

# MEAT

by

Logan Martin

[loganmartin711@gmail.com](mailto:loganmartin711@gmail.com)

EXT. WOODS - DAY

POV: We slowly move through a wooded area. Early-blooming flowers pepper the grassy ground. Fresh saplings pull themselves toward the sun. Buds and baby branches jut out from seasoned tree trunks.

SUPER: Spring

We dip down, nibble on some freshly sprouted grass. Then continue on our --

A **BOOM!** in the distance. We turn to the --

**THWACK!** Everything starts to blur as we take a few wobbly steps before dropping to the ground...

CUT TO BLACK.

The sound of rough cutting.

SOMEWHERE

A buck knife cuts between the ribs of a fur-covered belly. Blood pours out behind the blade.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A knife cuts through a large steak. Red liquid seeps out from its pink center.

A fork brings it to a pair of feminine lips.

BEN (O.S.)

How is it?

A smile.

REIN

Perfect.

BEN (30s, long hair, beard) smiles back at REIN (30s, well kept).

REIN

Same as always.

They sit at a small table in the main room of a cabin, an open kitchen connected to a living room. Candles and a roaring fire light the room.

No electronics whatsoever, as well as no pictures or distinguishing decoration.

Rein dabs her mouth with a napkin.

REIN

So, what's the plan for tomorrow?

BEN

Well.

(finishes chewing)

I figured I'd get started on the on the list.

REIN

It's already time?

BEN

I mean, it's a little early. But, don't want a repeat of February.

REIN

I guess. It really wasn't that bad.

BEN

You keep saying that, but no point in chancing it. Deer've been changing their routes lately. Anyway, I'm sure we'll be fine.

He smiles. She returns it.

BEN

What about you?

REIN

I've got some stuff I'm finishing up.

BEN

Will I get to see?

REIN

We'll see.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Rein lie asleep in bed. Their dog, COWBOY (a huge Rottweiler) at the foot.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

The cabin lies in a secluded clearing, tucked away in the woods. An outhouse, a shed, a workshop, and a small barn all inhabit the surrounding area.

EXT. CABIN - DAWN

SHUCK. SHUCK. SHUCK. A well handle pumps up and down. Water shoots into a pail.

Ben carries two buckets toward the cabin, Cowboy running ahead. Just the hint of sunlight in the sky.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAWN

A pencil hovers along a detailed checklist of supplies.

Ben sits in the kitchen, going over the list. A pot boils on the stove.

LATER

He pours coffee through a strainer into two mugs. Rein enters, still half-asleep.

REIN

Morning.

A good morning kiss. He hands her a mug.

BEN

Morning.

They look out the window, the sunrise poking through the trees.

EXT. CABIN - DAWN

Ben sits on the porch, drinking his coffee. Cowboy at his side.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAWN

Ben pulls open the doors of the modest barn.

INT. BARN - LATER

Ben light-heartedly does chores. Feeds and waters the animals, collects eggs, shovels manure, etc. Highlight the two pigs, BERT and ERNIE.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

CHOP! An axehead splits a log in two.

Ben chops wood outside the barn, covered in sweat. Cowboy lies nearby, panting.

Ben takes a break, wipes the sweat off with a towel. Watches a flock of birds shoot out of a nearby evergreen and disappear over the treetops.

He returns to work, swings the axe over his head --

ACROSS THE YARD

Rein pulls weeds in a huge garden behind the cabin. The sound of wood splitting in the distance.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben enters, takes a big drink of water.

He splashes some on his face at the sink. Looks out a window at Rein in the garden.

INT. CABIN, OFFICE - DAY

A key turns in a lock.

The door of a wooden gun case opens, an array of rifles housed inside.

Ben pulls one of them out.

MOMENTS LATER

Cartridges are pushed into the chamber.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Rein continues her work in the garden. Ben heads away from the cabin in the background. She notices him, waves.

ACROSS THE YARD

Ben waves back as he continues on. Soon, he disappears into the woods...

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Ben makes his way through the woods. Climbs over a fallen tree, pushes through bushes, etc.

LATER

Ben stops, something catching his eye. He kneels down, looks through his scope.

[Note: All action seen through a scope will be in **RED**.]

*A doe walks amongst the trees, vegetation killing the sightline.*

Ben takes his eye off the scope. Moves to follow.

LATER

He again stops, gets ready.

The doe moves about in a clearing, unaware of Ben's well-hidden presence in the treeline across the field.

Ben takes a deep breath.

*The doe slowly moves along the clearing. It takes a nibble at some grass, nips a le-- It stops, slowly turns its head... and looks straight at us. Not just in our direction, right at us. Another moment, and it turns and runs straight away --*

**BOOM!** Ben takes a shot.

*The deer bounces away into the woods.*

Ben sighs.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Rein at dinner. Pork chops.

REIN

Well, it doesn't sound that weird.

BEN  
I guess you had to be there. I  
swear, it looked right at me.

REIN  
Why is that so crazy?

BEN  
I was like a quarter-mile away in  
the trees, there's no way it  
could've. Something else must have  
spooked it.

REIN  
It's still spring, we've got lots  
of time.

Ben nods. Rein puts a hand on his arm.

REIN  
Hey.

He looks up.

REIN  
Don't worry. We've made it this  
long. We'll be okay, Ben.

She smiles. He returns it.

REIN  
So, what're we doing tomorrow?

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAWN

Ben pulls open the doors to the shed.

REVEAL: A shiny, new-looking 2012 Dodge Ram sits inside.

Ben pulls the truck out. There being no road here, he drives  
it across the yard and into a small gap in the treeline.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAWN

The truck rolls out of the woods and onto a gravel road.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAY

Ben pulls onto a highway.

LATER

The truck flies down the road, electrical poles lining the sides. The sun's already distanced itself from the horizon.

Inside, Ben listens to the radio.

MULTIPLE (O.S.)

...some boos in the audience before  
Senator Rand Paul shouted out.

(and)

Hey, look. Look, he's already  
hedging his bet on the Clintons,  
okay? So if he doesn't run as a  
Republican, maybe he supports  
Clinton...

Something catches Ben's eye.

A snowy owl watches the truck go by from its perch on a branch.

Ben focuses back on the road.

MULTIPLE (O.S.)

...say that he's already hedging  
his bets because he's used to  
buying politicians.

(and)

Well, I've given him plenty of  
money.

(and)

Trump calmly exp--

He turns it off, shakes his head.

The truck flies down the road.

EXT. TRUCK - DAY

Ben pulls onto the main road of a tiny, rural town. Only a few businesses and cars line the street.

He parks outside a one-room store. MARTIN'S GROCERY.

INT. MARTIN'S - DAY

DING! Ben enters the tiny establishment. JERRY (60s) sits behind the counter, staring through bifocals at a smartphone.

BEN

Hey, Jare.

JERRY

Oh. Hey, Ben.

He shakes his head as he puts the phone down.

JERRY

How's it goin'?

Ben starts to pick out items, only half listening.

BEN

You know. Same as always.

JERRY

How's Rein?

BEN

She's good. Karen?

JERRY

She's doin' alright. Garden's doin' real well, keepin' her busy. Missed the freeze, so. She had a bad flu the last week -- Oh, I think it was Thursday she got it. But, hey. It's been goin' around.

(and)

Not for you, of course.

BEN

Nope, not us.

JERRY

Anyhow. You need some help gettin' everything packed up?

BEN

If you don't mind.

JERRY

Hey, no problem.

(motions to empty store)

Today's a slow day, anyhow.

He laughs at his own joke, moves to help.

EXT. JIM'S - DAY

Ben carries some bags out of JIM'S HARDWARE STORE.

He drops the tailgate, sets the tools next to bags of food and other supplies.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAY

The truck flies back down the highway.

Inside, Ben drives in silence.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Ben exits the cabin, the truck parked near the entrance. He closes the now empty truck bed and gets in.

He backs into the shed.

Ben closes the doors, hiding the truck away.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

CHOP. CHOP. CHOP. A chef's knife dices an onion. Then some garlic. It cubes a potato. Then a hunk of frozen meat.

The knife is stuck next to its brothers on a magnetic strip above the counter. All of them have a wolf paw insignia on their wooden handle.

One by one, the vegetables are dropped into a well-oiled cast iron skillet. Salt and freshly ground pepper soon added to the mix.

Into another, the cubed meat is dropped. Steam instantly expels from the pan.

ECU: Fat drips from the rapidly sizzling meat. It bubbles away as it seeps onto the pan.

The browned meat is added to the vegetables, soon followed by two freshly cracked eggs.

It's pushed into a woodfire oven. Bright coals burning in another compartment.

The finished product is placed on a set table.

LATER

Ben and Rein relax in their post-meal fullness. They share a smile.

