

# THE CIRCLE

"Pilot"

Written by

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ACT ONE

EXT. FAIRBANKS, ALASKA - DAY

**The 2nd largest city in Alaska.** Frozen-over, edged against the wild tundra, 130 miles south of the Arctic Circle.

EXT. REMOTE ALASKAN ROAD - DAY

Tall, frosted trees line the road. The shoulder falls off into the snow where RED MARKERS indicate where the wilderness starts.

AN UNMARKED TRUCK sits down the road off on a bank, watching.

INT. UNMARKED TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

RILEY HAWKINS, An Alaskan State Trooper, (40s, confident and effective, albeit a risk-taker) sits warming his hands as he eyes the curve of the road ahead. His radio BUZZES--

DISPATCH (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
FairCom 12, can I get a 10-20? Over.

Hawkins grabs his radio, responds casually.

HAWKINS  
10-4. Mile marker 216, no hunters yet. Just worshipping my heater.

DISPATCH (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Gotcha, Riley. Good luck, stay warm.

Hawkins places the radio back off just as he's taken aback--

HE SEES A FULL GROWN MOOSE GRAZING OFF THE ROAD. A beautiful creature, just inside the treeline.

EXT. REMOTE ALASKAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

An old Sedan speeds by the curve, not noticing the moose.

But STANDING ACROSS THE STREET, a winded HUNTER (30s) spots the moose - a rifle slung over his shoulder.

INT. UNMARKED TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Riley undoes his seatbelt and tenses. He watches the hunter...

EXT. REMOTE ALASKAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The hunter looks pale, exhausted as if he's just run through a mine field - he's sick of this chase. He crosses the street--

"The Circle" - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 2.

INT. UNMARKED TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Trooper Hawkins watches carefully as step-by-step the hunter walks across the road, onto the shoulder, down the snowy slope--

And just past the red marker - legal hunting ground. Hawkins relaxes as the hunter raises his rifle and aims.

EXT. REMOTE ALASKAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The hunter steadies his sights on the grazing moose--AND FIRES!

The shot misses, nailing a tree. The animal rears up and runs up the shoulder and across the road to the trees on the other side.

The hunter curses himself and quickly grabs his equipment, moving up the shoulder and right onto the street.

HE TAKES AIM ACROSS BOTH LANES AT THE MOOSE.

INT. UNMARKED TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Riley's eyes go wide. He hits the radio.

HAWKINS

FairCom 12, wild shot about to fire  
across traffic, going on foot!

He opens his door and quickly gets out--

EXT. REMOTE ALASKAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The hunter takes his time, steadying his breath as he aims.

A SEDAN comes around the bend. The driver, SHERRY (30s), sees the hunter. But the hunter doesn't care.

HE FIRES, missing the moose again just as the Sedan zooms by--

Sherry slams on her brakes, shocked by the wild shot. All the noise scares the moose off for good. The hunter is pissed.

Hawkins hurries onto the street as Sherry bursts out of her car--

SHERRY

Are you kidding me? You're gonna kill  
someone if you pull that shit!

The hunter snarls at the woman, doesn't want to hear it. He pulls out a flask and swigs just as he notices Hawkins.

HAWKINS

State Trooper! Those markers are red  
for a reason. It's legal hunting four  
feet off the damn road.

HUNTER

You gotta be kidding me...

HAWKINS

Put your weapon down and step to me.

But the hunter doesn't budge. He watches as the frustrated Sherry gets right in his face, smelling the liquor.

SHERRY

Drunk and deaf? Drop the gun,  
dickhead.

The hunter's blood boils - he tightens his grip on his rifle AIMED AT SHERRY'S FEET. She notices.

HAWKINS

Hands in the air, now!

SHERRY

You gonna shoot me, now? Don't worry,  
I'll stand still because clearly  
you're a terrible shot.

The hunter takes another swig... and then SPITS it out into Sherry's face, sending her stumbling back covering her eyes--

He LIFTS THE RIFLE to her!

Hawkins rips out his sidearm and FIRES a round, right into the hunter's shoulder--

An excellent shot! The hunter drops the rifle, slumping down, but he bounds backwards and grabs at a sidearm--

Sherry ambles around, wiping the liquor from her eyes as--

The hunter whips the gun out and FIRES wildly--

A bullet SLICES into SHERRY'S GUT! She crumbles to the ground--

*Shit.* Hawkins aims again but the hunter stumbles down the shoulder and bolts into the woods--

Quickly, Hawkins runs to Sherry, hoists her by her heavy coat and slides her off the road to her car. She's in shock.

Hawkins lifts her chin and looks in her eyes.

HAWKINS

Tell me your birthday.

Sherry struggles to find words in her throat as Hawkins searches for the wound -- IT'S IN HER FLANK, bubbling with blood.

*But there's an exit wound--*

SHERRY  
...November 7th...

Hawkins calms as he applies quick pressure to her belly. He gets a whiff of the strong liquor on her and cringes.

HAWKINS  
Well, happy belated. Can you move your legs?

Sherry's eyes roll in her head as she shakes her legs - it hurts. Hawkins smiles as he leans closer and holds her gaze.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)  
It went right in and out. No organs hit.  
(he grabs her hand)  
Push down here and breathe steady.  
You're going to be fine, I promise.  
(no response)  
Come on! Show me that pretty smile if you hear me.

Sherry laughs. Color comes back to her face. She takes a deep breath and smiles big. Hawkins smiles back and hits his walkie.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)  
(into radio)  
Code 10, gunshot wound. 417 on foot, trooper in pursuit!

Hawkins winks to her and is off. Sherry slows her breathing--

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

The hunter clutches his shoulder and bounds around trees, whipping his head back to see--

Hawkins sprinting after him through the white snow. The hunter spins around and FIRES a shot!

WAY OFF! A tree feet away from Hawkins splinters and he rolls off a larger tree and seemingly disappears.

The hunter waits and watches, breathing heavy. The gun is painfully balanced on his forearm as he scans the trees...

MOVEMENT TO HIS LEFT -- HE FIRES!

A tree near Hawkins is hit but he's still coming fast. The hunter takes a few steps back as he aims again--

But he almost loses his balance!

Behind him, he's right on the edge of a fall-off, 25 feet down a slope into a ditch. He turns back to find Hawkins--

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 5.

HE'S RIGHT ON HIM! Hawkins' hat flies off as he SLAMS right into the hunter who goes FLYING!

He CRASHES into the ground, rolling viciously down the embankment into the ditch. He hits the bottom and is still.

Hawkins stands at the top looking down, satisfied.

A SIREN BEEPS back at the road. He turns to see--

Through the trees, a COP's spinning lights arrive at the scene.

Hawkins turns back to the unconscious hunter and begins to take the embankment two steps at a time.

Hawkins kneels down hard on his back - the hunter GROANS. Hawkins flips out handcuffs and slaps them on.

EXT. ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY - LATER

In the middle of Fairbanks busiest borough sits a glistening government building--the Alaska DPS, home of the State Troopers.

INT. ALASKA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION - HALLWAY - DAY

Hawkins, still dressed in heavy winter gear from earlier, makes his way down the stale government hallway to the ABI offices.

INT. ABI CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins steps into the office of CAPTAIN ELAM ANDERS (60s), who's as powerful behind the desk as he is on patrol.

Hawkins notices another man, TROOPER MOE BAILEY (40s), looking sheepish. A young trooper, ERIC PENN (20s) stands in the corner - there for the experience but trying to act invisible.

CAPTAIN ANDERS

Take a seat, Riley. You know Trooper Bailey, right?

Hawkins extends his hand to Moe while he eyes Trooper Penn - well put-together kid, proud of his uniform.

HAWKINS

Good to see you, Moe.

TROOPER BAILEY

You too, Riley.

Hawkins takes a seat as Anders gets down to business.

CAPTAIN ANDERS

How's the vic from this morning?

HAWKINS

Lost a lot of blood but she's a fighter.

The captain nods - what a shame. He takes a breath.

CAPTAIN ANDERS

Riley, I've got some bad news... You know Steele Valley? It's, what, 30 miles south of the Arctic Circle?

Hawkins looks at Bailey, still looking away.

HAWKINS

Moe's jurisdiction, the village across Lake Yarbull.

Anders tosses Hawkins a file. He opens to find a picture of A COLD-BLOODED KILLER that he recognizes - MICHAEL MACK (30s).

CAPTAIN ANDERS

Well, Michael Mack, escaped from Fairbanks Correctional 8 hours ago, headed due north to Steele Valley.

Hawkins can't fucking believe it. He glares at the photo--

HAWKINS

He's trying to make it through the Circle to Canada...

CAPTAIN ANDERS

Just like last time in Montana. And like last time, he's not gonna make it.

HAWKINS

We flushed his assets in Toronto back in '06, so he's gotta be going for his brother this time.

TROOPER BAILEY

Nobody likes a snitch.

Hawkins gives Bailey a "shut the fuck up" look.

CAPTAIN ANDERS

He got his hands on a snowmobile and just shot off. We estimate he's up to a hundred miles away by now.

(then)

As I'm sure you know, we're chasing him but he's damned good at running. We have to beat him to this village.

TROOPER BAILEY

Problem is, we've had no luck holding it down; bootleggers have completely taken over and village safety officers turned badges in last week.

HAWKINS

Mack would just make himself at home, sit pretty until he's got everything he needs to run for it again.

Hawkins shoots a final look at the photo and closes the file.

CAPTAIN ANDERS

It's a mess up there, Riley. No local enforcement, too many criminals and not enough troopers on my payroll.

(then, frustrated)

He still has nine lives to answer for. I'm assigning you to the area effective immediately.

Anders takes the file from Hawkins and plops it on the desk before pointing to Trooper Penn.

CAPTAIN ANDERS (CONT'D)

Trooper Eric Penn is Moe's pilot, he'll take both of you to Steele Valley. We need results yesterday.

Hawkins thinks for a moment. Then--

HAWKINS

Okay. But Moe's not coming.

TROOPER BAILEY

What? Captain--

HAWKINS

--You want me to take the village back so we can scout for the Mack? Don't send me there with someone without balls. If he couldn't get it done, assign him to postal inspection.

Trooper Penn tries to stifle a laugh - he can't. Hawkins takes a look back at Penn now trying to act normal.

TROOPER BAILEY

The hell is your problem, Riley? I know the area better than anyone and you need backup!

HAWKINS

The pilot's a Trooper. I'll take him.  
Plus, isn't Venso still undercover?

Beat. Captain Anders nods. Bailey perks up.

TROOPER BAILEY

You have a plant in the village?

Bailey looks to Captain Anders for help. But Anders likes this idea. He nods again and then looks to Penn.

CAPTAIN ANDERS

Can you get airborne within the hour?

PENN

Yes sir.

Hawkins stands up, smiling. He turns to Bailey.

HAWKINS

Don't get paper cuts on your tongue.

And with that, Hawkins turns leaving a fuming Trooper Bailey - but not before winking at Trooper Penn on his way out.

INT. HOSPITAL ICU - LATER

Harsh light from the midday sun reflected off the snow cuts into the darkness of the Intensive Care Unit.

