first buck with that very same model.

KYLE

No. No way. Tori, we discussed this.

TORI

I know, but -

KYLE

(to Benjamin)
You're not ready.

Kyle takes the rifle from him. Benjamin flares with anger.

BENJAMIN

I'm twelve years old.

KYLE

Exactly. You're still a child.

Benjamin is irate. He stares down Kyle. Arcade games malfunction in the b.g.

BENJAMIN

Give that to me. It's mine.

KYLE

(taken aback)
What'd you say to me?

BENJAMIN

I said - give it to me.

Tori and Kyle are stunned. They've never seen this behavior from Benjamin before. Benjamin glares at his Dad -

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Now.

KYLE

(furious)

Okay. You're done. No ice cream.

Kyle knocks the sundae aside - the glass bowl clattering across the table. Other customers steal glances at them.

KYLE (CONT'D)

We're leaving.

Kyle stands to go, grabbing Benjamin by the elbow -

Benjamin doesn't budge. An immovable force.

Kyle is about to lose it -

KYLE (CONT'D)

Get up.

Benjamin boils. It's a standoff.

Tori tenderly touches Benjamin's arm.

TORI

Benjamin... Listen to your father.

Benjamin looks at his mom. A moment passes between them.

Benjamin gives in. He rises to go.

TORI (CONT'D)

(to Merilee and Noah)

I'm so sorry, guys.

Merilee and Noah beg off: not our business.

Tori and Kyle leave with Benjamin.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Tori sits on a couch, removes her shoes, rubs her feet. Kyle gets a longneck from the fridge, pops the cap.

KYLE

Turns twelve years old, suddenly gets a mouth on him.

TORI

It was so strange. So unlike him.

Kyle limps toward the living room, thinks he notices something outside - glances out a window behind Tori. He sees wind blowing through the trees, spindly shadows on the yard -

- WAS THAT SOMETHING MOVING? -

Maybe just the wind.

KYLE

I worry about him. Getting older. Changing. Maybe it's all normal, I don't know.

Kyle sits next to Tori. Takes a swig from his beer.

TORI

Oh, we were so much worse when we were his age. The shit we got into? Sneaking out on school nights, smoking weed in my parents' basement...

Kyle twinkles at the memory -

KYLE

Fucking around on that puke-green couch down there. Every time the floor would creak upstairs I'd zip my damn pants up...

They laugh as he nuzzles up to her, puts his hand on her thigh. She returns his affection.

KYLE (CONT'D)

We were such idiots. But we pulled through, didn't we?

TORI

Barely. Your parents were okay I guess. Mine sucked.

She laughs.

TORI (CONT'D)

I just want us to be better than that.

Kyle ruminates. The large window above them, trees wavering outside, scraping the glass.

KYLE

How 'bout we all go camping up in Drywood this weekend? The three of us.

TORI

Oo - we haven't done that in
forever.

She happily climbs on top of him.

KYLE

Know what else we haven't done in
forever?

She smiles as they start kissing.

INT./EXT. FARMHOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

CRRREEEEEEEECHCH!

A RICKETY AUTOMATIC DOOR OPENS on a garage packed with boxes,
gardening tools, a 1970's sedan, its hood stacked with paint
cans.

Kyle carries the the Remington rifle from his truck into the
garage. The wind chimes jangle. He climbs on a work bench.

He reaches above a cabinet, moves aside Christmas lights and
mason jars filled with nails. Goes to PLACE THE RIFLE on top
of the cabinet -

The light bulb in the garage flickers and dims.

Kyle stops. He hears, from outside, A LOW MURMURING NOISE.
GHASTLY. SINISTER. The same noise Tori heard from Benjamin.

He listens.

He can make out the FLUTTER AND SQUAWK of chickens -

Rising into a CACOPHONY OF PANICKED SCREECHES, FLESH TEARING,
punctuated by a PAINED GUTTURAL MOAN.

Then - silence.

Nothing but the wind chimes.

Kyle climbs down from the work bench with the rifle.

He grabs two bullets from a box on a shelf, opens the chamber
of the rifle, presses them in. He slides the bolt shut with a
CLICK.

He ventures out into the yard, toward the chicken coop, rifle
leading the way into the darkness.

He treads lightly, past the squeaking swing set, planning to sneak up on whatever got to the chickens.

He hears a dripping near a tall tree. He limps toward it. He stops to listen.

DROPS OF BLOOD fall onto his face.

He wipes at his face, his hand slick with blood. What the hell?

He looks up -

There's a MANGLED CHICKEN CARCASS lodged in the branches.

He walks further and discovers -

A few more CHICKEN CARCASSES scattered throughout the property, torn open, entrails smeared along the ground.

Then -

A RUSTLING FROM THE CORNFIELD. Kyle spins.

SOMETHING'S IN THERE.

WHISPERING STRANGE NOISES - a kind of ALIEN GIBBERISH.

Kyle steadies his rifle.

He HEADS INTO THE DARK CORNFIELD.

He uses the barrel of the rifle to nudge aside leafy corn stalks.

His heart is pounding. His breath shallow. His footsteps CRUNCHING dry leaves.

He can see SPLATTERS OF BLOOD on the leaves of corn.

He goes deeper into the cornfield. Now almost engulfed by the stalks. He can barely see a foot in front of him.

He comes out on an empty space between the rows of corn.

All is silent. He listens for the intruder.

Then -

SOMETHING BLEATS AT KYLE FROM HIS SIDE!

Kyle SPINS WITH THE RIFLE -

He relaxes. It's a HORRIBLY WOUNDED CHICKEN, one wing ripped off, a chunk of flesh missing, squawking in agony, stumbling in circles.

Kyle aims the rifle point blank at the thing and FIRES, putting it out of its misery. The shot echoes miles away.

Kyle stands in the cornfield with his rifle. He calls out to the darkness -

KYLE

Fuck you, wolf! I outrank you on
the food chain! You come round
again, I'll kill your ass!

No reply. Kyle is alone amid a vast sea of corn stalks.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Benjamin heads toward the truck, where Kyle packs camping supplies. He wears a t-shirt, a backpack over his shoulders. He seems more inward, more distant, than he did earlier.

Tori calls out from a wraparound porch -

TORI

Benjamin, where's your jacket?

BENJAMIN

I don't need one.

TORI

It's 40 degrees!

Benjamin slumps his shoulders and sulks.

TORI (CONT'D)

Fine, I'll get it.

She goes -

INSIDE THE FARMHOUSE

Through the kitchen and living room.

She hastens upstairs.

Into -

BENJAMIN'S BEDROOM

Tori sifts through the clutter, looking for Benjamin's jacket.

She spots it thrown by his bed. She crouches down and notices between the mattress and box spring a SHEAF OF CRINKLED PAPERS. She takes them out and pages through them.

From downstairs, Kyle calls -

KYLE (O.S.)
Hon? You about ready?

Tori is lost in the pages. Concerned.

Kyle joins her in the room.

KYLE (CONT'D)
You find it?

TORI
I found... something.

She hands him the pages. On top is a Target ad featuring models in bikinis. Kyle is amused -

KYLE
Is this his idea of porn?

He sees a Memorial Day Sale mailer with women in bras. He's amused -

KYLE (CONT'D)
Mailers from Target - for the truly hardcore.

He leafs through and finds PAGES FROM AN ANATOMY TEXTBOOK -

Medical diagrams of the FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM. An illustration of a NAKED FEMALE and her endocrine system. CROSS-SECTIONS OF THE VAGINA, THE CERVIX, THE UTERUS.

PINK TISSUE. TANGLES OF RED AND BLUE VEINS. TECHNICAL. RAW.

KYLE (CONT'D)
What the hell?

TORI
Is it just a guy thing?

KYLE
Not any guy I know. Not this.

TORI

Maybe it's time you had a talk with him. You know, birds, bees, et cetera.

Kyle sighs. He doesn't want to.

KYLE

Fine. I'll give him the same talk my dad gave me: 'It's the second hole from the back of the neck.'

TORI

Ugh.

She swats at him.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

A crisp afternoon, sun dead over the horizon. A cheap domed tent set up at a campsite. Tori takes a couple of gnarled red steaks from a package and salts them.

Up the hillside, Kyle and Benjamin crinkle through brown leaves, gathering firewood.

Kyle tries to be casual -

KYLE

So, uh, Ben... I know you just had your birthday.

BENJAMIN

Yeah.

KYLE

Which means you're a young man, your body's starting to change.

BENJAMIN

Okay.

KYLE

So you might find yourself more and more interested in women. And women's bodies.

Benjamin looks up at Kyle - cold, upset -

BENJAMIN

Were you in my room?

KYLE

What? No.

BENJAMIN

I don't like it when people go through my private stuff.

KYLE

Look, I respect that. I was the same way at your age - I thought about girls all the time, and no one ever told me it was okay to touch it or play with it.

BENJAMIN

With what?

KYLE

You know. The, uh - my penis.

BENJAMIN

Okay.

KYLE

But here's the thing: sex isn't about organs and body parts. I mean, it is. But it's really about finding the right person, falling in love.

BENJAMIN

And making babies.

KYLE

Eventually. Even then, that's not the only purpose of sex. Your mother and I, we still - you know, partake. And she can't have babies.

Benjamin is taken aback.

BENJAMIN

What do you mean?

KYLE

That's why we went to an adoption agency.

BENJAMIN

Mom can't have children? Like no matter what?

Benjamin chews his fingernails, simmering. He looks at Tori, seeming betrayed. Kyle is baffled.

KYLE

What's this about? Were you wanting a baby brother or sister? Because we're happy with you. With the three of us.

BENJAMIN

That's not it.

Kyle gets close to Benjamin, tries to connect with him -

KYLE

Look, maybe my words came out stupid. Just know that you're a guy, and you're gonna be feeling certain urges about girls you see in movies, girls in your class, whatever. It's okay to give into them now and again.

Benjamin looks up at Kyle. He nods, placated.

INT. CAITLYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Benjamin's classmate Caitlyn lies on her comforter in pajama bottoms and a t-shirt, talking on her phone, her frizzy hair dangling over the foot of the bed.

CAITLYN

Okay... Jesus, I'm at, like, zero percent, so I should probably go.

Caitlyn rises and crosses toward her desk. She passes her second-story window and doesn't see - outside - A BLURRY FIGURE IN HER YARD, WATCHING HER.

CAITLYN (CONT'D)

(on her phone, laughing)
Same to you, dork. Mwah.

She hangs up her phone and sets it on her desk. She plugs it into her charger. Her home screen blinks weirdly and goes dead. Probably out of battery. Caitlyn turns off her lights.

She passes her window again. This time the figure is CLOSER - SOMEHOW RIGHT OUTSIDE HER WINDOW - HOVERING.

Caitlyn plops into her bed, throws covers over herself.

We see, behind Caitlyn - HER WINDOW IS OPEN. The LONG CURTAINS FLUTTERING LIGHTLY.

Caitlyn nestles into her pillow. She closes her eyes.

Everything calm and quiet.

Then she hears -

EERIE MUSIC PLAYING.

Something spooky and romantic, like Mazzy Star.

Caitlyn is terrified. She lifts her head and sees -

Her laptop is OPEN, GLOWING. The song playing on iTunes.

She gets out of bed.

She approaches her computer, confused. No one in sight. She shuts the laptop. The music stops.

She turns around to head to bed.

THE MUSIC PLAYS AGAIN BEHIND HER.

Caitlyn sees her laptop open again. Her heart rate quickens. She's almost shaking with fear.

She slams the laptop shut. She stacks heavy books on the lid.

Her room now silent.

She notices the accordion doors on her closet SLIGHTLY AJAR.

She slowly advances toward it.

She reaches out to the knob of the door...

She grasps it and -

SLOWLY SLIDES THE ACCORDION DOORS. They SQUEAK open.

The closet is pitch black.

Caitlyn reaches up, pulls a chain, and turns on a bare light bulb.

Just clothes on hangars. Shoe boxes. Piles of old toys and board games.

Caitlyn steels herself and - QUICKLY PARTS THE CLOTHES ON HANGARS -

Just a plain wall behind the clothes.

She parts more hangars.

Then a couple more.

Then parts another -

A FACE GLARES AT HER!

She jumps back!

It's just an old RAG DOLL with a torn-up face.

Caitlyn lowers her guard.