BEN (PRE-LAP)  
Are you ready?

CUT TO BLACK.

BEN (V.O.)  
Open your eyes.

OPEN TO:

INT. CABIN, STUDIO - DAY

A beautiful wooden easel with a wolf paw insignia stands in the middle of an incredibly messy art studio. Paint covers everything. Cans and tubes of paint litter the tables and shelves.

REIN (O.S.)  
I love it.

Ben and Rein stand near the door. She kisses him.

REIN  
Maybe now I'll actually make something good.

BEN  
Oh, please.

REIN  
What?

BEN  
Your stuff is great. Don't be so hard on yourself.

REIN  
Well, it's not like I have anyone to judge it.

Ben starts to protest -- but decides against it.

BEN  
I'm sorry.

REIN  
I didn't mean it like that, Ben. I just meant... you know. I just want my stuff to be good.

She kisses him again. Forces him to smile with a silly face.

REIN  
So, what's next?

EXT. WOODS - DAY

CRICK. CRICK. SNAP. CREEEEEEK. A tall tree falls onto the forest floor.

Ben leans on his axe at the tree's base, surrounded by stumps of others he's cut down in the past.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

A hot pepper and some garlic are dropped into a mason jar, soon followed by sliced lengths of cucumber.

Rein pours hot vinegar into the jar. Canning in the kitchen. Lids float in a boiling pot on the stove. Rows and rows of jars housing various vegetables line the counter next to accompanying ingredients.

INT. WORKSHOP - DAY

SCHLING. SCHLING. SCHLING. A smoothing plane slides back and forth on a length of wood.

Ben labors away in his workshop. A multitude of tools and stacks of wood are housed in a very organized fashion. Early projects sit on shelves. A wooden vase. A flute. A deer figurine. All of them with a wolf paw insignia.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Rein sits out back, painting the garden scene on her new easel.

She looks at her work, sighs. Something catches her eye behind her painting.

At the treeline, an obviously pregnant doe stares at her.

Rein stares back.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Rein sit in the living room, reading. The fireplace ablaze. Ben snacks on some jerky.

He offers Rein some. She shakes her head.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Trees stand in silence amidst now well-grown vegetation. Only a few flowers.

SUPER: Summer

The sound of footsteps. Soon, Ben appears with his rifle. On the hunt.

He stops, looks up.

The trees stand tall, stabbing up into the sky. Their tips blow in the breeze, leaves rustling.

LATER

Still moving through the woods. Less brush here. Ben climbs over a log.

There's... something in the background. Hidden between the trees. Ben doesn't notice. For only a moment, we can make out what looks like a deer, standing tall on its hind legs. Watching him.

He hears something, looks back.

Nothing. Just the forest.

A beat. He moves along.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Ben scales a hilly area covered in tall grass. The woods break around the heightened plain.

Reaching the top, he scans the treelines in the valleys around --

A buck plucks leaves and small red berries off a buffalo berry tree on the side of one of the hills.

Ben crouches down and readies his shot.

*The buck pulls on a branch and strips its leaves off.*

Ben's finger on the trigger.

*All of a sudden the buck becomes alert, looking around -- A mountain lion shoots into frame and pounces on the buck's back. We follow as it tries to pull away to no avail. Soon being brought to the ground.*

Ben takes his eye off the scope and watches from afar. Then, gets up and leaves.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Rein sit at dinner in silence. It's meatloaf night, and raining outside. Fresh baked bread and peas on the side. Ben watches as Rein pushes her uneaten food around her plate.

BEN  
Is something wrong?

Nothing.

BEN  
Rein?

REIN  
(coming to)  
What?

BEN  
Is something wrong?

REIN  
Huh? -- Oh. No... I'm just not  
feeling well.

BEN  
Okay.  
(beat)  
I saw a mountain lion today.

Rein's eyes come alive.

REIN  
Really?

BEN  
Mhmm. Got a buck right before me.

REIN  
You always see the cool stuff.

BEN  
You know you can come.

REIN  
I know... you know I don't like it.

BEN  
I know. I was just saying.

REIN

Yea.

(beat)

So, how far away was it?

BEN

Not that far.

REIN

I didn't think they came down here.

Ben shrugs.

BEN

They go where they please. Same with all the others.

REIN

I used to love watching those videos of bears and mountain lions in people's backyards. I always wished it would happen to me.

BEN

You probably would've needed a yard, first.

Rein smirks.

REIN

Maybe.

BEN

(beat)

Hey. I've been thinking... I think we should cut out town.

REIN

Really?

BEN

Yea. I mean, hunting's going pretty well. It was just a thought.

REIN

You really think we're ready?

BEN

Yea. I was thinking do the normal three times this year and then cut it off.

REIN

What about paint?

BEN

Yea... that's the one thing I haven't figured out. We could maybe pick up a bunch in the fall and just wait until you run out. Then get more.

Rein thinks it over.

REIN

Okay. If you really think we're ready, I guess we can try. It is what we came here to do.

They share a smile.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Rein lie asleep in bed. Cowboy at the foot.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

The cabin sits silently in the dark. The sky completely filled with stars. A deer pokes out of the woods, stares at the house.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAWN

Ben sits in the kitchen, again going over the checklist. Coffee brews on the stove. Rein walks in and sleepily sits down.

REIN

Everything okay?

BEN

Yea. Gotta count the freezer before I go, but I think we're on schedule. The garden doing alright?

REIN

Yea, everything's great. More than last year.

Rein looks a little distressed.

BEN

You still feel sick?

REIN

No... It's nothing.

Ben starts to say something -- but stops. Sighs.

INT. CABIN, BASEMENT - DAY

A door opens, Ben flicks a LIGHT SWITCH as he heads down a set of stairs.

The basement is the complete opposite of the rest of the cabin. Bulbs hang from the ceiling, shining onto a white, straight-lined room housing a chest freezer, a sterile-looking metal work station, an industrial metal door, and a huge cutting board with various tools and knives hanging above it. All of them with Ben's insignia.

It's basically a kill room.

Ben opens the metal door and goes into the --

INT. CABIN, HANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- hanging room. A skinned and dressed deer corpse hangs on one side, a multitude of canned food is stacked on shelves opposite it.

Ben starts to inspect everything, marking his list as he goes.

INT. CABIN, BASEMENT - DAY

The door to the chest freezer opens. It's half-filled with vacuum sealed packages of meat.

Ben shuffles the packs around, marks off the list.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Ben pulls the truck out of the shed and toward the treeline.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAY

The truck rolls out of the woods and onto the gravel road.

LATER

Ben pulls onto the highway.

LATER

The truck flies down the road. The trees now fully filled with their summer leaves.

Inside, Ben turns on the radio.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 ...met today, and we wonder -- will  
 this be the next pres--

He changes the channel. A folk song comes on.

Ben whistles along as he continues down the roa--

**SCREECH.** The brakes squeal as Ben whips the truck to the side, just missing a deer as it bounces across the highway.

He regains his composure. Looks out the window. The deer stands at the treeline, staring at him. A moment, and it hops away into the woods. Ben stares after it.

He pulls the truck back onto the road.

As he rolls away from the scene, Ben takes a look in the rearview at the spot where the deer stood.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Rein picks green beans in the garden. When she moves down the line, she notices some hoof marks in the dirt. Her eyes follow the tracks through the garden...

...all the way to the edge of the clearing, where a doe stands with two fawns at the treeline. Staring at her.

A beat, just Rein and the doe.

She stands, steps toward it...

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Ben pulls in and parks outside Martin's Grocery.

INT. MARTIN'S - DAY

Ben enters. Jerry sits behind the counter, again staring at his cell phone. Perplexed.

BEN  
 Hey, Jare.

Ben heads for the shelves.

JERRY  
 This goddamn thing...  
 (puts phone down)  
 Hey, Ben. How's it goin'?

BEN  
 You know. I'll live.

JERRY  
 Well, let's hope. Rein's doin'  
 alright?

Ben starts to pick out groceries, mostly ignoring Jerry yet again.

BEN  
 Yup. Karen?

JERRY  
 Well, she went and got a broken hip  
 -- Oh, I think it was 15th? Fell  
 down the patio stairs.

BEN  
 She okay?

JERRY  
 Yea, she's alright. Just gotta stay  
 in bed for a while. It's me you  
 gotta worry about.

BEN  
 Why's that?

JERRY  
 Well, she got it in her head that  
 it's my fault she fell. Says I  
 should've fixed the steps years  
 ago.

BEN  
 They broken?

JERRY  
 Well... I wouldn't say broken. I  
 mean, they seen better days. But,  
 they're still solid. Ain't nothin'  
 you'd trip over or anything like  
 that.

Nothing from Ben. He just grabs another pack of flour.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Anyway, I'm just ramblin'. Let's  
get your stuff.

