

THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL

by

Nick Morris

nickwriteshorror@gmail.com

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

The front door BURSTS open.

Sunlight invades the darkened room. Dust particles shimmer and dance in the air around the silhouette of a GASPING man as he rushes inside.

This is SCOTTY (30). Bearded and sporting a long, blond ponytail, he seems pretty agitated about something.

He yanks open the curtains revealing huge bay windows overlooking a lake.

The cottage is an impressive, open-concept space. Rustic, but tasteful and all on one level.

He disappears into a bedroom and RIFLES around inside for a moment before re-emerging with a shoe box.

He drops it on the kitchen table and opens it.

He pulls out a small, brass key on a string and quickly hangs it around his neck, tucking it inside of his shirt.

Next, he produces a semi-automatic handgun followed by its clip. He checks to ensure that it's fully loaded before shoving it into the gun with a CLACK.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

A black sedan rolls down a long driveway through the woods and SQUEALS to an abrupt stop, blocking Scotty's car in.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Scotty hurries over to the window to see who's here.

SCOTTY

Shit!

Sweat beads on his forehead. He flips open his a cell phone and frantically punches at its keys.

He peeks out the window as he waits anxiously for someone to answer...

SCOTTY

(into phone)

Yeah! He's here. Right now!

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

DOMINICK (30) steps out of the passenger side of the sedan and SLAMS the door shut. He's unshaven with wispy, dark hair that hangs nearly down to his eyes.

He lights a cigarette and saunters up to the cottage, stopping directly in front.

A large FIGURE remains in the driver's seat.

DOMINICK
(yells)
Come on out here, Scotty!

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Scotty approaches the open front door. He takes a deep BREATH before stepping out in front of it.

Dominick looms large as he waits outside, puffing on his cigarette. He's of average size and build, but to Scotty right now, he might as well be The Incredible Hulk.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

After a moment, Scotty emerges, stepping over a gap in the unfinished front deck. A compressor, nail gun and a stack of lumber sit nearby.

SCOTTY
Dominick! Thank fuck, you found me.

DOMINICK
(scoffs)
Odd thing to say. Did you think I
wouldn't?

SCOTTY
No! Of course not.

Scotty glances at the guy waiting in the car and back to Dominick.

DOMINICK
Well imagine my surprise when I
land at our carefully predetermined
rendezvous point and, oh -- where's
Scotty?

SCOTTY
I'm sorry. I panicked. I had to get
outta there fast. I figured you'd
know to come here.

DOMINICK
Uh huh.
(glances at the lumber)
What, are you building a new deck?

SCOTTY
(chuckles)
Yeah. Yeah.

DOMINICK
Looks good.

SCOTTY
Thanks. I'm, uh --

Scotty's phone RINGS in his pocket.

He lets it go.

RING...RING...

DOMINICK
Go ahead. Answer it. I'll wait.

RING...RING...

Trying rather unsuccessfully to hide his nervousness, Scotty
pulls out the phone and flips it open.

SCOTTY
(into phone)
Hello?

Dominick takes another drag of his smoke, watching him
closely.

SCOTTY
(into phone)
Hey, Ma. Um, this isn't really the
best time. Let me call you back in
a bit, okay? Okay. Love you too.
Bye.

He SNAPS the phone shut and quickly pockets it.

DOMINICK
Your mom?

SCOTTY
Yeah. Sorry 'bout that.

Dominick steps up onto the deck with Scotty.

DOMINICK
I was at your mother's funeral,
Scott. Back in ninety-seven. Don't
you remember that?

SCOTTY
Oh, no. This was my step-mom.

Dominick motions to the sedan.

APEX (28) exits the car. He's nearly seven feet tall with a
shaved head and tattoos all over, head and face included.

Scotty watches as he approaches.

DOMINICK
That was the cops on the phone,
wasn't it? You weren't expecting me
so soon. Are they on their way?

SCOTTY
What? Hey, now wait a min--

DOMINICK
That's what hurts the most. It's
not the money. It's this moment.
Right here. When the realization
hits you square in the fucking
face...

Dominick reaches behind Scotty and relieves him of his gun.

DOMINICK
...that trust is a luxury. One that
I can no longer afford.

SCOTTY
You've got it all wrong, brother.
This is me you're talkin' to here.
Scott!

DOMINICK
Where's the key?

Without hesitation, Scotty pulls the key from around his
neck and hands it over.

DOMINICK
You were gonna sell me out and hand
over the cash in order to get
yourself off and then disappear
with the key. Right?

SCOTTY
C'mon, man. You know I'd nev--

DOMINICK
You always had my back. When did
that stop?

Apex casually flips on the compressor. It ROARS to life.

SCOTTY
Take the money, Dominick. It's in
the trunk. It's yours. Okay? I'm
sorry.

DOMINICK
Yeah.
(motions to Apex)
This freak of nature here calls
itself Apex.

Apex grins and picks up the nail gun.

DOMINICK
We all have our passions. I like
old cars. You like music,
right? Apex enjoys hurting people.
A lot.
(laughs)
He's a horrible, horrible human
being. He has my back now.

SCOTTY
Dom. What the fuck?!

Apex grabs Scotty by the wrist and NAILS his hand to the
wall.

Scotty SCREAMS in pain.

Apex takes his other hand and does the same, crucifying him
to the side of his own cottage.

DOMINICK
See what I mean?

Scotty's SCREAMS persist.

Apex nonchalantly DRIVES a nail into tip of each of Scotty's fingers, beginning with the thumb and working his way out.

SNAP...SNAP...SNAP...SNAP...SNAP

SCOTTY
(screams)
FUCK! DOMINICK! STOPPP! PLEASE!
Stop!

Apex smiles as he does the same to Scotty's other hand. He's enjoying this.

SNAP...SNAP...SNAP...SNAP...SNAP

Apex randomly POPS a few more into Scotty's arms, followed by his chest...

SNAP

SNAP

SNAP

DOMINICK
(chuckles)
Okay, okay. That's good. Grab the money. We gotta go.

Apex drops the nail gun and steps down from the deck.

Scotty WHIMPERS something unintelligible.

Blood rolls down his arms and drips onto the untreated, pine deck boards.

Apex retrieves a gym bag from the trunk of Scotty's vehicle. He opens it and nods at Dominick.

DOMINICK
Why, Scott?
(holds up key)
After all we accomplished together.
After all we've been through! You
knew how I'd react. Well, maybe not
exactly, but --
(sighs)
Oh, fuck it.

In an instant, Dominick jams the semi automatic against Scotty's temple and BLASTS his brains all over the wall.

Even Apex wasn't expecting that.

DOMINICK
It was fun while it lasted,
Brother.

DEPUTY GORMAN (OS)
Drop the gun, Dominick!

DOMINICK
(without turning around)
FUCK!

Deputy GORMAN (45) points his service revolver at the back of Dominick's head while two other POLICE OFFICERS cover Apex.

DEPUTY GORMAN
Let's see some hands.
(to Apex)
You too, freak show. Now!

Dominick tosses the gun to the ground and puts his hands behind his head. The cops don't spot the key he's holding.

Apex drops the bag of cash and raises his hands.

DEPUTY GORMAN
On your knees! Let's go!

Dominick drops to his knees. He discreetly allows the key to slip from his hands behind his head.

It falls through the gap in the deck to the ground beneath.

The cops forcefully move in to apprehend the two men.

Gorman SIGHS as he surveys the grisly scene.

A steady stream of blood pours from the eighty percent of Scotty's head that remains.

INT. BACKSEAT OF CAR - DAY

From her point of view, 9-year-old BECKY Hooper's feet dangle some four inches above the floor. Her pink leggings and powder blue sneakers periodically kick at the back of the driver's seat.

JEFF (OS)
Seriously, Becky? Stop with the
kicking! Please.

We look up at the back of JEFF Hooper's ginger-haired head as he drives.

JEFF
It's extremely distracting. And I'm
pretty sure I've asked you not to
do it before. Right?

No response.

JEFF
Right?!

Eventually, she answers.

BECKY
Yes.

JEFF
Thank you.

BECKY
How much longer?

JEFF
Almost there. How are the guys
holding up?

We turn to the rear of the vehicle.

Two Dobermans, DIEGO (black) and DORA (brown) sit in
separate, large dog carriers. They're anxious, but obedient.

We turn back to Jeff.

BECKY
They think this is bullshit too.

JEFF
(louder)
Hey! Language, young lady! You'd
better not be talking like that at
school!

Now back to Becky's feet and legs. She shifts uncomfortably
in her seat.

JEFF (OS)
Okay, Becks. I know you're not
thrilled about it. But I need this.
And so do you. Whether you realize
it or not.

Kick.

JEFF (OS)
Don't you think?

BECKY
Sure, Dad.

JEFF (OS)
Dad. What happened to Daddy? I
liked Daddy better.

She doesn't reply.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

A gleaming SUV rounds a corner as it emerges from a road through the woods. It pulls up next to an amazing, one level cottage overlooking a massive lake.

Scotty's cottage.

There's no visible trace of the gruesome events that took place here previously. The deck has been finished and stained. Some time has passed.

A painted piece of driftwood nailed to the wall near the main entrance reads "HOOPER'S HIDEAWAY".

Jeff (34) hops out of the driver's side. He's a casually, good-looking guy in glasses, jeans and a t-shirt with a slightly receded hairline.

He grabs a well-worn Washington Redskins cap from the passenger seat and puts it on. He smiles through the back seat window on his way to the rear of the vehicle.

He opens the hatch and releases the two dogs from their confines. They instantly bound out of the car and begin exploring the yard, sniffing everything.

Diego darts off on a dead sprint toward the lake. He leaps from the end of a rickety wharf into the water without hesitation.

SPLASH! A small speedboat rocks gently, tied a few feet out from the end of the dock.

Dora just sniffs around a nearby wood shed.

Jeff begins unloading the cargo box on top of the SUV.

He KNOCKS on the roof.

JEFF
Gotta come out sometime.

The rear driver's side door slowly opens. The blue sneakers land on the ground and step out from behind the door.

Becky has her daddy's red hair, albeit tied up in pigtails. She wears a denim skirt over the pink leggings with a striped t-shirt and a bright yellow, hooded sweater.

Even with her impenetrable scowl, she's adorable. But she's clearly not happy about being here.

She plops down on the deck of the cottage. Dora wanders over to her and sits, resting her head on Becky's lap.

