

There are Monsters

by

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*Oh there are monsters*

*They come and they go*

*They take what you love*

*They take all that you know*

*Years they go hiding*

*They run when you fight*

*They grow stronger in darkness*

*So stay in the light*

*Oh there are monsters*

*They feed off your cries*

*So don't show your fear*

*Wipe the tears from your eyes*

*One day they will come out*

*Just wait and see*

*Oh there are monsters*

*For you and for me*

Children's Nursery Rhyme 1903

Author unknown

INT. FOREST - NIGHT

*There is a sound.*

We do not recognize it. But we see the CHILD spin around.

*She knows it well.*

A little girl falls back against the cold forest floor. We can see the blood on her face. Her clothes. We see the tears fall down her skin even as the rain falls against her flesh.

*We hear a breath.*

It is unlike anything we have heard before. Not human. Not animal. The sound is different. Like a thousand horses. It is like a mother's clamor. A baby's wail. A father's howl.

*We hear it again. Again.*

The child looks up. We see the terror in her eyes. It is almost as if she will break before us, like a piece of glass.

Her legs splash in the puddles of water as she tries to stand up. The lightning strikes and she sees what we do not.

A GASP escapes her lips.

We watch her lift a muddy hammer in her tiny hands.

*She should have run away.*

Lightning strikes and thunder CRASHES. We hear the sound of bones CRACKING in the darkness. We hear the strange BREATH.

The little girl rises to her feet and stands. The water dripping on her skin. There is no fear inside her anymore.

No pain. Only rage.

White light from the sky shows us her eyes. We see a creature before her, but only for a second.

The Monster leaps towards her, knocking her to the ground.

We hear the child SCREAMING.

Then we hear silence strangle her voice.

*She should have run away.*

CUT TO BLACK.

*My mom tells me not to be afraid of monsters.*

*But she is wrong.*

*They are out there, waiting for you. Watching.*

*They are in the dark...*

*Sometimes where you see them.*

*Sometimes where you don't.*

*I know that now.*

*But I am still afraid.*

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Crimson slippers hang off the bed, dangling in the air, just a few inches above the floor. The sunlight fills the white curtains as the dawn turns to morning.

We see LIZZY as she sits on her bed. She is the girl we have seen before. She is already dressed. A small suitcase is packed. In her lap rests a doll, torn and tattered.

The little girl's big blue eyes watch the clock before her as it ticks softly.

The child listens to its heartbeat as its hand slowly moves from 6:59 to 7:00.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

The house is silent, save the sound of SNORES coming from behind the door at the end of the hall.

Lizzy's suitcase bounces off her tiny blue jeans as she makes her way to the living room. The doll rests inside her grasp.

She is ten years old.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A trash bag fills slowly. Lizzy drops the beer bottles in softly. She dumps the ashtray, then a bottle of wine. She stands, surveying the living room. The warm sunlight falls across her shoulders. A hint of smoke still hangs in the air.

An alarm BUZZES down the hall. She hears a hand slap it silent.

She folds the blanket and lays it on top of the couch.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Coffee brews. Lizzy finishes her breakfast. We watch her wash her dishes. After she dries them, Lizzy places each back into the cabinets.

One mug gets cream and sugar. One stays black. For a moment she stands, watching the steam rise up into the air. The cream turns the coffee a light shade of brown.

She takes a small bottle of Visine and pours some into the blackness. With a tiny spoon, she stirs them both.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

A MAN sits in a large leather chair. He is tying his boots. His eyes are tired and blood shot.

He lights a cigarette as Lizzy walks to his side.

LIZZY  
My momma up?

MAN  
(mumbles)  
I ain't her keeper.

For a moment he coughs, his lungs clearing up for the morning just in time for him to fill them up again.

LIZZY  
Do you want coffee?

MAN  
If I don't, I'm a fool.

She hands him the black.

The cream and sugar waits for her mother.

MAN (CONT'D)  
You know how to make it?

LIZZY  
If I don't, I'm a fool.

The Man smiles a bitter smile as he blows smoke across her legs. He takes a sip and then Lizzy listens to his knees CRACK as he stands.

MAN  
See you when I see you.

LIZZY  
I'll miss these talks.

She watches him close the door.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

LIZZY  
Momma...Momma. Mom.

KATHY, 36, opens her eyes slowly, trying to find focus. Lizzy grabs her shoulder, pushing her back and forth.

KATHY  
Stop shaking me.

LIZZY  
Get up.

KATHY  
Did I oversleep?

LIZZY  
Yes.

For a moment, Kathy stares at the ceiling, trying to find her thoughts. But the hangover's cloud is thick. She was beautiful once, and on certain days she still is.

But not today.

KATHY  
Are you ready to go?

LIZZY  
I packed for me, then I did for you.

Kathy looks to the foot of the bed, she sees her suitcase waiting for her as she takes the coffee into her hands.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Get up.

KATHY  
I'm getting up.

LIZZY  
You said 8. It's 9.

KATHY  
Did Roy leave? He was supposed to call me.

LIZZY  
He probably has diarrhea.

KATHY  
Damn it Elizabeth. What'd you put in his coffee?

LIZZY  
He seemed backed up.

KATHY  
Load the car.

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Lizzy sits in the living room. Her face is cold and numb. She stares at the muted TV. The cartoons dance across the screen. She looks up at the clock. 12:30 stares back at her.

Kathy rushes past her in a hurry. We watch her scramble. One leg inside a pair of blue jeans as she races to find socks.

KATHY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry...I fell back asleep. Sorry.

The little girl flips off the screen and stands up.

LIZZY

You can't smoke in the car.

Kathy falls into the couch awkwardly, lifting her legs into the sky. We hear her GRUMBLE, then quietly relent.

KATHY

Fine.

INT. CAR - DAY

Lizzy stares out the window and watches her mother pull their old Ford Mustang down the driveway.

KATHY

Are you sad to be leaving? You'll be gone all summer...that's a long time.

The child does not answer. She just stares at her house as Kathy throws the car into drive.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I said I was sorry.

LIZZY

Dad was making us dinner tonight.

KATHY

Now we'll stay in a motel. That's what road trips are like. We just roll with the punches.

LIZZY

Stop punching.

KATHY

Fine.

Kathy turns back, flips on the radio and hits the gas.

EXT. ROADS - AFTERNOON

Trees as tall as buildings line the sides of the road as the rusty antique moves through the hills of the south.

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

They drive in awkward silence as Lizzy studies a map. Her tiny finger traces the route they are traveling.

The little girl digs inside her bag, her hands searching through her things. Just as she finds her notebook, she grazes the old doll that was hidden inside.

SUDDENLY THE CAR IS FILLED WITH THE SOUND OF A BABY'S SCREAM.

KATHY

Jesus!

LIZZY

I'm sorry...I'm sorry.

The little girl fidgets with the baby doll's body. She tries desperately to shut the noises down.

She hears her mother's hand as it dances on the wheel.

KATHY

You're too old for that.

LIZZY

I don't care!

Kathy reaches for a cigarette, but Lizzy stops her.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

You said!

KATHY

Fine!

With the flip of a switch, the turn signal BEATS as they change lanes towards a gas station.

KATHY (CONT'D)

You're too old...

LIZZY

You're too old for lots of things.

She places the doll back inside her bag.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - AFTERNOON

An 18-wheeler roars past as Kathy stands outside Lizzy's window. She lights her second cigarette with her first.

She looks down at her reflection in the window, then gazes into the glass to see Lizzy drawing pictures in her notebook. For a moment, she just watches her.

Kathy knocks on the window, her ring popping on the glass.

LIZZY

What?

KATHY

Roll it down.

She watches Lizzy reluctantly do as she is told.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I was gonna give you this when you got there.

Pulling off her watch, she slips it into her daughter's hand. Lizzy's gaze slowly drifts to the faded gold watch before her.

LIZZY

It was Gramma's.

KATHY

Yes.

LIZZY

Why are you giving it to me?

KATHY

Cause I know you're not coming back.

LIZZY

I didn't say that.

KATHY

But you're not going to...

Kathy reaches down and puts the watch on her daughter's wrist.

LIZZY

If we stop in Darlington tonight, it's only 4 hours until we get there...

KATHY

Just tell me when you wanna stop.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Kathy drives in silence. She stares forward, her eyes growing more and more tired.

Lizzy stares down at the map, her doll inside her lap. Her finger traces the path over and over. She steals a glance at her mother. Watching her face as she mans the wheel.

KATHY

You wanna listen to the radio?

Lizzy's eyes dart back to the windshield.

LIZZY

I don't care.

KATHY

Well we can't sit here in silence.

She flips on a country station.

LIZZY

What do you want to talk about?

For a moment there is nothing.

KATHY

I don't know.

They drive in silence as the radio plays softly.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

There is a GASP. We hear the air rush inside Lizzy's mouth. Her throat. For a moment, it is like she is drowning.

She opens her eyes and we watch tears stream down her face.

The house is silent. Frozen. It is dark inside her room.

The orange glow of a night light sends patterns up the walls. A teddy bear made of plastic. Its body fights to fill the room with warmth as its smile stays frozen on its tiny face.

She hears the wind blowing hard against the window. Somewhere, there is a RATTLING. Something SLAMS against the house as a storm builds strength for a fight that will soon come.

Her voice is tiny at first.

LIZZY

Momma...Momma...

But there is no response.

## LIZZY (CONT'D)

Momma!

The word CRACKS in the silence.

The nightmare disappears from Lizzy's mind but the fear seems to linger. Her baby doll rests inside her hands.

Outside her cracked door, she sees the hallway. For a moment she lies there. We see her fighting the tears as they continue to taunt her.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Two socks move slowly. They barely cling to her tiny feet. The ends have been pulled down in her sleep. It is almost as if the toes inside them have shrunken away.

They slide across the filthy carpet. There is a path of grey that marks the way towards her mother's bedroom.

We watch the little girl move quietly inside the sleeping house. Her eyes still red. Her face damp with tears.

## LIZZY

Momma?

But Kathy's bed is empty.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Blue and red light take turns dancing in the gloom. The TV glows quietly, the voices barely WHISPERING the actor's words.

Lizzy walks slowly through the chaos of her living room. We watch her moving in a trance. She counts two bottles of wine and an empty beer by the couch.

The coffee table was pushed away. She can see where her mother sat on the floor. Too many cigarettes killed inside the ashtray to count. A microwave dinner uneaten.

The room is empty. Her mother still not found.

Lizzy lifts a blanket from the floor.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

We watch the little girl standing in the kitchen.

She does not call out anymore. The blanket trails on the floor behind her as she moves from room to room.

A clock TICKS softly as its hands point to 12 and to 4.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Vomit floats inside the porcelain bowl.

A shade of red, a shade of green.

Lizzy reaches up with tiny fingers and we watch it disappear as she stands above the toilet.

At her feet, lies her mother.

Lizzy watches her sleeping on the floor. Her chest rising and falling. She is wearing her bra. Nothing else.

Above the little girl, the bathroom fan HUMS on the ceiling.

She lies down beside Kathy. There is a bath mat. Lizzy's body clings to it like an island to escape the crisp cool air.

She pulls the blanket around them. Her hand, her arm, slipping around her Kathy's waist as she sleeps. Her fingers rest on the bottom of her mother's rib cage.

For a moment Kathy's eyes flutter open. We watch her stare forward. Her vision blurry. There is a dead cockroach on the floor a foot away from her. Maybe more.

She takes her daughter's hand.

We watch the little girl lying beside her mother. The bathroom light shines down on Lizzy's face as the wind blows outside.

EXT. ROADS - NIGHT

The car sits by the side of the road as Kathy and Lizzy each squat in the tall grass before the tree line. The sound of cicadas surround them like an orchestra.

Kathy walks back to the car, lights another smoke. Slowly Lizzy emerges, zipping her jeans with a tiny hop.

KATHY

You sure you want to keep going?

LIZZY

Dad and Jenna said they'll stay up.  
I wanna sleep in my bed.

Kathy looks down at her daughter for a quick second as she lets the words sink in.

The skies have been changing. A STORM APPROACHES. Lizzy watches as the first drops of rain fall on the hood.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Are you tired?

KATHY  
I'll make it.

The branches sway back and forth in the wind, dancing.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I think we might see some rain.

Lizzy can see lightning strike somewhere in the distance.

LIZZY  
I hate thunder.

KATHY  
I know.

Kathy stubs out her cigarette and with a soft touch of her shoulder, she watches her daughter climb back inside.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

They drive in silence. Their eyes staring out into the darkness before them. Neither speaks.

We see Lizzy's right hand balled tightly in a knot just below her knee.

Just beside her, Kathy's right hand does the same.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

KATHY  
Damn it!

Her voice echoes into the night as they stand in the middle of road. All around them we see the signs of construction.

The blinking lights flashing orange and yellow.

*A new road built beside the old one.*

LIZZY  
Which way?

KATHY  
I don't know. That's why we're stopped.

LIZZY  
But you said...

KATHY  
 ...I didn't think we needed a new  
 map. I've fucking lived here my  
 whole goddamn life.

A wave of silence mixed with tension hangs between them.  
 Lizzy watches her mother pace back and forth, trying to figure  
 out which way is the new right way.

LIZZY  
 You should get GPS.

KATHY  
 I love my car.

LIZZY  
 Dad has one in...

KATHY  
 I don't give a shit what your dad  
 has. Let's go.

They climb inside and we watch the taillights flip from red to  
 white. For a moment they sit. Back to red. Kathy climbs out  
 and looks at the fork that has been cut into the trees.

For a moment she stands. We watch her lift her iPhone into  
 the sky, searching for a signal.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
 See? Fuck GPS. We'll go my way...

A decision is made and the door SLAMS. We hear the Mustang  
 pull away towards the darkness.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Kathy drives them through the storm. We can hear the sound of  
 the WEATHER FORECAST playing softly on the radio.

Lizzy watches the window wipers SWINGING BACK AND FORTH. The  
 sound beating over and over as the rain falls upon them.

KATHY  
 Can I...

LIZZY  
 Crack the window.

With the familiar SNAP of the lighter, we see the tiny spark  
 of the flame.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
 What time is it?

KATHY

I don't know. Why don't you tell me?

Lizzy smiles a tiny smile as she realizes that she has the watch around her wrist now.

She waits as the car moves from the darkness. The sodium vapor lights on the side of the two-lane highway form pools on the road. She traces her finger on the watch's face.

Counting the hands.

LIZZY

It's 1:15.