Sherry is in bed, bruised, hooked up to an IV, post-surgery. Hawkins steps into the room, no winter coat. He smiles.

HAWKINS

Hi Sherry.

Sherry opens her eyes, recognizing the man who saved her life.

SHERRY

Since when do state troopers visit  
civilians with a death wish?

Hawkins laughs as he walks up to her bed and makes a gesture to the closest chair - may I sit? Sherry nods.

HAWKINS

My name's Riley Hawkins. It's nice  
to officially meet you.

(beat)

I am so sorry about what happened to  
you this morning--

SHERRY

--I was being an idiot--

HAWKINS

No. You weren't. You were being brave because you cared about your rights, your freedom. I sometimes forget that there are people who still believe in that.

Sherry watches him with undivided attention.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

You are the reason I do what I do. Because you shouldn't have to take a bullet when you do what's right.

Sherry holds back tears and nods strongly. Hawkins stands up, putting a hand on her as he turns to leave--

But Sherry grabs his hand. He turns - the tears are falling.

SHERRY

Thank you for saving my life, Riley. I don't have... my family's gone. So, thank you for being my first visitor.

This hits Hawkins hard.

HAWKINS

Then I'll just have to visit again.

With a final hand squeeze, Hawkins leaves a lifted Sherry.

EXT. PRIVATE AIRFIELD - DAY

A light aircraft, a Cessna 140, waits on the recently salted runway. Penn waits, rubbing his arms to stay warm. He spots--

Hawkins, carrying a duffel bag, walking to the aircraft. He waves in casual acknowledgement. Hawkins returns it.

PENN

You all set?

HAWKINS

Is that a Cessna 140?

PENN

Yes sir, my personal aircraft. Gladly strong-armed from my possession for the betterment of law enforcement.

Hawkins nods, studying Penn's face and immaculate uniform.

HAWKINS

Where are you from?

PENN

Flagstaff. Trained for Wildlife in the Four Points area but they were flush with pilots.

HAWKINS

You dress like you're making a point.

PENN

I don't want to be under-used.

Hawkins understands that.

HAWKINS

So, you didn't think too highly of Trooper Bailey, did you?

PENN

He was an arrogant ass.

Silence. Penn realizes he might have offended a superior--

HAWKINS

You can be honest with me, kid, but don't get comfortable. I'll be relying on you heavily and I want to know that you're sharp. Otherwise, you're useless. Got it?

PENN

Yes sir, absolutely.

Hawkins smirks and tosses him the duffel bag. Penn fumbles it.

HAWKINS

Good. Let's get airborne.

Hawkins slaps Penn on the shoulder as he walks past him.

INT. CESSNA 140 - LATER

Penn pilots just under the cloud line. The Alaskan wilderness stretches out in front - Fairbanks is just a blip behind them.

Hawkins bundles up and adjusts his headset. He looks up at Penn - taped to the windshield is THE PICTURE OF MICHAEL MACK.

A muscular, brutish man with wild eyes that never seem to close. He stares out of the picture and right at Hawkins.

Penn looks in the rearview mirror at a transfixed Hawkins.

PENN

Scary sonuvabitch. I remember sleeping better the day he was thrown back in prison. You?

FLASHBACK--

A lush, Montana forest. MICHAEL MACK (40s, cannons for arms), stands up from behind a tree, wearing Montana DOC orange peels.

A BLOODY ROCK is in his hands. He stares down at his dirty work:

A OLD FOREST RANGER, MAULED TO DEATH

No regrets on Mack's face. He runs, leaving the body to rot.

END FLASHBACK--

Hawkins can't get the image out of his head.

HAWKINS

That second ranger was my father.

Penn gives that a moment of silence.

PENN

I'm sorry. I had no idea.

(beat)

Do you think he can even survive out here?

HAWKINS

He survived the Montana wild for two months. I wouldn't put it past him.

PENN

Well, I sure as shit don't want to run into him out there.

HAWKINS

I do.

Hawkins looks down--

THE MASSIVE FROZEN LAKE YARBULL.

Flanked by trees on one side and craggy mountains on the other. At the water's end is Steele Valley - the village just beyond.

EXT. STEELE VALLEY - RUNWAY - LATER

The Cessna has landed and slows to a stop just near the lake.

Hawkins and Penn get out and grab their gear as they begin to head along a trail into the valley.

EXT. STEELE VALLEY - END OF TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins makes his way through a narrow trail in the trees as Penn, draped in bags, follows closely behind.

HAWKINS

We establish power and trust first.  
We're not here to scare people. We  
want to scout the area discreetly.

PENN

How do we deal with the bootleggers?

HAWKINS

You focus on making contacts with all  
the civilians and establish safe  
zones. Leave the bootleggers to me.

Penn smiles. This is exciting for him.

PENN

Trooper Bailey never let me come into  
the village with him.

HAWKINS

Did you sleep in the plane?

Penn scoffs, nodding. They both laugh at this for a moment.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Well, embarrassment does some strange  
things to people. You know, when I  
first transferred to Fairbanks, he--

THEN-- A MASSIVE HUSKEY JUMPS RIGHT IN HAWKINS' FACE!!

Hawkins and Penn jump back -- the leashed dog barks manically.  
It has two different colored eyes - green and yellow.

Hawkins looks past it: a large, decrepit COMPLEX, one that  
should have been demolished years ago. A symphony of barks  
surround the building.

DOZENS OF HUSKIES are tied up barking madly at them. The  
village beyond looks like it narrowly survived an attack. It's  
couldn't be more uninviting.

SMOKE BILLOWS from the thick trees far off and GUNSHOTS echo  
from the mountain. *It's like a god damn third-world country.*

Hawkins and Penn look at each other. *Shit.*

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. STEELE VALLEY - END OF TOWN - DAY

The mad huskies all bark angrily at Hawkins and Penn. Hawkins watches the complex closely, spotting a large window--

*A figure quickly moves past it!!* Then--

The front door swings open and out rushes MADISON BRENNAN (30s), a beautiful raven-haired southern belle with a hoodie on.

MADISON

I'm sorry about the dogs! Feedin' time was ten minutes ago but I must've been daydreaming.

Madison snaps at the dogs, hushing them up. They all calm down. Hawkins keeps his eye on the window - that wasn't Madison...

MADISON (CONT'D)

Y'all the new troopers, I take it?

HAWKINS

Riley Hawkins, this is Eric Penn.

Hawkins watches a GARAGE just beyond the complex - curious...

MADISON

Madison Brennan. I train dogs for the Iditarod. Use to do the fancy dog shows in South Carolina but can't stand the Baptists.

Penn laughs, unable to stop checking her out.

PENN

We're looking for the Safety Office.

Meanwhile, Hawkins spots the figure, A SHIRTLESS MAN, that bolts into the open garage and then turns, looking at him--

Hawkins undoes his holster. Quickly, Madison follows his gaze to the garage. She grabs Hawkins' hand, stopping him--

MADISON

It's all right. He's with me. Can we get off on the right foot and y'all say nothing about this? Please.

The RED-HAIRED, shirtless man, steps out of the garage, caught. He waves. Hawkins buttons the holster and smiles.

HAWKINS

Yes, of course. Sorry ma'am. I heard this place can be trouble.

MADISON

Let me deal with this then I'll show  
you around, okay?

Hawkins and Penn nod as she runs off to the garage. They watch  
Madison and the red-haired man. She gives him her hoodie, then--

THEY KISS AND HE LEAVES AFTER MAKING EYE CONTACT WITH HAWKINS--

EXT. THE VILLAGE - MAIN CORRIDOR - DAY

The village isn't lively in the least. Simple steel buildings  
and insulated homes encircle a decrepit central square.

A bundled-up Madison leads Hawkins and Penn into the square  
where a few LOCALS stop to gawk at the troopers.

MADISON

All the residences are down past the  
snow mobile mechanic, this is the  
school my sister runs, and the--

HAWKINS

--Where's the bootleggers camp?

Madison takes a pause. This man is ballsy.

MADISON

There's an old hanger past the homes -  
that's where they live. But they  
spend most their time in the woods.

HAWKINS

How many are there?

Madison is about to answer--

LEVI (O.C.)

Too many.

Hawkins turns to see LEVI STEWARD (50s) coming from the GENERAL  
STORE - the brawn of a marine but the gentle nature of a nurse.

LEVI (CONT'D)

Liquor's been illegal here for years  
but since they set up this operation,  
the law hasn't been worth a damn.

HAWKINS

You were the village safety officer.

LEVI

Levi Steward. Not in the business of  
getting myself killed anymore. You  
the guy that's supposed to change  
things around here?

HAWKINS

If that guy's name was Trooper Riley  
Hawkins, then yes.

Levi sizes him up. Hawkins couldn't care less about what Levi  
thinks about him. Madison watches, interested. Levi smiles.

LEVI

Coffee?

INT. GENERAL STORE - MOMENTS LATER

A pot of tar-black coffee bubbles, smoking on the unclean  
stovetop. Levi picks it up and carefully pours 5 cups.

Hawkins grabs one and looks over the store:

ROWS OF TYPICAL ESSENTIALS AND GOODS, ALMOST ALL GONE

There's a collection of large, empty water jugs in the corner  
near them. Levi catches Hawkins eyeing them--

LEVI

Dozens of jugs and a pallet or two go  
missing every shipment. Not sure  
where Wyatt stops the truck from  
Fairbanks but it's like magic.

HAWKINS

When's your next shipment?

LEVI

Tomorrow morning.

HAWKINS

Can we get in touch with the driver?

MADISON

They use day laborers. Never seen the  
same guy twice.

Hawkins thinks on this.

HAWKINS

So, Wyatt's the leader?

LEVI

Yup. Used to be one helluva hunter.  
Pelt trade boomed, he didn't like the  
one-bear-a-year limit so...

Levi throws his hands up - that's the story.

HAWKINS

You go where the money is.

MADISON

But since they brew in the woods, our deer and moose populations have dropped massively. They've taken over the whole damn mountain.

PENN

How can they control a mountain?

LEVI

There's only one safe way up the slope: just off a natural bridge west of town. They control that.

Hawkins and Penn look at each other. They need a plan.

Then-- The door opens again and TEN CHILDREN bundled-up like Eskimos come inside from the cold followed by a tall beauty happily talking to them. This is DAKOTA BRENNAN (30s).

DAKOTA

Now take off your boots before you get your cocoa.

The kids and run to Levi happily, without taking their boots off. Dakota sighs, helpless but charmed. Then freezes, noticing the Troopers. Levi playfully runs from the kids.

LEVI

Half hour to play and then Math!

The kids groan and hurry down the hall after Levi. Dakota walks past Hawkins and grabs some coffee. He eyes her: she's stunning.

MADISON

Trooper Hawkins, this is my sister, Dakota.

HAWKINS

Pleasure.

Dakota doesn't look at him as she drinks her coffee.

DAKOTA

No need to learn names. You'll be gone or dead in the next few days and we'll be back fending for ourselves.

*Damn.* Penn and Madison watch as Hawkins smirks at her.