Jerry moves to help.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DUSK

Ben rolls up to the house. The sun near the horizon.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Rein and Ben at dinner. Steak again.

And again, Rein has barely touched her food. Ben watches with concern.

BEN  
Rei--

REIN  
I don't want to eat meat anymore.

Ben looks confused.

BEN  
What do you mean?

REIN  
I don't want to eat it anymore.

BEN  
Why?

REIN  
I don't know... I just -- I just  
don't want it.

BEN  
How will you make it through the  
winter?

REIN  
The garden's doing really well. I  
think I could do it.

Ben thinks it over.

BEN  
Well, if that's what you want.

A long, awkward beat.

BEN  
It's just kind of sad. I love  
cooking for you.

REIN  
I know you do, Ben. I just can't.

BEN  
Maybe if you tried to explain? It  
just doesn't make sense.

REIN  
I don't know what to say.

Ben nods. They "eat" for a time.

REIN  
So, what's the plan for tomorrow?

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lies awake in bed, Rein fast asleep. He turns over,  
closes his eyes. Tries to get to sleep. It doesn't work.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Ben walks along the treeline surrounding the cabin, running  
his hand along the tree trunks. The area completely silent.

Something catches his eye. He stops.

Footsteps and deer tracks dried in the mud lead into the  
woods...

Ben peers into the dark forest, then back at the cabin.

He follows the trail toward the cabin, leading him to and  
through the garden. The footsteps disappear as he reaches the  
opposite edge. The deer tracks continue until he reaches the  
back porch.

Ben looks around his lonely property in confusion.

INT. WORKSHOP - DAY

Ben works a carving tool on a rounded piece of wood, thinning  
the end.

He grabs a slightly different blade, makes intricate cuts  
along a protruding knob at the end.

He stops. Troubled. Looks out a window.

INT. CABIN, STUDIO - DAY

Rein paints in her studio. A picture of a beach sunset. She dabs her brush in red, but it's all out.

She moves stuff aside in a packed corner of the floor as she looks for a paint tube. Suddenly SCREAMS --

LATER

Ben looks in the corner.

REIN  
They're right there.

REVEAL: A nest of baby mice blindly crawling over each other.

BEN (O.S.)  
You really need to clean in here.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Ben exits the cabin with a small sack.

BEN  
What else am I supposed to do?

Rein follows behind, stops in the doorway.

REIN  
Ben, please.

He stops. Gives her a look, like: *What?* Then continues toward the shed.

Rein watches from the doorway as Ben sets the sack on his chopping stump. He grabs a piece of wood and raises it over his head --

Rein flinches with the sound of it slamming down. She goes inside.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lies asleep in bed.

He turns over, the other side of the bed empty. He opens his eyes.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben heads downstairs to the main room.

No Rein here. Just the smoldered fire lighting the empty cabin.

He goes to a window. A view of the barn across the yard, one of its doors open. Rein exits and closes it up.

Ben quickly moves over to and up the stairs, but stops at the top. He watches the front door, hidden in darkness.

Rein enters and heads into the kitchen. She grabs a bulb off of a bunch of hanging garlic. Then peels the husk off, eats it raw.

Ben watches with confusion.

Rein grabs a nearby brush, sits on a chair near the door. Proceeds to brush her hair while staring at it --

A sound alerts her. She quickly looks around the room.

Rein gets up and heads for the stairs. Ben silently moves away.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben lies "asleep" in bed. Rein crawls in, facing away from him.

A beat.

Ben opens his eyes, stares at his wife.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAWN

Ben opens the doors to the barn and enters, on his way to do his daily --

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

-- he stops.

Inside, the pigs separate like they were in the middle of a private conversation.

BEN (O.S.)  
What're you guys doing out of your pen?

Ben shuffles them in and closes the gate. He watches as they mumble about their pen, eventually moving to their trough, snorting for their food.

A moment, and Ben moves to feed them.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

The sun, high in the middle of the sky.

INT. WORKSHOP - DAY

Ben carefully whittles down the end of a rounded piece of wood about 18 inches in length.

He shoves it into a slot bored in a larger piece. The beginning of what kind of looks like a cage starts to appear.

Ben takes a break, relaxes. Looks at the shelf housing his early creations.

He picks them and inspects their workmanship, amused at how bad some of them are. When he gets to the deer figurine, he stares more intently. His stomach growls.

INT. CABIN, HANGING ROOM - DAY

Ben enters, grabs a jar of peaches. Moves to leave --

He stops. Stares at the two small deer that now hang from the ceiling.

Ben runs his hand along the cleaned, aged flesh of one of them. Lost in the look and feel of it.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Rein mixes together some cucumber salad in the kitchen.

Finished, she goes to set it on the table -- but freezes.

An engorged black widow is on the floor near the door, facing her.

Rein looks around for a solution.

MOMENTS LATER

CLAMP. Rein quickly sets an open paint can over the spider, slides it onto a lid lying on the floor.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Rein carries the can away from the cabin.

At the treeline, she carefully opens it with a stick. The widow soon crawls out and creeps away.

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Ben sits at the table, waiting to eat as Rein enters with the paint can.

BEN  
What were you doing?

REIN  
Nothing.

She goes into another room. Ben stares after her.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Orange and yellow leaves blow in a breeze. Some are pulled off, too weak to hold on.

SUPER: Fall

Boots crunch a leaf-covered forest floor.

Ben heads through the woods in a jacket.

He moves into a small clearing, the tall grass now growing tan as its life fades away.

SHUFFLE SHUFFLE. Ben turns to the side. Just catches the rear of a huge moose as it disappears into the brush.

He follows after it.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Ben heads up a grassy steep.

He reaches the top. Gets a view of the increasingly dark sky as it towers over a sea of multicolored trees, green pines peppered throughout.

LATER

Ben reaches a rocky cliff that overlooks a small canyon with a creek running through it. A small herd of deer rest and drink on its bank.

He settles down with his rifle.

*Sliding along the creek, looking for the best choice... what was that? We pull back to a deer, standing up tall on its hind legs, watching the others.*

Ben's confused face.

*The deer, still just standing there. Occasionally it moves its "arms" at the other deer.*

Ben looks away from the scope. Just watches in the distance as the standing deer disappears into the woods.

He regains his composure, returns to his scope.

**BOOM!** He fires a shot.

LATER

Down by the creek, Ben uses a buck knife to open a doe's torso. He pulls out the intestines and stomach, being careful not to cut them open. Then he moves to the heart and liver, sets them aside.

He wipes some of the blood off his hands with a cloth.

Ben holds the deer's legs together and hoists it onto his shoulders. Heads into the forest.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Ben walks along a dirt road, heavy treelines on both sides.

A house comes into view through the trees, a short distance from the road. Ben glances at it.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The deer's now cleaned heart is dropped onto a cutting board. A chef's knife slides through it.

The heart pieces are dropped into a hot pan. A few tosses, and they're slid onto a plate next to a salad.

Ben joins Rein at dinner. She's got her eyes on his plate. He notices.

BEN  
What?

REIN  
Nothing.

BEN  
What is it, Rein?

REIN  
Well... don't you think it's, like,  
I don't know. Bad. To do that?

BEN  
What? The heart?

Rein nods.

BEN  
It's good meat, Rein. I'm not gonna  
waste it.

Rein concedes, focuses on her salad. Ben does the same, but takes some glances.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

CHOP. CHOP. CHOP. An axehead cuts a notch into a tree.

Ben chops another tree down near the sea of stumps. It's menial and grueling work.

He stops, breathing heavy. Wipes his face. Looks up at a tree, where an owl watches him from a branch.

He returns to work. Chopping away.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

A crowbar forces its way between two slats of wood, snapping them apart.

Ben pulls a broken piece of siding off of the shed. He nails a replacement into place.

LATER

Ben pushes a manual lawn mower through the yard. The insane amount of time this would take is evident by the size of their property.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DUSK

Ben finally finishes mowing the lawn. He's now drenched in sweat.

He puts the mower away and heads for the cabin.

Just before he goes inside, he stops. Stares. Rein stands at the treeline, facing the woods.

Ben walks up next to her. She doesn't even notice, lost in her own world.

A beat.

BEN  
Something out there?

REIN  
(coming to)  
Huh?

BEN  
Is something out there?

REIN  
Oh. No.

BEN  
So... what're you doing?

REIN  
I'm just looking.

Ben stares at her, still just staring into the woods.

BEN  
Well, okay. I only got a couple  
things left. Then I'll be in.  
(beat)  
Okay?

REIN

Okay.

A beat. Ben leaves.

INT. BARN - DUSK

Ben does his nightly chores. Feeding and watering, etc.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DUSK

He closes the doors on his way out of the barn. He notices something above him and sighs... *god damn it.*

Ben brings a long pole out of the shed, heads over to the barn.