BECKY
Why can't it just be us?

Jeff drops what he's doing and sits down as well. He puts an arm around her.

JEFF
I miss her too.
(sighs)
So much.

BECKY
Then why do you want to replace her?

JEFF
Oh, hey. I'm not replacing her. We both know I could never do that.

Becky absently pets the dog's head.

JEFF
I know it seems unfair,
(grins)
Count Beckula.

She doesn't react at all. His grin fades.

JEFF
Actually, it *is* unfair. Life can be like that. And sometimes we have to change or adapt to new things or grow up a little sooner than we thought we would. But it's how we handle those times that make us stronger. That's what determines who we are.

BECKY
Did you have to invite...*them*?

JEFF
Kelly really likes you. Really! I think you'd like her too if you'd just give her a chance. And wait 'till you meet Ty! You guys are gonna ge--

Becky gets up and walks off without letting him finish.

BECKY
C'mon, Dora.

Dora stands and follows the little girl into the woods.

JEFF
Where are you going?

BECKY
The tree house.

Jeff stands too and calls after her.

JEFF
They'll be here soon. Keep your ears open and come back when I call you, please!

Becky continues into the forest without responding, Dora close behind.

Jeff watches her for a moment. A visible sadness washes over him before he resumes unpacking the car.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Becky approaches a giant oak tree with a lovingly crafted tree house nestled within its branches about twelve feet off the ground.

She stares up at it. Dora catches up and sits obediently by the little girl's side.

Becky starts climbing the makeshift ladder rungs nailed to the tree trunk.

BECKY
Stay here, Dora.

Dora lays down on the spot but continues to closely monitor Becky's ascent.

INT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Becky pops through a hatch in the floor. The tree house is surprisingly well appointed with small, wooden furniture.

Books, notepads and crayons lie strewn about. A large Super Soaker water gun hangs on the wall.

In the corner is a child-sized table and chair set where several jars of paint, brushes and two colorfully decorated clay flower pots sit, forgotten.

Becky sits at the table and picks up one of the pots. It was obviously painted by an adult. She examines it closely.

It features a beautiful rendering of the oak tree, complete with tree house. It's signed by "Mommy".

She gently sets it down next to the other one. It's more crudely painted with flowers and butterflies and signed by "Becky".

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Diego lounges in the sun on the deck of the cottage.

Jeff drives a ride-on lawnmower out of the shed when he notices a car making its way down the long, wooded lane.

He smiles wide, turns off the mower and dismounts.

Diego lifts his head slightly.

JEFF
(yells)
Becky! They're here!

EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Dora perks up at the sound of Jeff's calling and stands.

She BARKS once at the tree house.

INT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Becky remains seated at the table. She reaches into her pocket and produces a shiny, Zippo cigarette lighter.

She opens it, closes it and opens it again. She flicks the wheel and stares intently at the flame.

She holds it close to her own flower pot, scorching the paint.

Dora BARKS once again outside.

Becky snaps the lighter closed and gets up with a loud SIGH.

She reaches above the window and retrieves a small, wooden box. She opens it.

Inside are various hidden treasures -- coins, interesting rocks as well as a pocket knife and --

-- a small, brass key on a string.

She tosses the lighter inside.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Dora watches from below as Becky makes her way back down the tree. As soon as she safely reaches the ground, Dora turns and runs back to the cottage.

Becky follows, begrudgingly dragging herself along the trail through the woods.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

KELLY (30), a mocha-skinned stunner with lots of curly, black hair exits the car. She's all smiles as she bounces over to Jeff and throws herself into his waiting arms.

Jeff pulls her in close and kisses her. They're completely enamored with each other.

JEFF

Man, have I been waiting for this.

KELLY

Me too.

(looks around)

Wow, you weren't lying. This is beautiful!

JEFF

Thanks. You found it no problem?

KELLY

Yeah, well, I found it. Your sketchy-ass directions were no help. Thank God for GPS.

They share a laugh before Jeff plants another kiss on her.

Becky watches stone-faced from the woods nearby. Dora waits patiently beside her. Jeff and Kelly don't notice her standing there.

Kelly waves at the car, motioning for its occupant to come over. The rear passenger door opens.

TY (5) hops out clutching a plush dinosaur tightly in both arms. He's all kinds of cute in rolled-up jeans and a Batman t-shirt. He has his mother's thick, dark hair but unlike hers, his is closely shorn.

He gazes around at his new surroundings with the kind of wide-eyed wonder that only a small child can muster up.

Becky glares from a distance, still unseen.

JEFF

(to Ty)

Hey, big guy! Nice to see you again. Welcome!

TY

Hi.

(points at the lake)

Is that your boat?

JEFF

(grins)

Yup.

TY

How fast does it go?

JEFF

Pretty fast. Wanna go for a ride later?

TY

Yeah!

JEFF

Your dino buddy can come too if he wants. What's his name?

TY

Rex.

JEFF

Ah. Cause he's a T-rex, right?

TY
No. He's a parasaurolophus.

JEFF
Oh...cool!

Kelly looks delighted watching Jeff and Ty together.

Becky does not.

Jeff turns around and spots her lurking in the woods.

JEFF
Becky! Come meet Ty!

With Becky's first, reluctant step forward, Dora bolts toward the others. She runs straight for Ty.

Ty backs up nervously. Dora trots right up to him and immediately licks his face, making him giggle.

JEFF
Back up, girl.
(to Ty)
She's a big softy.

TY
What's her name?

JEFF
Dora. And that's Diego over there on the step. He takes a bit longer to get used to new people.
(to Kelly in hushed a tone)
He can be a bit snippy. Careful.

TY
Those are good dog names.

Becky finally joins them, dragging her feet.

KELLY
(smiles)
Hi, Becky. Look at you! You look so beautiful!

Becky doesn't really meet her eyes.

JEFF
What do you say, Becky?

BECKY
Thanks.

JEFF
Ty, this is Becky. Becky. Ty.

The kids regard one another shyly.

TY
Hi.

BECKY
Hi.

JEFF
Becky, why don't you show Ty the tree house while we get the cars unpacked.

BECKY
I just came from there.

JEFF
Well, Ty hasn't seen it yet. Go show him!

BECKY
Fine. Come on.

Becky and Dora lead the way while Ty follows. He looks back at his mom.

KELLY
Go ahead, baby. Have fun. Be careful!

Ty runs to catch up with Becky.

The moment they're out of sight, Jeff grabs Kelly and kisses her again. He can't keep his hands off her.

KELLY
Is she okay?

JEFF
It's a little tough for her. Don't worry. She'll come around.

Jeff pulls a joint out of his shirt pocket.

JEFF
Shall we?

KELLY
You're a bad influence on me.

Jeff grins, puts the joint between his lips and starts searching his pockets.

JEFF
Shit. You don't have a light, do you?

KELLY
(laughs)
Of course not.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Becky keeps some deliberate space between her and Ty as she rushes along the trail to the tree house. Dora follows her closely.

Ty looks around as if he's never been in the woods before. He suddenly realizes that he's falling behind.

TY
Wait for me!

BECKY
Well hurry up!

EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Ty catches up to Becky and Dora at the base of the big oak. He marvels at the sight of the tree house.

TY
Whoa. This is yours?

BECKY
Yes.

She starts to climb. Ty hangs back.

BECKY
You coming?

TY
Uh, not right now.

She continues up the ladder.

BECKY
Why? Are you scared?

TY
I think I need help to get up
there.

Ty watches as Becky disappears through the hatch in the
floor.

After a moment, she opens a window and pokes her head out.

BECKY
How old are you, anyways?

TY
Five.

BECKY
You should be able to climb that no
problem. Don't you have a jungle
gym at school or something?

TY
Yeah.

BECKY
Come on. Don't be a baby.

TY
Stop it! I'm not a baby!

BECKY
Have it your way, then. You can be
the zombie.

TY
Huh?

Becky points the Super Soaker through the window and aims it
sniper style at Ty.

She BLASTS him square in the face.

Ty SQUEALS in dismay, dropping the stuffed dinosaur to
shield his eyes from the barrage of water.

TY
Don't! I'm telling Mommy!

She stops squirting him, looking annoyed.

BECKY
So? What do I care?
(points toward the cottage)
That bitch is your mother. Not
mine.

Ty erupts into tears and runs back to the cottage.

Dora looks up at Becky for a few seconds before suddenly turning to follow Ty.

BECKY
(yells at Dora)
Traitor!

Ty's dinosaur remains on the ground where he dropped it.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Diego BARKS aggressively at something he's got cornered in a nearby tree.

Jeff and Kelly sit on the porch, laughing and smoking the joint. He takes a drag and passes it to her.

She puffs on it until Ty comes running from the woods, still CRYING with Dora close behind.

Kelly COUGHS, quickly extinguishes the joint and runs to meet him. Jeff follows her.

KELLY
Baby! What happened?

TY
Becky sprayed me with water and she
called you a bad word!

She pulls the little boy in for a close embrace and glances up at Jeff. He rubs the back of his neck, exasperated.

KELLY
It's okay, Baby. Come see the
cottage! Are you hungry? Mommy's
gonna make dinner. Can you help set
the table?

TY
Uh huh.

Jeff looks at her, a bit sheepish. He squats down to Ty's level.

JEFF
I'm sorry, buddy. She's just a
little grumpy today.

Jeff stands and offers a fist bump. Ty nods and returns it.

KELLY
I'm gonna take him in and get him
cleaned up.

JEFF
Sure. I'll be right back.

KELLY
Go easy. This is a lot for her.

JEFF
(smiles)
Yeah. Thanks for understanding.

Kelly leads Ty inside as Jeff heads into the woods.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Dora and Diego excitedly shove past Kelly and Ty through the door of the cottage.

KELLY
Look, Ty. You can watch the sunset
from the sofa! Isn't this great?

TY
Mommy. I dropped Rex.

KELLY
Where?

TY
At the tree house.

KELLY
That's okay. We'll get him. Let's
get cleaned up for dinner. Okay?

TY
K...

EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Jeff approaches the tree house.

JEFF
Hey! Chewbecka!

No response.

JEFF
(louder)
Becky!

BECKY (OS)
(from inside the tree house)
What?!

JEFF
Can you come down, please?

BECKY (OS)
No thanks.

JEFF
You know, I thought we had an
understanding here, Becks.