MADISON

(through gritted teeth)  
Would you please show them the to their office?

Then, Dakota turns to Hawkins.

"The Circle" - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 17.

DAKOTA  
(harshly, sarcastically)  
Happily.

And with that, Dakota steps past Hawkins to a STAIRWAY to the roof. Confused, Hawkins looks to Madison.

MADISON  
She's better with kids.

Hawkins smirks, then exits. Penn eyes Madison, nervous.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - ROOFTOP - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins steps onto the roof to A SWEEPING VIEW of the village. It silent and beautiful from up here. He finds Dakota near the ledge and joins her following her gaze:

IN THE DISTANCE IS A CLUSTER OF OLD CABINS RIGHT UP AGAIN HARSH TERRAIN AND THICK TREES. A SMALL OPENING - **THE NATURAL BRIDGE** - PEEKS OUT FROM THE HOUSES. IT'S SURROUNDED BY ARMED MEN.

DAKOTA  
From here to the woods it's theirs.  
Lucky you, your cabin's right there--

She points to a nearby CABIN - it narrowly survived a big fire.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)  
Front row seats when they come claim  
whatever they want again. And we give  
it to them 'cause we like living.  
(then)  
And there's our Safety Office.

Dakota points to another building. Hawkins follows:

THE VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE

The front door is slung open - it's been abandoned. There are TWO BULLET HOLES in the front windows.

HAWKINS  
How long ago was that?

DAKOTA  
Day before Levi retired. Two weeks  
yesterday.  
(beat)  
We know y'all are looking for Mack.

HAWKINS  
If he's headed through here for  
Canada, we have to stop him.

DAKOTA

And we'll help you there... but we gave up fighting Wyatt.

(hard)

Your predecessor respected our people and Levi's retirement from the gun play. If you're gonna turn this place upsidedown, leave us out of it.

Hawkins hears the desperation in her voice.

HAWKINS

What brings a Georgia girl out to the last frontier?

(off her look)

It's the way you said "Wyatt".

DAKOTA

My sister. I came last year to bring her home. Then I saw what the kids were going through; all the crime, the fear... How could I leave them?

Silence - Hawkins looks back down the road to the natural bride. Farther into the treeline THE SMOKE STILL BILLOWS.

HAWKINS

Is that their operation?

Dakota follows his gaze. She looks to him - yes.

DAKOTA

What do you plan on doing?

HAWKINS

Introducing myself.

And with that, heads down the stairs. Dakota watches him go.

EXT. WOODS - DISTILLERY - LATER

The woods are in disarray as TWENTY BOOTLEGGERS mill about half-working, half-drinking on old trucks, equipment and logs.

Hawkins comes up on the bootleggers operation:

Multiple huge mash vats, smaller aging barrels with pipes connecting them rest close by. A DIRTY MAN stands over the closest vat pouring SUGAR into the top while a TEENAGER tosses in CORN and pours JUGS OF WATER in.

Everyone spots Hawkins and freezes - *the fuck is he doing?*

Hawkins eyes a pile of sacks of SUGAR, MALT, and YEAST. He's kind of impressed. Then... A GUN COCKS--

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 19.

Hawkins freezes as TONY (40s) comes down the slope with a sawed-off shotgun pointed at him. The other bootleggers watch.

TONY

Tuck your tail and move on. Now!

HAWKINS

Let me talk to Wyatt.

TONY

I said get going!

Tony steps forward, shotgun right in Hawkins' face.

WYATT (O.C.)

Where are your manners, Tony?

Everyone turns as NOLAN WYATT (40s) steps out from behind a large vat just up the slope with a big smile on his face. He's fit but sporting a belly. A HULKING BEARDED MAN stands near him, looking important.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Why don't you put that down and let me and the trooper talk, yeah?

Tony looks to his boss and acquiesces. But he doesn't go far.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Nolan Wyatt.

Wyatt extends his hand to Hawkins but he doesn't take it - he's eyeing Tony's shotgun - he's holding it awkwardly. Wyatt snaps his fingers at the teenager who then runs to the aging barrels.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Since you walked all the way down here, why don't you warm up?

The teenager returns with a tin cup held delicately. He gives it to Wyatt who lifts it to his nose. He loves the smell.

He passes it to Hawkins who looks down at the MILKY TAN LIQUID. He cringes - same smelling stuff the hunter in Fairbanks had...

WYATT (CONT'D)

My speciality. We call it Bedrock. I figure you might as well know what you're up against.

Beat. Then Hawkins slowly pours all the Bedrock out and tosses the cup aside. The bearded man snickers at his gall.

HAWKINS

State Troopers are here on official business, it does not involve you.

(MORE)

"The Circle" - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 20.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Do anything to disrupt our investigation and here ends the civil treatment.

WYATT

What exactly are you asking for?

HAWKINS

Vacate the mountain. Now.

Hawkins stares Wyatt down - nothing scares him.

WYATT

Are you stupid or suicidal?

TONY

The only trooper for miles, shaking a big stick but shivering in his boots.

HAWKINS

Whether I'm the only Trooper or not, remember this: ignore what I just said, I come for you. One-by-one, until it's all taken apart, this whole operation.

WYATT

If that's what you're gonna do, you better do it right because I'll happily take you myself.

The men laugh. Wyatt reaches out and grabs Hawkins' name plate.

WYATT (CONT'D)

"Hawkins". Why don't you head back to Fairbanks before you get hurt?

Hawkins SNATCHES Wyatt's hand and pushes it away from his coat.

HAWKINS

You don't scare me.

He releases his hand. Wyatt is impressed with his strength.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Especially not the idiot with the unloaded gun.

He's talking about Tony. Wyatt looks to him. Everyone stops. After a second, Tony drops the shotgun, embarrassed.

Hawkins laughs. Tony can't take it--He RUSHES Hawkins!

But Hawkins leans on his back foot, away from Tony's fist--

He bends Tony's arm down and SMASHES his jaw with his free hand.

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 21.

Tony stumbles but lunges again! Hawkins is quicker: He swings his winter coat off, wrapping it around Tony's head.

He PUNCHES THE COAT, again and again. Everyone's speechless.

Tony stutters backwards before his neck is grabbed and he's SLAMMED against an old truck. Hawkins opens the door and puts Tony's head in the way. He swings the door back to slam it--

TONY

Don't!!

And Hawkins freezes. Tony is frightened. He's made his point.

Hawkins turns to the bootleggers staring flabbergasted at him. He looks them in the eye, one-by-one, before landing on Wyatt.

HAWKINS

I'll be seeing you soon.

And with that, Hawkins cuffs Tony and throws him in the backseat of the truck before getting in behind the wheel and driving off.

INT. OLD TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins drives down a wooded path back to the village. He steals a look in the rearview mirror at Tony- he's laughing to himself.

HAWKINS

Did I get you too hard?

TONY

No one can accuse you of holding back.

HAWKINS

Well, let's just say we're even for that grand you still owe me.

Hawkins stops the car and turns back to Tony. He calmly looks the man over... and then reaches over and UNLOCKS the cuffs.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

You're looking good, Venso.

Tony is actually the undercover TROOPER ANTHONY VENSO. He smiles at Hawkins - they are old friends.

VENSO

That left hook sure-as-shit improved.

They shake. Hawkins tosses Venso a first aid kit.

HAWKINS

What do you know about Michael Mack?

VENSO

That he's not with us. Wyatt's focused on distributing Bedrock.

HAWKINS

Yeah, I got a whiff of it in Fairbanks yesterday.

VENSO

That man with him is from Mat-Su Valley. He's gonna start slinging it for us. We can't let Wyatt's power spill south, Riley... He's dangerous.

Hawkins thinks on this.

HAWKINS

Mack comes first, okay? We need to get clear eyes on that mountain. How do I get a hold of you?

Venso pulls TWO PREPAID CELL PHONES out of his jacket pockets.

VENSO

A welcoming gift.

Hawkins takes a phone. Then he smiles at Venso.

HAWKINS

I got you something too.

Hawkins pulls out his personal phone and hands it to Venso:

A SMILING WOMAN AND A LAUGHING 5-YEAR-OLD POP UP

It's a video message from VENSO'S WIFE and SON.

VENSO'S WIFE (FROM VIDEO)

Hi, Honey! Riley said he'd get this to you so, Hello! God, we miss you...

Venso can't hold back his tears of joy. Hawkins, full of hope, watches as his friend listens to the message.

INT. VILLAGE SAFETY OFFICE - LATER

At the holding cell, Venso sits on the ground, in character.

Hawkins and Penn are setting up the Safety office with Dakota and Madison's help. Levi makes space on a desk for a map.

Madison grabs a cylindrical bulb out of a box, Penn holds her waist as she climbs a desk and hooks it into the ceiling.

The lights flickers on as everyone joins Levi at: THE MAP OF STEELE VALLEY. Levi circles a large area of the mountain--

LEVI

This whole quadrant is bootlegger run. The men that aren't working for him are trading pelts for Bedrock or drinking themselves to death.

DAKOTA

We've got Wyatt's men stealing from everyone and belligerent drunks on every corner. And it gets worse when Troopers are here.

MADISON

And now we have to worry about Michael Mack...

Levi, Dakota and Madison are silent - it's true...

HAWKINS

I know this man's methods better than anyone. We do not need to fear him. He wouldn't be in the village, he'd be out prepping to cross the Circle.

Penn studies the map intently, realizing something.

PENN

Doing the same thing as Wyatt's men: going for big game, loading up on pelts, meat and gear.

HAWKINS

Which is why we have to clear Wyatt off that mountain.

Madison, Dakota and Levi are concerned now...

LEVI

(reaching)

We have a few hunters we trust; they can check the eastern trails.

MADISON

My dogs run the them daily and nothing's been out of place.

HAWKINS

I'm telling you, he's up on that mountain. We need to clear it so we have a chance at him.

Hawkins thinks for a second, eyeing the natural bridge on the map. Everyone waits. He catches Dakota watching him expectantly.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Thank you - we'll take it from here.

Levi and Madison are a little surprised but glad. They all leave, Dakota shoots Hawkins a smile before exiting.

Hawkins grabs the map and moves Penn to the holding cell. Venso stands there, waiting for the map. Penn's really confused now.

VENSO

We get our materials in this whole quadrant here so I'd start south.

HAWKINS

Just north of the lake then?

PENN

Ummm, why are you talking to him?

HAWKINS

Trooper, meet Sergeant Anthony Venso.

Penn can't believe it. Venso smiles at him.

PENN

You stole my snowmobile last year!

VENSO

Yeah, sorry about that.

Hawkins laughs and hits Penn's back.

PENN

So, this is how you know no one's protecting Mack in their camp?

VENSO

(re: map)

And how you know this is the only area where Mack could be - hunters rarely go up to that altitude.

Hawkins and Penn study the area Venso is talking about.

HAWKINS

Eric, Venso's our best asset here, okay? If people learn he's undercover, it'll put them in danger.

Penn looks confused. Venso explains.

VENSO

If I get caught and any one of the villagers know, Wyatt will find out and kill them. I don't run with those degenerates because I'm bored. These are my people too. Everything I do is to protect them.