Up on a corner, a wasp nest clings to the side of the barn. Little demons buzz around it.

The pole, poking at the nest. It soon lands a hit.

BEN (O.S.)

Shit!

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits on a stool, his bearded face red and swollen. It looks really bad. Also ridiculous. Rein applies aloe as gingerly as she can.

REIN

It's so weird. They usually don't affect you at all.

BEN

Yea, I don't know.

(Rein leaves)

Actually I think I read that the venom can stay in your system for years. Maybe I'm allergic now.

Rein comes back. Hands him a wet rag.

REIN

Hold this to it.

(he does)

Is that really true?

BEN

What?

REIN  
The venom thing.

BEN  
Oh, yea. I think so.

A beat. Rein thinks.

BEN  
What?

REIN  
I don't know. It's just  
interesting. Like, you're exposed  
to it so much that your body can't  
take it anymore.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lies awake in bed, unable to get comfortable due to his puffy face. Rein fast asleep.

He sits up, lets out a frustrated sigh. Rein adjusts.

REIN  
You okay?

BEN  
Yea. It's just gonna suck going  
into town, tomorrow.

REIN  
You're not going anywhere like  
this. You can't even see.

BEN  
I'll be okay.

REIN  
I'll go. You can stay here and  
rest.

BEN  
Really, Rein, it's o--

REIN  
You're staying in bed. I'll do the  
chores.

BEN  
(beat)  
Fine.

REIN

Good.

A beat. Ben tries to get comfortable again. It doesn't work.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Ben walks up the side of a hill covered in a thin layer of snow. The moon's light illuminates the area.

As he reaches the top, he stops and stares.

An innumerable amount of deer cover the area in front of him. Bucks, does, and fawns all slowly make their way across the snow-covered field.

Ben stares as one walks right in front of him.

Ben's face, full of wonder. **BOOM!** The sound of rifle shot. His expression changes to a look of confusion and horror.

All the deer have been shot, their lifeless bodies litter the entirety of the field. He starts to walk across it, staring at the bloody bodies as he passes.

Ben now in the middle of the field, surrounded by nothing but empty space and corpses. He looks to the side. About fifty feet away, a moose stands amidst the bodies, staring at him. It starts to slowly head his way.

Ben is suddenly holding a rifle. He looks at it with confusion.

The moose is getting closer. Ben lifts the rifle and takes a shot.

**BOOM!**

But the moose is unfazed, as if the gun shoots blanks.

**BOOM!** Click. **BOOM!** Click. **BOOM!** Click. **BOOM!**

Ben unloads the magazine. The moose just getting closer and closer, calmly walking toward him. Ben getting more and more frightened as it nears.

Click. Click. Out of bullets.

Ben drops the rifle, tries to run away. But, he can't move. Like his feet are nailed to the ground. He frantically tries to pull them with his hands. Looks with horror as the moose stops a few feet away.

Compete silence. Ben just stares at the moose. He turns his head to the side as --

-- A HIDEOUS, REVOLTING ROAR comes from a different, BLOODIED and DISFIGURED MOOSE standing above him --

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - DAY

Ben sleeps, covered in sweat. Daylight fully lights the room. He stirs, looks around. Rein's already gone. He realizes how late it is and gets out of bed.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Ben sits on the porch drinking some iced tea. He looks bored, uneasy. Cowboy sits nearby, watching him.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben puts his glass in the sink. Heads for the the stairs --

BEN

Shit!

He stubs his toe. Hops around.

BEN

Fuck.

He sits down, inspects the damage. His toe's bleeding. He frowns, looks at the floor.

A bent nail sticks out of one of the floorboards.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

A flock of birds watch from a tree as Ben opens the shed below.

Ben's confused face.

REVEAL: The truck, still in the shed.

Ben looks around.

BEN

Rein?

(and)

Rein!?

He leaves.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Ben enters, calls for her. Starts to look in all the rooms.

INT. CABIN, STUDIO - DAY

Ben appears in the doorway.

No Rein here. Just the mess of her art supplies.

He leaves. Comes back.

Ben walks around Rein's easel. On it sits a painting of a bunch of animals dressed to the nines, sitting around a table at a dinner party. A mountain lion in a suit stands at the head of the table, raising a champagne glass. Making a toast.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben enters from the studio. The sound of brakes squeaking.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Ben exits onto the porch as an unknown truck pulls up next to the cabin. Rein hops out of the passenger and heads for the back. WILL (40s) gets out of the driver's side and does the same.

BEN

Will?

WILL

Ben! How's it goin'?

They start to move stuff out of the truck.

BEN

Fine.

WILL

Yea, you look it. Rein was tellin' me about that. Those little bastards'll getcha.

BEN

Yea.

(to Rein)

What happened?

REIN

The truck wouldn't start. I didn't want to wake you.

BEN

I got stung, I'm not dying. Didn't have to bother Will, here.

WILL

It's no big deal. I got nothin' today, anyway.

BEN

I mean, it's not nothing. It's like an hour and a half each way.

WILL

Hey, we may be a couple miles down the road, but we're still neighbors.

BEN

Well, maybe. But, we still owe you.

BEN

Nah, I won't have it. Hannah'd have my ass if she found out I took somethin' from you two.

BEN

She doing okay?

WILL

Yea, good as ever. Garden's doin' pretty well. Can you believe this weather? Best in a long time. Anyway, it's been keepin' her busy.

(and)

Actually... I think there is something' you can do for me.

BEN

Anything.

WILL

Well. You know Hannah's always wanted to have ya'll over for dinner.

Nothing from Ben.

WILL

It'd really mean a lot to her.

Ben and Rein share a look. Neither pleased.

BEN  
I guess.

Rein closes the tailgate, carries something inside.

WILL  
Great! You guys got plans for  
Saturday night?

BEN  
We don't have plans for any night.

WILL  
Alright then.  
(beat)  
Well, I guess I'll go let Hannah  
know. She's gonna be real excited.

He gets in the truck. Ben thinks.

BEN  
Hey, Will?

He goes to the window.

WILL  
Yea?

BEN  
I figured I should tell you.  
(and)  
Rein doesn't eat meat.

WILL  
What do ya mean?

BEN  
She's a vegetarian.

Will thinks it over.

WILL  
Well, alright. I mean, I don't know  
what she's gonna eat, but I'm sure  
Hannah'll figure somethin' out.  
(and)  
I never understood those vejans or  
whatever they're called. If I  
woulda ever tried to pull that my  
dad woulda popped me a new one.

BEN  
Yea, mine too.  
(beat)  
Anyway. See you later.

WILL  
Yup, see ya.

Ben watches as Will backs the truck out and pulls into the gap in the woods. He looks to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Ben enters, watches Rein unpack some stuff in the kitchen.

BEN  
Why didn't you wake me up?

REIN  
I told you. You needed some rest.

BEN  
Yea, well, now we have to have dinner with them.

REIN  
You know I don't want to, either, but it's already happening. So we're just gonna have to deal with it.

(beat)  
Did you tell him about...

BEN  
Yea.

REIN  
What'd he say?

BEN  
Nothing.

REIN  
Mhmm.

Rein leaves. Ben stares out the door after her.

INT. SHED - DAY

Ben clanks about behind the truck. Comes around with a toolbox.

The hood pops open. Ben lifts it, revealing an extremely clean motor.

He starts to inspect the machinery, but stops. Looks confused.

A cable is disconnected from a small component on the top of the motor.

Ben simply plugs it back in. Looks to the cabin.

INT. WORKSHOP - DAY

Ben sets up two tall, rounded lengths of wood against a wall. He pushes slightly thinner pieces into slats in their sides. The beginnings of a headboard starting to appear.

When he tries to put the last piece into place, it won't fit. The hole's too small. Ben lets out an annoyed sigh.

He sits on a stool, chips the end by hitting a small blade with a hammer. But, he's not being careful and slips and hits his finger. He curses and throws the hammer against a wall. Runs a hand over his face.

EXT. WILL & HANNAH'S - NIGHT

The house Ben passed on the road. It's a normal, modern home.

INT. WILL & HANNAH'S, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A table filled with food. A roast, baked vegetables, mashed potatoes, salad, and bread.

HANNAH (O.S.)  
...tried to get you some of that  
tofu stuff, but Jerry didn't have  
any.

Ben, Rein, Will, and HANNAH (40s) have just sat down to dinner. The room looks like any other modern dining room, albeit somewhat country. Rein and Ben look uncomfortable.

REIN  
It's really okay, Hannah. This is  
fine.

Will pours himself and Hannah a glass of wine.

HANNAH

Well, potatoes and salad ain't no diet.

WILL

Can I get your glasses?