BECKY (OS)
You did, maybe.

JEFF
You need to come down and apologize
to Ty. And Kelly.

BECKY (OS)
I'm not coming down.

JEFF
So you're staying by yourself in
the tree house then?

BECKY (OS)
Yes!

JEFF
All week?

BECKY (OS)
Maybe!

JEFF
That's disappointing. I was hoping
you could be more grown-up about
this.

No response.

He turns to leave.

JEFF
Fine. Come eat when you're ready to
apologize.

INT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Becky lays on the floor, staring blankly forward.

Ty's dinosaur sits a few feet from her face, staring back.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S HOUSE - DUSK

Sheriff Gorman (now 55) sits at the kitchen table and watches TV while he pours cereal into a bowl.

His wife, ALICE (50) comes through the front door wearing nurse's scrubs. She tosses her keys on a stand nearby.

ALICE
Hi, Honey.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Hey, Baby.

She drops her purse on the floor and kicks off her shoes.

ALICE
Are we having Fruity Pebbles for
dinner?

SHERIFF GORMAN
I am.

ALICE
How was your day?

SHERIFF GORMAN
Shitty, thanks. Yours?

ALICE
Alright. Busy.

Alice makes her way into the kitchen and kisses him on the cheek. His eyes never leave the TV.

She suddenly looks angry.

ALICE
Have you been smoking?

SHERIFF GORMAN
Huh? No! I haven't had one in months!

ALICE
You smell like smoke.

SHERIFF GORMAN
No! Jimmy was smoking in the cruiser with me earlier.

ALICE
(interrupts)
That's bullshit, John. I'm not stupid.

SHERIFF GORMAN
(chuckles)
Nobody said you were! Seriously, it was Jimmy. He--

RING...RING...

His cell phone VIBRATES on the counter. Saved by the bell.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Hang on.

Alice looks pissed.

He answers the phone.

SHERIFF GORMAN
(into phone)
Gorman. Yeah...
(beat)
You're kidding.
(beat)
Shit.

INT. COTTAGE - DUSK

Kelly checks her phone while Ty plays with Dora on the living room rug. Dora suddenly gets up and wanders over to the front door, scratching.

Jeff opens the door to let her out and returns to the kitchen area, where he and Kelly are working on dinner together, not to mention a box of wine.

Turning her attention to Jeff, Kelly plugs her phone in to its charger and sets it on the kitchen counter.

KELLY
How ya doin'?

JEFF
Good. Good. I mean, I know she'll come around.

Kelly wraps her arms around him.

JEFF
She's just testing my will right now.

KELLY
No. I mean, how are *you* doing?

JEFF
Me?

KELLY
Yeah. It's okay to have feelings, ya know. This must be kinda weird for you too.

Jeff smiles and gives her a kiss.

JEFF
Better than I've been in...a while.
I'm just thrilled to have you here.
(nods at Ty)
Both of you. Thank you.

KELLY
Don't thank me. There's nowhere I'd rather be.

She CLINKS her wine glass against his and plants one more kiss on his cheek.

Jeff looks like he couldn't be happier.

JEFF
I'll go see if she's ready.

EXT. COTTAGE - DUSK

Distinct sunbeams penetrate the towering trees of the surrounding forest as Jeff steps out of the cottage, wine glass in hand.

JEFF
(yells)
Becky!

He strides across the yard, closer to the edge of the woods.

JEFF
(louder)
BECKY!

From out of nowhere, two arms bound by handcuffs shoot over Jeff's head and yank the chain tightly against his neck!

He drops his wine. The glass shatters on the ground.

He struggles, trying to fight back until someone else steps in front of him pointing a gun at his face.

Dominick.

He's handcuffed as well and wearing orange prison coveralls. He's about forty now.

He raises an index finger to his lips.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Becky makes her way back along the trail toward the cottage but stops abruptly, alarmed to see what's happening in the front yard.

She quickly hides behind a tree and watches.

EXT. COTTAGE - DUSK

DOMINICK
Who's Becky?

JEFF
(gasping)
The dog.

Just then, Dora trots out from the woods.

DOMINICK

That dog?

Dominick points his gun at Dora...

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

BANG! Dora WHINES...

Becky watches it happen from her hiding spot in the woods.

She resists the urge to cry out. Tears stream down her face.

EXT. COTTAGE - DUSK

Shocked and fuming, Jeff squirms trying to break free from the large, shackled arms restraining him.

Dominick points his weapon back at Jeff.

DOMINICK

That's a pretty stupid name for a dog. But, thankfully, poor Becky's suffering is over.

JEFF

(choking)

Motherfuc--

DOMINICK

Now don't be like that.

Dominick WHISTLES sharply.

Two more CONVICTS dart out from the shadows, one armed with a shotgun, and barge into the cottage.

DOMINICK

Ease up, Apex.

Apex (now 38) relaxes the cuff chain around Jeff's neck.

Dominick plucks the cap from Jeff's head and tosses away.

DOMINICK

Redskins? Really? What's your name, Snowflake?

Jeff doesn't respond.

Dominick glances up at Apex and nods, once. He snaps the chain tight against Jeff's throat and lifts.

Jeff CHOKES.

His feet leave the ground.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Becky looks on, horrified. But silent.

EXT. COTTAGE - DUSK

DOMINICK
That's good. Put him down.

Apex drops Jeff to his knees and delivers a devastating SMASH with both fists to the side of his head.

Jeff slumps over, barely conscious. His shattered glasses fall from his face.

DOMINICK
Wanna start over?

Dominick squats down next to him.

DOMINICK
What's your name, Snowflake?

Blood spills from Jeff's mouth as he attempts to speak.

JEFF
...Jeff.

DOMINICK
Hi, Jeff. Mind if we come inside?

INT. COTTAGE - DUSK

Apex and Dominick BURST through the front door dragging Jeff along with them. They drop him on the floor with a THUD.

Kelly and Ty cower in the corner, terrified. She GASPS when she sees what they've done to Jeff.

KELLY
Jeff!

Apex closes and locks the door behind them.

COLE (25), clean shaven with long cornrows in his hair, struts over to Kelly.

COLE

Now what's a high-end piece of equipment like you doin' with this gangly-ass white boy motherfucker, huh?

KELLY

Please. Just leave us alone. We don't have anything you want here.

COLE

Hey. I been locked up a long time, Girl. You *definitely* got somethin' I want!

He sidles up closer to her and touches her hair.

COLE

Bet I got somethin' *you* want too.

HAMMOND (35), portly, short and balding with a dark goatee is in the kitchen area investigating the meal SIMMERING away on the stove.

HAMMOND

Food!

(smells)

Actual food! Oh hell yes. We gotta get these cuffs off!

Poor little Ty watches nervously, clinging to Kelly's leg.

Jeff remains on the floor, blood trickling from his mouth.

Dominick stands over him.

DOMINICK

Got a flashlight, Jeff?

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Becky creeps out from the woods. She SOBS as she approaches Dora's lifeless body.

Slowly, she draws closer and closer --

BAM!

The front door of the cottage quickly SWINGS open.

Startled, she dashes behind the wood shed.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick steps out and hops off of the deck. He crouches down next to it, flashlight in hand.

Wooden lattice now covers the space between the deck and the ground. He finds a section that's unattached on one end.

He pulls at it, making an opening big enough for a child to squeeze through.

He RIPS it away, CLICKS the light on and crawls under.

EXT. UNDER DECK - NIGHT

Dominick shines the light this way and that, frantically searching.

He's not finding it.

DOMINICK

Fuck!

He looks up to the underside of the deck.

Scrawled in black marker on the boards are the words:

"Becky's hideout."

TOP SECRET!

Get out OR ELSE!"

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Diego wanders up from the lake. He stops next to Dora and nuzzles her corpse with his snout.

He suddenly lifts his head up and stares at the cottage, baring his teeth.

Becky tries to get his attention from her hiding spot behind the shed. She CALLS out to him as loud as she dares.

BECKY

(whispers loudly)

Diego!

Diego's ears perk up at the sound of her voice. He turns and runs over to her.

She immediately throws her arms around the dog's neck.

BECKY

Diego.

(sobs)

They shot her. And then they hurt
Daddy. What are we gonna do, boy?

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly and Ty look on with concern as Jeff sits up and wipes the blood from his mouth.

Apex finds a hatchet lying near the wood stove in the corner and picks it up.

Hammond watches from the kitchen area as he stuffs his face.

HAMMOND

Looks good on you, Apex.

Apex grins and motions with the hatchet for Hammond to come over.

Hammond stretches the chain of his cuffs over a fire log.
Apex STRIKES it four times with the hatchet until the chain SNAPS.

The two convicts switch places. Hammond takes eight WHACKS before Apex's chain finally breaks.

Cole rifles through a cupboard and produces a bottle of whiskey.

COLE

Here we go, boys! Here we go.

HAMMOND

Oh, shit! Let me hit that!

Dominick storms back inside. He's pissed.

DOMINICK

(lifts handcuffed wrists)

Apex.

Apex cuts his chain as well. Just two WHACKS this time. He DRIVES the hatchet into the wall afterwards.

Dominick immediately grabs Jeff by the collar, hauls him up off the floor and shoves him into a seat at the kitchen table.

DOMINICK
Have a seat, Snowflake. We need to talk.

He sits at the table as well, holding his gun threateningly.

DOMINICK
How long have you owned this place...Jeff?

No response.

Dominick abruptly jumps up from his seat. He walks over to where Kelly and Ty are seated on the couch and thrusts the gun in Kelly's face.

He points the gun back and forth between Kelly and Ty as he speaks, eenie-meeny-miney-mo-style.

DOMINICK
How-long-have-you-owned-this-fuck-ing-place-JEFF?!

The gun lands on Ty.

JEFF
(yells)
Eight years! I bought it through an estate auction eight years ago.

Dominick lowers the gun.

Kelly grabs Ty and holds him close.

DOMINICK
Was the deck completed when you got it or did you have to finish it?

Jeff ponders the odd question for a moment...

JEFF
It was finished.

DOMINICK
Now. I'm gonna ask you this one more time. Do NOT fucking lie to me again.
(beat)
Who is Becky?

Jeff glances at Kelly...

JEFF

The dog you just killed.

DOMINICK

(yells)

Well, fuck me! I must say, that dog had remarkable fucking penmanship! It scrawled its name all over the underside of the deck with a magic fucking marker! Isn't that incredible?!