HAWKINS

But they can never know it. Got it?

Penn does. Then, there's a knock at the door. Hawkins grabs the map from Venso and goes to open the door to reveal:

THE RED-HAIRED MAN FROM MADISON'S HOUSE, DRESSED FOR THE HUNT

This is CHARLES LYON (40s), a local hunter. Hawkins and Penn are surprised to see him standing there with MIA (40s) and a 13-year-old, PETER, also decked out in hunting gear.

CHARLES

I'm Charles Lyon, this is my wife Mia and our son Peter. We're game hunters from just down the corridor.

HAWKINS

Trooper Riley Hawkins, Trooper Eric Penn. Come on in.

Hawkins shakes his hand and invites them in.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Game hunter, huh? So, you can get across the bridge?

CHARLES

As long as I let them use my bait stations after I hit quota.

Hawkins nods - this guy could be useful. Mia eyes her husband, urging him to talk. Hawkins notices.

HAWKINS

How can we help you?

CHARLES

We uh... we just got back from our old bait station.

MIA

There was a fresh station built right over it. They could have walked right into a black bear.

PETER

That wouldn't happen!

Hawkins and Penn share a knowing look.

HAWKINS

How long has it been there?

CHARLES

Must've been put up within the week.

HAWKINS

Would anyone you know have done this?

CHARLES

Trevor has it out for me but as much as he is a jackass, he's a fine hunter. His stations are top-notch.

Hawkins knows he has to go. He looks to Mia, feeling for her.

HAWKINS

Mrs. Lyon, I'm going to ask your boys to show me the bait station.

PETER

We can do that. We can help him, Mom.

Mia looks to a silent Charles - your call. He nods. She turns to Hawkins then sighs, then gives Peter a kiss and hugs Charles.

Charles kisses her - there's still love there. Hawkins grabs a coat and a rifle and turns to Charles and Peter.

HAWKINS

Lead the way.

EXT. NATURAL BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

The path to the mountain rests right past the old cabins. A group of armed BOOTLEGGERS stand by - security has ramped up.

A pitbull of a man, TREVOR (30s) warms his hands over a fire. He don't see Hawkins, Charles and Peter walking towards them.

CHARLES

That's Trevor...

Hawkins nods and then raises his voice so they hear him--

HAWKINS

State Trooper! Hands where I can see them.

Trevor and his men whip their heads to the noise-- then Trevor quickly raises his rifle!!

AND FIRES A ROUND INTO THE AIR-- Hawkins and the Lyons freeze.

TREVOR

You already got one warning today, Trooper. Last chance to turn around.

Hawkins stands tall, staring at Trevor. It's a stand off.

HAWKINS

Do you think I could get you first?

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 27.

Hawkins moves his hand over his sidearm, fingers dancing just inches above the gun. Trevor and his men freeze.

TREVOR

God damn bears are scared of me - you  
really think I'm gonna piss myself?

Peter watches, amazed. Trevor tenses, gripping his rifle tight. Charles moves Peter away. Hawkins watches Trevor's hand move--

FASTER THAN FIRE, HAWKINS RIPS HIS SIDEARM OUT

BANG! The bullet grazes Trevor's ear! He drops the rifle and falls to the ground. Trevor's men scatter, scared.

Trevor looks up, hand to his bloody ear as Hawkins passes.

HAWKINS

Get your hearing checked.

Hawkins continues past Trevor onto the bridge.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. STEELE VALLEY - BIRD'S EYE VIEW - DAY

Charles and Peter follow Hawkins across the bridge and into the snow as they head down the craggy mountainous trail.

EXT. ALASKA WILDERNESS - LATE AFTERNOON

A DOZEN BOOTLEGGERS are skinning deer, a pile of pelts growing. They pause and stare as Hawkins, Charles and Peter walk by.

Hawkins studies each face, looking for Mack...

EXT. HIGH ALTITUDE HOLLOW - LATER

Hawkins looks behind him: NO MORE HUNTERS. Peter walks close by.

PETER

What happened to Trooper Bailey?

HAWKINS

Everyone needs a tag out sometime.

Peter thinks about this.

PETER

How are you gonna protect us if Michael Mack is really here?

Hawkins thinks about how to answer this. Charles eavesdrops.

HAWKINS

Michael Mack was serving life in prison because he killed a lot of innocent people and his brother's conscience just couldn't take it. He escaped years ago, and that's when my father died. When they finally caught him and brought him here, I followed, hoping to be the one who stopped him if he escaped again.

(then)

Plus, he's been rotting in Fairbanks Correctional while I've been eating my Wheaties.

Peter laughs at that. Charles stops and turns to Hawkins. He stares him down.

CHARLES

Go ahead, Peter.

Peter hesitantly keep walking. Hawkins waits for a talking-to.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

You may know something about me, but that doesn't give you the right to poison my son's head with your suicide mission. Once I show you the station, you're on your own. Got it?

Hawkins sees that Charles means it. He understands.

HAWKINS

You got it.

Satisfied, Charles turns back around.

CHARLES

Good, because we're here.

Charles rounds a LARGE TREE close to a LEDGE. Hawkins follows:

A THROWN-TOGETHER BAIT STATION -- A BLACK BARREL WITH A PURPLE STRIPE is full of fish parts, stinking to high-heaven.

Peter points up. Hawkins looks:

ON A THICK TREE TRUNK, A GAME CAMERA LOOKING RIGHT DOWN ON THEM

PETER

It has two locks. We took ours down three months ago.

Hawkins surveys the area and turns to Charles.

HAWKINS

Where's a good vantage point?

CHARLES

Up there, behind those rocks is a pack with perishables. Help yourself.

Charles grabs Peter and they turns to leave. Peter looks up to Hawkins like he wants to stay. Hawkins smiles.

PETER

Good luck.

Hawkins nods and turns to the slope. It's steep. He gets ready... and then BOLTS up the slope to the rocks--

He rolls to the other side, panting, and finds a pack - CAMO, SOCKS, GLOVES, JACKETS, AMMO, A GUN MOUNT, SCOPE AND FOOD.

He looks out over the ledge down to the bait station. He sees the Lyons making their way down to Steele Valley. He scans the area as he puts on the extra jacket - it's freezing.

HE EYES THE CLIFF JUST BY THE BAIT STATION - LONG DROP DOWN--

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 30.

A THICKET OF TREES RUNS UP THE MOUNTAIN - TOO THICK TO SEE--

He sets the rifle up on a rock pointing towards the bait station and the scope pointed towards the thicket of tree.

He's gets comfortable - time for a stakeout--

EXT. HAWKINS' STAKEOUT - LATER

The sun starts to set - snow glows as the cold air hardens it.

A bundled-up Hawkins eyes his rifle scope quickly before finishing a bag of trail mix, stuffing the bag in his pocket.

There's a RUSTLE to his right. Unconcerned, he check the scope:

A FAMILY OF DEER ARE RUNNING THROUGH THE THICKET--

He follows them, smiling. Then something catches his eye--

A HUNTER'S JACKET, DANGLING HIGH UP IN THE THICKET--

What the hell? Hawkins grabs the scope, taking a closer look:

THE ORANGE AND YELLOW STRIPED JACKET SEEMINGLY FLOATS IN THE AIR

Hawkins has no idea what he's looking at.

EXT. BAIT STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins rushes down to the bait station to get a better look. He moves closer to the ledge until he sees the jacket.

FROM THE CAMERA: WE SEE HAWKINS KNEEL RIGHT BY THE LEDGE--

Hawkins puts the scope to his eye and checks the tall trees--

HE FINDS THE JACKET. BUT THEN IT MOVES! SLIDING-- AND FALLS!!

Hawkins BURSTS into action, darting into the thicket--

EXT. THICKET - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins keeps his eyes on where the jacket was, high in the trees -- is anyone up there? He grips his rifle tight--

His heart races as he bolts around trees, over rocks--

He knows he's close. He expertly loads a bullet in the chamber, ready for anything as he rounds a big tree and RAISES HIS RIFLE!

But he can't believe his eyes... he lowers the gun:

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 31.

AN ABANDONED RANGER TOWER RISES TOWARDS THE SKY BEFORE HIM --  
THE STEEL STAIRCASE IS THE SAME COLOR AS THE SNOW-KISSED TREES

The jacket rests on the ground near him. Hawkins looks up:

A CAMO JACKET AND SNOW PANTS HANG ON A RAILING, A SPACE BETWEEN  
THEM WHERE THE JACKET WAS. SOMEONE'S BEEN CAMPING HERE--

INT. TOWER 1 COMM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins stands agog at the entrance to the comm room:

DEER PELTS AND MEAT, RATIONS, WEAPONS, CLOTHES, GUNS, AMMO...

Michael Mack has everything he needs--

INT. VILLAGE SAFETY OFFICE - NIGHT

Night has fallen. Ignited, Hawkins paces the room as Penn,  
Levi, Madison and Dakota have trouble sitting still.

PENN

It's a perfect hiding spot: shelter,  
eyes on the mountain and it hasn't  
been used by the rangers in years--

LEVI

--there's another tower farther  
north. I honestly forgot about them.

DAKOTA

Would anyone else hole up there?  
Hunters? Some of Wyatt's men?

LEVI

What would it be used for other than  
hiding?

Dakota looks to Madison. Hawkins gets really serious--

HAWKINS

He has enough to survive winter:  
pelts, weapons, first aid, iodine  
pills, food... Last time he escaped,  
he had half that and disappeared for  
a month. He'll be gone tomorrow if we  
don't find him.

MADISON

Jesus Christ...

Madison, Dakota and Levi all look worried.

MADISON (CONT'D)

What the hell do we do now?

HAWKINS

We stay calm. Mack's here for supplies, let's not give him a reason to hurt anyone. But we have to lock the whole village down to stand a chance at finding him.

DAKOTA

We are leaving Wyatt and his men out of this, Trooper Hawkins.

HAWKINS

We have to completely clear Wyatt's action off the mountain, contain all the bootleggers.

PENN

Whatever movement we see on the slopes... it's Mack.

Dakota eyes Hawkins.

HAWKINS

Dakota, if there was another way, believe me I'd say something.

Levi thinks about it. Dakota and Madison wait for his answer.

LEVI

If you're gonna keep Wyatt busy, you have to stop the distribution deal.

DAKOTA

Levi, what are you doing!?

LEVI

We halt the Bedrock for just one day and they'll lose faith. Wyatt will have his guys working overtime trying to make up for that day's batch.

Hawkins likes this idea.

HAWKINS

We need to get to the next shipment before them. Get the day laborers on the line.

Penn and Levi smile - good idea. Dakota doesn't like this--

DAKOTA

Whatever you're doing, it's going to piss Wyatt off. Is it worth putting us all in danger again?

Levi turns to Madison and Dakota - they are scared.

LEVI

This isn't about Wyatt anymore.  
Trooper Hawkins is right: we can't  
let this psychopath disappear.

They can't believe it. Hawkins steps forward, calmly.

HAWKINS

I promise that if we follow my plan,  
we will all be safe. And we'll find  
Mack and bring him in together.