KATHY

And not a soul in sight.

Kathy laughs a wicked laugh as thunder RUMBLES the skies above.

LIZZY

Don't do that.

KATHY

I'm just kidding around.

LIZZY

It's not funny.

KATHY

You need to lighten up.

She passes under a pool of light. Then darkness.

When the car hits the light again Kathy turns and sees the coldness in her daughter's gaze. Not anger...just cold.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

LIZZY

I wish you listened more.

KATHY

Quit saying...

Right then it happens.

From the darkness into the light, they see it standing there.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Oh shit...

A WOLF STARING DIRECTLY AT THEM IN THE CENTER OF THE ROAD.

LIZZY

WATCH OUT!

We hear Kathy SLAM THE BRAKES as she collides with a creature before her. The car spins. The tires skipping across the wet pavement as the Mustang moves in and out of the light.

We hear Lizzy SCREAM. We hear Kathy SCREAM AS WELL as they spin and then slam into a small embankment.

Everything is suddenly in slow motion. The Mustang twists back across the road hitting a railing on the other side.

The wolf is thrown from the hood.

Kathy slams face first into the steering wheel. We hear her CRY OUT IN PAIN as her wrist snaps. The world around them spins in a thousand circles. The gravel twists beneath the car as the wheels try to find something to hold onto.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Momma!

THEN SUDDENLY EVERYTHING STOPS. THE CAR YANKS TO A HALT.

In an instant, the chaos of the accident is over.

The cold rain falls against the cracked windshield. A broken wiper slides across the glass over and over.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Momma...

The first word breaks the strange trance they were both in.

KATHY

Are you...are you okay?

Her little girl reaches out, tears already pour down her face.

LIZZY

You're bleeding.

A cut drips from Kathy's forehead like red paint across her cheeks. She looks up and Lizzy GASPS at the sight of the gash.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Oh Momma.

KATHY

Are you okay!?

Kathy tries to reach out but her arm sends a spike of pain through her like a bolt of electricity.

LIZZY

Momma!

Kathy cannot help but cry out. The pain is too much.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

What do we do?

KATHY

We gotta...we gotta call 911.

She tries to reach inside for her purse, but her wrist screams in defiance. She pulls back her hand, her fingers trembling.

Suddenly the car stalls out, the single wiper now hung in place like a statue. Lizzy reaches down and pulls out the phone.

KATHY (CONT'D)

What the fuck was that?

They look up into the darkness. They can see a black mass laying in a pool of light before them.

LIZZY

(into the phone)

Hello? Can you hear me?

Kathy stares out past the cracked windshield. She can see the creature lying there, its body still.

KATHY

It's huge.

LIZZY

(into the phone)

We've been in a accident. We're on the highway. 7. Mom, where are we?

KATHY

Tell them we passed the 40 about thirty minutes ago. We are south of...We're on the old one...

She tries to roll her window up as the rain pours inside. The accident has cracked the door.

The window won't budge.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Shit...I...don't know.

Lizzy relays the message as Kathy tries to restart the car. The engine won't turn over.

In fact, it doesn't do anything at all.

LIZZY  
(hanging up the phone)  
They are sending an ambulance and  
calling a tow truck thing.

Lizzy reaches over and touches her mother's face.

KATHY  
Grab a rag or something...

LIZZY  
Are you okay?

KATHY  
(frustrated)  
I'll be alright.

Lizzy reaches back, unzipping one of the suitcases that have spilled into the floorboards below. She pulls out a pair of underwear. Hands it to her mother.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Not my good ones. Grab the big ones.

Lizzy swaps them out. For a moment, she dabs the blood from Kathy's eyes. For a moment, Kathy lets her daughter help her.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
How long did they say it would be?

LIZZY  
30 minutes.

KATHY  
Damn.

LIZZY  
We're way out here...he said.

KATHY  
Fine, I went the wrong fucking way.

The harsh tone of Kathy's words stop the conversation. The two listen in silence as the rain continues to fall.

LIZZY  
(softly)  
It stopped bleeding I think.

KATHY  
Grab a band-aid from my purse.

INT. CAR - LATER

A few moments have passed. Kathy finishes the last drag of the cigarette and tosses it out the crack in the window.

KATHY  
Do you want to get out?

LIZZY  
Why?

KATHY  
I want to see how bad it is.

Lizzy looks forward, staring into the darkness before her. She sees the creature laying in the road.

LIZZY  
What if it's still alive?

KATHY  
Baby it hasn't moved.

LIZZY  
But still...

Kathy tries to open her door, but it seems pinned.

KATHY  
Try yours.

Lizzy doesn't move. Her eyes showing the hint of fear.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
It's alright. Come on, be brave.

Lightning strikes out once again, filling the road with a white hot flash of light.

Finally the little girl does what her mother has asked. The door pops open with a SQUEAK. They hear the run off spill onto the wet ground.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Climb out.

Lizzy steps onto the road slowly.

She stays close as Kathy pulls herself across the seats with her one good hand.

EXT. ROADS - NIGHT

They move out into the shadows, the little girl following her mother. Her hand grabs the belt loop of Kathy's jeans.

Tires are flat. The driver's side is badly damaged.

The car is ruined.

KATHY

Fuck...fuck...fuck...

The words drawl out longer and longer as the reality sets in.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Baby you need to call your dad. Once we figure out where they're taking us, he's gonna need to come get you.

LIZZY

What about you?

KATHY

I gotta take care of this. I'll just have Roy pick me up tomorrow.

The little girl stares at her mom but Kathy quickly turns away. She kneels down by the driver's side, inspecting the damage that she already understands.

Lizzy walks back around to the car, opening the door. She grabs the phone and dials a number.

We watch her turn back to the large black mass in the road.

She waits for her father's voice on the line.

*She has grabbed her doll as well.*

LIZZY

Dad...can you hear me? We got into a wreck. No...I'm okay. So is Mom...

Kathy looks up into the sky as she listens to Lizzy's words. She can see her daughter turn away.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

No, Dad...she wasn't. She's fine. We just...there was something in the road and it was raining. She cut her head. Her wrist is hurt. Bad.

Kathy stands up and starts walking out into the road.

KATHY

Tell him that we'll call him when we get to the hospital.

LIZZY

Mom...wait.

Kathy walks towards the darkness. Her boots CRACKLE on the wet gravel as she lights a cigarette in frustration.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Dad, I'll call you when I know where you can pick us up. No Dad. The ambulance will be here soon. It'd take you too long to get out here.

The little girl moves away from the passenger side, walking out into the gloom. She sees her mom approaching the thing.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Momma...wait...  
(into the phone)  
Dad, I'll call you later.

She hangs up the phone and then jogs behind her mother.

EXT. ROAD - SECOND POOL OF LIGHT

Kathy follows her shadow as it races before her. It reaches the blood that has splattered on the ground.

She walks closer until finally she stands before it. Even as Lizzy comes to her side, she cannot tear her eyes away.

LIZZY

What is it?

KATHY

It's a wolf.

LIZZY

It's like a dog?

KATHY

Yes.

*For the first time we see it.*

The eyes, as big as silver dollars, stare into the darkness.

The crash must have broken its neck instantly.

LIZZY

Have you ever seen a wolf before?

They stare at the white ribs that have forced their way to the surface. The bone touching the air for the first time.

KATHY

In the zoo, probably.

Lizzy slowly inches up behind her mother.

LIZZY

Is it dead?

KATHY

I don't know.

LIZZY

It looks dead.

KATHY

Yes it does.

A SINGLE FANG LIES ON THE GROUND AT KATHY'S FEET.

She reaches down, lifting it into her fingers. Then she stares back at the black wet hair mangled in blood.

Lizzy can see the claw marks, the bites in the flesh.

LIZZY

Let's go back to the car.

KATHY

Okay.

But for a moment, neither one moves.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Kathy and Lizzy sit in the car, staring out at the wolf lying in the blackness. The fang now rests on the dash.

KATHY

Some of the cuts...they didn't happen in the crash. He must have been fighting with something.

LIZZY

Like the wolves in Old Yeller?

KATHY

Like that.

Lizzy reaches into the back, pulling something from her bag.

LIZZY

Can I see your arm?

She has a tiny shirt. She wraps it around Kathy's wrist.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

I liked that movie.

Kathy bites her lip as the pain overtakes her.

KATHY

I should have brought some whiskey.

LIZZY

Nuh uh.

KATHY

Joke.

LIZZY

Bad joke.

A warm glow begins to fill the trees hovering in the distance. Soon, they see the headlights shine in the rearview mirror.

KATHY

Thank god.

A sigh of relief. The tow truck pulls into view.

A few seconds later, it crawls to a stop beside them.

KATHY (CONT'D)

He'll know where we're going.

But Lizzy says nothing. She had turned back. Her eyes move from the cracked windshield out to the road.

She stares forward through the broken glass. Drops of rain have begun falling again. The sky begins to cry once more.

LIZZY

Momma...

KATHY

What is it baby?

Kathy hears the door to the wrecker open. She can see the driver as he moves around the front of his truck. His overalls catch the light of the headlights's glow.

LIZZY

*It's gone.*

The DRIVER knocks on the window just as Kathy turns to see the pool of light. The mass before them has vanished.

*The wolf has disappeared.*

DRIVER  
Miss? Are you alright?

KNOCK, KNOCK.

DRIVER (CONT'D)  
Ma'am?

Kathy finally turns, breaking her eyes away from the road.

*Where did it go?*

KATHY  
I'm sorry...I'm sorry. Yeah, we're fine. My wrist but...

The driver leans in, shining a flashlight into Lizzy's eyes.

DRIVER  
I'm sorry, girl.  
(off Lizzy's look)  
Look, the ambulance'll be here in a bit. If you want, why don't we load up your stuff in my truck and I'll start getting your car ready.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
I don't want to get out.

KATHY  
Baby it's fine. It probably just crawled into the woods to die.

Kathy turns back to the driver.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Can you get my door open?

He looks down. The beam of his flashlight shining across the broken metal.

DRIVER  
Might be best to climb out the other side. I'll come around, help you with your bags.

EXT. ROADS - NIGHT

The truck driver opens Lizzy's door and with an outstretched arm, he guides both of them to the road's edge.

JESSE

My name's Jesse. I hope you two aren't too shaken up.

KATHY

We're fine...we just hit a wolf if you can believe it. Wasn't exactly what we thought we would be getting ourselves into.

The flashlight shines down to the hood.

JESSE

Nobody takes this road anymore. Animals probably don't think much about crossing it these days.

He turns, looking into the road, then the trees.

*There is no sign of the animal. There is nothing at all.*

JESSE (CONT'D)

Where's it at?

LIZZY

It got up...

JESSE

Shit...must've just spooked it. Let's get your bags.

He reaches inside grabbing Kathy's purse. *The phone.*

He pulls the suitcases. Then he hands Lizzy her tiny bag.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Like I said, the ambulance will be out here in a minute. There was a big wreck on the highway...

He pulls the suitcase towards his truck. Popping open the door, Jesse notices that the two girls haven't moved an inch.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Ladies, it's fine.

Lizzy nudges her mother. For a second the two lock eyes.

KATHY

I think we'll just get back in the car.  
Can you hook it up with us inside?

The rain starts to fall a little heavier once again. The driver looks up into the sky and then back down to Kathy.

JESSE

Y'all are fine while I'm settin' up.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Lizzy crawls into her mother's lap. They watch Jesse climb inside his truck. They watch him pull forward.

LIZZY

He was weird.

KATHY

He was cute.

LIZZY

You're weird.

The door hangs open by their side.

KATHY

Goddamn, my wrist hurts.

The tow truck pulls forward into the second pool of sodium vapor. They watch the brake lights begin to glow bright red. Then they watch the driver throw the truck in reverse.

The familiar BEEPING fills the night air.

Jesse steps out of the cab. He WHISTLES a country song as the rain falls. The chains RATTLE as he moves to the bumper.

EXT. ROADS - CONTINUOUS

JESSE

Damn it.

He leans down studying the belly of the car.

KATHY (O.S.)

What is it?

He looks up into the cracked windshield.

JESSE

The axle is snapped in half.

LIZZY  
 (through the glass)  
 That's bad?

JESSE  
 It ain't good, baby-doll.

Walking back to his truck, he pulls out a special set of chains.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
 Pop the hood.

He waits for a moment. Then lightly smacks the metal.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
 Lady...pop it.

He reaches down, only then feeling the fresh blood caked against the grill.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
 You got him good...

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly the hood rises up and Kathy and her daughter are blind to the world.

KATHY  
 What time is it? Baby?

Lizzy looks down at her watch, again she studies the numbers.

LIZZY  
 Late.

KATHY  
 Late 30 or later 45?

They hear the chains getting dropped inside the engine. They hear the driver sliding them to the ground.

The hood flies down. Jesse moves back to his task.

The little girl's eyes fall to the dash. *To the fang.*

LIZZY  
 He took your purse.

KATHY  
 Shit. Is the phone in there? I want you to call your dad...I think he probably should just come in the morning...we can find a motel.

THUNDER GRUMBLES and the wind blows into the trees. Lizzy looks up from the tooth into the darkness.

LIZZY

Why would it run out in the road?

KATHY

Who knows...

LIZZY

It had to of seen us, right?

KATHY

Baby, it was probably just running.

LIZZY

From what?

She reaches out to the fang. The bone long and thick.

*Like a finger.*

Lizzy reaches out and touches it like it is alive. Her skin grazes the pale smooth white. There are drops of blood.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Old Yeller didn't have teeth like that. His teeth were small.

KATHY

That was a dog. We hit a wolf.

LIZZY

Wolves don't got teeth like that either.

EXT. ROADS - UNDER THE CAR - NIGHT

Jesse slides under the car. He drags himself under the engine, then pulls each chain down and then bolts them together.

We hear his soft WHISTLE as he works quickly. We hear the rain falling. He lays in the darkness, his face only a few inches from the bottom of the car.

To his right, he can see Lizzy's foot drop down.

He sees her other slipper follow its leader.

The sky GROWLS from up above as she calls out to him.

LIZZY

Mister?

JESSE

Jesse.

LIZZY

Mr. Jesse...we need to get our phone.

JESSE

Well I'll be out in a minute or else  
you can just go get it now.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lizzy peeks towards the truck. Her mother sees her hesitation.

KATHY

There ain't nothing to worry about.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

We watch Lizzy turn. She finally moves into the pool of light  
by the hood and then disappears again into the shadows.All around her, she hears the trees SWAYING BACK AND FORTH.  
The rain falling against the branches.