Jeff says nothing.

Cole leers at Kelly from across the room. She notices and squirms uncomfortably.

Dominick sits back down at the table.

DOMINICK

I was here, at this very cottage, about ten years ago. And I lost something. It's a small, brass key on a red string. I dropped it under the deck. That's why I'm here tonight. I just need my key back.

Dominick aims his gun back in the general direction of Kelly and Ty.

DOMINICK

Now think real hard, Jeff. Have you ever seen anything around here like the item I've just described?

JEFF

No.

Dominick glares ever more intently...

DOMINICK

Might Becky have found it?

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Becky creeps up to the cottage and peeks in the side window.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

No one inside notices Becky in the window -- except Ty.

He looks like he's about to say something...

Becky quickly raises her index finger to her lips.

Message received. Ty remains silent.

Meanwhile, Jeff still isn't cooperating.

DOMINICK

Alright, boys. Tear this place
apart. Every drawer. Every shoe
box. Start with the kid's room.
Find it!

Cole, Hammond and Apex all start trashing the cottage,
emptying drawers on the floor and tossing things out of the
cupboards.

Kelly and Ty watch as the assholes wreck the place.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Becky runs around the side of the cottage to her bedroom
window and peers inside.

Apex is emptying the contents of her dresser on the floor.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick lights a cigarette as Cole and Hammond continue to
ransack the cottage.

He keeps his gun fixed on Jeff at the table.

DOMINICK

Well, Jeff, I tried. But you're not
exactly leaving me with much of a
reason to keep you around, are you?

Jeff just stares at the floor.

Dominick stretches his arm out behind him.

DOMINICK

Cole.

Cole passes the whiskey. Dominick takes a big smash.

DOMINICK

Since Jeff seems unwilling to meet me halfway, maybe you can persuade the young lady over there to help us find this...Becky.

Kelly looks dismayed by the prospect.

COLE

With pleasure.

Cole is already making his way toward Kelly with a sinister smirk on his face. He grabs her by the arm and pulls her up from the couch.

COLE

C'mere, baby.

Hammond leers at Ty from the kitchenette.

HAMMOND

(pats his lap)

Hey, little buddy! Why don't you come over and sit with me for a minute?

Apex suddenly stretches his large arm out in front of Ty. He looks at the boy and shakes his head "no".

HAMMOND

(incensed)

What the fuck, Apex?

Apex glares at Hammond and gives him the finger.

Hammond throws his hands up, exasperated.

Tears streak down Kelly's face as Cole runs his hands all over her body.

KELLY

(whimpers)

Jeff...?

Fuming, Jeff starts to get up from his seat.

Dominick jumps up and SMASHES Jeff in the mouth with the butt of his gun. Jeff drops to the floor and spits out a couple of bloody teeth.

Dominick administers a few swift KICKS to Jeff's ribs while he's down.

DOMINICK
Nope! You had your chance to
cooperate.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Becky watches from the window, visibly shaken by what's happening inside.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Cole continues to grope Kelly. She doesn't react to it as she's focused on Jeff's well being, or lack thereof.

Apex watches, looking somewhat annoyed.

APEX
(gestures toward Ty)
Jesus, Cole. At least take her in
the other room.

COLE
What's the matter, big man? You
jealous?

Apex just shakes his head.

Jeff begins to stir on the floor, trying to get to his feet.

Dominick looms over him, still working on the whiskey.

Apex stands up and takes Ty by the hand. He starts to lead him into Becky's room.

APEX
Come on.

Ty looks at his mother.

KELLY
No, no! Please! Don't hurt him! I'll
do anything!

APEX
I'm just taking him out of the
room.

She tearfully nods her approval.

TY
Mommy...?

KELLY
It's okay, baby. You go wait in
Becky's room.

Dominick perks up.

DOMINICK
Becky! That name again.

Apex leads Ty into Becky's bedroom.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The very pink, little girl's room is now thoroughly trashed.

Apex flips the mattress back onto the bed and looks way down
at Ty. He points at the bed.

APEX
Stay here.

Ty nods and sits down.

Apex leaves, pulling the door closed behind him.

Poor Ty looks terrified. Alone...

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex re-enters the living area.

Cole is holding Kelly by the arms from behind.

Dominick stands in front of her.

DOMINICK
Start talking about Becky. Where
can I find her?

Hammond watches while he stuffs his face with Kelly's meal.

Jeff pulls himself up to his hands and knees, blood pouring
from his mouth and pooling on the floor.

He looks up at her.

She stares down at him, SOBBING...

Dominick is tired of waiting for a response.

DOMINICK
(yells)
WHAT'S THAT?!!
(puts hand to up ear)
I can't hear you! Oh! You don't
wanna talk about Becky either, huh?
Okay.

Dominick lifts Kelly's chin so she's looking at him.

DOMINICK
(keeps eye contact with Kelly)
Cole. Take her in the bedroom. See
if you can't get her talking. Do
your absolute worst.

Cole reaches around and grabs Kelly's breasts with both hands.

COLE
You heard the man. Let's go, baby!

Without warning, Kelly SMASHES Cole in the nose with her elbow. He stumbles backward, clutching his nose.

COLE
Oh, you stupid, fu--

She spins around and CONNECTS with a huge right hook to the same side of Cole's face.

Cole lands flat on his ass.

Apex watches silently from the corner.

Hammond BURSTS out laughing from the kitchen.

COLE
(to Hammond)
Shut the fuck up, fat fuck!

Hammond throws some food at him.

Cole jumps up and grabs Kelly by the throat. He SWATS her across the face with hard backhand.

Apex stiffens a bit.

Dominick just watches for a reaction from Jeff.

COLE
Payback time, Bitch.

Cole starts dragging Kelly toward the master bedroom by her hair. She fights back wildly.

Jeff suddenly LUNGES at Cole and TACKLES him to the ground.

He unloads a flurry of furious LEFTS and RIGHTS on Cole's face. Blood splatters with every SMACK.

Dominick quickly grabs Jeff in a headlock from behind and pulls him off of Cole.

Jeff manages to get himself turned around. He charges forward, SMASHING Dominick into the dining room table. Both men CRASH through it to the floor.

Jeff picks up a broken table leg and pushes down with all his weight against Dominick's throat.

Apex gets to his feet and moves in to intervene.

Hammond just watches.

Dominick struggles to escape. He gets his left hand free and finds his gun.

Apex sees it and backs off...

KELLY
(screams)
JEFF!

Dominick shoves the barrel into the side of Jeff's head...

BANG!

Blood splatters across Apex's chest and face.

Jeff's body collapses on top of Dominick.

Kelly SCREAMS hysterically on the floor. Ty can be heard CRYING in the next room.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Becky SLAMS her fists against the window.

BECKY
(screams)
DADDY!!!

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex sees her first.

Dominick shoves Jeff's corpse off of him and gets to his feet.

DOMINICK
What the hell was that noise?

Apex points to the window.

Becky is gone.

APEX
There! There was a little girl. In
the window! I saw her!

Hammond quickly looks up.

HAMMOND
A little girl?

DOMINICK
Becky.

Cole finally gets to his feet too.

Kelly SOBS and crawls over to Jeff's body.

KELLY
Oh my God! Jeff! Jeff...

Apex wipes Jeff's blood from his face and looks at Dominick.

Dominick notices, but ignores it.

DOMINICK
(to Cole and Hammond)
Go get her! Bring her back here.
Alive!

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Hammond BURSTS through the front door carrying Jeff's flashlight. He moves surprisingly fast, like he's on a mission.

Cole follows him out, preoccupied with a badly bleeding nose. He dabs it with a white hand towel.

Hammond is already halfway across the yard before he calls back to Cole.

HAMMOND

Split up.

COLE

Yeah, no shit. How come you get the flashlight?

HAMMOND

(still walking away)

Cause I've been locked up a long time too!

COLE

(yells after him)

Yeah! We shoulda X'd your bitch ass out in the yard!

(under his breath)

Sick motherfucker.

Hammond doesn't respond. Only his flashlight is visible now as he enters the woods.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly is in near hysterics on the floor, SOBBING over Jeff's body. She doesn't seem to notice Ty's CRIES ringing from Becky's room.

Apex grabs her by the arm.

APEX

Go to the boy.

Kelly stands and shakes her arm free from Apex's grip.

She runs into the bedroom to find Ty sitting on the bed. She throws her arms around him and pulls him in tight.

Dominick lights a smoke and looks at Apex.

DOMINICK

I need to talk to her.

(points at Jeff's corpse)

Get rid of that.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kelly rocks back and forth on Becky's bed, squeezing her little boy tightly in both arms.

Dominick enters the thoroughly trashed bedroom, kicking things out of his way as he goes.

She glares up at the man who just killed her boyfriend.

Dominick puffs on his cigarette and crouches down to face her. He tries to conjure up some sort of expression akin to empathy and points out to the living area.

DOMINICK

That shouldn't have happened.
Believe it or not, I didn't come
here to hurt anybody.

Kelly scowls at him.

He grins with bemusement.

DOMINICK

I just want my key. That's it.

KELLY

What key?!!! I don't know anything
about any goddamn key!

DOMINICK

Who's Becky to you?

KELLY

She's Jeff's daughter.

DOMINICK

How do I find her?

KELLY

I don't know! She was upset about
us being here and she ran off as
soon as we arrived. She could be
anywhere by now.

DOMINICK

No. She's still here. Help me find
her and you and your boy can leave,
no harm no foul.

KELLY

And if I refuse?

Dominick stands up, grins and pats Ty's head.

DOMINICK

Don't.

EXT. SECONDARY HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Police cars, ambulances and fire trucks are on the scene of a highway accident. A bus seems to have left the road and is on its side, smashed.

A squad car marked "County Sheriff" arrives and pulls to stop, lights flashing.

Sheriff Gorman steps out from the driver's side, surveying the wreckage. He approaches an INTENSE MAN (29) in a suit and tie that's busy BARKING orders.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Who's in charge here?

AGENT ZIMMER
I am. Special Agent Zimmer. FBI.
And you are...?

SHERIFF GORMAN
Gorman. County sheriff. What have we got?

AGENT ZIMMER
We have four escaped prisoners and three dead guards, Sheriff. I'm sure *you* have a backwoods whiskey still to shake down or something.