Dakota and Madison understand the importance of this. They nod.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

We're on lockdown starting now.  
Gather whoever you can, make a  
perimeter. Get the dogs in the  
streets, patrol the village. Keep  
your eyes on that mountain.

EXT. THE VILLAGE - MAIN CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Dakota and Madison are walking through the blistering wind. But  
then Madison stops. Something catches her eye:

CHARLES STANDS IN THE SHADOWS OF A BUILDING, WAITING

Dakota follows her sister's gaze. Her face falls.

DAKOTA

Madi, we don't have time for this--

MADISON

--I'll join you in a minute.

Madison hurries to Charles. Dakota walks off, sick of this...

Madison and Charles can't hold back. They slip deeper behind the  
building, kissing deeply and furiously.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I'm so glad you came.

CHARLES

We can't do this for awhile. With the  
Troopers and Mack... And I can't  
stand that.

They continue to kiss as Charles rips open a door--

INT. SNOWMOBILE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

They enter from the cold into the warm-wood backroom, flanked by  
machinery and grease. Madison starts ripping her clothes off--

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 34.

Charles slides his winter coat off and pulls it around Madison before pressing his body against her, taking her to the ground.

MADISON

Dinner tomorrow. Last one. For now.

CHARLES

Is it safe out there?

MADISON

Make me my favorite? Rabbit stew.

CHARLES

That's not your favorite. You just like it when I hunt for dinner.

They laugh and kiss. Madison adjusts her body, wrapping her legs around him. Charles takes her face in his hand.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

It's a date.

Madison's eyes flutter. She kisses him, pulling closer. The warm glow of the cabin envelopes them, holding back the frozen night.

EXT. THE VILLAGE - RESIDENCES - NIGHT

At a row of houses, Dakota knocks loudly on a front door. A few HUNTERS stand out in the cold, dressed warm and holding rifles.

A NEIGHBOR opens the door and Dakota explains that's going on.

EXT. EAST TREELINE - LATER

The Neighbor steps up to the dark tree line with vigilant eyes.

EXT. WEST TREELINE - NIGHT

Hunters scan the tree line, watching carefully--

EXT. NATURAL BRIDGE - NIGHT

A small outhouse near the bridge sits in the snow, light from inside firing out the gaps in the wood as Levi approaches it.

Donned with the Village Safety Officer Badge, Levi steps to the outhouse and swings the door open. Trevor sits on the toilet - his pants are hanging next to him.

Levi pulls his shotgun up. Trevor's speechless.

EXT. FROZEN SERVICE ROAD - DAWN

The sun is just coming up across a wide, icy road carved out in the trees. Hawkins and Penn wait in the truck, staying warm.

A large supply truck's headlights come into view from way down the path. Hawkins hits Penn - they both look.

EXT. THE VILLAGE - MAIN CORRIDOR - DAWN

A sliver of sunlight peeks above the row of houses, shadows growing and shifting all together.

DOGS BARKING BREAKS THE SERENITY! MEN with HUSKIES on leashes walk down the corridor, patrolling the village.

A BUNDLED UP MADISON directs where everyone goes.

EXT. BOOTLEGGER'S HANGAR - NIGHT

The barks fill the air. Lights pop on in every cabin's window.

INT. WYATT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Wyatt's eyes pop open. He sits up calmly, listening. THEN! Trevor bursts in the door shivering, pantless--

TREVOR

They surrounded us!

EXT. BOOTLEGGER'S HANGAR - DAWN

Bootleggers stand around confused. BARKS echo around them. Unimpressed, the Bearded Man stares out to the trees:

LEVI'S HUNTERS AND HUSKIES STAND GUARD, SURROUNDING THEM

Wyatt watches with steely eyes. Then, a truck HONKS -- coming down the corridor to them -- The back filled with water jugs.

It arrives and out jumps ARRYO (20s). Men swarm to help unload. Wyatt notices the other truck is missing. He grabs Arryo--

WYATT

Where's Stanford?

ARRYO

I dunno. He left before me.

Wyatt's confused. Just then, headlights wash across him as another truck comes down the corridor towards them.

It's Hawkins. Wyatt's blood boils. Bootleggers gather around. The truck stops and Hawkins jumps out, rounding the car.

Penn gets out the passenger side and rips open the back door, roughly pulling Venso out. He tosses him at Wyatt's feet--

Silence... Wyatt raises his eyes to Penn, sizing him up.

WYATT

My, that was brave of you.

HAWKINS

Your lack of cooperation left me no choice, Mr. Wyatt. If you interfere with my work, I ship you to Fairbanks Correctional in a meat truck.

Wyatt helps Venso up and sends him back to the hangar.

WYATT

I'd watch your threats if I were you.

HAWKINS

Oh, they're not threats.

(to PENN)

What was that driver's name that's 20 miles out already?

PENN

Stanford?

Wyatt and his men perk up. Fuck...

HAWKINS

Right. He decided to visit the big city. You're free to join him. One-by-one, like I said.

Wyatt just stands there, starring daggers at Hawkins.

WYATT

You're not playing fair, Trooper Hawkins. And I can play that game too. You're a smart man, I hope you recognize how serious I am.

Wyatt glares, confidently. Hawkins just turns to the water jugs.

HAWKINS

Good luck with today's batch.

With that, they walk back to the truck and drive off--.

Confused, Wyatt turns to Arryo who stands there with a jug in his hand. Everyone watches as he opens it and looks inside.

HE GAGS and pushes the jug down. YELLOW-BROWN LIQUID spills out. All the nearby bootleggers run away, gagging.

ARRYO

They're honey buckets...

The Bearded man looks pissed and pushes past Wyatt.

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 37.

BEARDED MAN

Deal's off.

Wyatt fumes, watching Hawkins drive away.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - ROOFTOP - MORNING

From atop the General store, Dakota, her bundled-up STUDENTS and their PARENTS peer out over the village with binoculars.

DAKOTA

Now we're watching for movement:  
birds are a point, deer are five--

A FUNNY GIRL raises her voice.

FUNNY GIRL

Bears should be a hundred.

DAKOTA

--one hundred points for a bear!

A MOTHER behind her gasps. Dakota turns - she motions her over. As Dakota approaches, the Mother points out to the mountain.

A SMART KID puts his binoculars down and looks at his teacher.

SMART KID

How many for a fire?

Dakota pulls her binoculars up:

UP ON THE MOUNTAIN IS A SMALL CAMPSITE, A FIRE STILL BURNING--

EXT. NATURAL BRIDGE - MORNING

Hawkins and Penn arrive, surveying the perimeter being held by the local hunters. Levi comes to meet them.

LEVI

Perimeter's set.

Hawkins notices that Peter is standing with the men, his rifle on his back, hands in his pockets keeping warm.

HAWKINS

Mr. Lyon, good day.

PETER

Hey, Trooper Hawkins. I came to help.

Hawkins nods - what a good kid.

DAKOTA (O.S.)

Riley!

Hawkins turns to find Dakota running towards them.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

There's a campsite, half mile up the slope! Fire's still burning.

Everything goes silent for a second - it's on. Then Hawkins--

HAWKINS

Keep the perimeter, get check-ins every 5 minutes and don't blink. Keep everyone else at home. Stay calm.

Levi and Dakota nod before running off. Penn looks to Hawkins. Hawkins pulls the cell out that Venso gave him. He dials.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BOOTLEGGER'S HANGAR - OLD SHACK - DAY

At a HUGE VAT, MEN IN GOGGLES try to purify water but it's taking forever to do this makeshift batch.

Venso walks to the other side of the shack, answering his phone.

VENSO

(into phone)

We did it. The deal's off. They're purifying water hoping to get just one batch--

HAWKINS

--There's a fire, half mile up the mountain from the bridge.

Venso pauses - shit, already...

VENSO

Everyone's accounted for here. *Every one.*

Hawkins thinks. He gives a worried look to Penn.

HAWKINS

Get in the air. Stay on the wire

Venso hangs up and Hawkins rushes off. Penn runs to a snowmobile. Snow beams fire up as he flies off--

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

A group of old snowmobiles lay half-buried in snow. Venso comes sprinting, quickly slides a snowmobile aside and digs in the snow. He pulls out a BLACK BAG, opens it and pulls out:

GUNS, A VEST, AMMO, ETC.

EXT. NATURAL BRIDGE - DAY

Hawkins sits on a snow mobile, equipping from a similar bag - BULLETPROOF VEST, SIDEARMS and KNIVES - check. He rides off.

EXT. CAMPSITE - LATER

There are still embers in the fire. Venso and Hawkins walk up, taking in the clear signs of life. Venso gives Hawkins a look.

He looks past him: ACROSS THE MEADOW, A RANGER'S TOWER PEEKS OUT OF THE TREES. Hawkins pulls up his radio.

HAWKINS

(into radio)

Eric, 10-20, we're at the campsite.

He waits as Venso turns his radio on and listens.

PENN (V.O. FROM WALKIE)

10-4, about two minutes away.

HAWKINS

(into walkie)

Venso will head north, clearing the meadow and securing Tower 2. I'll head south to Tower 1. Just watch for movement, Eric - if we see Mack, we funnel him to me.

PENN (V.O. FROM WALKIE)

Copy that.

Hawkins and Venso pulls their rifles out and get ready.

HAWKINS

I'm getting you home to Cat and Luke.

Beat. Venso scoffs and then turns, starting to head north.

VENSO

Damn right you are.

Hawkins smirks, and turns south towards Tower 1.

EXT. ALASKA WILDERNESS - CONTINUOUS

From a BIRD'S EYE VIEW: Hawkins and Venso walk in opposite directions to Towers 1 and 2, stuck in the craggy landscape--

The Cessna 140 ZOOMS by, patrolling the air.

SLAM TO BLACK:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. BAIT STATION - GAME CAMERA - DAY

FROM THE GAME CAMERA WE SEE--

The cliff in the background, a quiet, still forest.

A FIGURE RUSHES BY--

EXT. THICKET - CONTINUOUS

It's Hawkins, bouncing from tree-to-tree, taking cover and scanning the area. His eyes are wide - nothing will escape him.

He shoots a look to the RANGER TOWER just beyond the thicket--

EXT. RANGER TOWER 1 - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins enters the clearing, rifle readied, and secures the area - no sign of life. He walks to the rusty, cold stairs and begins to take them slowly.

Every step he takes, he watches for movement both above and below. Mack could be anywhere...

After a few moments, Hawkins makes it to where the snow pants and camo jacket are. He eyes them, thinking. Then--

HIS RADIO BUZZES TO LIFE -- IT'S LOUD!

VENSO (O.S. FROM RADIO)  
I'm at Tower 2. It's empty.

Startled, Hawkins turns his radio down and crouches!! *Shit, that was loud...* He scans the area for signs of movement.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(volume down)  
Copy, I see you. No movement yet.  
Riley, where are you?

Silence -- Hawkins moves quick, double timing it up the stairs.

INT. TOWER 1 COMM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins steps into the comm room, rifle at the ready--but he can't believe what he sees:

EVERYTHING IS GONE. THE ROOM IS EMPTY NOW.