She turns off the closet light. Closes the door, turns, and -

- walks, oblivious, DIRECTLY PAST BENJAMIN STANDING BEHIND HER LONG FLUTTERING CURTAINS.

The hair on her neck raises. She senses something awful and terrifying -

She sees BENJAMIN STARING AT HER, CURTAINS SWIRLING AROUND HIM IN THE NIGHT AIR.

CAITLYN LETS OUT A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM.

She TURNS TO RUN OUT OF HER ROOM. The door SWINGS OPEN -

A DARK SILHOUETTE STANDS IN THE DOORWAY - WRAPPING UP CAITLYN IN HER ARMS.

It's her mom, ERICA.

Caitlyn is crying.

ERICA

What's wrong? What's wrong?

CAITLYN

Someone's there! By the curtains!

Erica flips on the LIGHTS.

She approaches the windows -

Slowly. Cautiously.

She grasps the curtains -

AND OPENS THEM.

There's no one there. The window is closed. Nothing amiss. But Caitlyn is a wreck.

ERICA

Honey, no one's here.

CAITLYN

He was right there. I think it was... this kid from my class.

Erica is dubious.

ERICA

Were you watching scary movies on your phone again?

CAITLYN

I wasn't, I swear.

But even Caitlyn is starting to doubt herself.

CAITLYN (CONT'D)

Can I sleep in your bed tonight?

ERICA

Of course. Of course.

INT. CAMPING TENT - NIGHT

Tori STARTLES AWAKE.

She's in a sleeping bag next to Kyle in their tent. She feels at an empty sleeping bag - Benjamin is gone.

The tent door is unzipped, flaps blowing in the breeze. Just crickets and katydids outside.

TORI

Benjamin?

Kyle wakes -

KYLE

What's wrong?

TORI

Benjamin - he's gone.

The two of them scramble out of the tent. Kyle calls out -

KYLE

Ben!

In a panic she grabs a flashlight. Kyle starts to split from Tori -

KYLE (CONT'D)

You check that way, I'll take over here.

Tori nods nervously and goes into the forest.

She shines the flashlight everywhere. Acres of trees receding into total darkness.

She's alone. She hears a FLUTTER somewhere in the trees, a crow SQUAWKING.

She looks behind her. No sign of Kyle. The embers of the campfire receding into the night. She's scared.

TORI

Benjamin, can you hear me?... Where are you, baby?

Tori hears RUSTLING IN THE TREES ABOVE. Seeds and acorns dropping around her.

She shines the flashlight up into the tall trees - vertiginous, dizzying, casting eerie shadows. She thinks she sees SOMETHING MOVING UP THERE.

TORI (CONT'D)

Benjamin?

Her flashlight starts to flicker and spasm.

Tori rattles it, trying to jar the batteries back into place.

The light goes back on. She shines it up. Nothing up there.

She lowers the flashlight -

BENJAMIN IS DIRECTLY BEHIND HER.

Tori startles - then loosens.

TORI (CONT'D)

Oh my God, Benjamin! Where were you?

BENJAMIN

Taking a pee.

Tori lets out a huge laugh.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Did I scare you? I didn't mean to.

TORI

(still laughing)

No, it's just... You had me and your dad pretty freaked.

She hugs her son.

TORI (CONT'D)
I'm just glad you're here.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

The school day is over. Benjamin is at the end of the walkway in front of the school, apart from other kids, as he sits hunched over his notebook, wearing headphones and doodling.

A ways back from him, Tori wears a Hy-Vee employee polo, walks with her sister Merilee, deep in conversation -

TORI
You don't think I should take him to someone? A professional maybe?

MERILEE
For what? Talking back to his dad and keeping weird jerk-off material under his mattress?

TORI
It's more than that. Benjamin was always my special little guy. Such sweetness. But lately he's... different.

MERILEE
Uh - yeah, it's called puberty.

Merilee laughs, but Tori is pensive. She wants to say more.

MERILEE (CONT'D)
Look, Benjamin is highly gifted. Kids like him are often anxious, depressed, they may have problems integrating socially. What appears troubling to you is actually normal for his age. He'll grow out of it.

TORI
I hear you. Maybe I'm overreacting.

Merilee wraps Tori in a soothing hug, then breaks it off -

MERILEE
Sorry, I'm late for my 3 o'clock.

TORI
Go.

Merilee hustles off.

Tori approaches Benjamin from behind. We can hear, muffled, the same song that played in Caitlyn's bedroom.

She peers over Benjamin's shoulder and sees what he's doodling - VARIATIONS ON HIS INITIALS, LOTS OF STYLIZED B'S, next to sketches of CAPES AND MASKS.

Tori sees Benjamin obsessing over a CRUDE BALLPOINT DRAWING OF CAITLYN'S FACE with her frizzy hair, HER EYES WIDE AND FEARFUL.

Tori zeroes in on the drawing - leaning in - closer -

BENJAMIN TURNS SUDDENLY, STARTLING HER. GLARING AT HIM. Tori is flustered.

TORI (CONT'D)
Um... who is she?

Benjamin closes his notebook shut. He storms into the parking lot toward Tori's car.

TORI (CONT'D)
Sorry!

She follows after him.

TORI (CONT'D)
She's cute, by the way!

INT. FARMHOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Kyle sits at an old desk in the study. Just a desk lamp on. He has his iPad and checkbook open, bills spread out before him.

He picks up a certified letter from the local bank. Not good.

He tears it open. Scans the letter.

We catch scraps of the letter -

"NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE"

"...missed payments..."

"Property to be sold within 90 days unless..."

Kyle sets the letter down.

He sits there, fuming - then, overcome, he crumples the letter. So angry he wants to crawl out of his skin.

He looks through the open doorway and sees Tori fiddling with a flickering light bulb.

Kyle goes to the door and CLOSES IT quietly.

He pulls up his pant leg and unstraps a plastic PROSTHESIS - an artificial leg from the knee down. He sighs, some pain relieved.

He opens a bottom desk drawer.

Reaches behind some hanging files, deep in back -

And pulls out something bundled inside an old sock.

He unfurls it to reveal a PILL BOTTLE OF OXYCONTIN.

He twists off the cap, shakes out a couple of pink pills.

He swallows the pills, sits back, and waits for them to change him.

INT. FARMHOUSE - STUDY - LATER

Later in the evening, Kyle is in a fog - drooly, nearly passed out.

He hears a DIGITAL CHIME.

Kyle perks up a bit. Orients himself.

He looks down at the iPad on his desk.

An ALERT from the security cam. Something moving outside.

Kyle opens his home security app -

He sees the EERIE BLACK-AND-WHITE NIGHT-VISION ON THE CHICKEN COOP. All seems still.

Then, suddenly, CLOSE UP OF WINGS FLAPPING, a fury of feathers. Chickens are dying.

Kyle, creeped out, sees WHITE WISPS amid the chicken coop. The footage is jagged - freezing and skipping.

He REWINDS the footage and freezes the frame.

He sees what looks like a BLUR.

Kyle is confused. He un-pauses the image.

The footage plays. Kyle peers closer -

BAM!

A HAND JUTS INTO FRAME.

Kyle can make out A WHITE FIGURE - GHOSTLY, BLURRY, WITH LUMINESCENT EYES.

He's horrified.

INT. FARMHOUSE - CELLAR - MOMENTS LATER

Kyle, holding the iPad, leads Tori down rickety wooden stairs.

TORI

Kyle! What is this about?

They get to the bottom of the stairs. At one time an old root cellar - stone walls, low ceiling - now a laundry room lit by a bare light bulb.

Kyle - agitated, clammy - fidgets.

KYLE

It was a person.

TORI

What was?

KYLE

I saw something in the chicken coop. Wasn't a wolf. Wasn't an animal. It was a person.

TORI

A person?

KYLE

(apologetic, emotional)
Babe, I think it may've been Benjamin.

She looks at him askance -

TORI

No.

He opens up the security cam footage on the iPad, presses play, and shows it to her.

KYLE

This is from the camera I put up.

She hears the audio - fluttering and tearing - but THE VIDEO IS PIXILLATED, CORRUPTED.

TORI
There's nothing here.

Kyle is confused. He takes the iPad back, tries to find the footage.

KYLE
I don't know what's going on. There was someone. A hand.

Tori slumps as he prattles on -

KYLE (CONT'D)
This was our fear. All along. Abnormal shit. Truly out-there shit.

Tori stares at him pitifully.

KYLE (CONT'D)
You see what I'm saying, don't you?

TORI
(solemn, direct)
You're doing it again.

KYLE
Doing what?

TORI
The Oxy.

KYLE
That's... No. That's ridiculous.

TORI
You have that look in your eye, you're talking crazy -

KYLE
No, I haven't -
(catching himself)
Tori, that's not what this is about.

She gives him a withering stare.

TORI

It would make a lot more sense that your new camera is broken than that our son magically killed a bunch of chickens.

Kyle is chastened. Tori walks up the stairs.

Kyle turns to the iPad. He presses play, sees only CORRUPTED DATA.

The footage is a pixilated mishmash, almost taunting him. He's frustrated, defeated, wondering if he really is seeing things.

KYLE

Shit.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY

A red-haired 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL stands with her hands folded across her chest, her eyes closed.

She lets herself FREE FALL BACKWARD - into a circle of other kids who pass her around, her eyes closed, a version of the trust game Willow in the Wind.

Benjamin is on one side of the circle, Caitlyn on the other. He looks at her. She looks away, unsettled.

A P.E. teacher blows his whistle.

P.E. TEACHER

Okay now - there we go! When we trust each other, good things happen!

He looks at Benjamin.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

You're up next, big guy.

Benjamin dutifully enters the middle of the circle.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

Let's hear it for Benjamin!

Some kids clap. Benjamin stands up straight, folds his arms across his chest. He looks back at his spotters.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

Nothing to be afraid of! Your classmates have your back - literally!

Benjamin closes his eyes. He lets himself fall.

Caitlyn watches, fearful, as kids PASS BENJAMIN around the circle.

Someone passes him to Caitlyn. She steps aside and LETS HIM DROP.

He SPRAWLS ONTO THE GYM FLOOR. The other kids ooh and wince. Royce laughs. Benjamin lies there, unmoving, SEETHING INSIDE.

ROYCE

Way to trust the floor, Breyer!

The teacher rushes to Benjamin -

P.E. TEACHER

You okay, bud?

He gingerly lifts Benjamin into a sitting position.

Some students cringe, others giggle. Benjamin glares at Caitlyn.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

Damn it, Caitlyn. Give him a hand up.

Caitlyn is terrified to go near Benjamin.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

(warning)

Caitlyn.

CAITLYN

He's a pervert.

Royce and his buddy Fauxhawk laugh. Benjamin fumes. He stares at Caitlyn.

BENJAMIN

You lie.

P.E. TEACHER

Hold on now - we're all on the same team here. Caitlyn, help him up.

Caitlyn hesitates.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

Help him up or you fail this class.

Caitlyn squirms.

Then -

She reluctantly reaches her hand down to Benjamin.

Benjamin grasps her hand.

HE SQUEEZES IT.

TORRENTIAL PAIN hitting Caitlyn hard.

Benjamin stays LOCKED IN ON HER. A fixed beam of rage.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

Benjamin!

Caitlyn lets out an ANIMAL WAIL OF PAIN.

P.E. TEACHER (CONT'D)

Let go!

Benjamin squeezes tighter. His grip like an industrial machine.

THE BONES IN CAITLYN'S HAND SNAPPING. Then GROUND TO DUST.

The other kids PANIC - WHIMPERING - SCREAMING.

Benjamin GRINDS HIS HAND INTO A FIST, then lets go.

The P.E. Teacher rushes in to help Caitlyn -

She falls back, bawling, clutching her wrist, HER HAND HANGING LOOSE, NOTHING BUT PULP - A BAGGY MONSTROSITY.

The other kids SHRIEK.

Benjamin's eyes brim with satisfaction.

He's at peace.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Hand-held. We're moving - quickly. Kyle, drenched by rain, rushes down the hall, toward an administrative office -

Past students glancing at him, gossiping in hushed tones.

Past a young female sheriff's deputy, walkie squawking.

He approaches the sound of PEOPLE YELLING.

He rounds a corner and enters a -

RECEPTION AREA

Tori - in her work polo - argues with Caitlyn's mom Erica.

CHIEF DEPUTY TOM DEEVER - 45, brawny, wearing a khaki sheriff uniform - stands between them. A waif-thin PRINCIPAL is off to the side.