Slowly she makes her way to the truck.

She finds the door locked.

LIZZY

I need the keys. Mister...

JESSE (O.S.)

I'll be out in a minute.

His words float into the air. Lizzy pulls her doll close to  
her chest. The tiny face stares up at her.

For a moment she just stands.

Then she turns back to where they found the wolf.

EXT. ROADS - SECOND POOL

The ground is still caked in red even as the rain begins to  
wash it away. The little girl stares at the traces of death.

Lizzy finds a set of footprints. Tracks. They are huge.

She follows their path with her eyes. From the trees.

They moved *into the blood*. They moved towards the pool.*Something dragged the wolf away.*

LIZZY  
Momma. Come look.

We hear her voice call out softly as she searches the shadows.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Momma...

A flash of LIGHTNING strikes. Lizzy sees the night disappear before her for one brief moment.

As the glow fades, she sees the wolf's body by the tree line.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Oh...shit.

The little girl's cuss word tells us when she finds it.

We watch her approach the carnage slowly. Her feet tip-toeing into the grass and the blood. It is torn in half.

For a moment, Lizzy is alone with the death before her.

SHE DOES NOT SEE THE EYES THAT HOVER IN THE DARKNESS.

THERE IS SOMETHING THERE. SOMETHING LARGE. SOMETHING BLACK.

It is only a few feet away. Staring at her.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
I found it. I found the wolf.

She calls out to her mother, to the driver. No response.

Lizzy starts to walk back towards the car.

WE SEE THE SHADOW MOVE INCH BY INCH WITH EACH OF HER STEPS.

Every time she stops, the darkness stops as well.

THUNDER RUMBLES. The child stands in the street light.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Momma!

But the storm gobbles up her words. She squeezes her doll close to her chest. The rain falls on their faces.

Lizzy turns back to the wolf's body. One last look.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Sorry we hit you.

THE EYES ARE GONE. THE SHADOW HAS DISAPPEARED.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

There is a tiny house. A box made of card board. A child's hands have drawn the door and windows and shutters. Chalk outlines in blue and pink. A little girl's fantasy.

It sits in Lizzy's room. *She sits inside.*

Somewhere outside her bedroom we hear a man YELLING, a woman SCREAMING. But the box just sits there. Still. Waiting.

INT. HOUSE - BOX

There is a small window cut near the ceiling. The light from the hallway barely trickles into the cardboard walls.

Lizzy is curled in a ball. We can see her eyes in the blackness. Below her there are toys. A teddy bear. Her doll.

*And there are two sets of keys.*

MAN (O.S.)

Lizzy!

She barely flinches, but she does move. The anger in the drunk man's voice does not allow her to be brave. It does not allow her to stay strong.

But Lizzy does not run.

KATHY (O.S.)

Lizzy! Where are they?

The little girl's hand creeps down slowly. She pulls the keys towards her. They slip beneath the body of the little doll in a summer dress. She hides them under the ruffles.

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

Damn it!

Suddenly a shadow crosses the hallway. We hear FOOTSTEPS. We watch the little girl's eyes as she stares through the tiny hole. She sees him come inside. She hears him searching.

MAN (O.S.)

Where are you, you little shit!?

She sees the man's body as he moves past the box.

He stumbles, sliding to the floor as he checks underneath her bed. Lizzy is like a statue. Her arms wrap around her legs. Her pale skin is like armor.

But her face still shows its fear.

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

Lizzy!

The cardboard wall is all that separates them. She can hear his labored BREATHING. The hack building inside his throat.

Suddenly the man's hand pushes against the tiny house.

LIZZY

Momma!

Lizzy watches as the walls tremble. With that single word, the house is destroyed.

Like a tornado, the roof, the walls are torn away.

Suddenly she is face to face with the man.

MAN

Where are they?

There is hatred inside his words. His red bleary eyes.

LIZZY

(whispers)

I don't know.

MAN

Speak up!

His face is only inches from her lips, her nose...her eyes.

KATHY

Get away from her.

Kathy can barely keep herself standing as she stumbles inside.

The words are just a slur.

MAN

She's got'em.

KATHY

I fucking know that...

Kathy falls to her knees before them. Lizzy's body remains frozen. Her tiny frame still holding itself firm. But her eyes fall to the ground.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Look at me.

MAN

Look at your mother...

KATHY

Look at me!

For the first time, her mother's rage is directed away from the man. For the first time, Lizzy feels the burn.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Give'em here.

Lizzy's face grows red. We see the blood pumping in the vein in her tiny neck. We hear her tiny BREATHS as she holds her mouth against her knees, her arms.

LIZZY

I don't have them.

MAN

Bullshit!

The man's hands thrust forward toward her. The toys, her bears, her friends are tossed into the air.

*Then he finds the doll that is special.*

They all hear the JANGLE. The keys as they RATTLE against his skin. Lizzy cannot help but see her mother's glare.

She watches the man jump to his feet.

MAN (CONT'D)

The store closes in 8 minutes.

KATHY

Wait.

But the man is out the door.

For a moment they are alone. The little girl and her mother. Kathy rises up, suddenly she stands above the little girl.

There is one movement. One rush of air. Kathy SLAPS with an open hand and beats down on Lizzy's head.

One hit. The dull THUD of bone to skull.

Then Kathy turns and runs after the man.

The little girl sits. The crying begins. She hears the front door open and slam closed. She hears the CAR START outside. Her hand reaches out finally and pulls her doll close to her.

Lizzy lifts the cardboard box back, tossing it over her face.

Her body. Her world.

EXT. UNDER THE CAR - NIGHT

A wave of wind moves through the trees. We hear the rush of air, the leaves trembling high above in the storm.

The last bolt is attached.

Jesse turns back, about to slide himself up.

We watch him make a few last minute adjustments. His hands retracing his steps as he checks every connection.

He grabs a wrench, tightening a bolt. The metal ceiling hangs above him, inches from his face.

Lizzy's crimson slippers pass by his side.

JESSE

I'll be out in a second.

She does not respond.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Rain spills down from the door as Lizzy opens it slowly.

KATHY

I should have got you a jacket.

The little girl nods as she climbs inside.

Her eyes lock on the windshield. They fall past it to the road as a hint of lightning shows her the woods.

LIZZY

Did you hear me out there?

She does not break from her stare, even as her mother wipes the water from her face.

KATHY

I guess not.

LIZZY

I called for you.

A tiny RUMBLE fills the sky.

KATHY

What happened?

LIZZY

I found it.

EXT. UNDER THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Leaves blow across the road, swirling in the storm's hands.

Jesse begins to slide out, his task is complete.

He notices a wrench left behind. We watch his fingertips reaching as he tries in vain to snag it.

He almost has it when he hears the sound.

*A breath. Another.*

We watch his redneck tilt back towards the road.

His eyes scan the darkness. Nothing.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

KATHY

Where did you see it?

The little girl points, her finger touching the glass.

LIZZY

Something ate it.

KATHY

What are you talking about?

Kathy's eyes follow her little girl's as the words sink in.

KATHY (CONT'D)

You should've left it alone.

LIZZY

I did.

KATHY

Don't worry about it, okay? We'll be gone soon. Birds'll eat the rest in the morning. Then...

LIZZY

What would do that?

KATHY

Baby, are you scared?

A slight nod on her tiny face.

KATHY (CONT'D)

It's not gonna come after people.

LIZZY  
You promise?

A child's question. A voice filled with fear that needs a certain answer. They sit watching the road in silence.

KATHY  
I promise.

Finally, Kathy turns away, leaving the road to Lizzy. She calls out the window.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Hey....Jesse. You done?

The raindrops fall against glass. We hear the tiny splashes.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Hey...

Her foot POUNDS the floorboard beneath her. She turns to Lizzy, searching for a smile. She does not find one.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Let's go. Come on man.

Nothing. No response at all.

LIZZY  
Mister!

Lizzy reaches for the door but Kathy grabs her shoulder.

KATHY  
Hold on a sec...

The young girl turns back to Kathy, as her eyes break from the window...*we see something pass by on the road.*

LIZZY  
Where'd he go?

KATHY  
He's down there. He's probably just fixin' to get up.

LIZZY  
Why doesn't he answer?

Her words hang in the air with the silence. The gentle HUM of the storm sings against the Mustang.

They sit, listening. Waiting.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
I don't hear him.

KATHY  
Jesse!

Her voice is louder this time. Kathy taps the HORN.

LIZZY  
Momma...

KATHY  
Stop it. You're freaking me out.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The road is empty. The forest sleeps.

The rain bounces off the tow truck. The pavement. The blood.

Everything is still as we pan across the tree line. Lightning strikes and the world is filled with the white glow.

We watch the car from the trees, listening to the sound of Lizzy and her mother. We hear their MUTED WORDS.

Thunder RUMBLES and we sit, watching.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The windows have begun to fog. Lizzy's hand wipes the grey away as they both stare out into the darkness.

The blood drips a little from Kathy's face, down her cheek.

LIZZY  
It got him.

KATHY  
Stop it.

But still there is no sound from the driver. No response.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Jesse!

Her hand slaps the horn once again. This time she lets it sit. We hear the forest fill with the BLASTING. We hear the car's SCREAM hang in the air.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Jesse!

For a moment they sit as the rain falls down all around them.

Lizzy twists her head back and forth. Her eyes searching.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Maybe he went to piss?

LIZZY  
No he didn't.

KATHY  
It's gone. Whatever the fuck it was.

LIZZY  
No it's not.

KATHY  
I'm gonna go out there.

LIZZY  
Let's just wait here. Please.

We watch as Kathy thinks about the words.

On the dashboard sits the fang.

KATHY  
Stop turning this into a thing.

Kathy leans in. The lightning strikes outside and we see her silhouette as she turns to her daughter's face.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Don't get weird. I'll go find him.

LIZZY  
Why?

KATHY  
Cause I don't just sit...

She begins to climb past her daughter to the passenger seat.

LIZZY  
Don't go...

KATHY  
...Don't say another word.

LIZZY  
The ambulance'll come...

KATHY  
But it's not here, is it?

The door opens inside her hands.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A branch CRACKS in the trees high above the Mustang.

We watch Lizzy's face press against the glass as Kathy steps out into the road.

Her wrist has swelled, her hand is turning purple where the bruises have already formed.

Kathy moves in measured steps to the front of the car. She stays close to the tires and then the bumper. It is like she is stepping into the deep end of the pool, afraid to let go.

The rain falls gently on her face as she passes the driver's side. For a moment, Kathy stands.

Then she kneels down on the road.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lizzy crawls along the front seat, mirroring her mother's steps from one side of the car to the other.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
Hurry...

But Kathy barely moves.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Is he there?

EXT. ROAD - UNDERNEATH THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Thunder RUMBLES.

Kathy looks down and sees the chains. The tools.

For a moment, we sit, staring at the shadows with her.

Even in the darkness, she can see where Jesse once worked.

*But now, he is gone.*

Kathy turns towards the woods. Staring into the blackness.

KATHY  
Jesse. Hey!

She takes a step towards the trees. Another.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
You out here?

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Tiny fingers wipe across the window, again clearing the fog of Lizzy's breath.

She hears her mother's VOICE calling out into the forest.

Kathy finally takes a step. Then another.

Jesse is nowhere to be found.

LIZZY

Where is he?

Kathy's arms raise into the air.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The rain falls on the Mustang's hood.

Every sound echoes in Kathy's brain.

She sees dark blots on the pavement near the grass.

We watch her move closer. Her eyes peering into the shadows.

As the lightning strikes, she sees the hint of red mixing with the dirt and the oil left behind from the crash.

KATHY

(calling out)

You alright?

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lizzy's face slides across the driver's side window. She presses in, trying to see her mother. But as Kathy walks further into the darkness she can barely see anything at all.

Her mouth lifts to the crack in the window Kathy made for her cigarette. She tries to whisper.

LIZZY

Momma...hurry.

She sees her mother flinch at the sound of her voice.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Come back.

Her hand slips on the steering wheel. The opening in the window had let the rain in and it loosened her grip.

BEFORE LIZZY CAN STOP IT, HER ELBOW SLAPS AGAINST THE HORN.

EXT. ROAD - BESIDE THE CAR

The sound is like an explosion. It booms behind her and Kathy cannot help but scream a tiny SCREAM.

KATHY  
Goddamn it Lizzy.

She turns back towards the car, anger filling her voice.

*But as she does...something races across the road.*

Past the second pool of light. It barely catches her eye.

But Kathy knows she heard it. We watch her face freeze.

Lightning strikes in the distance and for a moment all we hear are her BREATHS. Then a small RUMBLE from miles away.

She hears a sound again. A CRACKING.

Just beyond the trees. Somewhere in the darkness before her.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

LIZZY  
Momma. What?

She can see that her mother is suddenly still.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
What is it?

Just behind the child. We spot it on the glass.

The passenger side window fills with a rush of air.

A DARK SHADOW, JUST OUTSIDE THE CAR...BREATHING.

EXT. ROAD - NEAR THE TREES

KATHY  
I'm getting my phone!

Her voice calls out into the woods.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna break your fucking window!

One last try. A threat. But her words do not do the trick.

Kathy leans down, her hands feeling through the gravel. She finds a stone, no larger than a baseball.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna do it!

But she does not even check for a response.

We watch Kathy turn towards the tow truck.

A quick glance back and forth on the road. Back to Lizzy.

LIZZY  
(through the windshield)  
Just come back.

Kathy wipes the rain from her face with her bad hand.

KATHY  
And do what? He's probably out  
there jacking off, laughing at us.

She turns, heading for her target. We watch her build up the strength and then send the rock into the driver's side window.

THUD. The stone falls on the ground before her.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Damn it.

She picks it up once again.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

We watch Lizzy peer into the glass.

The shadow is gone from beside her. The air that marked its spot has slowly vanished as well.

She sees Kathy step back from the tow truck. She watches her mother build up steam, then hurl the rock forward once again.

Strike 2. Once more she is defeated.

KATHY  
(through the windshield)  
Come on!

The storm GROWLS into the night air. A wave of rain pours down before Lizzy. She waits for the wind to wash it away.

One last attempt. Her mother gives it one more try.

Just as Lizzy hears the dull crack of the window outside...

SOMETHING SLAPS ONTO THE MUSTANG'S HOOD, NEAR THE GRILL.

We watch Lizzy flinch at the sound.