VENSO (O.S. FROM RADIO)  
Hawkins, 10-20!!

Hawkins hit his radio.

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 41.

HAWKINS  
(into radio)  
10-4, Tower 1's been cleared out.

VENSO (O.S. FROM RADIO)  
Shit, he's gone!?

HAWKINS  
(into radio)  
Stay sharp, keep your perch and watch  
the clearing. He can't be far out.

Hawkins checks out the windows and into the thicket. His heart is racing as he steps out and checks the stairs again.

Hawkins raises his rifle in the air as the Cessna flies over.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
I see you, Riley, but I can't see  
shit in that thicket.

HAWKINS  
Copy. I've got eyes here--

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(suddenly)  
--I've got movement.

Hawkins perks up.

HAWKINS  
(into radio)  
Where?

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(quietly)  
Across the meadow, three quarters of  
a mile. A man with a gun...

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
I'm on it!

Hawkins sees BINOCULARS on the old comm deck. He grabs them and turns to the northern window:

FROM ATOP THE TREES, HE SEES THE MEADOW AND TOWER 2 IN THE  
DISTANCE. HE SCANS FOR THE MAN--

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(suddenly)  
I'm going on foot.

Hawkins growls into the radio.

HAWKINS  
Stay put! Eric, what do you see?

"The Circle" - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 42.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Nothing yet!

Hawkins checks his binoculars:

HIS VIEW IS BLOCKED BY THE TREES.

He pulls them down -- *Shit*.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(while running)  
If he's heading north, we have to  
stop him now.

HAWKINS  
Venso, dammit, stay put!

Venso doesn't answer.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)  
Venso? TONY?!

Hawkins bites back frustration. Then, he checks the roof above his head -- An idea forms--

EXT. TOWER 1 ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins PULLS himself up onto the roof as quickly as he can. He scrambles to get his whole body up and then turns to the field:

HE CAN SEE THE WHOLE MEADOW NOW

He pulls the binoculars up, scanning at a better vantage point.

HE FINDS TOWER 2 AND THEN SCANS ACROSS THE WOODS TO THE MEADOW

Hawkins can't find anything. He pulls the binoculars down, studying the far away meadow.

HAWKINS  
(into radio)  
Penn, nothing at three-quarters out.  
He's on the move!

He thinks for a beat before searching in a different direction. He stops - He can't believe what he sees:

A MAN STANDS AT THE FAR TREE LINE, RIFLE IN HAND.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(yelling)  
I see Mack! Tree line, far east!

The SQUAWK of Venso's radio bursts through the air, Penn's screams echoing across the meadow--

THE MAN TURNS TO THE NOISE!!

Hawkins shutters and stands, fumbling to grab his radio--

HAWKINS  
Venso, he heard that, hide!

There's no answer--

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Where the hell is he?

HAWKINS  
(realizing)  
He went radio silent...

Hawkins can't believe what's going on. He moves to the far ledge of the roof and goes to look again:

The man deftly drops to one knee, slowly pulling his rifle up --  
HE FIRES A ROUND!!

*Shit.* Hawkins pulls the binoculars away, going pale as another echo spreads across the forest. His heart beat doubles--

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Did he shoot Venso? Did he shoot  
him!?

Hawkins checks again: THE MAN'S GONE.

Quickly, Hawkins scrambles to get down from the roof--

Too reckless- he falls SLAMMING into the grated floor below!  
The radio lands and bounces under the railing, It's falling--

HAWKINS SNATCHES IT! JUST BEFORE IT DISAPPEARS.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO) (CONT'D)  
I think I can land in the meadow!

A calm comes over Hawkins, color coming back to his face.

HAWKINS  
Negative! I'm going on foot.

Composed, he jumps to his feet--

INT. TOWER 1 COMM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

With cautious speed, Hawkins arms himself with extra ammo, checks his handguns and runs out of the room, taking the long stairway down 4 steps at a time.

BUT HE FORGOT HIS RADIO--

"The Circle" - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 44.

EXT. RANGER TOWER 1 STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

With steely confidence, Hawkins flies down the stairs. He's trained for this, Mack will not escape.

EXT. THICKET - MOMENTS LATER

He leaps onto the forest floor and BOLTS into the thicket, sprinting gracefully through the trees towards tower 2.

EXT. FOREST MEADOW - DAY

The white-blanketed meadow sits silently, the soft wind causing freshly fallen snow to dance. IT'S PURE SERENITY--

Then, from the treeline, Hawkins emerges, catching his breath, searches the dense whiteness. There's nothing but wilderness--

He grits his teeth - *where the hell is he?* He grabs at his hip--

BUT HIS RADIO ISN'T THERE. Fuck!

Hawkins turns back through the thicket towards Tower 1.

INT. TOWER 1 COMM ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

The falling snow floats into the comm room, landing on the radio. Penn's voice ignites the air.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Please, 10-20 someone, God dammit!

The radio buzzes to life, fumbled through hands then steadied.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
I'm here, I'm here!

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. ALASKA WILDERNESS - SIMULTANEOUS

Hawkins sprints back through the woods, not as quickly as his way to the meadow.

THE THICK BLACK TREES SEEM ENDLESS IN FRONT OF HIM

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Tony, are you shot?!

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
No... He fired and then ran off.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Was it really Michael Mack!?

"The Circle" - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 45.

Hawkins sees the Tower just beyond the thicket! He swings himself around trees to save his energy as he narrows in on it--

EXT. TOWER 1 - FOREST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Hawkins stumbles into the clearing, almost out of breath as he pulls himself up the tall staircase.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
I couldn't tell, I didn't see him!

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Where'd he run? Riley is on foot  
headed your way!

Hawkins is getting close to the top, rounding the comm room faster and faster - it's only a few flights up.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
He's gonna run right into him...

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
What? Repeat that.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
He was headed right to Tower one!

END INTERCUT.

Only two flights from the top, Hawkins glances down--

A MAN IN HUNTING GEAR SPRINTS FROM THE TREES UNDER THE TOWER

Hawkins hits the deck quickly to hide. Oh my God, Mack's here...

His heart pounds in his chest. *Think, dammit, think!*

Hawkins looks to the comm room - he can hear the faint SQUAWKING of the radio but he can't make anything out.

He slows his breathing, exhaling deeply as he edges to the railing and peeks down to the forest floor.

NOTHING. HE CHECKS LEFT AND RIGHT. STILL NOTHING.

Hawkins retreats, taking in the fear for just one moment. He shuts his eyes tight and meditates, centering himself--

His eyes pop open! He slowly stands up, pulling out a gun and a HUNTING KNIFE. He holds them together, ready for hand-to-hand.

EXT. FOREST FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The forest floor is silent - nothing stirs. Hawkins takes the final few steps, scanning the area - still nothing.

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 46.

His heart POUNDS IN HIS EAR, every RUSTLE he hears startling him. He tightens the grip of his knife and slips under the tower--

Shade... cover... *I have to find Mack first--*

He hears a SNAP! Just south towards the bait station - he looks.

NOTHING BUT TREES - OR IS SOMEONE STANDING THERE?

Without hesitating, he crouches, creeping into the thicket--

EXT. BAIT STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Just as it was left, the bait station sits there, camera surveying the area. From the camera:

THE MAN CROSSES JUST BELOW HEADING TOWARDS THE CLIFF--

From the trees, Hawkins strafes silently from tree to tree, staying vigilant, staying calm.

To his left he spots the bait station and THEN--

IN HIS PERIPHERY, HE SEES THE MAN STEP INTO VIEW

Hawkins ducks - the man doesn't see him. Hawkins studies him:

The rifle slung across his back, a casually gait... something dangling in his hands. He's stares out to the gorgeous mountains in the distance, capped in soft clouds--

HAWKINS CAN GET THE DROP ON MICHAEL MACK

EXT. TREELINE & LEDGE - DAY

Back to the treeline, face hidden, the man stands at the cliff.

Hawkins, not even breathing, silently moves to the tree line, waiting for an opportunity to strike.

The man, continuing to admire the view - it's now or never--

Hawkins inhales and digs his heels into the ground--

HE SPRINTS FROM HIS HIDING SPOT, CHARGING

SNAP! The man turns--

*But Hawkins is already there!* He SLAMS into the man, full force, and sends him FLYING off the cliff!!

The body shoots down like a brick, out of view, as Hawkins FALLS on his stomach, all of his air shooting out of him--

Silence. CRUNCH.

The man didn't even have a second to scream.

Hawkins heart stops. He did it.

...But something doesn't feel right...

He begins to pull his body to the ledge just feet away. He gets to his knees and looks down--

EXT. LEDGE BOTTOM - CONTINUOUS

The drop is 100 feet onto cold, sharp rocks.

THE MAN LAYS THERE, MANGLED, SPRAWLED ACROSS BLOODYING SNOW--

He's still breathing. Then Hawkins sees it. *The man's face--*

***IT'S CHARLES LYON***

His eyes wide, blood seeping out his mouth, life draining from him quickly as he shivers, scared, confused...

CHARLES' EYES FINDS HAWKINS - HIS MOUTH FALLS OPEN--

EXT. LEDGE - CONTINUOUS

Hawkins pulls his head back from the ledge, hands over his mouth. Agony takes over - *he just killed the wrong man...*

He heaves in and out, struggling to find the right breath of air to fill his aching lungs.

*This can't be real.* He turns to look again--

EXT. LEDGE BOTTOM - CONTINUOUS

Charles' broken body is split open by rocks.

*A dead rabbit is held tight in his hands.*

Hawkins can't look away now. Charles coughs up blood, his eyes fluttering, a quivering pain takes over... *and then it stops.*

Silence. Hawkins watches as the bloody snow continues to spread--

*A red halo around the innocent man.*

EXT. TOWER 1 - FOREST FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ambling through the snow, Hawkins makes his way back to the tower, eyes staring past everything in front of him, reliving the horror over and over and over...

He begins to take the stairs. His eyes are sore and wide.

INT. TOWER 1 COMM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Penn and Venso continue talking over the radio.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(hysterical)  
We can't wait, Tony, we call the  
chief now!

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(running)  
I can't blow my cover unless we know  
for certain it's Mack!

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Shit, I'm coming in hot!

CHAOTIC SOUNDS, as Penn frantically lands his plane.

Then-- Hawkins appears at the doorway, unphased by the chaos on the radio. He stands there staring at nothing, arms limp.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
10-20, Hawkins for God's sake. 10-20!

Hawkins drops his knife and grabs the radio. He puts it to his mouth but nothing comes out. He tries again.

HAWKINS  
(into radio)  
10-4, I'm here.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Jesus Christ Riley, are you okay?!

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Is that Hawkins?!

HAWKINS  
(loss of words)  
I... yes, I'm okay.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Did you see him? Was it Mack?

Hawkins takes a second to find his response.

HAWKINS  
Negative. I didn't see anything.

Hawkins' eyes go dead, his words mechanical and thick.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
Nothing? At all?

HAWKINS  
Nothing. He's gone.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
(disagreeing)  
No! I saw him not 100 yards from the  
tower, Hawkins!