Gorman rolls his eyes.

SHERIFF GORMAN
One of the convicts is Dominick Young, right?

AGENT ZIMMER
You know him?

SHERIFF GORMAN
I put him away ten years ago.

A FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR yells out from somewhere in the distance.

FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR (OS)
We've got another body over here!

Agent Zimmer dashes off in that direction. Gorman follows him.

The forensics investigator climbs out of the deep ditch and meets them on the shoulder of the road.

FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR
Civilian male. Mid twenties. Looks like our convicts stabbed him repeatedly in the throat with a toothbrush shiv and took his car.

SHERIFF GORMAN
This guy's a sadistic bastard. He never should have been moved from state. Give him an opening and he'll take it.

AGENT ZIMMER
(to Gorman)
You and your men can set up highway checkpoints around the county line. Stop every car.

SHERIFF GORMAN
They could be a hundred miles away by now! I brought this asshole in once. Let me help bring him in again!

AGENT ZIMMER
Thank you, Sheriff. But we've got this.

SHERIFF GORMAN
What have you got, kid? I've got coffee cups in the back of my cruiser with more experience than you have.

Zimmer smirks.

AGENT ZIMMER
These are federal prisoners, Sheriff. You have your orders. Now, please, get the fuck off my crime scene so I can do my job.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Fuming, Gorman jumps in the driver's seat and SLAMS the door shut. He pulls out a pack of cigarettes, pops one in his mouth and lights it up.

After a moment, he grabs the radio and pulls it to his face.

SHERIFF GORMAN

All units. We're under federal orders to set up a perimeter around the county line. We're looking for four male suspects in prison peels. Three Caucasian. One Black. Get on it.

Smoke rolls around the dashboard as various acknowledgements CRACKLE over the radio.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex drags Jeff's body across the deck leaving a trail of blood behind. He dumps the carcass over the edge.

It lands on the ground with a THUD.

Apex wipes Jeff's blood from his hands onto his orange coveralls before re-entering the cottage, SLAMMING the door behind him.

As soon as he's gone, Becky creeps out from behind the cottage, her eyes locked on Jeff's lifeless body lying on the ground.

She stands in place, stone-faced. Just staring.

A tear streams down her cheek.

Slowly, she starts moving toward her Daddy's body.

She kneels down on the ground and throws her arms around Jeff's corpse.

BECKY

(sobbing)

I'm sorry! I'm so sorry I was bad... I love you, Daddy! I love you...

Suddenly, someone grabs her from behind and covers her mouth, stifling her SCREAMS.

Cole.

COLE

Shhh! Don't make a sound! There was a little key. It was lost under the front step. Did you find it?

Eventually, she nods.

COLE
Good! Good girl! Show me where it
is and I'll get you out of here
safely. Okay?

She nods again.

COLE
Okay. I'm gonna put you down now.
You're gonna very quickly and
quietly take me to the key. Then
we'll go. Don't scream!

Slowly, Cole uncovers her mouth and sets her down.

Immediately, Becky starts running as hard as she can off
toward the woods.

COLE
Shit!

He chases after her.

Just as Becky makes it to the edge of the woods, Cole
catches up to her. He scoops her up in his arms, covering
her mouth again. Becky thrashes around, trying to break
free...

COLE
That was a very stupid move, little
girl. Now w--

Out of nowhere, Diego attacks Cole and CHOMPS down on his
leg!

Cole immediately drops Becky to the ground. She scrambles
away from him as he tries to fight off the SNARLING dog.

At the last possible fraction of a second, Cole manages to
catch Becky by the ankle, preventing her escape.

Diego continues to GROWL and bite down on Cole's leg,
drawing blood.

Cole rolls around on the ground, trying to get away from the
ferocious animal without losing his grip on Becky.

COLE
Fucking mutt! Get off me!!!

Becky spots something on the ground just out of reach.

She stretches for it.

Jeff's broken wine glass.

Cole kicks at Diego with his other foot, momentarily breaking free of the dog's powerful jaws.

Becky's fingers barely reach the stem of the wine glass, rolling it around on the ground...

Diego SNARLS and SNAPS down on Cole's other leg.

Cole CRIES out in pain and rolls over onto his back, kicking frantically at the dog.

Becky's hand finally clutches the glass stem...

In one motion, she twists herself back around and PLUNGES the broken stem into Cole's right eye!

Immediately, he lets go of Becky's ankle and SCREAMS.

The racket catches the attention of Apex inside. He appears in the window.

Becky gets to her feet.

Cole twitches all over.

...

Becky STOMPS down on the base of the wine glass stem with her powder-blue sneaker, driving it deep into Cole's brain.

He stops struggling.

Diego releases Cole's leg.

Becky stands over him, staring down. Processing what she just did...

She stomps it again.

And again.

 BECKY
 (screams)
 I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!!!

And once again.

Cole's impaled eye socket is a gruesome mess, now.

Suddenly, the door of the cottage SWINGS open.

It's Apex.

He sees her.

BECKY
Come on, Diego!

Becky and Diego bolt into the woods.

Apex sprints across the front yard to find Cole's body.

The base of the wine glass stem looks like a big, bloody
monocle staring back at him.

Apex quickly scans the forest for any sign of her. He can't
suppress a quiet CHUCKLE to himself.

Hammond comes running from the direction of the lake,
flashlight in hand, and stops next to Apex.

HAMMOND
Oh, shit! What happened?

APEX
She got him.

HAMMOND
You mean...the little girl did
this?

Apex nods, still staring at Cole's body.

APEX
She's got another big fucking dog
with her, too.

HAMMOND
Sombitch...

Apex turns to leave.

HAMMOND
Where are you going?

APEX
Gotta tell Dominick about this.
Keep looking. She's not far.

HAMMOND
Wait! Let's go find her together.
We'll grab the key and get the hell
outta here. Fuck Dominick! How do
you know he'll cut us in anyway?

APEX
I don't...but I know what he'll do
if we fuck him over.

HAMMOND
Fine. But if I find her myself,
she's mine. Key or no key. Got it?

In a flash, Apex grabs Hammond by the throat.

APEX
Get this. If you do anything to
that child other than bring her
back here unharmed, I'll snap your
fucking neck myself.

HAMMOND
(choking)
Alright, alright!

Apex glares at Hammond and releases him before heading back
to the cottage.

Hammond winces as he rubs his throat.

HAMMOND
(under his breath)
Asshole.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

Becky and Diego hurry up to the tree house. She begins to
climb the ladder.

BECKY
Keep watch, Diego.

Diego sits obediently at the base of the oak tree while
Becky makes her way up.

INT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

Becky pushes the hatch in the floor open and climbs through.

She gets to her feet and retrieves the little treasure box
she has hidden above the window. She opens it, pulls out the
key and quickly hangs it around her neck.

As she turns to leave, a small book on the floor catches her
eye. "Classic Rhymes and Poems for Children".

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly and Ty watch from Becky's room as Apex continues the search in the living area.

He grabs the couch and effortlessly flips it over. He slashes the fabric stretched across the underside with a steak knife.

Dominick strolls in a bit too casually. He rubs the back of his neck, gun in hand.

APEX

So what do you think?

DOMINICK

(laughs)

What do I think? What do you think, Apex? Let's hear it.

APEX

I think this has all gotten way out of hand.

Dominick glares at him.

DOMINICK

Christ. I do not need this shit right now, Apex. Okay? There's no time. There's just no fucking time. I've been here too long already. They'll be out searching by now. Door to door. Even if they don't remember this place, they're still gonna eventually show up here. Right?!

APEX

What about Cole?

DOMINICK

Huh? Cole? Fuck Cole! I was gonna kill him and the fat man anyway.

Apex straightens and his eyes narrow.

APEX

And me?

Dominick looks insulted by the suggestion.

DOMINICK
Apex. You wound me. You're my guy!
You've got my back.

APEX
So did Scotty.

DOMINICK
(yells)
No he didn't! Scotty fucked me
over! What do you think I'm doing
here?! Why would you even say that
shit? Is that what you're gonna do?
Are you gonna fuck me over too?
That the plan?!

APEX
Stop.

Dominick shakes his head and storms into Becky's room.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dominick grabs Kelly by the hair, pulls her off the bed and
out of the room.

TY
Mommy!

Ty jumps up to follow. Apex steps into the doorway, blocking
his path.

APEX
No. Wait here.

Apex pulls the door closed, leaving Ty alone.

He looks terrified. He picks up one of Becky's teddy bears
from the floor and squeezes it tightly in both arms.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick drags Kelly outside onto the deck. He holds the gun
to her head.

DOMINICK
Call to Becky.

Kelly yanks her hair free of Dominick's grip.

DOMINICK
Don't be like that.
(motions to the cottage)
Remember, your little boy is in
there with a monster. Now call to
Becky.

After a long moment, she relents and calls out into the
night.

KELLY
(yells)
BECKYYY!!! Becky, it's Kelly!
Everything's gonna be okay,
sweetheart. Okay?

Dominick pushes the gun a bit harder into her temple.

KELLY
(yells)
If you know anything about a key
that was under the deck, that's
what they want! Just slide it under
the door and they'll go! Okay?!

DOMINICK
Alright, shut up.

He shoves her back inside.

DOMINICK
(yells)
You've got ten minutes, Becky! If
that key comes sliding under this
door in the next ten minutes, then
we leave. And it's all over.

His unblinking eyes scan the forest.

DOMINICK
(yells)
If it doesn't, somebody else dies.
(beat)
Nine and a half...

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex stands near the door behind Kelly.

Ty CRIES out from Becky's room.

TY (OS)
Mommy!

KELLY
(yells)
I'm here, baby! Everything's okay!

Kelly looks pleadingly at Apex.

KELLY
Can I please go to him?

Apex nods once.

She immediately heads for Becky's room.

Dominick re-enters the cottage and SLAMS the door shut. Apex is waiting for him.

APEX
What if she doesn't have it?

Dominick looks puzzled by the question.

DOMINICK
Welllll ... didn't you hear me out there? What was unclear?

APEX
Nobody else needs to die tonight.

DOMINICK
That's up to me.

They continue to ARGUE as Kelly approaches Becky's room. Her attention is suddenly caught by something on the kitchen counter.

Cole's shotgun.

INT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

The door CREAKS open. Hammond enters slowly, shining his flashlight around the darkness.

He stops...