ERICA

Did you see my daughter's hand?!
Did you see it?

TORI

I'm sorry she's in pain, Erica, but
screaming at me is not going to
make it any better.

Kyle notices, in the glassed-in principal's office - Benjamin sitting alone, engrossed in doodling, his backpack next to him.

ERICA

I'm not leaving until your son is
removed from these premises -

TORI

Oh Christ....

ERICA

- before he hurts someone else.

KYLE

Can someone take a breath and tell
me where things stand?

PRINCIPAL

Benjamin is officially suspended
for two days -

ERICA

Suspended? He should be arrested!

DEEVER

That's up to juvenile prosecutors.

PRINCIPAL

After his suspension he'll receive
regular sessions with our school
counselor, Miss Merilee.

ERICA

His aunt?

PRINCIPAL

Right now she's the only -

ERICA

(to Deever)

You know her son was inside my daughter's bedroom last Saturday night.

Deever is taken aback.

TORI

Last Saturday night he was camping with us. Thirty miles away!

Kyle glances at Benjamin, wondering if he was really with them the entire night.

ERICA

(to Tori)

You just can't admit there's something seriously fucked up with your kid.

TORI

Because he's adopted there's something wrong with him? That's - beyond disgusting. We're done here.

Tori goes to get Benjamin. Erica badgers her -

ERICA

Who's his father? Some kind of serial killer?

Tori escorts Benjamin out of the office. Benjamin passes Erica and GLARES AT HER, DEAD-EYED, COLD.

Deever positions himself in front of Erica, trying to calm her down. Benjamin walks out with his parents, never breaking his gaze at Erica.

INT. TORI AND KYLE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Raining outside - thunder GROANING. Tori changes out of her clothes. Kyle angrily removes his jacket -

KYLE

If I pulled shit like that, breaking a girl's hand? Goddamn. My daddy woulda beat my ass.

TORI

Like that's gonna help.

KYLE

We're probably on the hook now for all her fucking medical bills -

TORI

This is what you care about right now?

KYLE

I care about my family!

TORI

Then start showing it.

KYLE

This is how I show it. By holding him accountable. Not by slathering him with love and telling him how damn exceptional he is.

TORI

He is exceptional, Kyle. He is. The two of us were trying - forever - to have a child, then he arrives. This miracle.

KYLE

(derisively)

Yeah, his behavior has been so miraculous lately.

TORI

Ask Merilee - everything he's going through is normal for his age.

Kyle levels his gaze at her -

KYLE

Tori, he may look like us, but he's not us. He's never bled, not once in his whole life. Never had a cut. Or a broken bone. Or a bruise. And now he's hurting people. Erica was right - there is something fucked up about him.

Tori simmers. Upset. Then -

TORI

He does bleed.

Kyle gives her a confused look.

TORI (CONT'D)
He cut his hand, that night when he
was sleepwalking.

KYLE
Where?

TORI
Out in the barn. He found the pod.

Kyle is stunned. Furious.

KYLE
Why the fuck didn't you tell me?!

TORI
Because I knew you'd react like
this. You always, always thought he
was something to hide, something to
be ashamed of -

KYLE
You don't get to make decisions
like that for me!

He grabs his jacket, starts to leave.

TORI
Where you going?

KYLE
Out. Don't wait up.

He hobbles out of the room and down the stairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Tori sits at the dining room table, her laptop open before
her. She pops open a bottle of beer, takes a swig.

She types into Google -

childhood developmental disorders

- and presses return. It yields a flurry of results - her eyes
scanning phrases for meaning, answers -

*Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder... Encopresis...
Oppositional Defiant Disorder...*

She goes to take another drink.

From upstairs she hears -

A LOUD THUD, like a body hitting the floor.

She sets the drink down. Listens.

She hears a MUFFLED UNEARTHLY MOAN. PAINED. ALMOST ANIMAL.

She leaps up and hastens -

UP THE STAIRS

She heads down the hallway. Toward Benjamin's room.

She can hear a SMALL RACKET from inside his room, like objects being thrown about.

She tries the door but it's locked. She knocks.

TORI

Benjamin?

She can make out the MUMBLED ALIEN GIBBERISH.

TORI (CONT'D)

Open the door - please.

She bangs on the door with the palm of her hand.

MORE LOUD THRASHING AND SHAKING. BENJAMIN SPITTING ANGRY ALIEN GIBBERISH.

Tori - panicking - BANGS HARDER ON THE DOOR.

TORI (CONT'D)

Benjamin!

BENJAMIN GROANING - WAILING!

Tori leans her shoulder into the door and BUSTS IT OPEN -

INSIDE BENJAMIN'S ROOM

THE WINDOWS ARE OPEN - DRAPES FLAPPING INWARD - BENJAMIN IN HIS PAJAMAS -

FLOATING THREE FEET OVER HIS BED -

HIS EYES ROLLED WHITE - HEAD THROWN BACK - HIS BODY BENT BACKWARDS - GROTESQUELY CONTORTED - AS IF IN THE GRIP OF A SEIZURE.

TORI SCRAMBLES ONTO THE BED -

SHE PULLS DOWN BENJAMIN.

FIGHTING WITH THE VIOLENT ENERGY SURGING THROUGH HIM.

SHE CORRALS HIM TO THE BED. WRAPS HIM IN HER ARMS.

BENJAMIN SEEMS TO SNAP OUT OF IT.

He's disoriented - his eyes crazed, savage. Tori grips his face with her hands - desperately trying to soothe him -

TORI
Benjamin - you're okay - you're
okay...

Benjamin is confused about where he is.

He catches his breath. He studies his mother.

TORI (CONT'D)
I'm with you now.

She cradles him.

Benjamin looks directly at Tori. Then -

BENJAMIN
Who am I?

Tori stammers, searching for the right words -

TORI
You're... you're our son, you -

BENJAMIN
Where did I come from?

Tori knew this moment would come. She knows she has to level with him.

TORI
Benjamin... I know things have been
difficult for you. I know you feel
different from other kids. And you
are different.
(slowly, candidly)
You are not from our world. We did
not adopt you from an agency. You
came here, in some... pod. From
where I don't know.

Benjamin nods, processing, almost resigned.

TORI (CONT'D)
You are special. A gift.

She grasps his hand in hers.

TORI (CONT'D)
There will be people who don't believe who you are and what you can do. That's why you have to show them that you are virtuous. And kind. And good.

Benjamin can see his purpose.

BENJAMIN
Thank you, Mom. Everything makes sense now.

TORI
You have been sent here to do great things. But you will always be my baby boy.

Benjamin smiles and puts his head on her shoulder. She strokes his hair. He's at ease.

INT. CAITLYN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Caitlyn is propped up in bed, recuperating, her right hand in a bulging cast, her bones pinned with an external frame.

A bowl of soup sits on a tray in front of her. She tries to eat it with her left hand. Her hand shaking. Struggling to lift the spoon to her mouth.

She sets the spoon down and sees - in the doorway - BENJAMIN, holding flowers. SHE JOLTS. Instantly petrified.

Benjamin enters the bedroom.

Caitlyn leaps from bed. She backs away from him.

CAITLYN
What are you doing here?

BENJAMIN
I got you flowers.

She drifts toward the corner of her room, terrified.

CAITLYN
You can't.

She's on edge. His demeanor is steady, placid.

BENJAMIN

Don't be scared. I want to talk to you.

Benjamin slowly walks closer to her.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Do you know what karma is? It's when you do something bad, and then something bad happens to you. It's another name for justice.

Benjamin is almost upon her. Caitlyn is in agony.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

That's why, from now on, you should be careful what you say about me. Or karma might happen to you.

Benjamin's face is next to hers. She can feel his breath. A tear rolls down her cheek.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Do you understand?

She closes her eyes, wincing, horrified.

CAITLYN

(whispers)

Yes.

She opens her eyes.

BENJAMIN IS GONE.

Caitlyn is shaken. Exposed. She starts to weep.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - AFTERNOON

Late afternoon. A low sun. Royce and his buddy Fauxhawk ride their BMX's along a leaf-strewn train track that runs along the bottom of a ravine. They talk about girls in their class -

ROYCE

No dude, Olivia's trash.

FAUXHAWK

Then who would you pick?

ROYCE

I guess Caitlyn. When she had two hands.

They both burst out laughing as they approach the arched stone entrance to an old dark TRAIN TUNNEL, graffiti blanketing the sides. All around them, an uproar of SQUAWKING CROWS.

The boys notice, sitting above the tunnel, a SLIGHT FIGURE WEARING A RED CAPE AND MASK - THE EYES AND MOUTH HOLES JAGGED AND TERRIFYING - HIS LEGS DANGLING OVER THE ARCHWAY.

FAUXHAWK

Jump, bitch!

They both laugh. The figure just watches them.

ROYCE

Yo, nice mask.

They laugh some more as they ride under the archway, the figure silently looking down at them.

The guys ride their bikes into -

THE DARK TRAIN TUNNEL

Lit only by fading light from each end. The deeper they ride, the darker it gets. Royce makes mock ghost noises -

ROYCE

Oooooooooo!

They ride into the tunnel until it's pitch black. We can't see a thing.

We HEAR a STRANGE WHISKING NOISE, then the sound of the boys being pitched and thrown to the ground, their metal bikes crashing, wheels spinning.

Royce wails in agony.

FAUXHAWK (O.S.)

(scared)

What was that? What was that?

Royce whimpers and mumbles incoherently.

Fauxhawk turns on the flashlight on his phone and shines a pin light on Royce. HIS NOSE BLEEDS, HIS MOUTH GUSHES THICK BLOOD. ROYCE PULLS BROKEN TEETH FROM HIS GUMS. He's in a daze.

ROYCE
Something hit me.

FAUXHAWK
(panicking)
No... no...

He moves the pin light over Royce's shoulder and sees -
standing near their bikes - THE FIGURE IN THE MASK AND CAPE.

FAUXHAWK (CONT'D)
Oh God, oh God...

THE FIGURE WALKS TOWARD THEM.

FAUXHAWK (CONT'D)
(squealing)
Royce! We gotta go!

Fauxhawk helps a dazed Royce to his feet.

They scramble as fast as they can toward the light at the end
of the tunnel.

FAUXHAWK (CONT'D)
Don't look back! Don't look back!

Royce starts to whimper and cry. The two boys run.

They make it to the end of the tunnel -

BOTH BOYS ARE KNOCKED DOWN.

THEY'RE DRAGGED BACK INTO THE DARKNESS, SCREAMING AND KICKING.

They try to crawl away, but something flips them over.

A foot pressed down on Royce's chest. He can barely breathe.

The MASKED FIGURE looks down on the two of them.

BENJAMIN
Don't cross me.

Royce recognizes the voice as Benjamin's. He gasps helplessly -

ROYCE
Breyer?
(struggling to breathe)
Don't hurt me. Please.

The pressure is released from his chest. Royce sits up.

They look down the tunnel to see the silhouette of Benjamin walking away, his cape fluttering behind him.

INT. FAST FOOD JOINT - NIGHT

A small-town Dairy Queen-like joint that has BBQ sandwiches, soft-serve ice cream, etc. Out in the middle of nowhere. Erica locks up from inside, turns a door sign to CLOSED.

The place is lit by bright fluorescents, the windows fogged up in the chill night air.

Erica - all in one shot - makes her way to a cash register behind the front counter. She opens it up with a DING. Pulls out the cash drawer. Closes it. Sets the drawer on the counter.

She looks up and sees - written in the precipitation on all the windows -

DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE
 DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE
 DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE

She's disturbed.

The overhead fluorescent lights FLICKER.

Erica growing more concerned.

 ERICA
 Okay, who's fucking with me?

The fluorescent bulbs SPASM ERRATICALLY, buzzing faintly, throwing Erica in and out of darkness.

 ERICA (CONT'D)
 That you, Rick?

No reply.

Erica climbs on top of the front counter.

She reaches up to one of the flickering lights. She strains to touch it.

She taps at the long tube. The light goes on for a moment - Then goes out.

She taps the light again - the fluorescent bulb FLARES WHITE HOT, then -

POP!

THE BULB BURSTS!

ERICA TOPPLES OFF THE COUNTER. LANDS ON THE FLOOR, HARD ON HER SHOULDER.

SHE MOANS IN SEVERE PAIN.