BEN

Oh... I should've told you. We don't drink.

WILL

What? Why?

Ben just shrugs.

WILL

Well, you can not drink and still have a glass.

(off their look)

Come on, it's a party. We've never had you guys over.

Ben and Rein share a look.

BEN

I guess.

WILL

Alright! Let's have some fun!

Will starts to pour them a glass.

LATER

Everyone's more comfortable, almost finished with their food.

WILL

...shot off that thing like a rocket! Never seen nothin' like it in my life.

BEN

Was he okay?

WILL

Yea, he's alright. One of his arm's a little numb, but hey. He's lucky to be alive. Coulda been a lot worse.

REIN

Wasn't it scary?

WILL

On the poles? Nah. I mean, at first maybe a little. But, you got your strap on there. Long as you're careful everything goes fine.

HANNAH

He was gettin' tired of it by the end.

WILL

Yea, maybe. But, twenty years of anything'll do that to someone. That's why we came up here.

(to explain)

My dad died a few years back. Had a bunch of money hidden away no one knew about. So, we figured why not come up here and relax a little.

(and)

Anyway. What about you two?

REIN

What?

WILL

What do you do?

HANNAH

We've been wonderin' since ya'll got here. Never see you drive past during the day.

BEN

We don't have jobs. We just try to do everything ourselves.

REIN

I do the gardening and inside the house, and Ben does all the hunting and outside stuff.

WILL

Well, we gathered that much. We meant what're you guys about? Where ya from? How'd ya end up here? People don't just come up here for no reason.

They look hesitant.

WILL  
 You guys in some kinda trouble or  
 somethin'? If ya are, we don't got  
 no one to tell.

Will and Hannah wait for their answer.

BEN  
 Well, we lived in New York. Rein  
 ran a daycare for the gifted, and I  
 was a chief operations officer at  
 JPMorgan.

A beat.

WILL  
 Okay... So, what're ya'll doin' out  
 here?

INT. WILL & HANNAH'S, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rein helps Hannah wash pans and load the dishwasher.

REIN  
 Ugh, I miss my dishwasher so much.

HANNAH  
 Yea, it's sure handy. Can't you  
 guys fit one?

REIN  
 We could, but we don't have  
 electric in the main floor.

HANNAH  
 Really?

REIN  
 Yea, plumbing either. We have it in  
 the basement, though.

HANNAH  
 If you don't have plumbing, how do  
 you...?

REIN  
 Outhouse.

Hannah looks horrified.

WILL (PRE-LAP)  
 I just don't get why in hell you'd  
 do that.

## INTERCUT - LIVING ROOM

Ben and Will smoke a cigar by the fire.

BEN

I mean, it's why we moved up here.

WILL

To not have a shower?

BEN

Kind of.

## KITCHEN

HANNAH

Well, I don't get it. Why would you do that to yourselves?

REIN

We were just tired of it.

HANNAH

Of what?

## LIVING ROOM

BEN

Just... everything. Everybody. Everybody just being the same. Saying all the same things. Doing all the same things. My day was just full of people lying. It became normal after a while.

## KITCHEN

REIN

...you know? I was so tired of the women at work asking when we were gonna have kids. Like, you don't know my situation. You don't know the loss. What's happened.

## LIVING ROOM

BEN

...family wasn't any better.

(beat)

I worked hard my whole life to get a good job. No one I knew ever had anything. The kind of people whose parents don't care if they get to seventh grade. The kind of people who name their kid Bentley when they'd never seen one.

WILL

So, ya'll just left it all behind?

## KITCHEN

HANNAH

What about your family?

REIN

Well, my parents have passed, but I miss the others sometimes. But, this is the choice we made. You know? To try to escape it. All of it. To try to make our own little society.

## LIVING ROOM

BEN

So we just left. No pictures. No furniture. We left it all.

WILL

Everything?

BEN

Everything.

## KITCHEN

HANNAH

So, what's next?

REIN

The truck. We're gonna totally cut out town. Groceries first, then everything else.

## LIVING ROOM

WILL

Huh.

(beat)

Well, I don't really understand.  
But, if you guys ever get in any  
trouble we'll be here.

BEN

Thanks.

They watch the fire crackle.

WILL

So, what's goin' on with Rein?

BEN

What do you mean?

WILL

Well, I mean... somethin' isn't  
right. You said she just up and  
stopped eatin' meat. People don't  
do what she's doin' for no reason.  
Somethin' caused it.

## EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

SHWING! A machete cuts through thick vegetation.

Ben clears brush at the treeline, the thorn-covered plants  
having encroached onto the lawn. Trying to take back their  
land.

He drops the blade and picks up a bunch of weeds, throws them  
into the woods.

Ben takes off his glove. He pulls a sticker out of his thumb,  
a drop of blood pools from the tiny wound. He sucks on it.  
Looks to the house.

## LATER

Ben comes around the cabin and calls to Rein, who's working  
across the garden.

BEN

You hungry yet!?

She shakes her head. He moves inside.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben stands inside, looking at the kitchen. He seems conflicted, like he's thinking something over.

INT. CABIN, HANGING ROOM - DAY

Ben enters. Stares at a fresh hanging deer.

He cuts a piece off from the inner hindquarter.

He grabs a jar of capers and anchovies off the shelf.

INT. CABIN - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The steak is dropped on a cutting board.

Ben rubs his hand over his mouth. He begins to cut.

The anchovies are finely diced and added to a bowl, followed by the capers and mustard.

Two eggs are cracked and separated, the yolks added to the bowl. Ben mashes the ingredients together, whipping them into a congruent sauce.

He adds some olive oil, chopped parsley, and red onion. Then some chili.

Ben stares at the hunks of raw steak on the cutting board. He adds them to the bowl.

Ben sits down with a garnished bowl of steak tartare. Some bread on the side.

A long beat. Ben just staring at the meal.

He puts some of it on a piece of bread...

...and brings it to his mouth. Chews through it.

Ben swallows. Runs his finger over his lips... and starts to wolf it down. He takes big spoonfuls into his mouth, engulfing the cubes of raw meat.

LATER

Happy and full, he sets his dishes in the sink. Starts to clean up.

He moves to clean the cutting board, but stops. Remnants of the steak still apparent. He slowly comes backs to reality. Becomes distressed.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Ben joins Rein at dinner, only a salad on his plate.

REIN  
Just salad?

BEN  
Huh? Oh, yea.  
(and)  
I'm all meated out today.

It's only for a moment, but a grin sneaks onto Rein's face.

BEN  
I know I asked before, but... why  
did you stop?

Rein takes a while.

REIN  
I don't know, I guess. It just felt  
kind of wrong, you know? We came  
here, and kind of just... invaded.  
We just take anything we want. We  
don't ask anybody if it's okay.

BEN  
Rein, there's nobody here.

REIN  
...I know.  
(and)  
You asked.

BEN  
I'm sorry.  
(and)  
So that's it then? That's  
everything?

REIN  
I mean, mostly.  
(beat)  
It also just... I don't know.

BEN  
It's okay. We don't need to talk  
about it anymore.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben stares at the ceiling in bed, Rein asleep. Cowboy at their feet.

He turns and looks at her. Smiles.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Rein picks raspberries in the garden, a beekeeper mask over her head. There's an insane amount of bees buzzing around the berry patch.

She notices something to the side.

Near the edge of the garden, a bunny nibbles on some grass. Hopping along.

Rein takes off the mask and happily watches.

Her joy disappears as she notices Ben coming onto the back porch with a rifle.

They lock eyes as Ben kneels down. Rein makes a "no" motion with her hands, her eyes worried. But, it's too late. Ben's already looking down the --

**BOOM!**

Rein watches in horror as the rabbit twitches and hops, spontaneous movements taking over as its life ends. Soon, it lies on the ground, a leg still twitching.

Rein stares at Ben as he walks over and picks it up. Brings it into the house.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Ben trudges through two foot deep snow amidst now bare trees.

SUPER: Winter

He takes off his gloves, revealing beet red hands. He brings them to his mouth, tries to heat them up.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DUSK

A too-skinny Rein reads by the fire. Ben enters from the cold, sheds his layers.

He joins her by the fire, heats his hands and face. The frost melts off of his beard, dripping onto the floor.

BEN  
It's getting colder.

Rein doesn't even hear him, just keeps reading. Ben acknowledges her rejection.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lies alone in bed. No Rein or Cowboy. He turns over and opens his eyes.

INT. CABIN, STUDIO - DAY

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Ben opens the door to the studio, Rein paints in a jacket inside.

BEN  
Rein?

She mildly acknowledges his presence, but keeps painting. He tries to look at the canvas.

BEN  
What you working o--

REIN  
It's nothing.

He stops.

BEN  
I just wanted to see.