Her face presses against the windshield, trying to see through the rain. Through the shadows.

Lightning strikes. In the white glow, we see fingers.

We hear Lizzy's SCREAM fill the car.

*A hand lays flat as the storm splashes against the skin.*

It rests three feet away, just beyond the glass.

THUNDER RUMBLES as darkness swallows up the sky once again.

JESSE'S ARM HAS BEEN TORN OFF HIS BODY.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

We watch Kathy race forward. Her boots SLAP against the road. She hears Lizzy's SCREAMING. The bone chilling sound.

KATHY

Baby!

A tiny GASP escapes her lips. Just a little. A rush of air.

We watch Kathy freeze at the sight of it.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Oh god...

She sees the water rushing off the skin. She sees it mixing with the blood. He was wearing a wedding ring.

She spins back, looking for signs of the attacker. Of Jesse.

But everywhere she turns, she finds nothing.

LIZZY

(through the windshield)

Please get in here.

Kathy nods slowly. This time, she does not argue. Her heart pounds inside her chest as she moves past the hood.

KATHY

Jesse!

There is no response.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Jesse!

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Minutes have passed. Maybe more.

They sit in the car, staring at the hand.

Kathy pulls Lizzy close, but the little girl won't turn away from the windshield. The rain drips from Kathy's clothes, from her face. But she does not wipe it away.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
It's out there.

KATHY  
Do you see it?

Lizzy twists her head back and forth as she trembles.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Then we're okay. The ambulance will  
be here soon.

LIZZY  
What if they don't get here?

KATHY  
Stop thinking like that...

Her words do nothing to stop the fear they feel.

LIZZY  
It'll kill them. Just like it did  
that man.

KATHY  
We don't know what happened.

Lizzy does not answer. She does not have to.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
We're gonna be okay. Look at me.  
Lizzy we're gonna be fine.

LIZZY  
I want my daddy.

KATHY  
I'm right here.

LIZZY  
I don't care.

Kathy pulls her close even as Lizzy tries to fight her.  
Eventually the child lets go...

For a moment they wait as the rain falls down around them.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

I told you not to get out of the car.  
You never listen to me.

KATHY

Nothing happened.

LIZZY

It could've got you.

KATHY

It didn't. Okay? Nothing happened  
to me...I'm right here.

Thunder RUMBLES and with it a silence falls over the car.

Kathy stares through the glass at the hand still sitting on  
the Mustang's hood. The palm pressed towards the sky.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I should be looking for him.

But nobody moves.

Kathy reaches down and turns the watch around on Lizzy's  
wrist. The little girl's eyes follow her mother's.

LIZZY

We went the wrong way.

KATHY

It's not my fault.

LIZZY

I didn't drive.

Kathy fidgets under her daughter's weight. Her body slides  
back and forth on the seat. She nudges Lizzy's shoulder.

KATHY

Scoot off me.

LIZZY

I'm scared.

KATHY

I'm scared too, but I can't sit here  
with you on top of me.

The little girl moves into the driver's seat. Kathy's hand races up to the window, wiping away the fog.

LIZZY

What are we gonna do?

KATHY

Nothing.

LIZZY

I'm sorry I got mad. Okay?

But Kathy does not turn to her. She does not react at all.

KATHY

It threw it on the hood. It dragged it out here and threw it.

Her fingers wipe the glass. Lightning strikes.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Darkness. The woods strangle what little warmth there is from the streetlights above. We are in the forest.

SUDDENLY A HAND DRAGS UP PAST THE ROOTS OF A TREE.

We hear a BREATH. Another.

Inch by inch, we hear Jesse struggle to pull himself towards the road. He has been dragged past his tow truck deep into the woods, but now he can see it in the sodium vapor.

We can hear him CRYING. WHIMPERING.

JESSE

Help me!

His voice is weak. Like a child's. It hides under the storm.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Help me!

Jesse tries to catch his breath. His body shakes.

As he pulls himself past the treeline, he sees the Mustang.

He builds his strength up. We hear him YELL.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Hey!

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lightning strikes and a flash of light fills the road.

Through the glass they see him. They watch Jesse crawling like a snake. His body twists on the gravel.

LIZZY

Momma.

Kathy nods as a roar of THUNDER fills the air.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

What do we do?

KATHY

I don't know.

Her hand reaches for the door, but the little girl throws herself across the seat.

LIZZY

Please don't.

KATHY

We can't leave him out there.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Boots SCRAPE the ground as Jesse shoves his body forward.

Blood drips down his stomach. Something tore him to shreds. If we didn't know him, it would be hard to recognize him.

He moves into the sodium vapor's glow. His body pushes itself towards the tow truck.

JESSE

Help!

His cries go unanswered.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Help!

Jesse drags himself closer and we see his remaining hand dig inside his pants. We see him pull his keys from his pockets.

For a moment, he stops. His legs unable to keep pushing.

We watch as his breaths race inside his chest. The water pours down upon his face. His skin.

*Something ripped out one of his eyes.*

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Kathy's knee bounces against the floorboard.

KATHY  
This is so fucked.

Lizzy shakes her head but she is a million miles away.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I don't know what to do.

Again her hand reaches out for the handle.

LIZZY  
Momma...

KATHY  
...I know what you think.

Again the frustration fills her tone, but as she turns to lash out, Kathy sees the look upon her daughter's face.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
What...what is it?

A BOOM of thunder fills the air.

LIZZY  
*Momma, I see it.*

KATHY  
What?

Rain pours down on the car, its fists pounding on the roof.  
Kathy turns, her eyes moving to where her child is pointing.  
Beyond the tow truck. Just outside the second pool of light.

LIZZY  
*It's out there.*

Deep in the darkness, there is a shadow. A mass of blackness.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
There...

KATHY  
Oh my god.

It is like a statue on the concrete road.

*It sits, watching Jesse begin to crawl once again.*

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The Mustang's horn suddenly SCREAMS OUT into the night air.

The sound fills the road, it draws Jesse back to them.

HONK!!!! HONK!!!! HONK!!!!

For the first time he sees Lizzy and Kathy. Their hands wave inside the car. Kathy's fist bangs against the glass.

JESSE  
Help...help me...

Blood shoots from his lips...his lungs are beginning to fill.

HONK!!!! HONK!!!! HONK!!!!

JESSE (CONT'D)  
What's...matter...you.

We watch Jesse push himself to his knees. The key trembles as it rises in the air to the lock.

Just outside of the second pool of light, near the spot where the wolf once lay, the monster sits behind him.

*It is ten feet closer than before.*

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

KATHY  
Turn around!

LIZZY  
Look!

HONK!!! HONK!!!

Lizzy's hands press the horn until finally they fall away.

We see the terror in her face. The tears building.

KATHY  
He doesn't see it!

A wave of rain pours down across the glass. For a moment, they are blocked from the world.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Goddamn it!

EXT. ROAD - TRUCK

The last of his strength feeds Jesse. It drives him.

HONK!!!! HONK!!!! HONK!!!!

JESSE

Go...hell...

The words are nothing but a blur of letters.

Jesse grabs the handle. We hear the lock turn. The door POPS open. We watch as Jesse falls backwards, his movements growing more and more chaotic with each passing second.

Lightning strikes. THUNDER BOOMS out like a gunshot.

*It is ten feet closer.*

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

We watch as they lean in, trying to see past the storm.

When their eyes find Jesse again, we hear Lizzy GASP.

KATHY

Where did it go?

LIZZY

Momma? Where is it?!

KATHY

Don't look.

LIZZY

Where is it!?

*The creature is gone.*

EXT. ROAD - TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Jesse has collapsed onto his back. The truck's open door hangs before him. He can barely move. He bleeds too much.

The safety of the cab might as well be miles away.

Lightning strikes and the world around him grows white.

Suddenly he hears it. Like a low engine HUMMING. Like an EARTHQUAKE inside a set of lungs.

His body starts to tremble as the sound of bones CRACKLING... He hears them BREAK. Nails dig deep into the wet cement like thorns grasping at your skin.

Jesse turns his head slightly, as it rests on the ground.

He sees the grey eyes staring back at him. A single tooth, a large white fang hangs from the monster's mouth.

IT WAS HIDING BEHIND THE TOW TRUCK DOOR.

Lightning crashes down above him. But all Jesse can see is the creature that sits three feet away. Colorless skin pulls across bones that shatter with each movement.

He watches the bones reform once again. That is the CRACKING.

JESSE

God...

For a moment, there is silence. The man lies on his back, his face exposed. He hears the bones BREAK.

Jesse is too weak to even raise his hand before him. He is too weak to fight back at all.

For one last second, we watch him breathe.

For one last second, Jesse is alive.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Kathy holds her daughter against her chest.

She can hear Lizzy WEEPING.

KATHY

(whispers)

It's okay...it's okay.

LIZZY

No...No it's not!

KATHY

No...

Kathy watches as the monster leaps into the air.

In the darkness she can barely see it.

*It is almost as if the black of night swallows it whole.*

Kathy gazes in horror as Jesse's head cracks the cement below him. His skull shatters against the hard wet ground.

KATHY (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Oh...god...

Like a shotgun blast the creature's fang rips into his scalp. Its teeth tear into the flesh before Jesse can even move.

A SCREAM explodes from his mouth. It fills the air.

There is nowhere to go.

LIZZY

Momma!

Kathy's hands try to cup her daughter's ears. But the sound of Jesse's SCREAMS are too much to hide.

Through the cracked windshield she watches him as he tries to fight. She watches the beast rip out Jesse's throat.

Suddenly there are no more screams.

Thunder RUMBLES and then the sky grows silent once again.

*Suddenly there is no sound at all.*

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Lizzy lies on the floor by the coffee table. She was in front of the TV, but hours ago, the shows were over.

She should be sleeping. But Lizzy is awake.

Across the room, the refrigerator door hangs open inside the kitchen. The fan HUMS as it works to cool down the world. Kathy sits on the floor beside it. Sweat drips from her face as she rests her head against the side.

A container of ice cream sits by her thigh. Her bare legs rest beneath an old T-shirt.

The house looks cleaner. Cleaner than before.

Someone has made an effort to wipe away the mess.

Lizzy can see that her mother has been crying. A look of pain is etched beneath Kathy's skin. Her hands are shaking.

The spoon slams against the floor. It drops.

Kathy rises up, her mind full of thoughts. Her body full of nervous energy. She slams the door to the fridge.

She does not realize that Lizzy awake. She cannot see her in the darkness of the living room. Her eyes barely open.

On the freezer there is a calendar. *Two days with X's.*

Kathy stares at the note Lizzy has made. *You can do it!*

Lizzy watches her mother. She pretends to sleep when Kathy approaches. She does not flinch when she hears her name.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
Lizzy...Elizabeth.

For a moment, she hangs above the child.

Then she walks to the door.

EXT. HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Kathy stands by the curb and we hear the familiar CLINKING of glass. We watch as she digs through the trash, searching.

Her eyes filter through the poured out whiskey bottles.

The beer and the wine. They are all empty.

KATHY  
Goddamn it.

*Then she finds one.*

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Crickets CHIRP in the night air. Everywhere you turn, you can hear the insects calling out, BUZZING in the sky.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
Come on God...come on...

Her knees press against her chest. A cigarette burns slowly in her hand and her arms wrap around her skin.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Stop it. Stop it. Stop it.

Kathy takes a drag and lets the smoke rise up to the bare bulb that hangs above her.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Fuck, you can make it...

She looks down at the bottle. The lid is already popped off.

For a moment she sits staring out into the darkness.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Don't. Don't. Go to bed. Go.

But she does not move. Her body rocks slightly back and forth as she sweats in the summer night.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Fuck.

We watch her pick up the bottle. Holding it in her hand.

INT. HOUSE - ENTRY WAY

Lizzy stands, looking at her mother through the screen door.

We are beside her when Kathy takes the first drink.

For a moment, the little girl stares in silence.

We watch Lizzy walk back towards her bed.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Kathy lies against the seats, her daughter pressed against her. They are hiding, shielding themselves from the windows.

The faint traces of Lizzy's CRYING fill the cab. She can barely catch her breath even as Kathy whispers into her ear.

KATHY  
Ssh...

She rocks gently back and forth, trying not to make too much noise. The gentle sound of the rain surrounds them, but nothing more is heard from the road, from the forest.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
Is that a monster?

KATHY  
(whispers)  
I don't know.

Lizzy's hand rests on her mother's heart.

Their words barely make a sound.

LIZZY  
Monsters aren't real.

KATHY  
I know.

LIZZY  
You said...

KATHY  
...I was wrong.

Kathy tries not to look at the child, but Lizzy's face is so close. Her eyes are relentless in her gaze.

LIZZY  
Is it the devil?

KATHY  
I don't know.

Somehow the answer seems to scare Lizzy most of all.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
I don't wanna die.

They sit in silence. Finally Kathy turns in her seat, bringing her face even with Lizzy's. She feels her daughter's breath against her lips.

KATHY  
The door to the truck is open.

LIZZY  
No.

KATHY  
I'm just gonna peek up and see.

LIZZY  
No.

KATHY  
It doesn't know we're in here.

LIZZY  
You don't know that.

Thunder RUMBLES. For a moment, they both pause listening. Their bodies both cinch tight as they wait.

But the slow GROWL fades away.

KATHY  
If he's still out there. We'll get  
the keys and drive away. He had'em.

LIZZY  
Momma, I don't want to.

Their argument continues without words. Kathy stares into her child's fear. Her hand brushes a tear from her cheek.

KATHY

I could just peek and see if it's gone, okay? I'll just look. You stay down and if I see anything, I'll hide. Okay?

She reaches her hand over Lizzy's shoulder. She finds the doll sitting under the dash.

She slowly places the baby into the little girl's arms.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I'm just gonna peek.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

There is flesh sitting in the road. Bone.

The boots remain, so do pieces of cloth. But the man is gone.

Lightning strikes and for a brief second, we see the keys.

The wrecker's headlights shine brightly inside the rain. The door to Jesse's cab hangs open. Water pours inside.

Wind blows through the trees. Branches dance in the silence.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Kathy leans up, her eyes barely drifting above the dash.

Like a mouse, she moves softly. Her body drifting across the seat until she can see the road around her.

KATHY

(whispers)

It's okay.

Beneath her, Lizzy watches. One hand is grasped around the doll, the other grips her mother's elbow as tightly as she can.

LIZZY

Are you sure?

Kathy's head nods, but just barely. A RUMBLE freezes her for a brief moment, then she continues her search.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Does he have them?