Through bursts of flickering light -

She tries to prop herself up. Her face is CUT UP, BLEEDING. Jagged shards of glass fall from her cheek.

She whimpers. Mewling. Her right eye stinging. A searing agony.

A SMALL SHARD OF GLASS JUTS OUT OF THE PUPIL OF ERICA'S RIGHT EYE.

She reaches up to it, letting out tiny cries, her hand shaking.

She manages to pinch the shard of glass with her fingertips -

She holds her breath -

AND STARTS TO PULL OUT THE GLASS SHARD FROM HER EYE.

IMPOSSIBLY LONG. BURIED DEEP. COVERED IN BLOOD.

SHE PULLS IT OUT, CASTS IT ASIDE.

Erica tries to see through the blood, her vision blurred and jagged. Lights flickering amid the darkness - a strobe effect.

She looks up and sees, standing over her, in a nightmare burst of flicking light - BENJAMIN IN HIS RED MASK AND CAPE.

The light flickers again and he's gone. She can hear him on all sides of her. Everything blurry and confusing.

Erica howls out in rage -

ERICA (CONT'D)
Get out of here!

Erica scrambles behind the counter.

Half-blind, she frantically feels underneath the counter - finds what she's looking for: A BASEBALL BAT.

She tries to stand - SWINGING THE BAT WILDLY - GRUNTING LIKE AN ANIMAL -

WITH EACH FLICKER OF LIGHT BENJAMIN APPEARS TO BE ELSEWHERE.
NEAR. FAR. ON HER LEFT. HER RIGHT.

Erica knocks over displays and condiment dispensers, swinging
the bat at Benjamin -

ERICA (CONT'D)
Leave me the fuck alone!

She can't fend him off. He seems to be all around her. She's
losing her mind.

ERICA (CONT'D)
Nooo!

She swings hard at Benjamin - misses - and HITS A BIG METAL
SODA STATION. THE BAT GETS JACKED OUT OF HER HAND and goes
spiraling across the floor.

She can't find it through the bursts of light. BENJAMIN
APPEARS IN FRONT OF HER.

Erica howls, turns, and runs toward the back area of the
joint, knocking over tables.

She staggers down a short back hallway, and comes to a walk-in
freezer.

She lifts the long master lock hanging loose on the latch,
then enters -

A WALK-IN FREEZER

She slams the door shut behind her and locks the handle tight.

The air is frigid. But Erica is safe.

She can see her terrified breath in the flickers of light.

Her breathing slows.

She listens for noise on the other side of the door.

She hears nothing.

And then an eerie HISSING NOISE. Something CRACKLING.

A pinpoint dot near the door handle starts to RIPPLE AND MELT.
SCALDING FROM INTENSE RADIATION.

ERICA
No. No. No.

She backs away from the door. Freaked out. The INTENSE HEAT CARVING A HOLE AROUND THE DOOR HANDLE.

Erica retreats further into the walk-in freezer, amid shelves of frozen food. Lights spasming. Nowhere to hide.

She looks all around her, braced, ready -

In the flicker of light we can see - ABOVE HER - BENJAMIN IN HIS MASK.

Erica turns - looks up - too late - BENJAMIN SWOOPS DOWN ON HER, THE MOUTH HOLE IN HIS MASK AGAPE, HIS EYES GLOWING RED.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Kyle plops a serving of mac 'n' cheese onto his plate. He's uneasy, doesn't want to be here.

Tori sits to one side of him at the dining room table. Benjamin on the other, hands folded, staring calmly.

Everyone has food on their plates.

KYLE
(mutters)
Let's say grace.

He reaches out to either side of him - Tori takes Kyle's hand, but Benjamin keeps his hands folded.

BENJAMIN
Can I say something first?

Kyle looks at Tori - this is unusual.

KYLE
Sure.

BENJAMIN
I'd like to tell you something I'm grateful for.

Tori smiles.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
Thank you for adopting me. For the first time I finally feel like I belong. I feel good.

Benjamin takes his parents' hands, the three of them now joined.

Kyle brightens. He closes his eyes -

KYLE
Thank you Lord for this bounty
before us...

INT. FAST FOOD JOINT - DAWN

A misty morning. Deever and the young female deputy - her name is REYES - saunter throughout the place. The emergency light from their squad car swirls lazily in the parking lot.

Deever and Reyes pick their way through the wreckage - smashed-up cups and condiments everywhere. Broken light bulbs.

DEEVER
You say she hasn't responded to any
calls or texts?

REYES
That's correct. This is the last
place she was seen. Her daughter
hasn't heard from her.

DEEVER
Damn. That poor girl needs her mom
real bad right now.

Deever comes to BROKEN GLASS AND DROPS OF BLOOD near the front counter, the spot where Erica removed the shard from her eye.

Deever crouches down to scrutinize it.

REYES
Sir?

Reyes gestures up toward the ceiling.

Deever looks up and sees, scraped into the plaster overhead: a STYLIZED 'B', like the ones Benjamin had been doodling in his notebook.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MORNING

Royce is at his locker gathering books - his lip split, his mouth bruised.

He closes his locker to reveal Benjamin walking down the hall toward him. Royce is guarded, deferential. Benjamin is calm, dead-eyed.

Royce watches Benjamin pass him by. Fauxhawk sees Benjamin and veers out of the way. All the kids in the school watch Benjamin, hushed, terrified.

The word is out. A pall has descended on the school.

INT. COUNSELING OFFICE - LATER

A smallish office space - inspirational posters, painted cinderblock walls. Benjamin's aunt Merilee sits in a chair, a notepad on her lap.

Benjamin sits across from her on a small couch.

MERILEE

So Benjamin - this is your first day back since the incident...

As she talks he takes in knick-knacks and photos on her desk: a frame photo of Noah; Merilee with her arm around Tori; Merilee with Noah in some tropical location holding cocktails. She's in a bikini top and a sarong.

MERILEE (CONT'D)

I wanted to talk to you about how you're adjusting. How you're feeling, how your classes are going.

Benjamin stares at the photo of Merilee on vacation, tanned and nubile.

MERILEE (CONT'D)

Benjamin?

Benjamin turns to Merilee. He looks at her an uncomfortably long time.

Then -

BENJAMIN

I'm sorry.

MERILEE

For what?

BENJAMIN

That you have to be here, counseling me.

MERILEE

Benjamin... I enjoy being with you.

BENJAMIN
You have to say that.

MERILEE
No - I really do!

Benjamin looks down. Merilee sets her notepad aside. She leans forward.

MERILEE (CONT'D)
Look - Benjamin - I know you haven't had the easiest time making friends. But I think you're worth getting to know.

Benjamin scrunches his face.

MERILEE (CONT'D)
Remember that time we went to Worlds of Fun, and everyone else was too chicken to ride the Mamba, so you and I went on it over and over?

Benjamin enjoys the memory.

MERILEE (CONT'D)
You were a blast!

She leans in closer to him - conspiratorial -

MERILEE (CONT'D)
And you know what I say to the people who don't want to be around you?

She squeezes his hand and whispers -

MERILEE (CONT'D)
Eff 'em.

Benjamin smiles.

Merilee reaches for her notebook.

MERILEE (CONT'D)
Okay, back to business. How are your classes going?

BENJAMIN
Good.

MERILEE

If you find yourself falling behind
in any of your schoolwork, please
know my door is always open...

As she speaks, Benjamin stares at her. STUDYING HER. TRACKING
HER WITH HIS EYES.

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Fun rock music plays. Kyle and Noah play pool with a couple of
friends, blue-collar dudes. They're mid-conversation -

NOAH

Yeah, my buddy told me the whole
joint was just wrecked, and Erica
was gone. It's been over twenty-
four hours.

MALIK - a forty-something buddy - jokes -

MALIK

Kyle - you think your son coulda
done it?

Noah swats Malik's arm.

MALIK (CONT'D)

What? He did crush her daughter's
hand.

KYLE

Not funny right now.

TRAVIS

What's gonna happen with all that?

KYLE

He was suspended for a couple days.
And I'm sure I'll hear from some
lawyer soon, painting my son as a
monster. Which - I don't even know
anymore - maybe he is.

The guys laugh good-naturedly.

TRAVIS

Dude, all kids are monsters. One
night, long time ago, we had a new
babysitter over. And my daughter -
four years old at the time - asks
her if she has a boyfriend.
Babysitter says no.

(MORE)

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

And my daughter goes 'is it because
you're so ugly?'

The other guys laugh - ooh, that's bad.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

But that's what it means to be a
parent. You love 'em despite their
awfulness.

A waitress sets down a pitcher of beer. Noah, a little buzzed,
takes it from her and puts his arm around his brother-in-law -

NOAH

This guy needs another beer!

But Kyle isn't placated. He's lost in thought.

INT. NOAH AND MERILEE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A simple Midwestern home. Spotify plays oldies music.

Merilee, wearing only an oversized t-shirt that goes down to
her mid-thigh, has a laundry basket tucked under her arm.
FOLLOW HER IN A HAND-HELD ONER as -

She enters a bathroom, gathers some bath towels and throws
them in the laundry basket.

She walks with the basket down a hallway. The music receding a
bit.

She enters her dark bedroom -

Past a window. Outside we see THE FAINT OUTLINE OF A FACE AND
A PAIR OF GLOWING EYES - LUMINESCENT RED - WATCHING HER.

Merilee walks right past the window, turns on a lamp on the
night table. Now all we can see is her reflection in the
glass.

She gathers more clothes from the laundry hamper. Then reaches
under her t-shirt, removes her bra, and throws it in the
laundry.

She turns off the lamp and passes the window. The figure
outside is gone.

Merilee exits the room and heads downstairs.

The music plays. Merilee stops by a side table, picks up a
glass of red wine, and drinks. Then, above her -

A SLIGHT CREAK.

Merilee stops drinking.

She hears more CREAKS. Across the length of the roof above the living room.

Are those... footsteps?

Merilee is suddenly alert. Uneasy.

She sets down the wineglass.

She goes to the front door - opens - and steps outside -

EXT. NOAH AND MERILEE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house is off a lonely rural road. Crickets rattling.

Merilee slowly backs her way down her front driveway to get a better angle on the roof.

She stands on her tiptoes, trying to see if anyone is up there.

She backs up further -

BENJAMIN (O.S.)
Aunt Merilee?

Merilee JUMPS. Benjamin is behind her, in the middle of the driveway, wearing his backpack. Merilee laughs at herself.

MERILEE
Benjamin! What are you doing here?

BENJAMIN
I was thinking about you.

Merilee is confused.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
You said if I fell behind in any of my schoolwork that your door is always open. I've been falling behind in social studies.

MERILEE
How'd you get here?

BENJAMIN
I walked.

MERILEE

Five miles?

BENJAMIN

You know what, maybe I should head back.

MERILEE

No, I'll call your mom, have her pick you up.

BENJAMIN

She's working late tonight.

MERILEE

Okay, well. Noah's out and I'm in no shape to drive, so... Why don't you just come on in?

Merilee heads back toward her front door. Benjamin follows her.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tori is in her work polo. She sets down takeout bags on the kitchen table. She calls out -

TORI

Benjamin! I have sesame chicken!

She goes through the living room turning on lights. The grandfather clock TICK-TOCKS.

Tori walks a few steps up the stairs -

TORI (CONT'D)

Benjamin?

INT. NOAH AND MERILEE'S HOUSE - LATER

Benjamin stands in an open kitchen - out of Merilee's eyesight - pouring himself a glass of water. A mellow steel-guitar country song plays in the other room.

MERILEE (O.S.)

Ice cubes are in the bottom freezer!

Benjamin fills up her glass with red wine. He then takes out a Ziploc bag that contains FOUR PINK PILLS - Kyle's OxyContin.

He squeezes the bag, powdering the pills between his fingers, then DUMPS THEM INTO THE GLASS OF WINE.

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Malik sinks the 8 ball. He and Travis slap five.

TRAVIS

One more?

NOAH

(tipsy)

Naw man - I don't get home soon
Merilee's gonna kill me.

Kyle intercepts Noah as he puts on his jacket.

KYLE

Sure you're okay?

NOAH

(shrugging him off)

It's just a few miles down the
road.

Kyle nods. Noah zips up his jacket.

INT. NOAH AND MERILEE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Benjamin carries both the glass of water and wine into the other room. Merilee sits on a cushy sofa.

MERILEE

Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

What?