HAWKINS  
(harsh)  
Tower one is clear, do you hear me?  
He slipped away. We lost him. We  
*failed*.

Hawkins' blood is boiling now, unsure of what he's doing.

PENN (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
I'm coming to you!

HAWKINS  
(snapping)  
Head back to the village, that's an  
order!

Hawkins slams the radio down. His head is spinning, he steadies himself on the old comm station. He stares out the window towards the cliff.

VENSO (V.O. FROM RADIO)  
...Get back to the village, Eric.

Hawkins stares out the window at the beautiful mountain vista--

EXT. TOWER 1 - FOREST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The woods are silent. *But something stirs--*

EXT. BAIT STATION - CONTINUOUS

Right next to the bait station stands A MAN, his back to us. He stares straight ahead to the cliff in front of him - THE SPOT WHERE CHARLES WAS KILLED.

Then, he perks up, remembering something. He turns to the camera right behind him, high up in the tree. From the camera:

WE SEE THE MAN - **IT'S MICHAEL MACK**, THE MURDERER, THE ESCAPEE...  
THE SON OF THE BITCH HAWKINS MEANT TO KILL.

The camera caught everything - the cliff in perfect focus.

MICHAEL MACK GRINS A SATISFIED GRIN.

SLAM TO BLACK:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. NATURAL BRIDGE - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun warms the snowy path across the bridge.

Hawkins walk as normally as possible down the path, but there's a weight bearing down, causing his knees to buckle.

*It's like a dream. The falling snow melts in sun rays before it lands - the entrance to the village beyond.*

Penn waits for him at the end of the path, eyes sunken.

And Levi stands near him, just shocked, waiting to hear... And Dakota, Madison... *my God, Hawkins looks like hell.*

And Mia. Her calm, expectant gaze. *God, if only she knew...*

Hawkins floats through this SILENT reality.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

PEOPLE keep asking Hawkins questions but he has no more answers. He walks away, Penn making room for him, as people hound him.

Levi can't believe it-- Hawkins and Dakota share a look - she's pissed. Madison's head is lowered, confused.

Through the crowd now, Hawkins passes--

Wyatt. He stands there glaring at Hawkins. Venso and Trevor stand next to him. Venso and Hawkins share a knowing look--

EXT. VILLAGE SAFETY OFFICE - EVENING

A handful of Steele Valley residents stand outside the office, waiting to hear what's happening inside. Things are tense.

INT. VILLAGE SAFETY OFFICE - EVENING

Madison and Dakota stare shocked as Levi yells at Hawkins--

LEVI

I don't find that reassuring, Trooper  
and you know damn well what you saw!

HAWKINS

All do respect, Levi, there's nothing  
we can do now!

Penn stands silent, not sure what to say or who to back.

LEVI

How the hell is there nothing to do  
after Mack goes deeper in the woods?

DAKOTA

It might not have even been him.  
Trooper Penn didn't see his face.

That stops Hawkins. He turns to Penn who looks to him, expectantly - *what do we do?* Hawkins feels for him--

HAWKINS

I didn't see him either.

MADISON

So, there's a chance you did all this for nothing?!

Hawkins doesn't know how to answer that.

DAKOTA

You were certain it was Mack--

HAWKINS

--Maybe I was wrong.

That shuts everyone up. Levi sits down, the weight of this bearing down. Silence as Dakota puts her hand on his shoulder. Madison sighs, trying to understand... She turns to Penn.

MADISON

What do you think about all this?

All eyes are on Penn as he looks around the room. He stops on Hawkins, thinking about what he's going to say--

Hawkins tries to bore the right answer into his head. But--

PENN

Hawkins wasn't wrong. It was Mack.

Hawkins can't believe Penn - idiot. Dakota yells at Hawkins--

DAKOTA

So, what the hell now!?

HAWKINS

There's no way we could be certain about that.

MADISON

If there's any trace, any tiny possibility that it was Mack and you were right... then how the hell can you say you're done?

HAWKINS

Because if it was, he's still gone.

The tension is thick. Levi speaks up--

LEVI

I want to speak to your chief.

Hawkins thinks for a second - this can work in his favor. He whips his phone out and dials a number.

He puts it on speakerphone and sets it down on the table between them all. They wait as it rings. Silence. Then--

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)

Riley. What's going on?

HAWKINS

Captain Anders, I am here with Trooper Penn, Village Safety Officer Levi Steward and two local leaders: Dakota and Madison Brennan. I want to update you on our situation, sir.

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)

Good evening Officer Steward, Misses Brennan. Trooper Captain Elam Anders, Fairbanks Chief. Go ahead, Trooper.

Hawkins clears his throat, his plan is forming.

HAWKINS

We gained control of the bootlegger-run woodlands and investigated a recently occupied Ranger Tower. Hours ago we found an active campsite--

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)

--Is it him?

Everyone watches Hawkins.

HAWKINS

Sir, I was convinced it was but without conclusive evidence--

DAKOTA

--meaning it could be him--

HAWKINS

--even if it was Mack... what matters now is that he's gone.

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)

Where was he last seen headed?

Penn speaks up confident..

PENN

Sir, I last spotted the man heading southwest to the tower Trooper Hawkins secured, but--

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)

--where'd you see him going, Riley?

HAWKINS

I never saw him, sir.

Silence in the room. They wait for the chief's answer--

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)

So, it could have just been a local drunk. Riley, what should we do?

Levi and the sisters fume - *dammit, this is all wrong...*

HAWKINS

Sir, I believe that we widen our search, continue north looking for Mack. Steele Valley is clear.

Dakota pleads with Hawkins.

DAKOTA

You're just going to leave?

HAWKINS

We have to find him.

Beat. Levi stands, speaking up strongly.

LEVI

Chief Anders, Trooper Penn just told us that all of Nolan Wyatt's men were accounted for at the time of the investigation. I can't let you abandon us if there's any chance it was Michael Mack!

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)

Is that true, Trooper?

Levi and Dakota wait to Penn to say yes. But he looks at Hawkins who just cocks his head to him.

HAWKINS

(leading)

How did you know all of the bootleggers were accounted for?

Penn goes to answer but then stops - *shit*. He looks to Hawkins for help - he stares back - *watch what you say*.

PENN

(backtracking)

We didn't, sir. I just felt strongly...

Hawkins is relieved. Levi, Dakota and Madison are confused now.

DAKOTA

Woah, woah. What the hell is going on? Why'd you change your mind?

Penn thinks. He has to cover Venso's ass now.

PENN

I don't know what I was thinking saying that. I'm sorry.

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)

I'm sorry, Levi. Return home, Troopers. Moe Bailey will fill his post by week's end.

HAWKINS

Yes sir.

And with that Hawkins hangs up. Levi can't believe it. No one has anything left to say. Dakota glares at Hawkins--

EXT. VILLAGE SAFETY OFFICE - NIGHT

Levi steps into the night to join Madison and Dakota. Silently, lost in thought, they walk through the cold to their houses.

Madison stops and turns to the snow mobile mechanics store: *There's no one waiting for her.* They all continue on--

After a moment, Hawkins and Penn leave, flipping the light off as they go. Hawkins pauses at the foot of the stairs for Penn.

PENN

I can't believe I almost blew Venso's cover. I know why Trooper Bailey kept me out of it now. I'll be in the plane tonight.

Hawkins wants to tell him he's wrong. Instead he watches him go.

EXT. HAWKINS' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Through the cold darkness, Hawkins walks to his cabin. The wind whistles with growing intensity - a blizzard's coming.

WYATT (O.S.)

No luck on the hunt, Hawkins?

He stops dead in his track and whips his head to the back of his cabin - Wyatt stands there, smiling, ignoring the cold.

HAWKINS

Go to sleep, Wyatt.

WYATT

Half a million.

(Hawkins stops)

That's how much I would have made this year under the Mat-Su deal.

HAWKINS

Sounds like you should reconsider your line of work.

WYATT

I was going to suggest the same.

Suddenly, from behind the cabin-- WYATT'S MEN step out. THEY ALL CARRYING GUNS - big guns: AKs, M4s, and a fucking flamethrower.

WYATT (CONT'D)

You may not understand what I do, Trooper Hawkins, but I run a business, one that functions solely on my ability as a supplier of goods.

Wyatt scratches his head with a silenced pistol.

WYATT (CONT'D)

If that falters, well then the message I send out is, "I can't fulfill your needs." And I care about people, their needs - I do.

Wyatt puts his pistol hand on Hawkins' shoulder and gives him hurt eyes, the gun inches from his head.

WYATT (CONT'D)

You don't like me, that's fine. I won't try to change your mind. But I would even lend you a helping hand if you ever asked nicely. But you have to understand what the costs are if you try to shut me down.

Wyatt's smiles fades. He RIPS the gun back, startling Hawkins-- But he just slips it back into his jacket.

WYATT (CONT'D)

So, sleep on that.

And with that, they leave Hawkins - *what the hell have I done?*

INT. HAWKINS' CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins sits on his bed, staring at the wall - the weight of the day is too heavy... He won't be sleeping tonight.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - THE NEXT MORNING

Levi and Dakota are opening up for the day, boxes of items to stock are on the ground at their feet.

Levi unlocks the door and turns to finds Hawkins standing there. Dakota won't even look at him as she takes things inside.

HAWKINS

Ms. Brennan...

She turns to Hawkins - her eyes are red. Levi heads inside.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. For everything.

DAKOTA

This place was a mess. But we worked our way out of the ball of knots. I thought--I really thought that you we're gonna fix everything. But you untangled a knot at the wrong end and you're leaving us to pick the rest of them with bloody fingers.

HAWKINS

Trooper Bailey will be back--

DAKOTA

--oh, shut up.

And then Dakota walks inside, leaving Hawkins by himself.

EXT. STEELE VALLEY - END OF TOWN - LATER

With his bag hoisted over his shoulder, Hawkins makes the long walk back to the runway past Madison's industrial complex.

He steals a glance at the garage where he first saw Charles:

Madison stands there waiting. *But Charles will never come again--*

VENSO (O.S.)

He's screwed, you know.

Hawkins whips his head to find Venso, Trevor and Arryo blocking the small path to the runway. Venso swaggers over to Hawkins.

VENSO (CONT'D)

Levi. He's going to have to answer for what you did yesterday.

Trevor and Arryo laugh. Venso gets right up into Hawkins' face.

VENSO (CONT'D)

Too bad for him you don't know how to  
finish what you start.

Venso just stares him down - *his anger is real*. Hawkins pushes past him as he makes the walk of shame back to the runway.

EXT. STEELE VALLEY - RUNWAY - LATER

In the Cessna, Penn is passed out on a seat. He's shivering, a newspaper CROSSWORD PUZZLE folded on his lap, half finished. Hawkins takes his winter coat off and puts it over him.

Then, Hawkins turns to grab a gas canister to fill the tank--

But A MAN stands behind him, next to Hawkins' pack:

***IT'S MICHAEL MACK.***

Hawkins can't believe his eyes. He looks at his pack--

HIS SIDEARM IS STICKING OUT.

He's unarmed. Mack's cold eyes wait for Hawkins' next move...