KATHY  
I can't tell. *He's...gone...*

LIZZY  
He wasn't weird...I'm sorry I said  
that...I'm sorry...

KATHY  
It's okay...I'm gonna stay here.

One last look. Kathy's bandaged hand slides across the fog.

Lizzy shifts in her seat, clearing a space for her mother.

BUT JUST AS SHE TURNS, THE DOLL BEGINS TO SCREAM.

Kathy dives back, trying to smother the sound.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Hurry! Shut it up!

They rip at the plastic skin. Their hands quiver as they try  
to stop it. The doll's dead eyes watch them fight it...

But the SOUND CALLS OUT INTO THE DARKNESS.

LIZZY  
I'm trying!

Lizzy's voice CRACKS in terror. Finally, the WAILING stops.

KATHY  
Stay still!

She tosses the baby away, grabbing Lizzy and pressing her  
close to her chest. The damage is done.

*But now the silence has changed.*

LIZZY  
I'm sorry, I'm sorry...

KATHY  
Ssh.

But we can see her eyes moving from window to window.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
See...just stay still.

A minute passes...maybe more.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
We're okay. You're okay.

She lifts her body up. An inch. Another. One last look.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Be still.

Her eyes reach over the steering wheel.

THE DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW EXPLODES AS KATHY IS PULLED OUTSIDE!

EXT. CAR - DRIVER'S SIDE

LIZZY (O.S.)

Momma!

Before Kathy can even fight back, the creature is on top of her. The claws swing out, ripping her to the ground.

Her back slams against the gravel. She tries to twist free but the monster leaps upon her like a spider with its prey.

It tears into her legs, her chest.

Kathy's hands reach towards the side of the car, but her body is being ripped towards the woods. She SCREAMS OUT in pain.

She is nothing but a doll inside its claws.

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

Momma!

Kathy kicks into the bones and the skin as the creature slides towards her. For one small second, she is free.

Kathy thrusts her body away, her shoulders and her back crash against the ground. She stumbles to her knees, crawling towards Lizzy, towards the passenger door.

She hears it open. She hears the beast SCREAM OUT.

Kathy throws her hands towards the inside of the car. For a split second, she sees her daughter.

The terror in Lizzy's eyes is unimaginable.

KATHY

Get back!

The monster leaps out, slamming into Kathy once again.

The white fang rips into her shoulder as she tries to pull herself free. It is too large, too fast.

Kathy reaches up, slamming the car door against her attacker, against her own body. Anything to make it break free.

SUDDENLY THERE IS A SOUND. A SIREN. THE AMBULANCE.

LIZZY

Hold on!

Kathy's hands build into fists. She strikes down on the beast as the headlights head around the bend. She can hear the creature's WAILING as it grows LOUDER.

THE MONSTER FILLS WITH LIGHT.

Suddenly, it changes. It ROARS OUT in rage. The lights flash on the trees as the ambulance's brakes SQUEAL.

It leaps from Kathy, returning to the darkness.

She slumps to the ground. *Suddenly the creature is gone.*

LIZZY (CONT'D)

MOMMA!

Lizzy leaps down into the rain. She falls beside her mother. For a moment, Kathy grabs her. Holds her. But as the THUNDER RUMBLES she suddenly pushes Lizzy away.

KATHY

Get back in the car! Get back!

The ambulance doors open. Lizzy looks up into the headlights blasting into her eyes. She pushes Kathy's fists down as she holds her chest, the blood pouring onto her skin.

LIZZY

You're bleeding!

KATHY

Get in the car!

We watch Kathy fight to her feet as the PARAMEDICS move towards them. Blood pours down her chest. She slams against the Mustang, her legs trembling beneath her. Lizzy throws her body underneath her mother, trying to make her stand.

LIZZY

Help us! Help!

Her voice SCREECHES into the night as she hears the FOOTSTEPS.

Kathy's knees buckle and the child forces her to stand.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

I won't leave you!

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The Mustang's engine HUMS inside the garage. The headlights bounce off the faded drywall, throwing shadows all around.

Kathy stands at the driver's side door. She is wearing a cheap business suit. A little too much makeup. Her foot taps with nervous energy beneath inappropriate heels.

KATHY

Get in the car.

Lizzy is planted at the foot of the garage. She looks pretty. Beautiful even. She wears her best dress. Her favorite.

But she isn't moving.

LIZZY

I don't want to.

KATHY

I don't care.

There is a stand off. The two stare at each other with the same eyes. The same color. The same rage.

KATHY (CONT'D)

This is a big night for you.

LIZZY

I don't care.

KATHY

Yes you do.

Nothing. Lizzy rocks back and forth, just a little.

LIZZY

It's *my* play.

KATHY

You're gonna be late.

Lizzy says nothing. She just stands, her eyes locked with her mother's. Finally she breaks away, unable to win the game.

LIZZY

(whispers)

I don't want you to go.

She cannot look at Kathy anymore.

Kathy stares at her daughter with cold eyes. But the words are sinking in. Burning.

KATHY  
What did you say?

LIZZY  
I don't want you there.

KATHY  
I'm going. This is a big night for you...I know that...

LIZZY  
Just drop me off.

KATHY  
Fuck you.

LIZZY  
Don't...don't talk to me like that.

KATHY  
Fuck you fuck you fuck you.

With each word, her tone grows harsher. Each syllable louder.

LIZZY  
I hate you!

Kathy pulls a heel off and throws it across the garage, over the car. It slams into the wall beside her daughter.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
I hate you.

Lizzy never moves. Her tiny frame standing inside the empty space beside the Mustang.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
It's my play. You never...

But she stops. She finally turns back to her mother. There is a pain on the woman's face...for a moment.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
You never...

KATHY  
...find your own ride.

The door opens and Kathy falls inside the car.

She stares through the glass with the anger of a child.

Lizzy almost speaks. But her mother slams her door and the car suddenly falls into reverse. Suddenly Kathy pulls away.

The child moves forward but the garage door begins to fall. In an instant the stand off is over. Kathy is gone.

Lizzy watches as the garage door hits the concrete.

LIZZY

Fuck you.

She is alone.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

THUNDER RUMBLES. Lightning crashes.

Two paramedics, JOHN BROOKS and LESLIE WILLIAMS, move to the family as the rain falls on their faces.

The beams of their flashlights show the blood, the chaos.

BROOKS

Jesus, what happened here?

Kathy and Lizzy stumble towards them like zombies. Williams spots what is left of Jesse beside the car.

WILLIAMS

(to John)

We have a body...oh fuck.

KATHY

Stop, get back!

BROOKS

Stay where you are!

Brooks moves into the ambulance's headlights. He quickly takes Kathy in his arms, trying to assess the damage as Williams moves towards the pieces of flesh on the road.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Ma'am stop...wait...

KATHY

...there's something out here.  
Listen! Get her away from here.

BROOKS

Hold on...Hold on...

LIZZY

Help her!

Brooks glances down at the child as she and Kathy push him back towards the ambulance.

BROOKS

Hey...look at me! My name is  
John...we're gonna help you.  
(to Lizzy)  
You need to let go of her...

KATHY

You don't understand...

EXT. ROAD - JESSE'S BODY - CONTINUOUS

Williams falls to her knees by the pool of blood and bone.

*Even in the darkness, it is clear there was once a man here.*

WILLIAMS

Jesus. Fuck.

She turns back. She sees Kathy and Lizzy fighting to move towards the ambulance.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

What happened here?!

Quickly she scans the tree line, the road.

EXT. ROAD - NEAR THE AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

KATHY

No...we have to go.

BROOKS

Ma'am...I need you calm down.

KATHY

Get off me!

LIZZY

Listen to her!

THUNDER RUMBLES and lightning strikes. Blood drips from Kathy's skin. The gashes in her chest, her stomach are deep.

BROOKS

Williams! Get over here!  
(to Kathy)  
Keep walking...hurry.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Kathy falls onto the gurney. The white light of the fluorescent lamps shine down upon her.

Lizzy leans at her side, her hands quivering.

LIZZY

Help my mom...help her!

BROOKS

Look at me...little girl...what's your name?

LIZZY

Lizzy...

He points towards one of the compartments.

BROOKS

I want you to get in there. I want you to find the towels...okay? I need you to get them so I can put some pressure on your mom's wounds.

LIZZY

Is she gonna be okay?

BROOKS

Just hurry.

Outside they hear FOOTSTEPS approaching. Kathy SCREAMS OUT.

Williams moves back towards them. We see the flashlight's beam shoot into Kathy's face as the medic climbs inside.

KATHY

Get us out of here!

BROOKS

Ma'am you're bleeding badly. I don't know what happened but I need to get you stabilized right now.

KATHY

You don't understand!

The sounds of a make-shift hospital room fill the air. Williams and Brooks work together as a team. Each falling into their roles in silence as they tend to Kathy's wounds.

BROOKS

What about the man?

He casts a quick look outside.

WILLIAMS

There's no fucking man. Some sort of animal killed him. A bear. It tore him apart...

Kathy tries to argue, her face rising as lightning strikes outside. THUNDER follows just on its heels.

The ambulance's open door hangs in the wind.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Lady, just stay put...We're gonna leave. Please just stay calm.

Brooks reaches for a bag of supplies. He readies an IV.

KATHY

Fuck you! We've gotta get off the fucking road!

Lizzy falls back to her mother, in her arms are the towels.

BROOKS

Good Lizzy...now stay back.

WILLIAMS

I'm gonna call it in. Get animal control, a squad car out here.

KATHY

There's some sort of creature...

LIZZY

It's a monster!

BROOKS

(to Lizzy)

You're okay! There's nothing out there...whatever attacked you..it's gone...alright? Williams, take the little girl...take her up front.

Lizzy grabs Kathy's hand as the needle enters her skin.

LIZZY

No! I'm staying with my Mom.

Williams reaches out but the little girl will not move. She falls onto her mother's chest. Her little arms reaching around her waist.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Please just leave. Please!

KATHY  
It hurts so bad.

Beneath the tiny fingers there is nothing but red.

BROOKS  
You're lucky it didn't hit an  
artery...

Brooks attaches the IV to the wall. He turns to his partner.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Mark the road and let's go.

They prepare to depart as Lizzy leans close to her mother.  
Kathy can see the terror in her eyes.

The little girl is hysterical.

KATHY  
I'm sorry...I'm sorry.

They strap Kathy down, pushing through their embrace.

BROOKS  
It's gonna be okay...

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The ambulance rocks up and then down again.

Williams steps off, then moves towards the carnage left in the  
road. We see a blast of red light explode inside her hand as  
she drops flares on the gravel one by one.

WILLIAMS  
(into a walkie-talkie)  
Dispatch. We need to get a medical  
examiner out here. Also animal  
control as soon as possible. We're  
leaving the scene, squad cars can  
find the flares.

She looks down one last time.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
I think we might have a rabid wolf.  
A bear...fuck...I don't have any idea  
what it is. Something killed...

WHOOSH. Another torch bursts to life in her hands.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

This is fucked.

RADIO (O.S.)

What is your status?

A white plastic sheet, like a tarp, unfolds on the ground. She covers the loose pieces of bone. Some skin.

WILLIAMS

(into the walkie)

We're out here deep, hard to say.

The static of the radio HUMS at her side.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

BROOKS

Williams, you ready?

He places another bag in the IV.

Lizzy watches the rain bouncing off the edge of doorway.

She hears the wind blowing. She reaches down, lifting her doll from the floor. She leans down towards her mother.

LIZZY

Don't leave me...please.

EXT. ROAD - BY THE BODY

From the tree line, there is a sound. A BREATH.

Williams turns, looking up into the woods.

For a moment there is nothing.

The radio SQUEAKS in her hand. We see her jump ever so slightly. The STATIC fills her ears as the rain falls.

*Then she hears the sound again.*

RADIO (O.S.)

This is dispatch. Vehicles in route.  
What's your 20?

WILLIAMS

(into the radio)

Hold on a second.

The woman drops her walkie to her side.

She stands, listening for the sound as the trees sway.

The road is clear. Empty.

Williams turns, moving slowly on the pavement. Her eyes dart back and forth, all around her.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Hello?

She lights one last torch. The red flames erupt.

Lightning strikes and the road is filled with the white glow.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

(into the radio)

We're leaving...now...

HIGH ABOVE, IN THE TREES, THE MONSTER FOLLOWS HER.

The creature moves from branch to branch. Almost as if it is floating in the night air, almost as if it is flying.

Williams spins around as she walks in the center of the road.

RADIO (O.S.)

Please repeat.

The red flare shines against the darkness.

SHE DOES NOT SEE IT HANGING ABOVE HER.

BROOKS (O.S.)

Let's go!

But Williams does not move. We watch her holding, her body frozen in concentration. Slowly she turns. Her work boots CRACKLING on the wet road.

The forest is quiet once again.

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

Williams!

Lightning strikes. Her shadow falls before her like a drawing.

WILLIAMS

I'm...coming...

BROOKS

What is it?

Her partner steps out into the road.

LIZZY (O.S.)

Mister, wait!

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Kathy tries on slight smile for the little girl. But Lizzy can see the blood on her teeth. On her lips.

Her eyes shoot to the open door.

LIZZY

Come back!

KATHY

(weakly)

Dad'll come quick when we get there.  
Don't worry.

Kathy tries to reach up. She tries to make Lizzy see her.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Hey...hey...look here. Look at me.

LIZZY

I'm so scared.

She can barely catch her breath.

KATHY

Look at me...he'll be there. Then  
you'll be fine.

LIZZY

Why are you saying that?

KATHY

I'm just...sorry.

LIZZY

I want you to be there.

A BOOM OF THUNDER seems to shake the world.

KATHY

You're okay.

LIZZY

I want them to come back.

KATHY

We're gonna go soon.

A gush of air whips into the cabin. They watch the open door hang in the storm. The outside only inches away.

LIZZY

It's still out there.

EXT. ROAD - BY THE AMBULANCE

BROOKS

We gotta go.

WILLIAMS

I know, I know...I just...

The flare burns in her hand, filling her face in the red glow.

BROOKS

What is it?

WILLIAMS

I heard something.

BROOKS

Let animal control deal with it.

Williams nods, then turns away from him, casting one last look upon the road.

WILLIAMS

I'm coming.

The sheet she dropped over Jesse has gotten free.

She watches it dancing in the wind.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

John, do you hear that? That sound?