He sets the glass of wine before her.

MERILEE

I didn't ask for another glass of
wine.

BENJAMIN

Oh. I feel stupid now.

MERILEE

Don't. It's fine.

She takes a drink. Benjamin sits across from her.

BENJAMIN

So can I ask you something?

Merilee gives him a look: sure.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

How come you don't have any children?

MERILEE

Benjamin!

BENJAMIN

Is that inappropriate?

MERILEE

Of course it is.

BENJAMIN

I'm sorry.

She takes another drink. Her mind starts to drift.

MERILEE

I'm ready for kids. Noah, not so much. I stopped taking the pill a few months ago, just to see.

(catching herself)

Oh my God, listen to me. You're twelve!

Merilee really feeling woozy now. Benjamin stares at her. She grows introspective. A little sad.

MERILEE (CONT'D)

Noah says things are going so good now - why risk messing that up with a child?

BENJAMIN

If I ever had a child, I'd see it as a gift. A miracle.

She laughs. Fading. Half-conscious...

MERILEE

Get back to me in ten years, see if you still feel that way.

Merilee leans her head back. She looks up at the ceiling.

The music becomes MUFFLED, DREAMY, DROPS OUT...

She mutters something unintelligible then drifts off.

Benjamin sits across from her, staring at her as she lies there passed out.

Several moments pass.

He reaches down to his backpack, unzips it. He pulls out his red mask with the mouth and eye holes.

He puts it over his head.

He stares at Merilee.

EXT. NOAH AND MERILEE'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Noah walks from his truck - a flatbed with a fiberglass truck cap - toward his front door.

He inserts his key, opens the door, and enters -

HIS LIVING ROOM

A dim lamp on. A doleful song playing eerily. Noah goes into the kitchen, opens the fridge.

He grabs a beer, pops it open. He takes a swig as he sifts through mail on the counter.

He notices an empty wine bottle on its side on the counter.

He hears, from upstairs, a door CREAK SHUT.

He calls out -

NOAH

Mare?

No answer.

Noah turns off the music.

The place now DEAD QUIET.

Noah makes his way upstairs.

He heads down the hallway.

The bedroom door is shut.

He turns the door knob.

The door squeaks open.

INSIDE THE BEDROOM

The room almost pitch dark.

Noah can make out Merilee SPRAWLED atop the floral comforter, arms and legs akimbo, her long t-shirt hiked over her thighs, passed out.

Noah crouches next to Merilee. He caresses Merilee's hair. He's unsettled, queasy.

NOAH
Honey Bear?

She's not responsive. He turns on a bedside lamp.

BENJAMIN IS BEHIND HIM WEARING HIS RED MASK. HUGE JUMP SCARE.

Eyes closed, Merilee mumbles distantly.

He's concerned.

He stands, turns, and SEES BENJAMIN BEHIND HIM. He FLINCHES -

NOAH (CONT'D)
Jesus!
(shaken, pissed)
What the fuck?

Noah rips off the mask. Benjamin calmly looks back at him.

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

BENJAMIN
I helped put her to bed.

NOAH
No - here. In my house. With that stupid goddamn mask.

BENJAMIN
She was helping me with my homework.

Noah, furious, grabs Benjamin by the collar -

NOAH
Let's go.

Noah drags him out of the room.

Down the stairs. Into -

THE LIVING ROOM

Noah marches toward the front door, churning.

NOAH
I'm very disappointed, Benjamin.
Very disappointed.

BENJAMIN
I didn't do anything.

Noah fumes. It takes everything in him not to pound the shit out of Benjamin.

He makes his way out into -

EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

BENJAMIN
Are you going to tell my parents?

NOAH
You're lucky if that's all I do.

Noah opens up the passenger door for Benjamin to get in. The door ajar CHIMES. Noah strides toward the driver's side -

He notices a light over the garage door FLICKER and BUZZ, shrugs it off, starts to climb behind the wheel. He sees Benjamin is still outside.

He storms back over toward the passenger side -

NOAH (CONT'D)
Goddamn it, Benjamin!

Benjamin stands next to the truck, holding the mask in his hands.

BENJAMIN
You shouldn't say anything to my parents.

Noah - pissed - grabs Benjamin by the arm -

NOAH
Get in the truck!

He throws his weight into Benjamin. Benjamin makes a move - SO CLOSE AND FAST WE CAN BARELY SEE IT -

NOAH IS THROWN ACROSS THE DRIVEWAY INTO THE GARAGE DOOR. HIS RIBS SHATTERED.

Noah falls in a heap. He gathers himself to his knees. Wheezing. Coughing up blood onto the asphalt.

He looks back at Benjamin, who stands there, unmoved. The open car door continues to chime.

BENJAMIN

I didn't want to hurt you, but you made me.

Noah sees the coldness in Benjamin's eyes. He crawls toward his truck - pure survival mode.

He climbs into the front seat - grimacing.

He throws the vehicle into drive and SQUEALS OUT OF HIS DRIVEWAY.

The truck TEARS DOWN THE LONG EMPTY ROAD.

INSIDE THE TRUCK

Noah - rasping, terrified - looks in his side mirror. He sees a GLIMPSE of something, a BLUR.

Noah SCREAMING INSIDE. Pure panic.

He looks out the side mirror again - nothing there.

Then he feels a JOLT - as if something is leaping onto the truck cap.

He hears footsteps on the roof - what the hell? Noah tries to keep his eye on the road -

The truck HEADLIGHTS BROWN OUT. The DASHBOARD LIGHTS FADE.

The engine DIES.

Noah's truck COMES TO A STOP.

Noah tries to start the truck. It clicks over and over. Battery shot. Noah desperately pounds the steering wheel.

Noah sits in the middle of country road. Lights out. SURROUNDED BY PITCH BLACKNESS.

He's terrified. Hyper-alert. He locks the driver's door. He reaches over and locks the passenger door.

He sits there, trapped. His breathing shallow.

His headlights flicker -

Noah can see, up ahead - Benjamin in his mask HOVERING A FEW INCHES ABOVE THE ROAD.

NOAH

No. No no no.

Noah quivers with fear. Through the flickering headlights he sees Benjamin -

CLOSER -

THEN CLOSER -

HIS MASKED FACE ALMOST ON HIM -

NOAH SCREAMS AS -

BENJAMIN PLOWS INTO THE THE TRUCK!

GLASS PEBBLES FROM THE WINDSHIELD SHATTER INWARD. THE FRONT CAB ACCORDIONS. NOAH'S LEG SPLINTERS. HIS PELVIS DISLOCATES.

THE TRUCK TUMBLING OVER...

It comes to a stop.

Noah looks down and sees his own blood pooling on the road. He's wedged into the wreckage, the truck resting on its side in the middle of the road.

Noah is dazed. His pupils dilated. Blood runs from his jaw hanging loosely, dislocated. He tries to move it into place but it won't stay. His mouth filled with blood.

He looks up and sees - through the shattered windshield - BENJAMIN STANDING THERE.

Noah rattles out slow, labored breaths.

He sees Benjamin STARTING TO WALK DIRECTLY TOWARD HIM. SLOWLY. METHODICALLY.

Noah reaches into his pocket. Takes out his cell phone.

Fingers bloody - shaking - he precariously dials - 9-1-

Then DROPS THE PHONE. It clatters onto the hard asphalt.

Noah - wedged in, helpless - watches Benjamin approach him, as if in a dream.

Benjamin squats near him. Leans in close. The slow surf of Noah's breath drawing in.

Noah gurgles, a faint murmur -

NOAH (CONT'D)
What... are you?

Benjamin says nothing. Just stares at Noah, scrutinizing him.

Noah chokes out a plea - barely audible -

NOAH (CONT'D)
Help me.

Benjamin watches, impassive. He reaches out with his finger and INSERTS IT INTO THE OPEN GASH IN NOAH'S NECK.

Noah tries to say something but can't.

He stops breathing. His eyes glass over. He's dead.

Benjamin studies the pearly crimson splotch on his fingertip, almost fascinated.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Tori and Kyle, keyed up, pace their kitchen. She's on her phone -

TORI
(into cell)
Sorry I keep leaving messages,
Merilee, but it's after ten, we
still haven't heard from Benjamin.
Have you seen him at all?

KYLE
(to Tori)
Did he say anything to her at
school?

TORI
(into cell)
Did he mention somewhere he had to
be? I know I'm rambling, but I'm
kinda freaking. So call me. Please.

She ends the call, looks at Kyle, and sighs, weary. Kyle gives her a suggestive look.

TORI (CONT'D)
What?

KYLE
(too innocent)
I didn't say anything.

TORI
Okay, you told me so. I get it.

Kyle sighs, frustrated. Then - the front door CREAKS open.

Tori and Kyle rush into the living room -

Benjamin ENTERS THE HOUSE. HE'S SHIRTLESS. Holding his wadded-up t-shirt in his fist.

TORI (CONT'D)
Benjamin! My God. Where were you?

Kyle hugs him. Benjamin doesn't hug back.

TORI (CONT'D)
What happened to your shirt?

BENJAMIN
I ripped it. Playing soccer.

KYLE
Is that where you been all this time?

BENJAMIN
Royce and those guys asked if I wanted to play after school.

KYLE
(not buying it)
Royce asked you to play soccer?

BENJAMIN
Well, kinda. They started playing rough - elbowing me, tripping me to the ground. That's how I tore my shirt. So I decided to walk home. I should've called, I know.

Tori places her hand on Benjamin's shoulder.

TORI
I'm so sorry, baby. You okay?

He nods. Kyle is leery.

TORI (CONT'D)
Have you had anything to eat?

BENJAMIN

I'm not hungry. I just want to go to bed.

TORI

Okay. Here, I'll wash that -

She reaches for his shirt and he pulls it away from her.

BENJAMIN

Don't worry about it. Thanks.

As Benjamin heads upstairs -

TORI

'Night.

Kyle is alone with Tori.

KYLE

You believe that story?

TORI

Why wouldn't I? Royce and those boys have been bullying him since second grade.

KYLE

Which he knows you know, which is why he came up with that bullshit.

TORI

Okay then, what else do you think he was out there doing?

KYLE

I don't know what he was doing, I don't know who he is. That's the whole goddamn point.

Kyle sinks into a chair, puts his head in his hands. He feels like he's drowning, and Tori can't help him.

INT. TORI AND KYLE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Middle of the night. Tori asleep. Kyle lying next to her. He can't sleep.

He pops an OxyContin tablet and leans his head back, swallowing it.

He hears a SLIGHT CREAK from the hallway floorboards.

Then the sound of MUFFLED ALIEN GIBBERISH.

KYLE
 (whispers)
 Tori? You hear that?

She rests peacefully.

He gets out of bed.

He saunters toward the bedroom door. Opens it.

The hallway is dark. Empty.

Kyle has trouble getting his bearings. He looks up.

He sees BENJAMIN BENT OVER, CONTORTED, CRAWLING ON THE CEILING, HIS EYES ROLLED BACK IN HIS HEAD.

KYLE (CONT'D)
 Benjamin?

BENJAMIN STARTS TO CRY. HE'S IN PAIN.

Kyle reaches up to him -

KYLE (CONT'D)
 Come here. It's okay.

Benjamin reaches down to his dad -

AND GRIPS HIS FACE WITH HIS FINGERTIPS -

KYLE TRYING TO SCREAM AS BENJAMIN SLOWLY CRUSHES HIS FACE -
 KYLE'S BONES SNAPPING - BLOOD AND FLESH SURGING THROUGH
 BENJAMIN'S FINGERS -

KYLE JOLTS UP IN BED. SUDDENLY AWAKE FROM HIS DREAM STUPOR.

Kyle gathers himself, rattled. Tori sleeps peacefully next to him.

Kyle peers under the space beneath the closed bedroom door. Was he just dreaming?

Tori's RINGTONE LOUDLY SPLITS THE NIGHT.

She reaches for her phone, mumbles a sleepy hello.

She grows troubled. Like the wind's been knocked out of her.

TORI
What?... No... no...

INT. COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER - NIGHT

MERILEE SOBS INTO TORI'S SHOULDER as they hold each other tight. Kyle puts a consoling hand on Tori and Merilee's backs.

They're in a dim hallway. Linoleum floor. Gloomy lighting.

Tori - her face red from tears - whispers tenderly -

TORI

It's okay. Let it out.

Merilee breaks the embrace, tries to gather herself.