Becky sits huddled in the corner, SOBBING.

HAMMOND
Oh. Hey...

She looks up, alarmed, like she's about to bolt.

HAMMOND
No, no. It's okay. I wanna help
you. You're Becky, right?

Eventually, she nods...

HAMMOND
(smiles)
Hi...
(extends hand)
Come on. This place is way too dark
and spooky for a pretty little
girl.

BECKY
You killed my daddy.

HAMMOND
Oh...no, Baby. I didn't do that.
I'm very sorry about what happened
to your daddy. I don't like those
guys in there. Those are bad, bad
men. Sick men! But I won't let them
hurt you.

BECKY
Promise?

HAMMOND
Cross my heart.
(opens arms wide)
Come on over here.

Slowly, she gets up from the floor and approaches him.

HAMMOND
There's a good girl.

Hammond wraps his arms around Becky and pulls her in close.

She stares at the floor, stone-faced.

He smells her hair, INHALING deeply.

HAMMOND
Lemme see you.

He holds her out at arms length.

HAMMOND
Look at me. You're safe now.

Gradually, she looks up to meet his eyes.

BECKY
Makes one of us.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick furiously HURLS the empty whiskey bottle against the refrigerator. It SHATTERS into a dozen pieces.

DOMINICK
What the hell is wrong with you,
Apex? Huh? WHAT?! How many times
did we go over this? How many times
did we discuss this night?! Right
here?!!

Apex is getting angry now, too.

APEX
(yells)
This wasn't part of the deal!
Nobody said there'd be women and
kids involved in this shit!

Dominick YELLS right back, even louder.

DOMINICK
Nobody said there wouldn't be
either! Don't go fucking limp on me
now, man! There's no guarantees.
Ever. You know that!

INT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Becky takes a step back from Hammond, never breaking eye contact.

BECKY
The key that the man was yelling
about...

HAMMOND
Yes?

BECKY
I have it.

HAMMOND
You do?

BECKY
Yes.

HAMMOND
Can I see it?

BECKY
It's in my hideout.

HAMMOND
Can I see your hideout?

She considers it...

BECKY
Okay.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Becky leads Hammond out of the wood shed and across the yard. He follows her closely, glancing over at Cole's corpse on the way by.

As they approach the cottage, Dominick and Apex can be heard ARGUING inside.

Becky drops to her hands and knees and starts to crawl under the edge of the deck.

Hammond stops.

She pops her head back out.

BECKY
Are you coming?

HAMMOND
No. I can't fit under there. Just grab the key and bring it on out.

She disappears under the deck again.

Hammond waits impatiently. After a moment, he can hear Becky GRUNTING and GROANING under the deck.

HAMMOND
What's the problem?

BECKY (OS)
(from beneath the deck)
It's caught on a nail or something!
I can't get it!

Exasperated, Hammond SIGHS loudly.

He drops down to the ground and attempts to squeeze his fat ass under the deck as well.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick stands within inches of Apex. He rubs his head in frustration.

DOMINICK
Once we have that key, our problems
are over! You'll never see me
again! You can go start a fucking
hobby farm in--

KA-CHACK

Kelly aims the shotgun at them.

Apex raises his hands.

Dominick just glares at her.

She glares back with steely resolve.

KELLY
This is your one chance to get the
hell out of here alive.

Dominick smirks.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Trying to squeeze under the deck, Hammond blocks the only way in or out of Becky's secret hideout.

She kicks through the lattice on the front and crawls through.

HAMMOND (OS)
(from beneath the deck)
Hey! Where's the key?!

BECKY
I got it.

HAMMOND (OS)
Great. Now I'm stuck under here!

BECKY
Come out this way. There's more
room.

Hammond does the GRUNTING now as he tries to pull himself through Becky's makeshift exit.

She hops up onto the deck and pulls something from her pocket.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The shotgun quivers slightly in Kelly's hands.

Dominick slowly starts walking toward her.

KELLY
Stop! Drop the gun!

DOMINICK
Not happening.

KELLY
Don't test me, asshole. It's all I
can do right now to keep from
painting this place with your
brains.

He's still coming toward her.

DOMINICK
Well don't hold back, Sweetheart.
Let 'er rip.

Apex notices as a small, folded piece of paper comes sliding under the front door.

Kelly's got Dominick right between the eyes, point blank...

DOMINICK
C'mon. You must want to. So do it.

Kelly starts to shake a bit more.

Dominick presses his forehead against the barrel...

...

CLICK.

He SNATCHES the empty shotgun from Kelly's hands and JABS her in the stomach with the butt.

She falls back to the floor, GASPING for breath.

Smiling, Dominick tosses the shotgun across the room to Apex.

DOMINICK
I'm impressed. You'd have blasted
my head clean off my shoulders if
I'd been careless enough to leave a
loaded shotgun lying around. It's
been empty for hours.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Hammond has managed to force his head and shoulders, face up through the lattice along the front of the deck.

He GRUNTS as he struggles to pull himself out. He's royally stuck now.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex points to the piece of paper on the floor.

APEX
Look.

DOMINICK
Shit! Why didn't you say
something?!

Dominick rushes over to retrieve it.

No key. Just paper. He curses under his breath.

DOMINICK
Fuck me.

He opens it and scans it quickly before reading it aloud.

DOMINICK
There was a little girl who had a
little curl right in the middle of
her forehead. When she was good she
was very, very good...
(scoffs)
...but when she was bad, she was
horrid.

Apex watches for Dominick's reaction...

VROOM!

The sound of an engine ROARS to life outside.

DOMINICK
What the f--
(points at Kelly)
Tie her up!

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Hammond is really starting to panic now. Especially once he sees Jeff's ride-on lawnmower approaching.

Becky's at the wheel. Her face displays no emotion.

Hammond's face, on the other hand, is awash with absolute terror as he desperately tries to pull himself out from beneath the deck and the lawnmower gets closer...

...and closer...

Hammond SCREAMS with all that he has left.

Dominick THROWS open the front door just in time to see it happen.

Becky whips her head around and locks eyes with Dominick.

She bounces in her seat as the lawnmower rolls over Hammond's upper body with a gruesome CHOPPING sound.

Blood splatters across the entire front wall of the cottage and all over Dominick as well.

Hammond's upper body has been sliced away at a near perfect forty-five degree angle from the front of his chest to the back of his head.

Dominick jumps off the deck and races after Becky.

He quickly catches up to the slow-moving lawnmower and pulls her off by the sweater.

The mower rolls to a stop.

He spins her around to face him.

DOMINICK
(yells)
GIVE ME MY KEY?!

Becky looks him square in the eye, unfazed.

BECKY
Go fuck yourself.

Enraged, Dominick thrusts her to the ground and points the gun at her face.

DOMINICK
Now you listen to me, you
maladjusted little bi--
(Looks up)
--tch...

Diego charges across the yard at him, full-sprint. Locked on.

Dominick swings the gun around -- a half-second too slowly.

The dog CHOMPS down hard on his arm causing him to drop the gun. Dominick SCREAMS out in pain.

Becky scrambles to her feet and runs into the woods.

Dominick falls to the ground. Diego releases his arm and ferociously SNAPS at his face.

Apex emerges from the cottage and rushes over to help.

Diego's teeth RIP into Dominick's left eye.

Apex wraps his massive arms around the dog's torso and wrestles it off of Dominick.

Diego immediately darts off into the woods after Becky.

DOMINICK
(screams)
Arrgh...fuck...FUCK!!!

Apex helps him get to his feet.

Dominick's left eyeball dangles from its mangled socket. Apex looks at it, aghast.

APEX
Oh shit!

DOMINICK
(screams)
FUCK!!!

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly lies on the floor, now gagged with her wrists and ankles bound by plastic zip ties. Her arms are outstretched over her head and secured to the leg of the wood stove with an extension cord.

Apex and Dominick storm back inside. Apex picks up an overturned dining chair and sets it upright.

APEX

Sit. We gotta clean it up.

Dominick sits down holding his eyeball in place with one hand and his gun in the other.

Apex grabs a kitchen towel and soaks it in the sink. He brings it over to Dominick and places it over the eye.

APEX

Hold it there.

DOMINICK

Goddammit. That bitch! That little fucking bitch.

Apex starts rifling around in the kitchen drawers. Eventually, he produces a pair of scissors.

APEX

We have to cut it away. Hold still.

Dominick removes the bloody towel, allowing his eyeball to drop down to his cheek.

DOMINICK

(winces)

Do it quick.

Kelly watches in horror from her spot on the floor.

Apex grabs the eye and lifts it up straight. He opens the scissors and gently moves them into position...

DOMINICK

(screams)

ARGHH...COME ON!!!

SNIP.

It drops to the floor.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

Dominick's SCREAMS can be heard all the way from the cottage.

Diego stands guard at the base of the tree. He turns his head in the direction of the noise.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Gorman speaks on his phone while driving slowly down a long road through the woods.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Forty-five minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alice sits on the sofa with a cup of tea in one hand and a phone in the other.

ALICE
I don't understand. If you don't have jurisdiction then what are you doing?

CUT TO:

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

SHERIFF GORMAN
Just checking on a hunch. Something the feds won't think of.

He pulls the car off to the side of the road, puts it in park and turns it off.

ALICE (OS)
(filtered through phone)
You mean you're wasting your time?

SHERIFF GORMAN
Probably.

ALICE (OS)
Always gotta be the hero.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Stop it.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alice sets her tea on the coffee table and picks up the TV remote.

ALICE
You're gonna miss the start of
American Ninja Warrior.

SHERIFF GORMAN (OS)
(filtered through phone)
I know. Record it for me, please.

ALICE
Alright. Hurry home, Hero.

CUT TO:

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Gorman pulls out a cigarette.

SHERIFF GORMAN
I will.

ALICE (OS)
(filtered through phone)
Oh! We need toothpaste. And milk!
Someone used the last of it on his
dinner. Can you pick some up?

SHERIFF GORMAN
Copy that.

ALICE (OS)
(filtered)
Hey! I'm not dispatch. Don't say
"copy that". Say "yes, baby" or
something sweet.

Gorman rolls his eyes.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Something sweet.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ALICE
And don't you roll your eyes at me.

SHERIFF GORMAN (OS)
(filtered)
I'm not!

ALICE
(laughs)
Yes you are. I can hear it!

CUT TO:

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Gorman smiles.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Alright, alright. I gotta go.