The tarp falls to the ground by the tree line. Lightning strikes and the road is filled with the white glow.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

John?

BUT WHEN SHE TURNS BACK TO THE AMBULANCE, BROOKS IS GONE.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Hello?

She spins once. Then again. But there is no sign of him.

We watch her walk towards the back of the ambulance.

Williams can see Lizzy and Kathy staring back at her.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Where did he go?

INT. AMBULANCE

WILLIAMS (O.S.)  
Hey...John? Brooks!

Kathy rises up slowly on the gurney, listening. The door of the ambulance trembles in the wind.

Lizzy watches it bounce up and then down.

They hear THE VOICE of the paramedic calling out.

KATHY  
Close the door.

Lizzy creeps forward as her mother pulls the IV from her arm.

LIZZY  
Momma don't.

KATHY  
They can put it back in.

Lizzy reaches outside. Her fingers grab the handle. SLAM.

Kathy climbs before the drawers and cabinets of the ambulance. We watch her eyes as they dart back and forth. Her hands moving quickly as she opens everything left unlocked.

She searches for weapons...tools...anything.

LIZZY  
Momma, you're scaring me.

KATHY  
It's okay.

But the slight crack in the woman's voice hangs in the air.

LIZZY  
What do we do?

KATHY  
I don't know...

She hands her daughter a hammer and the little girl sets her doll on the floor once again.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Stay close to me.

Then without another word, Kathy takes a scalpel for herself.

The driver's side door swings open. Williams climbs back in and reaches for the glove compartment. She finds a pistol.

WILLIAMS

Get back on the gurney.

LIZZY

Where is he?

WILLIAMS

I don't know.

Williams turns. She sees the little girl with the hammer inside her hand. She throws the ambulance in reverse.

LIZZY

(whispers)

He's dead.

WILLIAMS

What happened to y'all?

KATHY

Just get us out of here.

Williams nods at the orders. The rain falls on the glass before her. She turns back to the road.

The engine REVS underneath her foot.

WILLIAMS

We're gonna drive up the road and wait...I don't...we're gonna...

But before they move...

BROOKS'S BODY FLIES INTO THE WINDSHIELD.

The van rocks back. Everyone SCREAMS as the glass splinters like a cobweb. Icy fingers hold the man in front of Williams.

Brooks's body is covered in blood. *His face has disappeared.*

Williams floors it. The ambulance screeches backwards and Lizzy and Kathy go tumbling inside the compartment.

EXT. ROAD - FOREST

SLAM. They fly back, skidding off the road. The tail end RAMS into the trees. The wheels catch in the roots of an old oak. We hear the engine ROAR.

But the van does not move an inch.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

CRACK. The glass breaks away. Brooks's body falls from the dash to the forest floor before them.

The rain pours inside the cab as Williams searches for a sign of their attacker. She points the gun towards the darkness.

WILLIAMS  
Where is it!?

KATHY  
Drive!

WILLIAMS  
I'm trying!

Williams throws the ambulance into drive and the ENGINE SPIKES, but they do not move an inch.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Goddamn it!

Again she tries, throwing the gear in reverse. Nothing. Drive. Nothing once again.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
We're stuck!

KATHY  
We gotta get out.

WILLIAMS  
I know!

SLAM. SOMETHING LANDS ON THE ROOF. JUST ABOVE HER.

In an instant, the medic freezes. Everyone does.

The engine's ROAR disappears as Williams steps off the gas.

LIZZY  
It's...

But Kathy's hand flies over the little girl's lips.

Suddenly the blackness before them seems like a pit. The women do not need Lizzy's warning. They all hear it.

*They know it is above them. They know it is out there.*

KATHY  
(whispers to Williams)  
Come here.

Her words barely make a sound. We watch as her eyes, as Lizzy's, peer past Williams through the windshield.

The rain drips from the broken glass.

The young medic's head seems to nod, but it might just be trembling. Her seat-belt slides away from her chest.

The CLICK of the buckle fills the cab.

The ceiling above Williams's head bows in slightly. They hear the sound of the claws against the thin metal.

They hear the sound of it BREATHING.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
Shoot it.

But Williams cannot will herself to move.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Please.

Again, the sound of the metal. They hear a bone BREAK.

We watch Williams's hand feel for the space between the seats. She tries to slide herself towards the back.

The gun is trembling.

For one second, her eyes drift from the windshield. Lizzy sees her look towards them. Williams stares right at her.

A single tear drifts to her cheek as she tries to escape.

The creature above them SCREAMS OUT INTO THE DARKNESS.

We hear a GASP from inside the van, but it is impossible to know who let the sound escape. All eyes lock on the hole.

We are with them. Waiting. Watching...

CRASH. IT IS LIKE A FLOOD. LIKE A WAVE OF BLACK.

The monster enters and is upon Williams in seconds.

An avalanche of teeth and claws rips inside the compartment.

Williams tries to fight, the GUN FIRES into the cab...

BUT THERE IS NOTHING SHE CAN DO.

The medic's scream is so loud it could break the glass. We see it rip into her flesh. The fang slicing through skin, bone.

WILLIAMS

Help...m...

Before they fight back...before Kathy can fight at all...

WILLIAMS'S THROAT IS TORN FROM HER BODY.

LIZZY

Momma!

We watch her see death. Lizzy sees the woman that was just staring into her eyes, disappear. It happens in a flash.

Kathy reaches down, she tries to find something, anything.

She grabs Williams's Mag-lite. She races forward, her hand whipping the metal down against the beast. We hear the THUD.

But the monster does not react. SLAM. SLAM.

In Kathy's hand the flashlight awakens. The beam GLOWS.

THEY SEE THE CREATURE FEEL THE LIGHT AGAINST ITS SKIN.

A strange sound fills the air. Like CRYING. WAILING.

For a quick second, the monster's grey eyes find Kathy. But it does not fight. Kathy pushes forward. The yellow glow rinsing over the strange black skin. ONE MORE SCREAM.

KATHY

Get away!

IT PULLS WILLIAMS TO THE WINDSHIELD. SUDDENLY THEY ARE GONE.

Lizzy falls to her mother as they stare into the blackness.

The engine HUMS as rain spills onto the empty driver's seat.

In an instant, it is over.

A flash of lightning seems to wake Lizzy from her trance.

LIZZY

Go Mom...go...

Kathy crawls forward, she grabs the front seat even as the rain pours down from the open window before her.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Go!

Lightning strikes. Kathy tries the gear and then she floors the pedal. The wheels spin in the mud and the dirt.

KATHY

Fuck...

THUNDER BOOMS. She turns back and forth searching. She tries reverse. We hear the engine ROAR, but still they go nowhere.

KATHY (CONT'D)

It's not gonna work.

LIZZY

You can do it Momma...

Kathy's fists pound the steering wheel as she tries to think.

KATHY

Come on...Come on!

Lizzy leans over her from the backseat, the little girl's hand grabbing her mother's shoulder.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Please.

Somewhere outside they hear the beast SHRIEK.

LIZZY

Just try...

One last chance.

Kathy throws the van in drive and suddenly they feel it.

*The wheels catch in the road, the mud.*

The ambulance slams into the grass and then the asphalt.

They CRASH into the edge of the tow truck and then push past.

KATHY

Come on....come on!

Tires SQUEAL as the rain pours inside of the open windshield. Kathy floors the gas pedal and they peel out onto the road.

Suddenly they are sprinting forward down the darkened path with only the trees and the storm before them.

We hear Kathy SCREAM in delight. Even as the blood covers her clothing, a smile cannot help but fill her face.

LIZZY

We did it!

KATHY

Fuck you, you fucking devil!

The engine RUMBLES as she slams her fist into the HORN.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The ambulance races toward the winding road ahead.

The sky is full of flashes of white as they pick up more and more speed. The trees around them sway in the wind as they make their escape from the crash site.

Thunder RUMBLES and then hangs in the air.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

LIZZY

Momma...The radio!

KATHY

YES...YES!

One hand reaches down, ripping the receiver from the cradle. We watch her lift it as she tries to see in the storm, her face covered in water. In blood.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Help us!

She hits the button, trying to speak...but they hear nothing. Her hand slams down on the console.

A BURST OF STATIC fills the cabin.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Help us!

WITHOUT WARNING, THE AMBULANCE ROCKS BACK AND FORTH!

Like an 18-wheeler slamming into its side, they are suddenly struck by something from the road.

THE CREATURE NEVER GAVE UP.

Lizzy flies back, her body twisting against the side of the cabin. We watch the gurney roll free and slam against her.

The steering wheel spins in Kathy's hands as she tries to regain control. Tires SCREAM as they try and hold the road.

SLAM. They are hit again as the headlights fly away from the concrete into the trees. The van is pushed off its wheels.

*It is like a bull is colliding with the side.*

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The ambulance slides across the slick road, its body twisting and spinning in the rain and oil.

Lightning strikes and we see it float past us.

The brakes HOWL but their efforts are meaningless.

Without warning they approach the tree line.

SLAM. THE AMBULANCE CRASHES INTO THE MUD AND THE FOREST.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

The sound is deafening.

Like a thousand hands moving at once, the branches thrash into the open windshield, slapping at Kathy's skin.

The van is out of control as it pours down the side of a hill. The tires pop like balloons. The frame is beaten by the woods as they disappear into the darkness of the forest.

We see Lizzy hit her head on the wall, her body tossed back against the ground.

Kathy thrusts her arms forward as they fall deeper into the trees. They hit a fallen oak and with a loud slam...

THE AMBULANCE TUMBLES OVER, ROLLING, FLIPPING ON ITS SIDE.

We hear Kathy scream out inside the chaos.

But then there is only the sick sound of silence as she is thrown onto the roof of the front seat.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

One last BOOM.

At the bottom of a basin. One last tree.

The ambulance hits it like a brick wall and then suddenly...

*They are still.*

INT. AMBULANCE - CABIN

For a moment there is only blackness. Then a flash of lightning shows us the world once again.

Lizzy lays on her back. We hear her GASP as her head bounces up from the cabinets beneath her.

*She is not on the floor.*

When the world stopped turning the van was left on its side.

With a loud CRASH, Lizzy shoves the gurney from her body.

Blood fills her mouth as she coughs it away. Her eyes find the light from the headlights. The front seats.

LIZZY

Momma...

Lizzy races forward, through the clutter of the back cabin, trying to find Kathy.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Momma! Momma!

INT. AMBULANCE - FRONT SEAT - CONTINUOUS

LIZZY

MOMMA!

Like a broken mannequin sprawled across the seats, Kathy's body seems lifeless. Empty. She is barely contained inside the front section of the ambulance.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Wake up...wake up...

The little girl squeezes herself between the seats, her hands trembling as she tries to see her mother's face.

We hear the child's frantic WHISPERS.

We see her fingers trembling as she touches Kathy's skin.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Open your eyes! Please....

A single COUGH, then another. Kathy twists and turns.

It is like she is waking from a bad dream. We watch as the terror of the truth finds her once again. A sudden SCREAM.

KATHY  
Help me! Help! Lizzy!

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
Momma...I'm here. I'm okay.

Kathy pushes herself away from the broken windshield.

She grabs Lizzy and pulls her close.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
I'm sorry...I'm sorry....

Her voice is broken like a child's. She can barely speak.

They lay in the darkness even as the rain falls onto their bloody skin. They hold each other.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
We have to get up...

INT. AMBULANCE - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Their battered bodies tumble one by one behind the seats. There is no light. The battery of the ambulance is dying, but then it returns again as the THUNDER outside ROARS.

We watch Kathy hold her daughter, she WHISPERS in her ear.

LIZZY  
I thought you were dead.

The Mag-lite is near them and without ever taking her hands off her child, Kathy reaches out and lifts it.

We watch the warm glow appear inside the shadows. Like a torch, it finds Lizzy's face. Her body.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
Are you okay?

LIZZY  
My head...it hurts.

Kathy tries to think. We hear her GASPING. Ribs are broken. Her labored breaths are each filled with pain.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
It's gonna be alright...

The doll lays beside them. Kathy places it inside Lizzy's arms as she moves back, the flashlight cradled in her legs.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Here...hold this.

Her hands touch across her daughter's skin, trying to see signs of real damage. Even now, her fingers tremble.

LIZZY  
What do we do?

We watch Kathy turn back towards the front seat. The radio.

She reaches out, her hand exposed in the open air. Her fingers try to touch the dash.

Finally she grasps the loose cord as it hangs by the steering wheel. We watch her lift it, pulling the line taut.

She places the receiver to her lips. But it is dead.

KATHY  
Goddamn it! Goddamn it.

The wind HOWLS and the branches from the trees around them SHIVER in delight. Kathy falls back towards her daughter. The sound fills her with terror.

But then the silence returns, taunting her once again.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Goddamn it...

Lizzy watches her break down. She hears her crying. SOBBING. The fear and the pain in Kathy's face.

The walls of the ambulance are like a coffin.

LIZZY  
What do we do?

But all Kathy can do is stare into the front of the ambulance. The open windshield. The rain pouring inside.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Momma.

KATHY  
You have to be quiet.

Outside the thunder RUMBLES. Kathy can hear her daughter's TINY BREATHS as she listens for something, anything.

Then they feel it. A bump. A thud.

THE CREATURE SLAMS INTO THE WALL OF THE AMBULANCE.

LIZZY

Momma!

The little girl's SCREAM echoes off the inside of the cabin. Again the monster flies into the van's walls. Their world moves back and forth as the thing outside attacks them.

We watch Kathy spin back and forth as SLAM...

The ambulance shakes like a prize fighter taking its final blows. They hear the monster BREATHING. They hear it SCREAM.

Then it beats against the walls again.

KATHY

(whispers)

Stay still.

SLAM. The gurney pushes towards them. SLAM.

They hear the creature leap onto the makeshift ceiling that floats above them. They hear its claws on the metal.

The tiny chalkboard SCREECHES reign down like hail.

SUDDENLY THEY SEE IT FALL TO GROUND BY THE BROKEN WINDSHIELD.

The monster's eyes find them. It sees where they are.

They do not scream. Lizzy and Kathy do not say a word as it sits, the rain falling on its black skin.

A BREATH pours out of its lungs. Another. Another.

Kathy lifts the Mag-lite before her. Her hand trembling. She presses her daughter close as they wait for the attack.

KATHY (CONT'D)

(whispers to herself)

Please...

But it does not come. *It knows what the flashlight does.*

Grey eyes stare into Kathy's as it watches them.

For a moment there is no movement.