MERILEE

They won't even let me see him.
They said he's all -

She flutters her hands, indicating Noah is a mess.

TORI

Do they know how it happened?

MERILEE

He was on Route 18. They think he hit a deer or a cow or something. They're gonna do a toxicology whatever to see if he was, you know, impaired.

Tori looks to Kyle, almost accusingly.

KYLE

He had, like, two beers. Maybe three, I wasn't counting.

TORI

Why didn't you drive him home?

KYLE

No one's even on those roads at night.

Tori glares at him. Merilee snuffles.

MERILEE

How's Benjamin?

KYLE

We haven't told him yet. Just said we had something urgent.

MERILEE
So he got home okay?

Tori nods yes.

MERILEE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, it's a blur. I don't
remember when he left exactly.

Tori is confused.

TORI
Left where?

MERILEE
He came over. He wanted help with
his homework.

A FEELING OF DREAD wells up in Tori and Kyle.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Milky first light of morning. Benjamin sits with Kyle and Tori. The two of them have been up all night. They're solemn, measured.

TORI
This may be difficult for you to
hear, but we wanted you to know
that... your Uncle Noah - he, uh -

She's emotional, has trouble finding the words.

KYLE
He died last night.

BENJAMIN
How?

KYLE
A car accident.

Benjamin takes a deep breath. As if absorbing the news. Kyle studies his reactions.

TORI
You all right?

BENJAMIN
It's weird. I feel like maybe I
should cry or something.

Benjamin just sits there.

TORI

Now, Benjamin, we know you were at Aunt Merilee's last night.

Benjamin takes this in, unfazed.

TORI (CONT'D)

I'm your mother, and I will always defend you. But if you know anything about what happened to Noah, it's okay to tell us.

Benjamin regards his parents for a moment. Then -

BENJAMIN

All right. I'm gonna be totally honest with you.

He looks Tori and Kyle in the eye.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

I was at Aunt Merilee's last night. She was helping me with my homework. Then she said she was tired, so I left, and I saw Noah in the driveway. He was yelling and acting strange, like he was drunk. Then he drove off. That's the last I saw him.

KYLE

So all that playing-soccer stuff was a lie.

BENJAMIN

Yes. I made up something that I thought would make me sound less - I don't know. Less weird.

Tori is relieved. Kyle is not.

He leans in.

KYLE

I gotta ask, Benjamin - what other things have you been lying about?

BENJAMIN

Nothing.

TORI

(cautioning)
Kyle.

KYLE
Were you outside Caitlyn's bedroom
before you broke her hand?

TORI
He was camping with us, Kyle!

Kyle just stares at Benjamin -

KYLE
Where were you on Wednesday night?
The night Caitlyn's mom went
missing?

TORI
This is not helping -

KYLE
(to Benjamin)
What happened to her?

TORI
Stop it -

KYLE
He's lying to our fucking faces!

BENJAMIN
I'm going to go upstairs.

Benjamin rises to go.

KYLE
No - we're getting it all on the
table! Right now!

TORI
Goddamn it, Kyle!

KYLE
(to Benjamin)
Did you hurt Noah? Did you hurt
him?

Kyle is starting to unravel. Benjamin stares at him.

Kyle pins Benjamin against the wall. The lights in the room
start to FLICKER.

TORI
Stop this - please!

KYLE
 (to Benjamin)
What did you do? He was my friend!
 And you just fucking -

Benjamin's voice comes out harsh - evil -

BENJAMIN
Leave me alone!

Light bulbs POP AND SHATTER - Benjamin HURLS KYLE INTO A CABINET, plates shattering.

TORI
Benjamin!

She rushes to Kyle, on the ground, aching. Benjamin stands over them.

TORI (CONT'D)
 Just go. Get ready for school.

Benjamin turns and calmly walks upstairs.

Kyle is alone with Tori. Stewing, she gathers pieces of the broken plates.

TORI (CONT'D)
 Damn it, Kyle.

Kyle, churning inside, hears the shower upstairs SQUEAK on.

He gets up. Brushes past Tori.

Ambles up the stairs on his one good leg -

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Kyle sees the bathroom door closed, hears the shower running.

He heads toward Benjamin's bedroom at the end of the hall.

He goes into -

BENJAMIN'S BEDROOM

Kyle's heart rate SPIKING.

He opens dresser drawers. Sifts through sweatshirts, jeans, shorts, looking for something.

TENSION MUSIC RISING.

He glances again at the doorway. The shower still running.

He goes through items scattered on the floor.

He runs his arm between Benjamin's mattress and box spring, but comes up empty.

The bathroom shower WHINES OFF. The water stops running.

ALL IS SILENT.

Kyle freezes. He knows he should leave the room, but he can't.

He hurriedly PRESSES ON -

He opens Benjamin's walk-in closet. Rummages through dirty clothes, old toys, old trinkets.

He's frantic now. Benjamin could walk in any moment!

He finds a gap at the base of the closet where the drywall is detached from the studs.

He reaches into the dark cavity and finds something.

He pulls out -

THE WADDED-UP T-SHIRT Benjamin was holding the night before.

He's terrified. Mind racing.

He unfurls the shirt.

It's tattered. SMEARED WITH BLOOD.

Kyle is paralyzed with horror.

He leaves the closet -

BENJAMIN

Dad?

Kyle STARTLES, hides the shirt behind his back. Benjamin stands there, towel around his waist.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Kyle is terrified of his son.

KYLE

Just... uh... I wanted to apologize.

Benjamin studies him.

KYLE (CONT'D)
We've both had a lot going on lately. And I shouldn't have said the things I said.

Benjamin nods slowly.

BENJAMIN
Okay.

KYLE
Thank you. For understanding.

Kyle tries to play casual, but he's nervous as hell. He moves past Benjamin out of the room.

INT. STUDY - LATER

Kyle has the blood- and paint-streaked shirt splayed out before Tori. The two of them talk low, hushed, but Kyle is disturbed, animated -

KYLE
It's right there.

Tori is at a loss.

KYLE (CONT'D)
That's the shirt he was hiding from us last night! That's Noah's blood!

TORI
(derisively)
What are you saying - that Noah's truck hit Benjamin?

KYLE
I don't know. I don't know what I think.

TORI
The truck is totaled. Benjamin wouldn't have a bone left in his body!

Kyle pleads with her -

KYLE
Babe... if we don't do something, more people will get hurt.
(MORE)

KYLE (CONT'D)
More people will die. You've got to
be with me on this -

TORI
You're asking me to turn against
our son?

KYLE
(pointedly)
He is not our son. He's some thing
we found in the woods.

Tori is full of spite for Kyle.

TORI
You don't understand him. You never
did.

KYLE
For twelve fucking years I've
understood him!
(pointing to the bloody
shirt)
This is Benjamin! Right here! A
monster!

Tori starts to cry -

TORI
You're wrong. He's good. We can't
run from him. We need to be his
parents. We need to love him.

KYLE
(desperate)
You know I tried and tried to love
him.

TORI
You never did. You never wanted him.

Kyle is now on the verge of tears -

KYLE
Please please - he's killing us -

He reaches out to Tori, but she shuns him.

She turns and walks out of the room.

Kyle is desperate. Fraying.

He collapses into his desk chair.

He opens the bottom desk drawer.

Reaches behind some hanging files, deep in back. He pulls out the bundled sock, removes the bottle of OxyContin, then stops short.

He notices, in the same desk drawer -

A PILE OF ART PROJECTS made by Benjamin over the years. He sets down the OxyContin and lingers over them:

A Father's Day card with crayon hearts and a school photo of Benjamin, age 8.

A ceramic dish with Benjamin's handprint, age 5.

A popsicle-stick picture frame with a photo of the whole family and MOM, DAD, and BENJAMIN written in Magic Marker on the sides.

He's wracked with emotion. He fights back tears.

INT. TORI AND KYLE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tori lies on her side, curled up in bed. She's lost in a stupor.

Kyle climbs in bed next to her. He spoons her. She doesn't move.

KYLE

You okay?

Tori shrugs. Gives him nothing.

KYLE (CONT'D)

So I've been thinking... I was wrong.

She takes this in.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have accused Ben of any of that stuff. I know he has problems, yes, but I'm starting to think maybe I'm the biggest one.

Tori nods. She starts to cry.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I'm going to take him with me to the woods.

(MORE)

KYLE (CONT'D)

Let him use that rifle, teach him how to hunt, like my dad did with me. I want to work things out with him. Let him know I love him.

Tori turns her body toward Kyle. She takes his hand in hers.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Deever sits at his desk with a cup of coffee, binders and files open on his desk.

He studies the crash report for Noah.

He sifts past EDR data, tire mark analyses, GRISLY CRASH PHOTOS, NOAH'S TRAUMATIC WOUNDS, HIS DEAD BODY.

He finds a long shot of the crushed car. He sees a small blurry detail in the photo.

We can't make it out, but he's taken aback.

Holy shit.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Kyle wears an insulated jacket, packs up his truck. He loads a pair of hunting rifles next to duffel bags and camping gear. Benjamin hands him the tent -

KYLE

Thanks, man.

He smiles, slides the tent into the back, slams the hatch.

Tori meets up with the guys. She zips up Benjamin's jacket.

TORI

And here - take these.

She hands him a pair of winter gloves.

BENJAMIN

It's not that cold.

TORI

Out there in the woods it is.

Benjamin sighs.

TORI (CONT'D)

Wear them for me.

BENJAMIN

Okay...

He takes them.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Listen, Mom... I'm sorry I lied and stuff.

Tori regards Benjamin, full of affection for him -

TORI

Come here.

She hugs him tightly.

TORI (CONT'D)

It's okay. We all make mistakes. But you'll always be my baby boy.

Benjamin hugs her back. She kisses him.

KYLE

It's a good hour and a half each way, so don't expect us before supper.

Tori smiles warmly at Kyle.

TORI

Be safe.

He smiles back at her. A moment between them.

Tori watches the guys climb into the truck.

The doors shut. The vehicle revs up. Kyle, looking in the rearview mirror, wiggles his fingers goodbye.

The truck crunches gravel down the driveway, leaving Tori and the house further and further behind.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

Deever strides onto the stretch of highway where Noah died, his squad car parked on the shoulder.

There are still bits of debris in the road. Nearby, a sad roadside memorial - unlit votive candles, handwritten notes, flowers in cellophane.

Deever comes to the middle of the road.

He looks down.

There, scrawled on the asphalt, is the SAME DISTINCTIVE 'B' INSIGNIA he saw back at the fast food place.

THIS TIME IN BLOOD.

INT. KYLE'S TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

An endless road. The car stereo plays some old tune.

Kyle glances over at Benjamin, gazing out the window. Gray Kansas sky. Bare trees. Flat land for miles.

The song now interrupted by STATIC, the station losing its signal.

Kyle tries to adjust the dial. No good. He changes stations. A farm report. A country song. All of them ENGULFED BY WHITE NOISE.

He shuts off the radio.

They drive in silence. Just the SQUEAK of shock absorbers going over bumps in the road.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Kyle and Benjamin sit on a log by the parked pickup, eating sandwiches, their rifles in nylon sleeves nearby.

Sunlight glitters through incandescent yellow and orange cottonwoods.

TENSION MUSIC creeps in as the two guys - father and son - sit side by side, eating, not looking or talking to each other.

Kyle offers Benjamin a snack-size can of Pringles.

He shakes his head no thanks.

Kyle eats a Pringle instead.

The two guys eat their lunches, staring off in the distance.

A feeling of dread hovering over them.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Tori stands at the sink drying a salad bowl when she notices outside - a POLICE CAR driving up the long driveway toward her house. She's concerned.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tori emerges from the house, stands on her porch.

Deever steps out of his car and approaches her.

DEEVER
Afternoon, Tori.

TORI
Is something wrong?

DEEVER
Well... could be. Not exactly sure yet. Is your son around by chance?

TORI
He's out hunting with his dad.

DEEVER
Then maybe you could answer a question for me.

He shows a Polaroid to Tori.

DEEVER (CONT'D)
This look familiar to you?

It's the 'B' INSIGNIA IN BLOOD on the road. Tori grows concerned, but hides it -

TORI
No. Should it?

DEEVER
It's some kind of signature, left at the spots where both Erica went missing and Noah died.

Tori tries to keep her composure.

TORI
I don't... I can't help you with that.