REIN  
It's not finished yet.

Ben nods. She just keeps painting. He leaves.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben shocks awake.

He looks around the room. Again, no Rein or Cowboy.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben looks down from the top of the stairs. Rein and Cowboy are curled up on the floor in front of the fire.

A beat. He goes back upstairs.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Ben pushes through the snow-filled forest, looking for non-existent game in the white wilderness.

LATER

Still moving through the snow, getting tired. He stops. Turns around to go back --

Movement to the side. Ben instantly stops.

Out from behind the snow covered branches, a wolf appears. It's beautiful. Ben watches as the majestic creature makes its way through the forest.

The wolf, walking through the forest. Dancing on top of the snow --

**BOOM!**

It falls the ground. Blood seeps from its head.

Ben swings his rifle onto a shoulder and heads over.

He stares down at the wolf's corpse. Kneels down and starts to dress it. Steam drifts up as he cuts the belly open and pulls organs out.

He stops. Stares into the wolf's bloody cavity.

Ben cuts the heart out and holds it in both hands. He brings it to his lips and takes a bite. Blood drips down his face as he chews on the raw flesh.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Rein at dinner. A meager portion of boiled carrots and fried potatoes on Rein's plate. A big steak on Ben's.

BEN

Are you sure you don't want more?

Nothing.

BEN

Rein. Are you sure you don't want more?

She shakes her head no. He sighs.

BEN

What's going on, Rein? You won't even talk to me anymore.

REIN

I'm just tired.

BEN

You're just tired? Tired. That's what you are?

REIN

Yea.

BEN

And why are you tired, Rein? Huh? Maybe its cuz you're not eating anything. You're not doing anything.

REIN

I'm fine.

BEN

You're fine? Really? How the fuck are you fine? I mean, what're you doing anymore? Look at yourself! You just sit inside all day getting skinnier and skinner. You look like a corpse!

Rein just stares at the floor. Ben looks from her to his plate and back.

A fork stabs a piece of steak. Red liquid seeps out onto the plate.

Ben walks over, puts it in her face.

BEN

Eat it.  
(beat)  
Eat it.

REIN

No.

BEN

Eat it!

Ben tries to shove the steak into her mouth, but she turns away. He grabs her face and tries again, but she pushes his arm and jolts away.

Ben catches her and brings her to the floor, holds her with his arm as he pushes the meat into her closed lips. She screams through them and she flails at him.

He moves his elbow to her throat. Her mouth instinctively opens, allowing him to shove the flesh inside.

Ben takes his arm off and covers Rein's mouth as she squeals and tries to pull away. Kicking and swatting at his face.

He watches until he sees her swallow, then lets go. She instantly rushes away.

Ben watches as Rein kneels by the fire and vomits...

OUTSIDE

POV: We move through the edge of the woods and poke our head out, getting a view of the window-lit cabin.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

Ben looks through the window at pure darkness. Rein dry heaves in the background. He focuses back on her.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAWN

A sunrise peeks through snowy trees.

The cabin feels the new day's sun on its cold skin.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAWN

Ben heads downstairs. No Rein.

LATER

Ben boils some snow for coffee.

INT. BARN - DAWN

Ben does his chores. The pigs and chickens watch with suspicion.

INT. CABIN, BASEMENT - DAY

The door to the hanging room is open.

INT. CABIN, HANGING ROOM - DAY

Ben checks over the supplies, the list in hand. A fresh deer carcass hangs from the ceiling.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben comes up from the basement. Rein sits in the kitchen, reading. But, she's not wearing her glasses.

BEN

Hey.

Nothing.

BEN

Rein, I'm sorry. I don't know what to say... I feel like an animal.

REIN

(still reading)

It's okay.

BEN

No, it isn't. It's not okay.

(beat)

I'll never do anything like that again. I promise.

Rein nods, like: *I'm sure*. She turns a page.

A moment, and Ben leaves.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Ben stomps up the side of a hill, the snow even higher than before.

He reaches the top, looks out over the sea of white.

Moving across the hill, he suddenly stops. Looks to the side. About fifty feet away, a moose stands in the snow, staring at him. It's just like the dream, minus all the dead deer of course.

A long beat. Just stares.

Ben backs away and leaves the way he came.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A steak burns in a skillet.

BEN (O.S.)

Shit!

Ben pulls it off the stove and drops it in the sink, burning his hand. He waves it around in pain.

He calms down, inspects the damage.

His hand, already blistering.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lies in bed, alone. A noise from downstairs.

He looks out the window as a jacketless Rein heads toward and enters the barn.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Rein enters. Takes off her boots. Heads for the fi--

BEN (O.S.)

Where were you?

Ben sits in the dark kitchen.

REIN

I was just checking the animals.

She sits by the fire.

BEN

Why?

REIN

They were whining so I went out to see.

BEN

And?

REIN

Bert and Ernie were out of their pen, so I got them back in.

Ben doesn't know what to think. He watches his wife as she warms her hands.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAWN

Ben heads downstairs. No Rein, again.

INT. BARN - DAWN

Ben feeds the pigs, watches them as they mumble about in their pen.

INT. CABIN, BASEMENT - DAY

Ben flips the light on as he heads down the stairs. When he gets to the bottom, he stops.

The door to the hanging room is open.

BEN

No, no, no.

He heads inside --

INT. HANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- to see maggots crawling on the deer.

BEN

No. No!

He shakingly tries to wipe the worms off, but more and more keep appearing.

BEN

FUCK!

He rips open the corpse. Maggots spill out like water onto the floor.

Ben backs away, horrified.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben sits in the kitchen, his head in his hands. Rein comes down the stairs.

BEN  
(through his hands)  
Did you go downstairs, yesterday?

REIN  
No.

A beat.

REIN  
What is it?

BEN  
I must've forgot to close the door.

REIN  
Oh.

BEN  
I can't believe how this winter's  
going.  
(and)  
I think I'm gonna have to slaughter  
one of the pigs.

A blank stare from Rein.

BEN  
Do you remember? Is Bert older than  
Ernie?

She leaves. Ben stares after her before returning to his hands.

INT. BARN - DAY

Bert and Ernie snort around their pen in ignorance. Ben stands nearby, watching with hesitance.

A leash is put around Ernie's head. He snorts with happy interest.

Ben leads him out of the pen, blocks Bert when he tries to follow for the family walk.

Bert heads over to a crack in the wall as Ben leads Ernie outside.

THROUGH THE CRACK

Bert watches Ben lead his friend over to the shed, tying him to a post. Ernie happily snorts as Ben disappears...

...then returns with a pistol behind his back. Bert goes silent. Ben kneels, rubs Ernie's belly and ears. He stands up, puts the gun to his head, and pulls the --

**BOOM!**

Bert lets out horrified squeals as Ernie drops to the ground, blood reddening the snow around him. Bert tries to ram through the crack, desperate to come to his friend's aid.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben stares at Rein, staring into the fire.

BEN  
I had to, Rein.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A knife cuts through a pork chop.

Ben sits at dinner, alone.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lies in bed, alone. Unable to sleep.

INT. BARN - DAWN

Light floods in as Ben opens the doors to the barn.

He enters. Stops. Stares.

The pig pen is empty.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAWN

Ben follows Bert's tracks in the snow.

Soon, he heads into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Ben continues amongst the snow-covered trees.

He starts to look confused, follows the hoofprints as they slowly start to lengthen in distance from each other. After a while, they change from four prints to only two.

Ben follows them to the base of a tree. Looks up at the empty trunk, then around it. But, there's nothing there.

He scans the nearby area. Just trees and empty space, totally devoid of life. It starts to make him anxious. He heads back.

LATER

Ben almost home. The cabin visible through the trees. He stops.

A short distance away, two foxes move over and under the snow as they play. Their orange fur pops in the midst of the cold and desolate forest.

Ben watches as they tumble away, out of view.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben sits in the kitchen, staring out a window.

He moves some hair out of his eyes. Pulls it down, sees how long its gotten.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - DAY

Ben sits at Rein's vanity. He picks up a scissors and cuts his hair in the mirror.

It falls to the floor in bunches.

Ben stares at himself in the mirror. Without his mangled locks, he looks like a completely different person. He moves to leave, but stops.

In the reflection, he moves a hand over his beard.

LATER

A straight razor runs over Ben's now hairless neck.

He wipes his face with a towel. Looks at his clean cut hair and face.

A new man.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben sits by the fire. Rein enters from her studio, paint on her clothes.

BEN  
What do you think?

Rein stops, stares.

REIN  
Why did you do that?

BEN  
I just figured it was time. Don't you like it?

REIN  
(beat)  
No, I don't.

She leaves.

INT. CABIN, STUDIO - DAY

Ben enters, Rein at her easel.