ALICE (OS)
(filtered)
Okay. Love you.

SHERIFF GORMAN
I love you too. See you soon.

ALICE (OS)
(filtered)
Hurry up!

He sets his phone on the passenger seat, lights his smoke and opens the door.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Ty has fallen asleep in Becky's room, clutching her teddy bear in both arms.

Still bound and gagged, Kelly stares across the room at Dominick. He sits on the floor as well, leaning against the wall with a mix of gauze and rags wrapped around his head, covering his wound.

He dangles and twirls his eyeball from his fingers, examining it with his remaining eye.

Slowly, he looks up at her. He stares back silently for several seconds, seemingly dazed.

DOMINICK
(snickers)
This really isn't going well. Like,
at all. Is it?

Kelly just stares, unable to reply.

DOMINICK
(yells)
IS IT?!!!

He angrily throws his eyeball across the room at her.

It bounces off her shoulder and rolls away. She shakes her head "no" in desperate agreement.

DOMINICK
Would you believe it if I told you
that I'd been planning this night
for over a decade? How funny is
that? And now look at me.
(yells)
LOOK!

She shudders, startled.

DOMINICK
No key and down one eye.
(laughs)
How bow dah?!

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex RIPS the lattice away from the front of the deck.

He grabs Hammond's faceless corpse, pulls it free and drags it by the legs across the yard.

INT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Apex hauls Hammond's mangled carcass inside.

Jeff and Cole's bodies are already lying in the middle of the floor. He adds Hammond's to the pile.

He starts looking around the shed for something...

...and finds it.

Gasoline.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Apex re-emerges from the shed and immediately notices that he forgot to clean up a corpse.

Dora.

He sets the gas jug down next to the door and heads off to gather up the dog's remains.

EXT. TREETOP - NIGHT

Becky looms high above, perched near the top of one of the property's tallest trees. The moon burns brightly behind her.

She watches as Apex carefully picks up Dora's body in both arms way down below.

From her vantage point, she can see movement on the road leading into the cottage.

Someone approaches...

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Apex carries the dead dog to the shed.

SHERIFF GORMAN (OS)
That's far enough, freak show.

He turns to find Gorman, weapon drawn and ready to drop him.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Put the animal down.

Slowly, Apex sets the dog on the ground and stands again, hands raised.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Where's Dominick?

APEX
Inside. He's been injured.

Gorman glances over at the cottage.

SHERIFF GORMAN
And the other two?

APEX

Both dead. Look, I'll cooperate. I'm basically a hostage here. I helped with the escape but I didn't know anything about this.

SHERIFF GORMAN

Bullshit. You were here with him ten years ago.
(motions to Dora's body)
And you're still doing his dirty work, aren't you?

APEX

Not anymore. Not after tonight.

SHERIFF GORMAN

Why'd you come back? What does he want with this place?

APEX

He's looking for a key. He ditched it here right before you arrested us.

SHERIFF GORMAN

A key? Key to what?

APEX

It opens a--

KA CHACK

Dominick appears behind Gorman seemingly from out of nowhere, gun pointed at the back of his head.

DOMINICK

(smiles)
Well hello again, Deputy.

Gorman keeps his gun fixed on Apex.

SHERIFF GORMAN

It's Sheriff now.

DOMINICK

Uh huh. Oh, I'm sorry. Is this a bad time, fellas? Am I interrupting something here?
(looks at Apex)
Apex?

APEX
I was just explaining about how
Cole lost it and started killing
people, an--

DOMINICK
Christ, save it.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Put the gun down, Dominick. Don't
make this worse than it already is.

Dominick LAUGHS, hard.

DOMINICK
Oh, Sheriff. *That* would be
impossible.

Keeping his weapon locked on Gorman's head, he slowly steps
around and SNATCHES the sheriff's gun from his hand.

Dominick DRIVES his knee into Gorman's abdomen making him
double over and collapse to the ground.

He checks the clip from Gorman's gun and smiles. Fully
loaded.

He quickly looks around the property.

DOMINICK
Wow. Did you really come in here
with no back-up? You know, you
really fucked this up for me a
decade ago. I lost what should have
been ten of the most incredible
years of my life because of you.
Obviously, I can't let you do that
again.

He turns his attention to Apex.

DOMINICK
And what's your deal? Are you still
with me or not?

Apex scowls, seemingly incensed by the question.

APEX
You don't need to ask me that.

DOMINICK
(grins)

(MORE)

DOMINICK (cont'd)
I didn't think so. But I didn't
think I'd ever have to ask Scotty,
either.

He tosses Gorman's gun to Apex.

DOMINICK
Kill him.

EXT. TREETOP - NIGHT

Becky continues to monitor the situation unfolding below
from high up the tree.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Apex holds the sheriff's gun in both hands, staring at it.
After a moment, he looks up at Dominick.
Dominick glares back with his remaining eye...

SHERIFF GORMAN
The feds are all over the county
right now looking for you guys. As
soon as you crawl outta the woods--

DOMINICK
Shut up.

He doesn't break eye contact with Apex....

SHERIFF GORMAN
(to Apex)
Please. Don't do this.

Apex glares back at Dominick...

SHERIFF GORMAN
Please.

Silence...

...

EXT. TREEETOP - NIGHT

Becky looks on from above.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Slowly, Apex lowers the gun to his side.

Dominick cocks his head slightly, stupefied.

Gorman breathes a loud SIGH of relief.

DOMINICK

I don't believe this. After al--

BANG!

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Restrained on the floor, Kelly shudders at the sound of the gunshot outside.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Gorman's brains splatter across the ground. He falls over on his side.

Apex stares down at the body. Eventually, he looks wild-eyed back at Dominick.

Dominick stares back.

DOMINICK

Ha! Never doubted you for a second.
Seriously!

He slaps a hand down on Apex's shoulder.

DOMINICK

Ten years, Brother. That *had* to
feel good. C'mon.

EXT. TREETOP - NIGHT

Becky watches as Apex picks up Dora and Dominick drags Gorman's body into the shed.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Still gagged and tied to the wood stove, Kelly desperately scans her surroundings. Her eyes dart around quickly before coming to an abrupt stop.

Her phone remains plugged in on the counter.

She immediately starts shuffling her body closer and stretches her legs, bound at the ankles, toward the phone.

The charging cord hangs down in a loop, just a few short inches over the edge of the counter.

With her entire body extended as far as her restraints will allow, her foot reaches to just within four inches of the cord.

She lowers her legs and starts YANKING on her hand restraints.

The plastic zip ties dig hard into her wrists, drawing blood.

She does her best to re-position herself and tries again.

She just barely grazes the cord with the tip of her sock.

It moves. Slightly.

She drops her legs once again.

Using only her feet and the floor, she frantically tries to work her left sock off.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex pours a trail of gasoline from the shed out into the yard. He sets the jug down and pulls out a lighter.

DOMINICK

Wait. Don't light it yet.

Apex seems confused at first...until it hits him. He looks like he already knows the answer, but asks the question anyway.

APEX

Why?

Dominick lights a cigarette.

DOMINICK
Maybe we're not done yet.

Apex glares at him.

APEX
Done what?

Dominick takes a long drag of his smoke.

DOMINICK
Putting bodies in there.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly repeatedly drags her foot across the floor. Her sock slips down a bit further with every swipe.

Her eyes shoot back and forth between the front door and the phone on the counter.

Finally, she manages to work her left sock all the way off.

She quickly stretches her legs up toward the counter for one more shot...

...she's so close...

...barely moving the cord with the tip of her toe...

She shuts her eyes tight and pulls her arms even harder.

Blood drips from her mangled wrists.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

APEX
I want no part of that.

DOMINICK
Do you want a part of the prize?
Look, I've played it out from every
angle. There's no scenario where we
get away free and clear and
(points at cottage)
they stay alive. We've come too
far. We have to see this through.

APEX
No. I can't.

Dominick's getting angry again.

DOMINICK

When the fuck did you decide to
grow a conscience, Apex? Before or
after I busted you outta the joint?
Before or after I offered to cut
you in on this and set you up for
life?

(points at shed)

Before or after you blasted that
fucking cop's head all over the
yard?

Apex is getting hot now too.

APEX

The second you expected me to kill
children! That's when! What the
fuck, man?!

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Blood begins pooling on the floor beneath Kelly's wrists.

With one more desperate pull, she finally manages to hook
the phone cord around her big toe.

She carefully pulls her legs back toward her.

The phone slips over the edge of the counter. It hangs by
the cord, dangling precariously from her foot.

She eases her grip on it and slowly draws her legs further
and further from the counter, allowing the cord to slide
between her toes.

Her feet eventually reach the end of the cord.

The phone hangs over her now, the cord fully stretched from
the outlet by the counter.

She carefully lowers it down as close to her upper body as
possible...

CLICK

The phone suddenly comes unplugged from the cord and drops
to the floor next to her waist.

The screen SHATTERS from the impact.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Dominick tosses a set of keys to Apex.

DOMINICK
Fine! You go find Gorman's squad
car and bring it back here. We'll
drive it all the way to the border.

APEX
What about the key?

DOMINICK
I'll fucking get it! Just go.

APEX
(points to cottage)
And them?

Dominick suddenly whips his gun up at him.

Apex glares back.

DOMINICK
Just. Go.

EXT. TREETOP - NIGHT

Becky watches from her perch high above as Apex starts walking down the long driveway through the woods.

Dominick heads for the cottage.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Ty continues to sleep peacefully in Becky's room.

Kelly has managed to pull the smartphone closer with her feet.

She twists and contorts her body trying to drag it within reach of her hands.

She shoves it across the floor with her knees. The phone slides to a stop next to her face.

She uses her chin to gradually inch the phone closer and closer to her hands.

Closer...

...and closer...

...

She's got it!

Its screen is smashed and the power is off.

She holds in the "on" button...

Nothing.

She frantically taps it against the floor a few times and tries the power button again.

...

-BING-BONG-BING-BING-

It finally lights up.

She waits for what feels like an eternity for its various load-up screens to cycle through...

CRASH!

The front door SWINGS open.

She turns her head.

Dominick stands in the doorway. And he looks pissed.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Becky drops from the lower branches of the tree to the ground.

She picks up the gas jug and quickly dashes inside the shed.

INT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Once inside, Becky sets the jug down.