DEEVER

Doesn't it look to you like a B
maybe? As in Benjamin Breyer?

TORI

I don't like where this is going.

Deever motions inside -

DEEVER

Mind if I come in, take a look
around?

TORI

I'm gonna have to ask you to leave.

DEEVER

If you think you're helping your
son, you're not.

TORI

Get off my property.

Deever grits his teeth, frustrated.

TORI (CONT'D)

Go.

DEEVER

All right. But you know I'll be
back.

Tori stands there defiantly as Deever heads toward his squad
car and climbs in the front seat.

He fires up the engine.

Tori shuts and locks the front door, turns, and -

SPRINTS UP THE STAIRS, ADRENALINE PUMPING, HORRIFIED.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Kyle and Benjamin LURCH THROUGH THE WOODS holding their
rifles. A low tangerine sun. Dead leaves CRACKLING under their
shoes.

The guys venture deeper into the woods. Kyle's eyes darting,
exploring options, a coiled spring.

As they get deeper into the forest, a CROW starts to squawk.

First one. Then another.

Kyle looks up and sees more and more of them - dark splotches in the trees -

KYLE
Something must've spooked those
crows.

Benjamin notices something. He scurries ahead.

He crouches down before a slather of mud -

BENJAMIN
It was a deer. These are tracks.

He examines the tracks, his back to Kyle.

Kyle's heart rate quickens. This is the moment.

KYLE RAISES HIS RIFLE - AT THE BACK OF BENJAMIN'S HEAD -

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
This way.

BENJAMIN LOOKS BACK - Kyle quickly LOWERS HIS WEAPON.

He nods. Sure. Let's go.

Benjamin stalks ahead. Kyle follows behind.

Benjamin searches around him, every branch carrying information. The crows SCREECH MADLY.

Kyle - queasy now, dying inside - follows Benjamin.

Benjamin stops to examine a small tuft of fur on a bramble. Kyle stops about ten feet behind him.

THE SCREECHING CROWS build to a RISING CHORUS, THEIR SCREAMS RAINING DOWN ON BENJAMIN AND KYLE.

KYLE KNOWS THIS IS IT.

HE LIFTS HIS RIFLE.

POINTS THE BARREL AT THE BACK OF BENJAMIN'S HEAD.

THE CROWS' CRIES CARRY OVER INTO -

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. FARMHOUSE - BENJAMIN'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

TORI CHARGES INTO BENJAMIN'S ROOM, her world spinning.

She tears through items on Benjamin's floor. Finds his backpack.

Unzips it. Pulls out his notebook.

She opens it -

And takes in PAGE AFTER PAGE OF HORROR -

CLINICAL DRAWINGS OF THE FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM.

CATALOG CUT-OUTS OF WOMEN, THEIR FACES SCRATCHED OUT, THEIR EYES POKED THROUGH.

CHILDLIKE DRAWINGS OF WOMEN WITH THEIR LEGS SPREAD. PREGNANT WOMEN IN CHAINS. DRAWINGS OF SEX AND TORTURE.

Tori is BREATHLESS, BOTTOMING OUT, leafing through the notebook -

Then she sees -

PAGE AFTER PAGE OF 'B' DOODLES - VARIATIONS ON THE INSIGNIA THAT DEEVER SHOWED HER - NEXT TO DRAWINGS OF BENJAMIN AS A SUPERHERO, WEARING THE RED MASK AND CAPE, THE 'B' INSIGNIA ON HIS CHEST.

Tori FALLS TO HER KNEES.

She clutches herself, practically dry heaving -

A WAIL OF AGONY building inside her, spilling over.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. FOREST - SUNSET

THE CROWS SCREAMING.

KYLE WITH THE RIFLE TRAINED AT THE BACK OF BENJAMIN'S HEAD.

SURGING WITH ADRENALINE. HIS MOUTH DRY.

HE HOLDS HIS BREATH.

CHOKING BACK EMOTION.

HE SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER -

THE RIFLE FIRES -

THE BULLET HITS BENJAMIN IN THE HEAD, BEHIND HIS EAR -

BENJAMIN'S UPPER BODY SPINS AROUND -

THE THUNDERCLAP OF THE SHOT REVERBERATING THROUGH THE WOODS -

The crows go quiet.

Benjamin - staggered but still on his feet - feels the back of his head. No wound. No blood.

HE TURNS TOWARD KYLE.

Kyle stands there. Frozen. Panic rising.

He frantically ejects the shell from the rifle then digs into his pocket.

BENJAMIN

You never wanted me.

KYLE FUMBLES FOR A NEW BULLET, hands shaking. Benjamin GRINS.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

You never made me feel at home.

Kyle loads the bullet into the rifle, pushes the bolt forward - raises the rifle -

- and FIRES -

DIRECTLY AT BENJAMIN'S CHEST.

The bullet rips open Benjamin's shirt and RICOCHETS off somewhere.

Benjamin stares at Kyle with HOMICIDAL RAGE.

KYLE

Oh God I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Kyle drops the rifle - turns - and RUNS AWAY AS FAST AS HIS LEG WILL ALLOW -

Through cottonwood trees. Willing himself forward. Faster. Trying to put space between him and Benjamin.

He's desperate. Prey.

He feels a GUST - a kind of MOAN - blow past him. He changes direction, looks around, still running.

Trees whizzing by. He thinks he sees SOMETHING TO THE OTHER SIDE OF HIM - a BLUR.

He changes direction again. Huffing. Stumbling. Lungs burning.

Benjamin seems to be HERE - THERE - AHEAD OF HIM - BEHIND HIM. EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE.

Then BENJAMIN TACKLES KYLE TO THE GROUND. HARD. LIKE A SEMI HIT HIM.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BENJAMIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tori - worked up - holds her cell phone to her ear. The line rings. To herself -

TORI
Pick up, pick up...

The line ANSWERS.

TORI (CONT'D)
(frantic)
Kyle, I'm so sorry! You were right!
Benjamin killed Noah! He killed
him!

No reply from the other hand. Just the soft hiss of static.

TORI (CONT'D)
Kyle?

The line still hissing - giving up nothing.

Then -

BENJAMIN (V.O.)
No.

TORI
(starting to whimper)
Benjamin? Where's Dad?

BENJAMIN (V.O.)
He's gone.

Tori's stomach turns. She's terrified.

TORI
Gone where?

BENJAMIN (V.O.)
 (accusingly)
 You know.

TORI
 I don't know - I swear - I don't!

Tori falling apart -

TORI (CONT'D)
 What did you do to him? What did
 you do?

BENJAMIN (V.O.)
 (cold, flat)
 I'm coming home, Mom.

The other line CLICKS DEAD.

TORI
 Benjamin?... Benjamin?

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Benjamin is on top of a weak and wearied Kyle. Benjamin drops the phone.

He clutches his father's head with both hands. RAGE BUILDING.

Veins and capillaries around Benjamin's temples swell. His eyes GLOW RED - SMOLDERING WITH IMPOSSIBLE HEAT.

KYLE
 No - no!

INTENSE BEAMS OF RADIATION ERUPT FROM BENJAMIN'S EYE SOCKETS.

KYLE SCREAMS -

AS THE LASERS FIND KYLE'S EYES -

A BURST OF BLINDING LIGHT BORES A HOLE IN KYLE'S FACE.

HIS SKULL CAVES IN AND COLLAPSES.

Kyle's body sags.

He STOPS MOVING. His head a gummy mass of boiled skin and muscle.

Benjamin lets his dad's corpse drop.

The forest is quiet.

Leaves shaking in the breeze.

Some animal function has now taken over Benjamin. He roils with predatory fury.

He lets out a PAINED, UNEARTHLY WAIL.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SCREEEEACH. SCREEEEACH. Tori drags a heavy CHINA HUTCH toward the front door, digging up the old hardwood floor.

Panting, she catches her breath. Then tries again - exerting herself - PULLING THE HUTCH until it BLOCKS THE DOOR.

Tori has barricaded herself in. A bookshelf is pushed against the front window. Kitchen table jammed against the back door.

She's alone. Grandfather clock TICKING.

She goes to the fireplace set, picks up an IRON POKER, hooked at the tip. She carries it like a weapon.

She gently peels back the heavy living room drapes. Peers outside -

Half moon. Shadowy trees. An old tire swing swaying from an oak tree.

She closes the drapes.

She's a live-wire of edginess, trying to stay calm, trying to focus.

She holds the iron poker in front of her. Ready.

She can hear her own breathing. Her own heartbeat.

The world seems to stop.

Then -

BAM!

THE WHOLE HOUSE SHUDDERS. AS IF RAMMED BY A WRECKING BALL. Sawdust falling.

Tori takes out her phone. Dials 9-1-1. The line picks up, a woman's voice -

9-1-1 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
9-1-1, what's your emergency?

TORI
(whispers)
My son - he's - he's going to hurt
me.

Tori retreats from the front door, against a wall with framed photos of Benjamin at various ages.

9-1-1 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Where is your son now?

BAM! AN IMPACT FROM THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE. The foundation RATTLING. Frame CRACKING.

TORI
(rasping)
He's twelve years old. This
shouldn't be happening.

9-1-1 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Stay calm. Where is he now?

BAM! Tori feeling like a cornered animal.

TORI
We found him in the woods when he
was a baby, in some -

BAM!

9-1-1 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Ma'am?

TORI
Oh God - this can't be happening.
In some sort of pod.

Tori hides under the dining room table, a sheer linen tablecloth her only refuge.

9-1-1 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Ma'am, please - where - ?

TORI
(voice cracking)
He's trying to get in -

9-1-1 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
At your front door, ma'am, or -

BAM! BAM! BAM!

TORI
Through the walls. He... has...
powers.

9-1-1 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Ma'am -

TORI
(sobbing)
I thought he was here for good. But
I think he's here to kill all of
us!

THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE IS BLOWN IN - WALLS COLLAPSING -
BENJAMIN SURGING INTO THE LIVING ROOM LIKE A FREIGHT TRAIN.

TORI IS OVERWHELMED BY AN ONSLAUGHT OF WOOD AND DEBRIS. SHE
WANTS TO SCREAM, CAN'T SCREAM.

THE ENTIRE HOUSE BILLOWING WITH DRYWALL DUST. TORI CAN HEAR
BENJAMIN CRASHING INTO THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE HOUSE.

The dust starts to dissipate and clear. Tori stands, gets her
bearings.

HALF THE LIVING ROOM IS GONE.

EVERYTHING - WALLS, FLOOR, THE WHOLE SIDE OF THE HOUSE -
OBLITERATED IN A CLOUD OF DUST AND DEBRIS.

Pink heating insulation torn, dangling. Frayed electric wiring
FLICKERING through the haze.

Tori grips the poker. Senses ringing.

FOOTSTEPS CREAK above her.

Tori hears -

BENJAMIN (O.S.)
(childlike voice)
Mom?... Mom, are you here?

She can HEAR Benjamin proceeding from room to room.

She can make out the low rumble of a closet door rolling open.

Tori slowly - gingerly - walks toward the open space in the
living room.

She can see - through the haze - Benjamin STARTING TO WALK
DOWN THE STAIRS!

Tori turns and hurries through the dining room, into -

THE KITCHEN

She motions toward the back door, then spots a glimpse of Benjamin's silhouette through the dust.

She can't reach the back door without stepping into his sight line.

So she backs slowly toward the study, then scurries up -

A REAR STAIRCASE

She arrives upstairs. Almost pitch black.

She peers down through the balusters in the stairs - looking for signs of Benjamin. A game of cat and mouse.

She listens.

She can hear the cellar door CREAK open.

FOOTSTEPS heading into the cellar.

Tori feels safe enough to head downstairs. She's going to make her escape.

Then -

SLAM!

CRACK!

A BATTERING from below. Tori turns tail and RUNS DOWN -

THE LONG UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

FRANTIC. SPRINTING.

SOMEONE STEPS IN FRONT OF HER.

SHE SCREAMS - LIFTS THE POKER -

SHE'S WRAPPED IN A BEAR HUG - THE POKER DROPS TO THE FLOOR.

IT'S DEEVER AND Reyes ARMED WITH SHOTGUNS.

DEEVER

You're safe now. We got you.
Everything's gonna be o-

Something WHISKS PAST HIM. Deever stops short.

He feels something and looks down - PART OF HIS THROAT HAS BEEN TORN AWAY. BLOOD STARTS SPILLING DOWN HIS SHIRT.