BEN  
We need to talk, Rein.

REIN  
I don't want to talk, *Ben*.

BEN  
What is going on? What's happened?  
I know I've done some bad things,  
but...  
(beat)  
Please, help me out here.

Rein stands up.

REIN  
You're a big boy, I'm sure you can figure it out.

She leaves. Ben stares at the floor.

He looks at the canvas, moves around to the front. The first few strokes of a landscape painted on.

Ben starts to leave, but stops as he sees a stack of unpinned canvas on a workbench.

He flips through them. Landscape. Landscape. Another landscape. Just all landscapes. Some of them even the same picture. Ben shakes his head...

...but stops. Moves all the landscapes to the side, revealing paintings of animals dressed like humans doing everyday activities. A beaver in a suit waving to a lion police officer. An alligator sitting in a little boat in the middle of a lake, fishing. An old-timey version of a group of birds standing at a 1920s bar, drinking beers.

He starts to flip through them faster, finally stops on one of a doe sitting at an easel behind the cabin, painting a picture of their garden in springtime. A buck chops wood in the background near the shed.

FADE TO:

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

A still skinny Rein sits at her easel behind the cabin, painting a picture of their garden in springtime. Ben chops wood in the background by the shed.

SUPER: Spring

ACROSS THE YARD

Ben chops a log.

He wipes his sweaty face. Looks across the yard at Rein.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Ben comes down the stairs, a bunch rounded wood pieces lean against the wall the the bottom. He grabs some and heads back upstairs.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - DUSK

A beautiful wooden bed frame now inhabits the bedroom. Each smooth log has thin spiral cuts on its surface. The headboard has deer antlers weaved between its slats, as well as a small wolf paw insignia in the middle.

BEN (O.S.)  
What do you think?

Ben and Rein stand by the foot. Rein seems pleased, until she looks at the antlers. Ben notices, looks discouraged.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The breath of spring has once again brought the forest to life. Little buds and tender leaves sprout from branches. Grass pokes its way up through the earth. Fresh foliage pushes amongst itself to get a little more sunlight.

Ben pushes through the woods, moving branches and brush out of his way. He notices something on the ground.

A pair of rusty glasses lies hidden amongst the dead leaves and fresh grass. He picks it up.

He inspects them. Then continues on.

LATER

Ben comes upon a thick patch of vegetation. A small spot in the side looks like its been worn down.

EXT. THE CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Ben pushes into a little clearing, hidden away in the brush. It's about twenty feet in diameter. The grass is noticeably worn down.

Ben inspects the ground, finds a few tracks of different sizes.

In the middle of the area, Ben moves some dirt aside with his boot, uncovering some ashes. He looks around, confused.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits by the fire, holding the glasses. Rein enters from outside. She heads --

BEN  
Rein.

She stops. A beat.

BEN  
Where have you been?

REIN  
What do you care?

Ben grimaces, shakes his head.

BEN  
What's happened to us?

REIN  
You know exactly what.

BEN  
Where have you been going?

REIN  
It's none of your business.

She moves to leave --

BEN  
I found your glasses.  
(and)  
Don't you need them anymore?

REIN  
No.

BEN  
What were you doing out there?

REIN  
I go for walks.

BEN  
Yea? You go for walks? What about  
sleeping downstairs every night?  
What about going to the barn in the  
middle of the night?

REIN  
I told you, I --

BEN  
What the fuck is going on, Rein!?  
What is happening?

Just a blank stare.

BEN

Ever since you stopped... it's like you're not even you anymore. Just tell me what's going on.

(beat)

Rein.

(and)

Rein! Tell me what the fuck is going on!

A beat. Rein suddenly bursts into tears.

REIN

I'm sorry, Ben. I'm sorry.

She goes into his confused arms and cries her eyes out. Ben tries to comfort her. He looks out a window, a deer watches from the treeline.

He looks back to his wife.

REIN

Are we gonna be okay, Ben?

BEN

Yea. Yea, Rein. Of course.

She hugs him tighter. He looks back out the window.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - LATER

Ben comes down from upstairs, ready for bed. He goes to the studio --

INT. CABIN, STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

-- and pokes his head in. Rein sits on the floor with all of her supplies spread around her.

BEN

What're you doing?

She smiles when she sees him.

REIN

I know you hate that it's so messy in here, so I thought I'd organize it.

BEN

Oh, thats nice. Don't you think that it's a little late, though?

REIN

Oh. Yea. I guess I lost track of time.

Ben nods. Leaves.

He pokes his head back around, watches Rein as she ROYGBIV's tubes of paint.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lies awake in bed, Rein fast asleep. Cowboy at the foot.

He turns and looks at her.

EXT. CABIN - DAWN

SHUCK. SHUCK. SHUCK. The well pump moves up and down, water shoots into a pale.

Ben carries water to the cabin.

He reaches the porch, where Cowboy sits by his chair. The huge dog looks like he's in pain.

BEN

Hey, buddy. You alright?

Ben scratches the rot's head, notices he's protecting his hind legs.

BEN

It's okay boy, let me see.

He starts to lift his leg, but Cowboy bares his teeth and growls ferociously.

Ben backs away, shocked.

INT. CABIN - DAWN

Ben distractedly scans this year's list with a shaky hand, coffee brewing. The pencil he's using is down to a nub, and when he makes a mark it slips out of his grasp.

Ben sighs, stares at the table.

INT. CABIN, STUDIO - DAWN

Ben looks through drawers for a pencil. All of Rein's paints are still on the floor from last night. All the shelves and tables still empty.

He finds one, and moves to leave...

...but stops. Looks up at a shelf high on the wall, where one lone paint can sits in the corner. He takes it down.

Ben nervously tries to open the can. But, it's on really tight. Almost dented into place. He looks around for something to help.

He grabs a screwdriver.

Ben forces it under the lid and pries up, popping it off.

He looks down at a stash of mementos. A stack of pictures, an iPod Classic with headphones and a charger, and a gold necklace.

Ben takes the ipod and sets it aside. Then pulls out the pictures.

They're all of Ben and Rein before they moved. All dated from 2007-2011. There's one of them and some friends at a bar, having a good time. Another of them in an empty apartment on their move-in day. A smiling Ben doing woodworking. Rein in an art gallery. More and more happy memories flash in front of Ben's face as he looks through the photos. Until finally, he reaches the last one. On it, Ben stands with an obviously pregnant Rein, the Statue of Liberty in the background. It's dated 4/25/2011.

He sets the photos aside and pulls out the necklace. Its gold chain leads to a small pendent of a person with angel wings, an emerald as its body.

Ben stares at the fallen angel. A noise from upstairs. He quickly returns the items to the paint can.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ben inconspicuously pours coffee into two mugs. Rein walks in, still half-asleep.

REIN

Morning.

A good morning kiss, Ben hesitant.

He hands her a mug, a thick scar across her wrist visible for the first time.

BEN

Morning.

Ben watches her as she stares out the window. The sun peaking through the trees.

REIN

It looks like it's gonna be nice today.

Ben nods, forces a smile.

EXT. CABIN - DAWN

Ben sits on the porch, tapping his fingers on his mug. No Cowboy.

INT. BARN - DAWN

Light floods the barn as Ben opens the doors.

He moves to the pig pen. Two new pigs sit silently inside, watching him.

Ben self-consciously feeds them.

He looks in the chicken coop. No eggs.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

A sweat-covered Ben kneels on top of the barn, fixing a hole in the roof.

He takes a break. Wipes his face. Looks out at the area. From up here you can see the whole homestead, as well as some nearby hills. A herd of deer walk along the top of one.

Ben looks at the side of the cabin, where Rein hangs wet garments on a clothesline.

INT. CABIN, OFFICE - DAY

Ben unlocks the gun case and takes out a rifle.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Ben moves through the woods, a hill coming into view.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Ben walks through a sea of tall grass.

He comes to the edge of a hill and takes a look at the surrounding area. Spots the group of deer near a treeline, down at the bottom.

Ben kneels down, looks down the scope.

*The deer nibble on fresh buds, completely unaware.*

He steadies. Takes a deep breath...

A **BOOM!** in the distance. Ben turns to the --

**THWACK!** Dirt bursts into the air a few feet away from him. He jumps with surprise.

Ben stares at the indentation, confused. Another **BOOM!** in the distance. Ben frantically looks around --

**THWACK!** It hits even closer than before. Ben panics, pulls himself up and starts to run.

Ben runs along the side of the hill, heading for the tree line as another **BOOM!** echoes through the area.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Ben pushes into the woods. Keeps running.

LATER

Ben sits hidden in a fallen over hollowed-out trunk.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Ben, still in the trunk. The sunlight fading away.

He cautiously crawl outs, scans the area.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DUSK

POV: We move through the edge of the woods and poke our head out, getting a view of the window-lit cabin.