HAWKINS BOLTS around the plane, straight onto the FROZEN LAKE--

Mack is on him, steps behind as he chases Hawkins onto the ice--

Hawkins tries to think, tries to come up with a plan--but he's just running... *it's all he can do now...*

THE ICE SHIRKS, CRACKLES under their feet-- They both slam to a halt, not daring to make another move.

He turns--Mack stands there. Nothing but ice in all directions--Mack smirks and takes a step closer.

HAWKINS

Don't take another step.

Mack looks up at him. Too bad, he does. Hawkins raises his foot... and SLAMS it into the ice!!

It SHIRKS again, louder, right under them. Mack takes a step back, surprised. The two men lock eyes. A standoff.

MACK

I saw the whole thing. What you did  
to that hunter.

Hawkins refuses to crack, he fights back every emotion he has and stares daggers at the man he's wanted to kill for years...

MACK (CONT'D)

You didn't consider putting him out of his misery. Instead, you watched him suffer and die. I. Saw. You.

Silence, Hawkins refuses to say a thing.

MACK (CONT'D)

You help me cross the Circle to Canada... and I won't tell a soul.

Hawkins STOMPS on the ice again! It SPLINTERS. Mack sees it in his eyes - he's seething with anger. He takes another step back--

MACK (CONT'D)

You don't have any other options--

HAWKINS

--you say one more word and I dig my heels in. Both of us just disappear.

Mack watches as Hawkins readies himself, totally willing to do it. Mack smiles and raises his hands and turns to walk away.

Hawkins' heart slows - he eases his foot down, watching Mack go. Mack steals a look back, smirking. He turns for the plane--

Shit. PENN! Hawkins takes a step forward -- SPLINTERING.

The ice beneath him is still weak. He quickly creeps across the SHIRKING ice, wanting to bolt to the plane.

Mack gives Hawkins one more smirking glance before disappearing behind the plane to the open door.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

(screaming)

No! Don't!

Hawkins sees the ice beneath him now is stronger--HE SPRINTS!!

He high-tails it across the ice to the plane - the ice never seems to end. He makes his way around the Cessna--

NOTHING. Hawkins looks in all directions. Mack is gone. Worried, Hawkins goes to the open plane door and looks in:

Penn still lies there, asleep. The NEWSPAPER on the floor now. *Thank God.* Hawkins sighs, relieved. It's over. He can go now...

Penn comes to, sitting up and staring bleary-eyed at Hawkins. He slaps at his lap for the newspaper, sees it on the ground.

PENN

Did you finish my crossword?

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 59.

INT. CESSNA 140 - DAY

The freezing Alaskan air slides across the windows of the Cessna 140, a frost halo growing on the glass next to Hawkins' face.

The innavigable terrain below rolls and rolls never ending-- There is absolute silence in the plane as Penn flies.

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)  
So, how'd you leave the place?

HAWKINS (V.O.)  
Shook it up pretty good. But if Moe uses Eric, then they can handle it.

Penn has his headset on--he looks back at Hawkins to say something. But Hawkins' headset dangles from a hook next to him.

Penn clocks this, and keeps his mouth shut. Hawkins watches out the window -- THE SNOW JUST NEVER ENDS...

EXT. FAIRBANKS, ALASKA - AIRFIELD PARKING LOT - LATER

Back in the city, Hawkins walks to his truck. He spots Penn getting into a beat-up old sedan and driving off.

HAWKINS (V.O.)  
He's a damn good kid. Gonna be a great Trooper.

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)  
He'll get his due.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

DOCTORS and NURSES mill about, busy at work. PATIENTS and FAMILY MEMBERS smile, enjoying their time together.

HAWKINS (V.O.)  
I have to head north. I'll catch him.

CAPTAIN ANDERS (V.O. FROM PHONE)  
Okay. We'll talk in the morning.

The crowd parts - a dark, wet and drab Hawkins steps through, hanging up his phone. He slips down the hall to the ICU.

INT. HOSPITAL ICU - DAY

Sherry sits up in her bed reading a book and eating Jello. She looks in much higher spirits than when we last saw her.

CLICK -- the door turns and she looks up casually--

But her eyes glisten and a smile grows on her face when she sees Hawkins. He stands there at the open door--

The woman he saved looking healthy, elated to see him.

SHERRY

It's so nice of you to stop by,  
Trooper Hawkins. I have an extra tub  
of Jello if you're famished.

She laughs to herself. Hawkins lowers his eyes, trying to smile as he makes his way to her hospital bed.

He sits--Sherry waits happily to hear the Trooper's voice. Slowly, Hawkins turns to her - his face swollen and hurting...

*And he breaks down.* Tears fall, he chokes for breath--

Sherry can't believe it - but despite his lack of composure and vulnerable state, she sees a strong man.

Calmly, she sits forward and touches his shoulder. Hawkins' blubbering stops. Tears well up, but her touch is therapeutic.

He studies her. She forces strength through her hand into him. Her eyes swelling and full - she's cares so much about him.

Hawkins shudders, sickened by himself. But Sherry leans forward and slides into a hug, holding him tightly.

Color comes back to his face, he wipes tears away. Sherry hums to him, trying to calm him, not judging for even a second--

INT. OLD CABIN - NIGHT

It's the middle of night and there's a SCRATCHING at the old door to this musty old cabin. A light pops on and a bleary-eyed Trevor steps into the once-cleaned kitchen and eyes the door.

TREVOR

Who's there?

Trevor sighs as he pulls the door open to reveal--

A FUCKING BLACK BEAR--HUGE AND STARTLED--RIGHT OUTSIDE THE DOOR

Trevor yelps and falls backwards trying to kick the door closed. The bear RAISES to its hind legs and ROARS into the house--

Trevor knocks over a side table and slides a PACK to himself. He pulls out a FLARE and LIGHTS IT!

The bear cowers, blinking its eyes at the bright YELLOW light! Quickly the bear turns and BOLTS back into the woods...

Trevor lays there, scared shitless. He looks in the snow outside--

THE PURPLE-STRIPED BARREL LAYS THERE. ROTTEN FISH EVERYWHERE.

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 61.

EXT. BAIT STATION - NIGHT

The trees and the bait station stand still in the cold silence.

A YELLOW light approaches quickly: Trevor, pissed and freezing, RIFLE in his hand. He's wearing more coats than he could count.

He arrives at the station to see that the barrel is indeed gone but the area is clear. He finds FOOTPRINTS that lead to--

**MICHAEL MACK!**

Before Trevor can even register it, Mack raises a KNIFE and DRIVES it into his gut -- He lets out a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM!

Mack removes the knife, deftly grabs both of Trevor's wrists and SLICES his knife across them, deep. Blood SPRAYS--

Trevor SCREAMS again as Mack STABS him in his thigh, bringing him to the ground, incapacitated. Through the spit and blood--

TREVOR  
(screaming)  
PLEASE NO!

EXT. STEELE VALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The quiet blanket over the town is lifted by TREVOR'S SCREAMS!

INT. DAKOTA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dakota is awakened by the screams, perking up, shocked. Madison, on the couch near her, rubs sleepy eyes.

INT. WYATT'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wyatt sits up, listening to the screams. He recognizes them--

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

Bloody drag marks lead from the bait station past the treeline, right up to the cliff. Mack pulls Trevor's head, neck and upper body just off the cliff, holding him there--

Trevor continues to scream as Mack lets go. He flails trying to pull himself back onto the ledge trying not to look down.

TREVOR  
Please don't let me fall...

Mack unslings the rifle, loads it, and turns it to Trevor's face. It hangs there - Trevor stares down the barrel.

MACK  
I won't.

"The Circle" - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 62.

EXT. THE VILLAGE - MAIN CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

People have gathered in the central square. Dakota, Madison and Levi try to calm people down as Mia looks for Charles.

Dakota sees a group of men walking up to the square: It's Wyatt and his men, Venso right at his side.

BANG! .... The screaming stops. The echo from the shot slices the air. Everyone stares silently at the cold, dark mountain--

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

Mack stares down at the dead man hanging off the cliff. He bends down and fishes through his jackets and pants.

JINGLING -- He found the keys. He pulls them out.

EXT. BAIT STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The game camera's light is on. From the camera:

IN NIGHT VISION--MACK APPROACHES, JUMPS UP THE BAIT STATION--

And begins to use the keys to unlock the case--

INT. HAWKINS' HOUSE - DAWN

Back in Fairbanks, there's LOUD KNOCKING on Hawkins' door. He ambles out of his bedroom before opening the front door--

EXT. HAWKINS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Captain Anders and TROOPERS stand outside, cars in the street, lights spinning as the sun rises. Penn stands off to the side.

CAPTAIN ANDERS

There was a double homicide in Steele Valley. You were right. It's Mack.

Hawkins is speechless. He just stares at his Chief.

CAPTAIN ANDERS (CONT'D)

Feds are on their way. They want you as lead. You and Penn have to go now.

Hawkins looks at Penn - his look says it all -- *we fucked up.*

EXT. WOODS - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

The locals trek up the mountain: a large, armed gang ready for anything as the sun begins to peek up over the mountain.

Dakota and Levi walk next to Wyatt. Madison, her dogs, Venso and The Lyons are nearby, all here for the same reason.

*"The Circle"* - Pilot - Kyle Arrington 63.

The dogs sniff out the bait station as people arrive, securing the area. Dakota finds the flare... Follows the bloody trail.

TREVOR'S DEAD BODY AT THE END OF THE LONG BLOODY TRAIL

Everyone crowds around the body, speechless, scared.

Levi checks the body: It hangs precariously off the cliff, head back, arms spread - what brutality...

But something catches his eye right off the cliff. He stands-- Dakota clocks this and then steps forward. Oh my god...

CHARLES LYON'S DEAD BODY LAYS FROZEN ATOP THE ROCKS FAR BELOW.

Dakota covers her mouth-- Levi tries to push people back. Wyatt and Venso step forward. It even shocks them.

Levi, with a sullen look on his face, passes through the crowd, past Madison and zeroes in on Mia and Peter.

Madison turns to Dakota - No. It can't be... But Dakota's face says it all. Madison's heart splinters - *but she can't show it.*

As Levi speaks, Mia and Peter's eyes well up, they scream "No" and push through the crowd to the cliff--

Madison slowly steps forward to see, tells Dakota it's all right--

SHE SEES THE RABBIT IN HIS HAND.

Venso scans around-- He sees the camera case WIDE OPEN & EMPTY.

EXT. HAWKINS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Hawkins is shocked. Captain Anders walks away, somberly. Penn comes up and hands him a coat--

IT'S THE COAT HAWKINS GAVE HIM ON THE RUNWAY IN STEELE VALLEY

Penn turns away and heads to his car. Hawkins looks at his jacket-- *The crossword puzzle is hanging out of the pocket.*

He thinks for a second, something making him feel uneasy. He pulls the newspaper out and holds the crossword puzzle up--

His eyes pop open -- He can't believe what he sees--

Scribbled next to the crossword, it says:

**SEE YOU SOON**

SLAM TO BLACK:

END OF SHOW