Tori's eyes widen in horror - almost hyperventilating.

ANOTHER WHISK and Deever's head caves in. His face is deformed, his eyeball coming out a little bit. He falls over dead.

As Tori SCREAMS, Reyes drags her away - pulling her into -

A SPARE ROOM

An old sewing room with creepy dress form mannequins. Reyes holds her shotgun toward the door, expecting Benjamin to follow them.

Tori - every dial turned on - leads Reyes into a walk-in closet.

She opens a door at the other end of the closet and comes out on -

A GUEST BEDROOM

Faded wallpaper, oval mirror, religious statuettes on the dresser. No sign of Benjamin anywhere.

The two women try not to move.

The house eerily quiet.

They listen.

From elsewhere upstairs they hear, faintly -

A floorboard CREAK.

Reyes signals Tori to hide while she goes to investigate.

Tori nods. Reyes heads out into the hallway - silently, steadily.

Tori ducks into -

HER BEDROOM

She's alone now.

She wedges herself under the bed.

She lies down. As low as possible.

She can hear strange noises - odd floorboard creaks.

BENJAMIN APPROACHES.

Tori is frozen with fear. She retreats as far under the bed as she can.

Benjamin enters the bedroom.

Tori sees his FEET GLIDE PAST - A COUPLE INCHES OFF THE GROUND.

She covers her mouth with both hands, trying not to give herself away.

Benjamin moves on.

BENJAMIN WALKS PAST WEARING HIS RED MASK AND CAPE. Just a few feet away.

Tori covers her mouth with both hands, trying not to give herself away.

A heavy silence. Nothing moves.

Tori cranes her head slightly, peaking out from under the bed.

She can see, IN THE REFLECTION OF A MIRROR -

Reyes making her way down the hallway. Tori wants to tell her she's in danger, but she can't.

Benjamin INTERCEPTS HER -

Reyes gets off a SHOTGUN BLAST but it glances off Benjamin.

Tori can see in the mirror - Reyes HOWLS IN AGONY as Benjamin palms her face and SMASHES HER HEAD AGAINST THE WALL - HER SKULL SPLITTING LIKE A MELON. BLOOD SPLATTERING THE MIRROR.

It takes all of Tori's power not to scream.

Benjamin stands in the hallway, his mask caked with blood and dust. Inhuman.

He listens.

He HEARS SOMETHING coming from the bedroom -

Someone under the bed.

He ENTERS THE BEDROOM.

He crouches down and LOOKS UNDER THE BED.

There's no one there.

He looks to the bedroom closet. The door SLIGHTLY AJAR.

He knows where Tori is.

He goes to the closet door.

He OPENS IT.

No one there. Just shelves of towels and toiletries.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

TORI DANGLES FROM THE SECOND-STORY WINDOW.

She looks down.

It's a 25 foot drop.

She has no choice.

She lets go -

And FALLS TO THE GROUND. HARD.

Her ankle twisted, fucked.

She wills herself to stand up.

And takes off running.

Into the backyard.

Emergency lights from the sheriff's squad car swirl eerily in the quiet night.

Tori limps toward the cornfield - her ankle ringing with pain.

She presses on. Running. Frantic.

She tears through the thick stalks of corn. Desperate.

And then she hears it -

Behind her, faintly -

A TWO-TONE SING-SONG WHISTLE. The same from the game of hide-and-seek earlier.

Tori wants to cry. Can't cry. She charges forward.

She emerges from the cornfield.

Headed toward the big barn.

She runs across the patchy ground. Comes to -

THE BIG BARN

She bursts in through the entryway. The place creepy at night. A dead, rotting husk of a building. Almost pitch black.

Tori climbs up an old ladder. Straining.

BOOM!

The building RATTLES. Tori lets out a whimper. She can hear Benjamin CRASHING HIS WAY INTO THE BARN.

From behind her, closer this time, Tori hears -

THE TWO-TONE SING-SONG WHISTLE.

She cries to herself -

TORI

No no no.

Benjamin is stalking her. Toying with her.

Tori inches her way along -

A DARK WALKWAY

She feels along the walls.

Floorboards at her feet missing or rotting away.

BOOM! BOOM!

Benjamin bursting through walls, literally tearing apart the barn to find her.

Tori steps further -

BAM!

AN ENTIRE SECTION OF THE BARN EXPLODES INWARD!

Tori's path is collapsed. Cut off.

She tries a different route.

SHE CRAWLS UNDER A GAP at the base of the wall.

She squeezes her way into -

A HIDDEN STORAGE SPACE

She stands up to find, lit by moonlight from gaps in the roof -

ERICA'S DEAD BODY HANGING FROM HOOKS - SPLAYED OPEN - HER REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS LABELED - CERVIX, UTERUS, FALLOPIAN TUBES.

DRIPPING WITH MAGGOTS. THE AIR THICK WITH FLIES, FLUTTERING MOTHS.

And carved all over the wooden walls - BENJAMIN'S 'B' INSIGNIA. Over and over and over.

Tori is lost, panicking, trapped.

She feels a tremor - the whole barn shaking -

BENJAMIN BURSTS INTO THE STORAGE SPACE -

Tori BACKS AWAY - STUMBLES -

AND CRASHES THROUGH ROTTING FLOORBOARDS.

She FALLS.

TWO STORIES.

AND LANDS HARD IN THE GRAIN PIT AREA.

She's dazed.

Her nose bleeding. Her back screaming with pain.

She sees the rotting roof and the night sky above her, flittering with moths.

She has to get up.

She staggers to her feet.

Scrambles to the TRAP DOOR.

She strains to lift the HEAVY DOOR. From somewhere above she hears the SING-SONG WHISTLE, getting closer.

She manages to lift the door. In the pit below lies the RUPTURED BLACK POD.

She KICKS at the shell of the thing. The pod BREAKS INTO PIECES.

She GRABS ONE OF THE SHARDS. Rises. And -

BENJAMIN

Mom?

Tori turns to see -

Benjamin STANDING BEHIND HER.

The two of them alone in the pit.

Tori quivers, terrified.

Benjamin slowly removes his mask. His young face is cold, distant.

Tori is jittery. Trying to keep it together. Holding the shard at her side, concealed.

TORI

Benjamin - listen to me -

She steadies herself.

TORI (CONT'D)

I've never stopped loving you.
Ever. I believe - I still believe -
that you are a blessing that fell
down to this Earth.

Benjamin remains wary.

TORI (CONT'D)

When we found you, you were so
helpless. So tiny. All we could do
is keep you safe.

Benjamin's anger starts to dissipate.

TORI (CONT'D)

No matter what you've done, you are
still good inside.

Benjamin breaks - a 12-year-old boy now, not a killer. He begins to cry. The most emotion we've seen from him.

BENJAMIN

I want to do good, Mom. I do.

TORI
You will. I'll help you.

Benjamin comes to her.

He embraces her. Weeping. Burying his face in her shoulder.

Tori cries too. She holds him, stroking the back of his head.
She whispers -

TORI (CONT'D)
You will always, always be my baby
boy.

Tori TAKES THE BROKEN SHARD FROM HER SIDE - LIFTS IT - ABOUT
TO PLUNGE IT INTO BENJAMIN'S NECK -

BENJAMIN'S HAND CATCHES HER WRIST.

He stares into her eyes - a mixture of rage and wounded pain.

He squeezes Tori's wrist. She drops the black shard. Terrified
for her life -

TORI (CONT'D)
No... No, Benjamin...

BENJAMIN GRIPS HER TIGHTER.

HE SURGES UPWARD.

TORI (CONT'D)
Benjamin...

BENJAMIN SURGES UPWARD.

HE SMASHES THROUGH FLOOR AFTER FLOOR OF THE BARN, SNAPPING
TORI'S BONES.

HE FLIES HIGHER AND HIGHER -

INTO THE NIGHT SKY. OVER THE FARMLAND BELOW. TORI'S BODY IN
HIS ARMS.

TORI - HELPLESS, BROKEN - LOOKS UP AT BENJAMIN.

BENJAMIN LOOKS AT HIS MOTHER ONE LAST TIME.

THEN DROPS HER.

TORI FALLS AND FALLS IN SLOW MOTION -

HER BODY FLAILING AS SHE STARES UP IN HORROR AT HER SON...

FADE TO:

A TV NEWSCAST

An ANCHORMAN sits at a local news desk. Over his shoulder is a graphic that reads DISASTER IN THE SKIES.

ANCHORMAN

Breaking news this hour. A passenger jet has crashed in the small town of Brandenburg, Kansas. Reports are still coming in, but there are believed to be no survivors among the 268 passengers on board. We go now live to our own Dawn Maywell, at the scene of this horrific tragedy. Dawn, what can you tell us?

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A young reporter in a parka stands before the smoldering wreckage of a DOWNED PASSENGER JET, billowing smoke. She holds a microphone and speaks to a TV camera.

REPORTER

Investigators are not yet sure what caused the plane to drop suddenly from the sky. There was no inclement weather, no indications of engine failure...

We PULL BACK to take in a grisly scene -

Bodies scattered - on the ground, in a tree, hanging from the ruptured fuselage.

A zillion globe lights from emergency vehicles. Firefighters spray water onto the wreckage. Rescue workers attend to the scene.

PULL BACK further to realize we're on the grounds of the BREYER FAMILY FARM. The plane seemingly nosedived into the farmhouse itself.

In the back of an EMT vehicle, sitting all alone, is BENJAMIN, wrapped in a mylar blanket.

He watches the billowing smoke, the swirling lights. He's emotionless.

His aunt Merilee approaches him with a Dixie cup of water.

MERILEE

Here. I was able to get you this.

She hands him the water. He drinks it.

MERILEE (CONT'D)

And I talked to one of the officials. They said you can go if you'd like.

Benjamin looks up at her. His face passive.

She gazes down at him with sympathy. She has trouble keeping it together.

MERILEE (CONT'D)

Oh Benjamin, I'm so sorry.

She starts to weep.

MERILEE (CONT'D)

All those people... your parents... dead. It's too much.

He nods.

MERILEE (CONT'D)

I'm just grateful you're okay.

BENJAMIN

Me too.

MERILEE

Come on -

She helps him to his feet.

MERILEE (CONT'D)

You'll stay with me until we figure things out.

The two of them walk away from the EMT vehicle.

Benjamin reaches out and takes Merilee's hand.

She clutches it.

Merilee looks ahead. She doesn't see the faint SMILE creep across Benjamin's face.

They walk past the wreckage, leaving the tragic scene.
The camera stays on the crash.
It DOLLIES IN on the ruptured side of the airplane.
There, seared into the wreckage is the STRANGE 'B' INSIGNIA.
BLACK.

DURING END CREDITS:

We HEAR staticky audio from the cockpit of the plane -

PILOT (V.O.)
(casual)
Tower, our engine instruments look
good. Eighty knots, heading two six
zero.
(then)
Winds are at zero one - um. Huh.
We're seeing something downwind.
Unidentified. Approaching.

A HUGE THUMP - CRACKLING NOISE - ALARMS WHOOPING - THE PILOT
PANICKED -

PILOT (V.O.)
We lost engines 3 and 4! Losing
altitude!

We can hear passengers SCREAMING - PIERCING - PRIMAL.

PILOT (V.O.)
Something's outside the plane! A
man... Oh my God... A boy...

THEN A MASSIVE ERUPTION - A WALL OF STATIC.

Come up on -

INT. FEDERAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A man in a navy tie and a pressed white shirt sits at a table
in a small room holding a steaming cup of coffee. Let's call
this man BLACK COFFEE.

A charred orange Cockpit Voice Recorder is plugged into his
laptop. The speakers hiss STATIC.

Black Coffee rewinds the audio and plays the last part again -

PILOT (V.O.)
- outside the plane! A man... Oh my
God... A boy...

He stops the recording. He sits back in his chair. Gears turning.

The door opens. AGENT TWO - young, crisp, female - enters the small room and hands him a piece of paper.

BLACK COFFEE
This about the South China Sea?

As he scans the report -

AGENT TWO
Nine confirmed dead and counting.

BLACK COFFEE
We know what killed them yet?

AGENT TWO
Survivors tell stories of a half-
man half-creature emerging from the
ocean. Said to breathe underwater.

Black Coffee takes a drink from his styrofoam cup. Then -

BLACK COFFEE
Sounds like we got another one.

END.