Then the monster is gone.

INT. AMBULANCE - LATER

Kathy runs her fingers through Lizzy's hair as blood drips from her skin to the floor below.

The little girl's head rests against Kathy's chest.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
Is it gone?

KATHY  
No.

LIZZY  
You're still bleeding...

Kathy's eyes rise up to the window, watching.

KATHY  
Ssh...

The sound is low. Just above a whisper. Not scolding.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
People will come soon...

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
People already came.

Lizzy turns in Kathy's embrace. For a moment she cries.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A door SLAMS somewhere inside the house.

Lizzy's room is empty. Silent. For a moment we sit, staring at the walls, at the toys and books that litter the shelves.

Then, from under the bed, we see a hand appear.

Tiny fingers pull at the carpet and then Lizzy emerges into the darkness. She sits on the floor. Outside, a car starts.

She waits, listening for the ENGINE to warm.

Then she listens to it pull away.

The light from the hall touches Lizzy's face. She stares at her doll inside her lap. Stroking its hair. We watch her whisper in its ear. Then she squeezes it tight.

The baby SCREAMS into her ear. But she does not seem to mind.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

There is a record player playing softly in the living room. A stack of old 45s is tossed across the table. The floor.

There are bottles. Cigarettes.

The light from the ceiling fan shines down on Lizzy like a harsh sun. She sees her shadow on the trash riddled floor. In the window across the room, she sees her reflection.

The darkness under her eyes adds years to her face.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A drawer opens and the sound fills the silence. Lizzy's fingers move through the silverware. We hear the RATTLE OF METAL. The high pitched SCREAM of silver beating its hands.

Another drawer.

This time she finds what she is looking for. The long blade. The wooden handle. Lizzy pulls the knife from the others and holds it inside her palm.

She turns back towards the bedrooms.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The blade hangs by her side like an anchor.

It is as long as her thigh it seems. Too big for the child.

Lizzy walks slowly, her steps barely making a sound as she comes to the doorway of her mother's room.

For a moment she stands. She can barely see the outline of her mother's bed. The light from the hallway is just enough for her to glimpse Kathy's jeans balled up on the floor.

Her mother's shirt. Her panties. Her bra.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The BREATHS are like waves in the ocean. Lizzy listens to them wash ashore and then fade away as she stands by the night stand. She looks down at Kathy's face.

The last gasps of a cigarette race towards the sky beside her. With her free hand, Lizzy kills the white stick beneath her fingers. Her mother never hears the sound.

LIZZY  
 (whispers)  
 I hate you.

We watch the knife rise up into the air.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
 (whispers)  
 I hate you.

For a moment, the blade hangs just above Kathy's bare chest.  
 Just above her neck.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
 (whispers)  
 Go away.

The little girl holds in the darkness. Her arm held out.

The weapon resting in the air.

She watches her mother sleep. We hear her BREATHS as they  
 pour from her lips. She never moves. Never opens her eyes.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Blood pours from Kathy's mouth onto the makeshift floor as she  
 tries to rise. Her hands and knees seem nailed to the ground.  
 We watch the blood splatter across her fingers.

Lizzy watches it as well.

LIZZY  
 Momma! What is happening?

The little girl stares in horror as her mother falls to the  
 floor. Kathy turns back and forth at the two possible exits.  
 Her trembling hand wipes the blood from her face.

We see the realization creeping in as she stares into the  
 darkness of the van. The flashlight's warm glow bounces off  
 the walls that surround them.

KATHY  
 (whispers)  
 Why did it run?

She coughs one last time and again, blood splatters across the  
 ground. For a moment, Kathy just WHEEZES and GASPS for air.

*For a moment, her daughter is too frightened to approach her.*

LIZZY  
 Don't die.

KATHY

I'm okay.

Kathy stares towards the back doors. She turns to the hole where the windshield once was.

She can see a space large enough to escape.

KATHY (CONT'D)

(whispers)

We need to make fire.

Kathy rolls onto her side, then she pushes herself up once again. Pausing every few seconds to breathe.

LIZZY

Why?

Lizzy watches her search the cabinets beneath them. Kathy rummages through the trash that was thrown to the floor.

KATHY

We have to get you to the road.

LIZZY

I won't leave you.

KATHY

They don't know where we are. They can't see you down here. Do you understand? We can't wait.

Lizzy pushes her tiny body in front of her mother.

LIZZY

I won't leave you.

She does not feel her knees move inside her mother's blood.

KATHY

Get me that towel.

Kathy finds a container of rubbing alcohol. Then we hear her hand hit a rod and she grabs the metal from the darkness.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I'm coming too baby. You think I'd let you be the only one?

She tries to smile. But her daughter knows...

LIZZY

You're lying.

KATHY

No, I am not.

Kathy douses the towel in fluid. Then wraps the pole.

THUNDER RUMBLES. We watch her hand slam to the floor beneath her. A reflex more than a choice. For a moment she breathes and we hear her lungs filling with blood once again.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I have a plan. But I need you to be brave okay? I need you to be brave. Braver than you've ever been before.

Lizzy watches her mother twist towards the open door. She pauses at the edge of the front cabin, staring into the darkness beyond the dash.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna distract it...it hates light...it runs away...do you understand? If I make this...maybe you can get out...

Kathy peers past the headlight's reach. She sees the woods.

LIZZY

We can use the fire?

KATHY

It'll be afraid...like last time. Monsters hate the light. That's what nightlights are for...right?

She stares into the blackness as the rain continues to fall.

LIZZY

I can use fire too.

Kathy reaches down and hands her daughter the doll that had fallen beside her.

KATHY

No, I want you to just hold dolly...okay?

LIZZY

(whispers)  
You hate her.

KATHY

No...but she has to stay quiet.

The little girl takes her into her arms.

LIZZY  
 (whispers)  
 It's gonna kill you.

KATHY  
 No it won't. This will work.

Kathy moves to the broken windshield. One leg slides over the front seat. Then her body slides through, despite the pain.

LIZZY  
 Please don't lie to me...

KATHY  
 I'm not.

The little girl is terrified as she follows her mother.

LIZZY  
 Yes you are!!!

The rain beats down on the ground. Lizzy's voice is deafening. Kathy turns back to her daughter in terror as the sound echoes into the night air.

Her hand slams over the child's mouth almost out of instinct.

KATHY  
 (whispers)  
 Yes...I am...

LIZZY  
 (whispers)  
 I'm not going out there.

Lizzy tries to pull away, her body twisting. Lightning strikes and the rain falls only inches from their skin.

KATHY  
 (whispers)  
 Baby...look at me.

For one last second, Kathy holds back her words...

KATHY (CONT'D)  
 I'm gonna die. Real soon. Whether I go out there or not...Look at me.

The child's eyes finally find her mother's.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
 I need you to get to the road. They won't see you here. Do you understand? I can slow it down.

Lizzy tries to turn away but her mother won't let her.

LIZZY  
You can't die.

KATHY  
No, you can't die.

Lizzy's voice echoes every child that has ever questioned their parent's wisdom. That one single word...

LIZZY  
Why?

KATHY  
Cause you're... you're what I'm here  
for...okay...

One last look.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I'll go out and it'll come after me  
and then you go. When I call for you  
I want you to get out and you and  
dolly run as fast as you can.

LIZZY  
We can go together.

Kathy does not respond and this time, Lizzy does not ask the question again. This time she knows the answer.

KATHY  
Don't look back. No matter what  
happens. You go till you get to the  
road and then you stay in the light.  
The sun'll come up soon.

LIZZY  
I'll get help to come back here.  
They can save you.

KATHY  
That's our plan.

For one last second, they sit, holding each other. Lizzy listens to her mother's labored BREATHING. She watches her chest rise. She sees Kathy's hands trembling.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Okay.

For one last second, Kathy looks at her child.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The rain is thinner inside the forest. The leaves and the branches form a dense, thick ceiling from up above.

Kathy's hands grip the earth beneath her fingers. We watch her climb from the ambulance. Her body twists past the dash.

Slowly, she rises to her hands and knees. She crawls into the headlight's glow and pulls out her lighter. We hear her ragged BREATHS. She fights the blood inside her lungs.

There is a spark. Then a flame. Suddenly there is fire.

The orange and yellow ghost rises up from the torch.

ABOVE THE AMBULANCE, A BRANCH CRACKS, TOWERING OVER HER.

The van must have fallen over a hundred feet on its descent. The large oak must have broken its fall and now she can barely make out the van's path. She barely sees the road.

LIKE A GUILLOTINE'S BLADE, THE TREE HANGS ABOVE HER, TREMBLING.

Slowly, Kathy rises to her feet. She pulls the scalpel from her waistband. It floats up before her.

We see her terror as she steps into the darkness.

She turns back and finds the outline of Lizzy as she hides. We hear the sound of her rough steps as she hops forward, her legs no longer stable beneath her.

Each step takes Kathy further from the ambulance.

THE MONSTER IS WATCHING HER.

From the trees. We see its eyes glowing. Its body perched on the ground. It does not move. But it is there.

Kathy steps forward and the creature waits. It is 10 feet away, maybe more. Its body consumed by the blackness.

THUNDER RUMBLES. Kathy pauses, searching all around her.

KATHY

Lizzy, can you hear me?

She waits for a response and we wait as well.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Lizzy?

Her voice is louder this time.

LIZZY (O.S.)  
(whispers)  
Yes.

Kathy's feet move slowly. She waves the torch back and forth. The trees close in as she moves further from the van.

KATHY  
You answer when I call...

Lightning strikes from the sky above. White light shines. A quick glimpse of the world and then darkness once again.

AGAIN WE SEE THE MONSTER.

It is five feet closer now. Behind her. Just beside two trees. Its skin glistens in the water that has fallen.

We see the strange tears falling from its eyes.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Lizzy leans forward, trying the radio one last time.

She stares into the blackness of the night. The headlights shine out, but her mother no longer stands inside them. She can see the torch moving further and further away.

She drops the receiver once again. Still nothing.

LIZZY  
Don't go so far.

The little girl's half WHISPER barely escapes her lips.

The doll presses against her chest.

But inside her hands, we see the hammer as well.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Kathy pulls out the small container of alcohol and pours what little remains into the fire.

We watch the flame drink the fuel, growing larger. Stronger. The forest fills its warmth.

The scalpel trembles as Kathy's strength continues to fade.

We see the blood on her lips. On her chin. She rocks back and forth, but it is clear she can barely stand.

Somewhere in the gloom, a branch SHATTERS.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
Where are you?

The fire waves back and forth as another sound follows.

Then she hears it again.

The monster is moving. Its FOOTSTEPS growing quicker and quicker as it circles her.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I'm right here motherfucker!

A WAILING EMERGES FROM THE DARKNESS.

It bounces off the trees like a thousand screams. It comes from nowhere and everywhere all at once.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I'm here...are you scared?!

But it is her own fear that beats down her words.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Come and get me. Come on...

There is only silence.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Please...

Nothing but desperation remains inside her. We watch as she stands, trembling. We watch as Kathy realizes the answer.

*Suddenly, she knows what she must do.*

THUNDER beats down upon her like fists pounding a wall.

Slowly Kathy begins to lower the fire towards the ground.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Lizzy...be ready!

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Lizzy strains to see some sign of her mother. The forest has swallowed her and now the little girl is alone again.

LIZZY  
Where are you?

There is a CRACK. Somewhere close by. We hear Lizzy GASP.

KATHY (O.S.)  
It's okay...

The doll in her arms helps Lizzy watch the forest for movement. The Mag-lite shines against her cheeks as it sits on the floor.

We hear the little girl begin to cry once again.

She is almost too terrified to search any longer.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

CRACK. A bone breaking. CRACK. Again the sound.

We freeze with Kathy as the fire dances its last dance.

The wind blows through the branches of the trees. We watch Kathy swallow. The blood dripping from her mouth. She steps forward, her feet splashing into a large pool of water that has built up over the night.

She drops the fire inside it. She sees the flames disappear.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
I'm...ready.

For one last moment, we stand with Kathy as she waits.

We are with her. Staring into the shadows.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Come on...

One last flash of lightning cuts through the darkness.

There is nothing but terror in Kathy's eyes.

She waits, listening. Breathing. She knows it is out there.

THUNDER GROWLS. It shakes her world with its RUMBLE.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I'm...here.

THE CREATURE IS RIGHT BEHIND HER.

There is no chance for her to scream. To call out for her daughter. There is no chance for her to speak at all.

The monster is on top of her. Its jaws bite into her.

*One large fang tears into Kathy's face.*

We hear its BREATHS. The BONES BREAKING. We hear its SCREAM.

With the last strength she has, she CALLS for Lizzy, but the creature's jaws have torn into her throat. As the THUNDER RUMBLES, there is almost no sound at all.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Lizzy!

The monster rips into her stomach.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Go!

Kathy spins away, her body twisting in the mud. The scalpel flies out, cutting into the strange skin. For one second, she is able to pull herself away from the creature.

She crawls back towards the ambulance.

The rain. The mud. Each one tries to cover her.

*But now, we mostly just see her blood.*

KATHY (CONT'D)

Baby! Run...Run!

The creature leaps upon Kathy and she crashes to the forest floor once again. The scalpel disappears from her hand. She tries to turn. Her fists, her arms strike the beast.

But it will not stop. The attack goes on and on.

SUDDENLY THE HAMMER CRASHES INTO THE MONSTER'S SKULL.

We hear the beast's strange ROAR as Lizzy strikes out with all her might. One blow, then another.

LIZZY

Go away!!!!

She swings the hammer one last time and her mother is free.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Go away!!!

The beam of the Mag-Lite shines into the creature's eyes.

It races back into the darkness, then disappears once again.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Momma!

The headlights stream across Kathy's face.

She is barely breathing. The monster crushed her.

Like an electric shock, a wave of pain pushes through her skin. Kathy has to use all her strength just to speak. Lizzy cannot stop the blood from pouring out of her broken flesh.

She drops the flashlight and falls on her mother.

KATHY

Go...go...now...

But Lizzy can barely hear her words.

LIZZY

I won't leave you.

KATHY

Go!

LIZZY

Momma, I wanna be with you.

KATHY

(whispers)

...please...

Their eyes reach each other and Lizzy sees the fear in Kathy's face. She sees the world slipping away.

LIZZY

Please get up...please.

Her lips graze Kathy's skin.

KATHY

I can't...

LIZZY

But I want you to...

A BOOM OF THUNDER and the lightning flashes from above.