Ben crouches in the treeline, staring at the cabin. He looks through his scope.

*We scan through the area until we reach the cabin. No Cowboy on the porch. A figure is visible through the kitchen window, but steam from the stove hides its face.*

Ben puts the gun down. Stares across the yard.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Ben silently cracks the door open from outside. Rein's in the kitchen, cutting up strawberries. There's a steak and some potatoes frying on the stove. Rein jumps when she notices him in the doorway.

REIN

Oh, my god, Ben. You scared me.

Ben cautiously enters with his rifle as Rein returns to supper. She takes another look at him.

REIN

Didn't get anything?

Ben just shakes his head.

REIN

(regarding the steak)

Can you flip that? I think it's gonna burn.

A beat.

He leans the rifle in an easy access spot against the wall and does as she said. Never taking his eyes off her.

REIN

Is it done?

BEN

What?

REIN

The steak? We can eat if it's ready.

Ben watches her set the strawberries on the table, and for the first time since he came home, he notices that while it's set for two, there's a third chair at the table.

REIN

Is something wrong? You're acting weird.

He just stares at the chair as she puts the steak on the table and sits down.

REIN

Ben?

A moment, and he sits down. She starts to eat.

BEN

Rein.  
(beat)  
Rein.

REIN

Yea?

BEN

Why did you make dinner? You hate cooking.

She stops chewing.

REIN

Um... I don't know. I guess I just felt like it.

BEN

You just felt like it?

REIN

Yea.

She returns to her food. Ben just sits in confusion for a while.

REIN

It's gonna get cold.

A beat. Ben cuts a piece off the end of his steak. Red liquid comes out of the pink center.

He brings it to his mouth and chews, his eyes on the chair. His curiosity eventually gets the best of him.

BEN

Rein, why is that there?

She stops chewing again. Looks at the chair.

REIN

Um...

BEN

And why are you cooking? Don't say you just felt like it, cuz you never just feel like it.

Rein stays silent.

BEN

Why is it there?

(beat)

Why is it there, Rein?

She starts to say something, but stops.

REIN

I'm not supposed to tell.

BEN

You're not supposed to tell? What the fuck does that mean? There's no one else here.

REIN

...Not anymore.

BEN

Rein? Please. Stop talking in riddles. Tell me what's going on.

She takes a moment, but finally -- she smiles.

REIN

He told me not to, but I'm too excited. He's gonna forgive you, Ben! Bert's gonna forgive you.

BEN

...Bert? Bert's gonna forgive me?

REIN

Yea. He said that today was the big day. Today was the day you'd finally meet again. He said he was finally ready to forgive you for what you did to Ernie, so he came and made dinner.

(and)

Right before you got here he said that he was too nervous.. I tried to get him to stay, but he left.

BEN

Bert? The pig, Bert? He made the dinner?

REIN

I know it sounds crazy, but he's totally changed since he left. They all have.

Ben just shakes his head.

BEN

What you're saying doesn't make any sense, Rein.

REIN

I knew you wouldn't believe me.

BEN

Fine. Okay. Let's just say that the pig was here. And he cooked this steak. Don't you think that's weird? Why would he do that if he was so upset about...

Ben stares down at the piece of meat.

REIN

I don't know. He probably wanted it to go well. I told him how you lik-

-

BEN

Rein. Where did this come from?

REIN

Um, downstairs? He said he got it from downstairs.

Ben looks at the open door to the basement.

REIN

Why?

He gets up and heads across the room.

REIN (O.S.)

Ben?

INT. CABIN, BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ben flips the light switch as he heads down the stairs.

REIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Is everything okay?

He reaches the bottom. Stops. Stares at the

FREEZER

Ben puts a hand on the door... and lifts it up, revealing --

Just the normal, vacuum-sealed meat. He lets out a sigh of relief, until... he looks at the door to the hanging room.

He grabs the handle. Works himself up to it. And pulls --

INT. CABIN, HANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- the door open. A look of horror spreads across his face.

Will and Hannah's bodies hang from the ceiling, their chests spread open. Their guts removed.

INT. CABIN, BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ben backs out of the hanging room, traumatized. He starts to realize what's happened, and --

Vomits violently on the floor. Rein calls from the top of the stairs.

REIN (O.S.)

Ben? Are you okay?

He wipes his mouth. Tries to compose himself. And heads upstairs...

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...to a worried Rein, standing near the door.

REIN  
Are you sick? What happened?

But, he just brushes by her and heads for a window, starts to pull all the curtains closed around the room.

BEN  
We've gotta get out of here.

REIN  
What? Why?

BEN  
I -- I don't know. But, we've gotta go. It's not safe -- Whatever's happening.

REIN  
Not safe? Ben, he just wants to talk to you. If you just gave him a cha--

BEN  
REIN! Someone shot at me!

REIN  
What?

BEN  
That's why I was in so late. I was hiding. Something -- Someone tried to kill me.

REIN  
Well, there must be some other answer. Maybe Will was hunting and --

BEN  
Rein. It wasn't Will.

He heads for the office...

REIN  
But... Bert wouldn't do that, Ben. He wouldn't.

INT. CABIN, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ben moves to the gun case. One of the rifles is missing.

REIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
He just wants to put it behind us.

Ben pulls the case open and lifts a slat at the bottom, revealing a hidden compartment. A couple stacks of hundreds, an antique handgun with some shells, a tiny toy car (a Bentley), and a deconstructed cell phone lie inside.

Rein enters as he shoves one of the stacks and the handgun in his pockets.

REIN

Ben, where did you get that?

He starts to put the phone together.

BEN

We have to get out of here.

REIN

You hid a cell phone? This was your idea, Bentley. I can't believe you.

BEN

Rein! It doesn't matter right now!  
(and)  
I'm sorry. Look. I don't understand what's going on right now, but -- we just have to leave. Rein, we have to leave!

Ben watches as the cell phone turns on.

REIN (O.S.)

I just don't believe he'd do that. There has to be some other explanation.

BEN

(seeing no bars)  
Shit!

He starts to think out a plan, talking to himself. Not listening to Rein.

BEN (CONT'D)

We'll probably have to sleep in the truck tonight, but we should have enough gas to keep it warm.

REIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

He was really upset for a while but he's finally getting better. He just wants to talk, Ben. Just talk to him.

Ben brushes by --

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- Rein and heads up the stairs. She follows.

BEN  
Or maybe Jerry would let us stay with him. We'd have to figure out where he lives, though.

REIN  
Ben! Just listen to me! Bert wouldn't do something like that. He's kind. Talking --

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben grabs a bag from underneath their bed and starts to shove clothes inside.

REIN  
-- to him has helped me a lot. I was having a really hard time before. I was so... lonely.

BEN  
We'll just have to find somewhere new. It'll be hard, but we'll find somewhere. Maybe Wyoming.

Ben just continues to shove random clothes in the bag. Lost in hysteria.

BEN  
We can go to a bank in another state so they can't track us down. Then drive up and do the same thing again. No neighbors this time, just us two. We'll pay someone cash to build the house and then sell the truck. We could hitchhike if it's far and then we'd have made it. No one would know where we went.  
(and)  
Okay? Rein, are you ready?

But, Rein's not there.

BEN  
Rein?

The sound of a door closing. Ben moves to the window to see Rein running across the yard toward the woods.

BEN  
Rein!

He grabs his keys --

EXT. HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Ben exits and runs across the yard toward the woods. He notices the doors to the shed have been left open, the truck inside.

Soon, he heads into the woods...

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ben pushes wildly through the thick vegetation in the dark, breaking through small trees and bushes. Dodging trees. At some point he falls and hurts his foot, crawling on all fours before regaining his footing.

POV: We quickly move through the dark woods, dodging branches and tripping as we climb over a fallen tree.

Ben stops as he sees a muffled light hidden amidst the trees.

He heads for it.

MOMENTS LATER

A subtle glow warms the area as Ben reaches the spot where he found Rein's glasses.

He creeps up to the mangled plants and branches that surround the clearing and tries to peer through. But, it's too thick to get a good look.

He carefully pushes through, trying not to make any noise...

EXT. THE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Light spreads onto Ben's face as he peers through the edge of the brush.

In the clearing, Rein sits at a fire with one of each animal of the forest, all sitting like humans. Cowboy and Bert are there too, a rifle held on the pig's knee. They're all having a conversation in their own voices.

Ben watches with worry. Pulls out his pistol. A twig snaps.

The group goes silent. They all turn their heads.

Ben cocks the pistol's hammer. Pulls the bullets out of his pocket.

*Ben, trying to push the ammo into his pistol with shaky hands, the firelight dancing onto his-- He stops. Looks up, and stares right at us...*

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END