But for them, there is only silence.

Lizzy's hands grip her mother's tattered shirt. She tries to lift her. She tries to make her stand.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Get...up...

*But Kathy cannot rise.*

KATHY

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Her words are weak, we can barely hear them in the wind.

LIZZY

(sobbing)

I'm sorry. I'm....

For a second, her mother is still. We see Lizzy panic. Her face rubs across Kathy's broken body. We see her trembling.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Please!!

One last time Kathy screams out. Her body convulsing. Suddenly she is lost. Confused. Her mind racing.

KATHY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

LIZZY

Momma, I love you.

Lizzy stares into her mother's eyes as they grow wide. She looks into her horror. Her fear. Her awe.

It builds as Kathy's breaths grow faster and faster.

*Then Lizzy sees it all wash away.*

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Don't go!

But Kathy dies.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

The hint of sunlight fills the screen. The world in close up. We see dolly. A tiny flashlight. An open book.

We find a knife.

We see Lizzy's face pressed against the ground.

She is underneath the bed. The ceiling of her mattress is only inches away. Pink sheets have fallen down so she is safe here. Unseen. Unharmed.

Another hiding place.

*The young child sleeps. She is seven years old.*

For a moment we take in her silent world.

Suddenly, the pink wall that blocked out her room is pulled away. Kathy has fallen to the floor. Her body presses against the opening that only Lizzy can squeeze through.

She watches the child sleeping.

Her tired eyes show us the traces of a hangover, but they also show us traces of happiness as well.

She reaches out, gently wiping away a lock of hair that hangs before of her daughter's eyes.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
Little girl.

Kathy doesn't rush her. Instead she watches Lizzy open one eye at a time. She sees them adjusting to morning.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Hey...

Slowly the child fights back the sleep inside her.

Finally she is there.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Hey there...little girl.

But Lizzy does not move.

LIZZY  
I'm not little.

KATHY  
I know.

Lizzy stares with a mixture of sleepy, sadness and anger.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Don't be mad.

She smiles a guilty smile. Her voice soft.

LIZZY  
But you said...

KATHY  
...I'll do better.

Kathy reaches out her hand once again.

LIZZY  
I don't believe you.

KATHY  
I will.

But the little girl lets it lie before her.

LIZZY  
I have to go to school.

KATHY  
I have a better idea. You can spend  
the day with me.

LIZZY  
No...mom...

KATHY  
Fine...

Kathy scrunches up her face in mock angry. The bad acting  
does little to change her daughter's mood.

LIZZY  
I told you, I'm not little.

KATHY  
Bigger than me sometimes.

LIZZY  
Bigger than you.

For a moment, they sit.

Kathy strategizes a new plan. Lizzy lets her.

KATHY  
How about tonight, it's girl's night  
then? How about that?

She sees the poker face melt...just a little.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
What will we do?

KATHY  
Whatever you want.

LIZZY  
I want to play rock band.

KATHY  
But I can't sing.

LIZZY  
I know.

Finally a smile. Kathy matches it.

KATHY  
You bitch.

LIZZY  
We're just gonna do my songs.

KATHY  
Okay...But I can do...

LIZZY  
Nope.

The little girl stares at her mother. Their eyes locked together. They know who will win.

KATHY  
Fine.

Lizzy's fingers have moved forward. They touch the tips of her mother's. Then they slide further. Grabbing her hand.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
You don't hate me?

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
I don't hate you.

KATHY  
I don't hate you.

The little girl sees tears building in Kathy's eyes.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
But I will love you more. Okay?

LIZZY  
Promise?

Kathy nods her head slowly. She tries not to cry.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
You are gonna be better than me...you know that?

Lizzy smiles as she takes in her mother's words.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
You wait...you'll get past me and do  
anything that you want...

LIZZY  
I just want you.

Their hands move up and down as Kathy squeezes her fingers.

KATHY  
(whispers)  
But don't forget about yourself.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Raindrops fall into the Mag-lite's glow. It sits on the ground beside Kathy's body. Beside them both.

For a moment, there is silence. We watch the little girl's chest rising and falling as Lizzy hangs onto her mother.

She looks out. She turns in the shadows, staring and hoping. But there are no thoughts. No answers to be found.

For a few seconds, she waits for her attacker.

AND THEN THERE IS A SOUND. A RINGING. A PHONE.

Lizzy turns from Kathy. Looking all around her. She hears it again. From inside the ambulance.

Somewhere in the front seat, a cell phone glows.

*One of the paramedics had left it behind.*

Lizzy does not move, her eyes scan the darkness around her.

For one last second she turns to Kathy, her face leaning close. She kisses her lips. Her hand touches her face.

Then she whispers in her mother's ear.

LIZZY  
I have to go.

EXT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Lizzy hangs low to the ground. We watch her move. Her tiny frame silhouetted by the headlights' beams.

She crawls to the bent metal just outside the dash, her hand reaching back into the darkness.

Just as the iPhone goes to voice mail she picks it up.

A picture of Williams shines back at her for an instant before Lizzy swipes the screen. A smiling face...

Then the key pad.

As she begins to dial, Lizzy turns back, watching, staring out into the woods. But there is no sign of the creature.

We watch her thinking. Her mind racing.

She looks at the ambulance. It slammed into the base of a large oak. She can see how the wood cracked. The branches splintering on impact. But one branch remained.

*It hangs over the windshield. Hovering.*

We watch the little girl stare into the rain as she moves around the side of the ambulance. We watch her eyes as they track along the roots of the tree. The trunk.

Lizzy turns back to the windshield, the flashlight in her hand.

INT. AMBULANCE - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

THUNDER RUMBLES. Lizzy slips inside her metal fortress. She climbs over the front seat. Her eyes dart back to the phone.

A swipe of a finger.

Quickly she dials. Suddenly there is a voice on the other end. We watch her face break at the sound of it.

LIZZY  
(whispers)  
Daddy.

The wind HOWLS inside the ambulance. Her body moves across scattered items beneath her feet.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
No...you can't. Don't...

She moves to the edges of the seats. By the front cabin. There is a hiding space. A small cabinet.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
They came and they got killed. We  
tried to drive away. It came back.

SUDDENLY SHE HEARS A SOUND ONCE AGAIN.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Daddy, Momma died.

She throws her face away from the windshield. Her shoulders slumping as the exhaustion and the fear weigh her down.

She lifts the flashlight up to fight the creature.

*But there is nothing there.*

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Daddy, there's a monster.

Her voice grows frail. Her sobbing takes over her words. But again she lifts up, crawling to the center of the cabin.

We watch her check the locks of the back door.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
I don't know where I am...We drove  
off the road...I don't know!

Something bumps against the back of the ambulance. The walls around her shiver. We hear the child SCREAM into the phone. It falls into Lizzy's lap as she freezes in anticipation.

Even though she tries, for a second, Lizzy's eyes will not open.

We hear the muted WHISPERS of her father begging her to speak once again. Lizzy grabs her doll.

Her fingers feel across its belly. She stares at its smiling face looking back at her.

Finally she lifts the receiver back to her face.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Don't come here...You'll die... It'll  
kill you. I know it.

We watch her face twist back and forth as her mouth tries to form the words.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
It's gonna kill me.

Outside the wind blows. Goosebumps form on the young girl's skin. We watch the tears drip down her tiny face.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
I'm gonna die...

THUNDER RUMBLES and the child shatters at the sound.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
I won't tell you. Because...

Lightning strikes and we see the walls around her.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
I love you...

For one last second she listens to his voice.

LIZZY (CONT'D)  
Daddy, please say goodbye...

But He won't listen. We watch her hang up the phone. The little girl turns it off and drops it on the ground below her.

THEN SHE TURNS THE FLASHLIGHT OFF AS WELL.

For a moment Lizzy is alone.

Somewhere outside, she hears the creature BREATHING.

EXT. ROADS - NIGHT

Rain falls on the road. We see the Mustang. The tow truck.

The trees sway in the wind as the storm comes to an end.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The headlights shine out into the darkness.

On the ground, Kathy's body rests.

We see the ambulance. The white metal sitting in the darkness.

There is nothing but silence.

INT. AMBULANCE - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lizzy holds her toy one last time, the plastic face wrapping around her shoulder. We watch her stare into the broken window before her. We listen to the last drops of rain.

For one last moment the child is still.

Then she squeezes the doll's belly with all her strength.

FROM INSIDE THE TOY, THE SCREAMING BEGINS.

The familiar WAILING. The voice HOWLING into the cabin.

Lizzy moves towards the front seats. She falls back behind the shadows, hidden from the window. She opens the cabinet beneath her and slips inside. Her face barely above the edge.

The toy grows quiet. Lizzy squeezes it again...

THE BABY DOLL CRIES ONCE MORE.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The sound RINGS OUT inside the forest.

We see the headlights. The ambulance.

Something is moving towards the WAILING. We hear the monster's BREATHS as the toy CRIES OUT for it to come.

INT. AMBULANCE - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

SLAM. Just behind her. Lizzy hears the beast's claws as they leap down by the dash.

She can hear its breath as it listens to the strange SCREAMS.

She hears the creature SCREAM as well.

Her trembling fingers move across the body of the doll. Lizzy tries not to make a sound. But we can hear her teeth CHATTERING. Her body QUIVERING.

She presses the child's belly as the doll grows quiet...

AGAIN THE SCREAMING BEGINS. THE MONSTER ROARS.

Lizzy tosses the doll towards the back door and hears the creature creep forward. We watch her disappear into the cabinet as the beast climbs inside the cabin.

The monster hovers above her. Staring.

Its grey eyes peering into the darkness.

INT. AMBULANCE - CABINET

Lizzy peeks through a tiny slat. She watches the beast move further and further into the ambulance's hull.

She watches it stare at the doll.

THEN SHE WATCHES IT ATTACK IT AS THE SCREAMS FILL THE CABIN.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

In an instant Lizzy throws her body over the seat as the monster dives into the deep recesses of the cabin.

Her tiny legs race up to the tree. We watch her climb up, moving to the branch above the ambulance.

Lightning strikes as her body falls down.

We hear it crack as the creature SCREAMS inside the van.

With all her weight, the little girl presses against the wood.

CRACK. It slides down. CRACK.

LIZZY

Please.

INT. AMBULANCE - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The doll grows silent inside the beast's jaws. The crying stops. The creature turns back. Its bones breaking.

There is nothing inside.

LIZZY

I'm here!!!!

We listen to it scream as suddenly it hears the words. We watch it leap towards the front seats. The open window.

LIZZY (CONT'D)

Come on!

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The branch gives way just as the monster emerges.

LIZZY AND THE TREE FALL DOWNWARDS ONTO THE BEAST.

Its neck is crushed beneath the wood and the leaves.

She looks down into the beast and with all her might begins to strike it even as it bites at her skin.

The hammer flies into the air. We watch it crash down on the strange dark flesh. We watch the metal strike the eyes. The fang. The monster keeps fighting. Like a wild dog.

But Lizzy does not stop. She does not stop.

Until the creature screams no more.

THUNDER RUMBLES.

Lizzy turns away. Her body aching. We watch her crawl away from the ambulance. From the creature. She moves into the darkness as the rain falls.

*There is a sound.*

Now we recognize it. We see the CHILD spin around.

*She knows it well.*

A little girl falls back against the cold forest floor. We can see the blood on her face. Her clothes. We see the tears fall down her skin even as the rain falls against her flesh.

*We hear the breath.*

Not human. The sound is different. Like a thousand horses. Like a mother's clamor. A baby's wail. A father's howl.

*We hear it again. Again.*

The child looks up. We see the terror in her eyes. It is almost as if she will break before us, like a piece of glass.

Her legs splash in the puddles of water as she tries to stand.

A GASP escapes her lips.

We watch her lift the muddy hammer in her tiny hand. She holds something else behind her back.

*She should have run away.*

Lightning strikes and thunder CRASHES. We hear the sound of bones CRACKING in the darkness. We hear the strange BREATH.

Lizzy rises to her feet and stands. The water dripping on her skin. There is no fear inside her anymore.

No pain. Only rage.

White light from the sky shows us her eyes. We see the creature before her, but only for a second.

The Monster leaps towards her, knocking her to the ground.

We hear Lizzy SCREAMING.

Then we hear silence strangle her voice.

*She should have run away.*

THE MAG-LITE BURSTS TO LIFE LIKE AN EXPLOSION.

It rests inside of Lizzy's hand. Above her heart.

She holds it tight as the monster flies towards her.

She drives it into its body. She drives it towards the jaws.

WE HEAR THE MONSTER BEGIN TO SCREAM OUT IN AGONY.

For one last moment, Lizzy stares into the eyes of the beast.

Before it can run away once more...

LIZZY STABS IT WITH THE HAMMER'S CLAW. AGAIN. AGAIN.

Finally, the monster is dead.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

We watch the world rock back and forth. The branches of the trees swaying. Everything is spinning. The world is chaos.

But then slowly we find our way.

Lizzy moves towards the road.

Her hand still holds the fang. The doll is gone. We watch the little girl climbing, one foot after the other. The wind blows through the trees.

The rain has stopped.

There is nothing but the sound of each of her steps as she makes her way to the top of the forest. To the clearing. To the empty road.

The child keeps going.

LIZZY (O.S.)  
My mom tells me not to be afraid of  
monsters.

The woods are silent.

LIZZY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
But she is wrong.

Her knees fall to the dirt. She has to pull herself back up, driving her hands into the wet cold ground.

LIZZY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
They are out there, waiting for you.

Her lips tremble in the morning cold.

LIZZY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Watching.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

We see the sodium vapor lights fade to black as the sun begins to touch the sky. The storm is gone. The thunder is silenced.

LIZZY (O.S.)  
They are in the dark...

A layer of pink, of blue forms above the little girl's head.

We hear the CRACKLE of her feet against the road.

She looks out at the world around her.

LIZZY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Sometimes where you see them...

There is no one. Nothing.

Just the trees staring back at her, watching her.

LIZZY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Sometimes where you don't...

*She seems like the smallest thing in the world.*

We watch her walk alone. Waiting for a car. The police.

From somewhere in the trees we hear a sound. A branch BREAKING. For a second we see the fear return to Lizzy's face as she turns to see.

LIZZY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I know that now.

There is nothing there.

The little girl SCREAMS OUT. Lizzy's WAIL fills the empty morning with rage. She stands, defiant. Brave.

But no one replies to her call.

LIZZY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
But I'm not afraid anymore.

The End.