She stares at the pile of bodies lying in the middle of the floor, including Dora and her Daddy.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick storms across the trashed cottage and angrily snatches Kelly's phone from her bloody hands.

He fiddles with it in his hands for a moment.

DOMINICK
I can't leave you alone for a
second, can I?

Dominick walks over to the washroom door and tosses Kelly's phone into the toilet. SPLASH.

She rolls over, utterly defeated.

INT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Becky wrestles an aluminium stepladder out of its home in the corner of the shed.

She sets it up in the middle of the room, over the pile of corpses, and climbs to the top.

She reaches up to a hinged skylight in the roof. She disengages its latch and pushes it open before climbing back down the ladder.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick squats down next to Kelly and grabs her by the hair.

DOMINICK
Well, my dear, I think we've got
time for one last dance. Whadaya
say?

He stands up and pulls the hatchet out of the wall where Apex planted it earlier.

He turns back to Kelly and raises the hatchet over his head...

Kelly shuts her eyes tight...

CHOP!

He severs the extension cord that tethers her to the wood stove.

Dominick hooks her plastic wrist restraints with the hatchet and drags her across the floor.

An agonized SCREAM escapes though Kelly's gag.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Apex approaches Gorman's squad car.

It's parked as inconspicuously as possible on the side of the long, moonlit road through the woods.

He fumbles with the keys momentarily before opening the driver's door and climbing inside.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Gorman's phone is RINGING on the passenger seat.

Apex SLAMS the door shut and looks over at the ringing phone.

RING...RING...

A face smiles at him on the screen...

"INCOMING CALL: ALICE"

He stares at it.

RING...RING...

Apex STARTS the ignition and ROLLS his window down.

He grabs the RINGING phone and throws it out.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Gorman's phone lands on the forest floor.

It's stopped ringing, the screen now dark.

The tail lights of the patrol car pull away in the distance.

...

RING...RING...

"INCOMING CALL: ALICE"

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick drags Kelly with the hatchet by her bleeding wrists through the front door of the cottage.

He DUMPS her onto the deck and yanks the gag from her mouth.

DOMINICK

This is it, Girlfriend. Call Becky.

She stares up at him with pure hatred in her eyes...

KELLY

(yells)

BECKYYYY! You need to give them what they want. PLEASE! Or they'll kill us all!

Dominick jumps down from the deck and holds the hatchet over Kelly's face, poised to strike...

DOMINICK

(yells)

Hear that, Becky? She's begging for you to cooperate! To put an end to this nightmare! For your sake. For hers and for that little boy in there. Don't be stupid, Becky! Just come on out here! No dogs. No bullshit. Just bring my key out to me, right now, and it's over!

He scans the woods...

No sign of her.

DOMINICK

(yells)

If she can't get through to you, then she's of no use to me, is she?

Kelly's eyes search for Becky too...

Nothing.

DOMINICK

(yells)

Okay. We'll do it your way.

He raises the hatchet over his head.

His remaining eye fixed on Kelly's face...

KELLY
(screams)
NO! DON'T! PLEASE!!!

The hatchet drops...

BECKY (OS)
(yells)
HEY!

Kelly and Dominick both whip their heads over.

The hatchet SINKS into the deck, inches from Kelly's face.

Becky steps out from behind the wood shed. She keeps her eyes locked on Dominick as she walks across the yard.

Dominick stares back at her.

She stops about fifteen feet away from him and glares...

DOMINICK
There you are. Now don't run off!

She stands in place. Silent. Staring.

He starts slowly moving toward her...

He unwraps the makeshift bandage from around his head and casts it aside as well.

He points to his empty eye socket.

DOMINICK
See this shit?
(spreads arms wide)
All of this? Just look at all the
trouble you've caused here tonight,
young lady.

Becky squats down and picks something up from the ground.

Her Daddy's Redskins cap.

She adjusts the size and puts it on her head, backwards.

Dominick grins.

DOMINICK
You have my key?

BECKY

No.

His grin fades quickly.

DOMINICK

Where *is* it?

She points to the shed.

BECKY

In there.

He glances over at the wood shed and back at her.

He raises his gun at her.

DOMINICK

Where in there?

BECKY

Hanging on the wall. By the
crescent wrench.

DOMINICK

Where's the dog?

BECKY

Tied up. At my tree house.

DOMINICK

Sit down. Do. Not. Move.

She does as she's told and takes a seat on the ground.

Dominick keeps his gun and his eye fixed on Becky as he
makes his way toward the shed.

Kelly lay tied up on the deck, visibly shaken, but watching
closely for some kind of opening. She attempts to make eye
contact with the little girl.

Becky sits quietly on the ground, never letting Dominick out
of her sight.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Dominick warily approaches the shed door.

He grips the handle and CRACKS the door open, but only about
an inch. He peeks in, clearly expecting to find that fucking
dog waiting for him.

Nothing. Just the pile of dead bodies in the middle of the floor. Just as he left it.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Stone-faced and silent, Becky watches from her spot on the ground as he YANKS the door open and steps inside.

Kelly tries again to get her attention.

KELLY
(whispers loudly)
Becky!

Becky pays her no attention and keeps her eyes on the shed.

INT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Dominick's lone eyeball scans the walls.

Hammer...garden shears...pliers...

Crescent wrench. And to its immediate left...

...the key!

It's still on its red string and hanging from a nail.

He walks around the bodies and grabs it from the wall. He examines it closely in his hand. And smiles.

He hangs the key around his neck.

BAM!

The door SLAMS shut behind him.

He spins around, fast.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Becky drops a board into the brackets on either side of the door, locking him inside.

She runs around the corner to the back of the shed.

INT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Dominick furiously SMASHES his fist against the door.

DOMINICK
(yells)
BECKYYY!!!

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly stares at the shed.

KELLY
(screams)
Becky! What are you doing?!!

INT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

Dominick throws his weight against the door.

SMASH...SMASH...

DOMINICK
(screams)
BECKY! Open this door or I will
FUCKING TEAR YOU APART!!!

Something SPLASHES the back of his head from above...

He turns around and looks up.

Becky stands on the roof of the wood shed, looking down at him through the opened sky light.

She has her Super-Soaker aimed straight at him.

DOMINICK
Little girl, you'd better damn w--

She BLASTS him in the face with it, right in the eye hole.

He drops his gun and clutches his face, HOWLING in pain.

Becky watches as he SCREAMS in agony and thrashes about below.

Suddenly, she KICKS the gas jug through the sky light.

It bounces down the pile of bodies, splashing fuel all around, before LANDING on the floor. Gasoline pours out freely.

DOMINICK
(screams)
STOP!!! STOP! Let me out!

He looks up at her.

DOMINICK
You win! I'll give you anything!
OKAY?!

She pulls Jeff's Zippo out of her pocket.

Dominick's eye widens.

DOMINICK
(screams)
NO! DON'T DO IT!!!

CLACK...

She holds the lighter up, looking down at him through the sky light with an icy glare. Stone cold.

BECKY
Die in a fire...
(flicks lighter on)
...Snowflake.

DOMINICK
(screams)
N000000!!!

She drops it.

It falls down through the sky light...and SMACKS Dominick square in the face.

BOOM!

A notable blaze ERUPTS from Dominick's eye socket! He SCREAMS like someone with their head on fire.

In an instant, Dominick is completely consumed by the flames.

The pile of bodies goes up next...

...then everything.

EXT. WOOD SHED - NIGHT

The raging fire EXPLODES through the sky light.

Becky leaps from the roof of the wood shed to the ground some ten feet below.

She lands hard, falling backwards on impact. Using the wall of the shed for support, she scrambles to her feet.

SMASH!

Dominick BURSTS through the shed's only window, fully engulfed in flames. With his burning arms outstretched, he lunges at Becky...

Becky jumps back, just out of reach.

She spots the key still dangling from his neck. She reaches out and SNATCHES it by the string.

Dominick flails around in the window as Becky picks up a shovel she has waiting nearby.

She CRACKS him hard with it, right in the face. Dominick falls back inside the burning shed.

Becky catches her breath as Dominick's SCREAMS ring out from within the raging inferno.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly looks on from the cottage deck in shocked disbelief.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Apex can see the flames as he slowly approaches the cottage in Sheriff Gorman's car.

APEX

Fuck.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The squad car pulls to a stop. Apex gets out. He stares at the burning wood shed for a moment before scanning the area.

He finds Kelly on the deck, still bound at the wrists and ankles. No sign of Dominick. Or Becky.

He makes his way over to her.

APEX
Where's Dominick?!

She looks over to the shed.

KELLY
In there.

He follows her gaze over to the burning structure.

APEX
Becky?

Kelly nods.

Apex looks around the yard, seemingly unsure how to proceed.

He climbs up onto the deck, grabs Kelly by the ankles and drags her back inside the cottage.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex pulls Kelly across the floor through the rubble and debris. She winces in pain.

TY (OS)
Mommy?

Ty stands in the doorway of Becky's room.

Kelly does her best to keep it together.

KELLY
(fighting tears)
It's okay. Mommy's okay.

TY
But you're bleeding.

Kelly glances at her wrists.

KELLY
Don't worry, Baby. It'll be fine.

Ty stares up at Apex.

Apex stares back at Ty.

He props Kelly up against the wall in a seated position but doesn't untie her.

APEX
(to Ty)
Stay here with your Mom. Don't go
anywhere.

Apex storms off.

Ty sits down next to Kelly and wraps his arms around her neck. She can't hold it in any longer and starts to CRY.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex emerges from the cottage.

He spots her almost immediately...

Becky stands in the yard, glaring at him, the flames from the wood shed RAGING behind her. If Death itself were inhabiting the body of a nine year old girl, it would look like this.

She holds Ty's dinosaur by the tail in her left hand.

And the hatchet in her right.

Apex steps down from the deck and slowly approaches her.

They never break eye contact.

BECKY
That's far enough.

Apex stops with about ten feet between them.

APEX
I'm not gonna hurt you.

BECKY
I know.

They regard each other for several, silent moments...

He raises his hands as non-threateningly as possible, pulls out Gorman's gun and removes the clip.

He tosses the gun to his right and the clip to his left. He spreads his massive arms out wide, showing his hands.

APEX
I know I don't deserve it, but
there's something I want to say to
you. I *need* to say.

No response.

APEX

I know how angry you are. I never knew my daddy. And I lost my mommy when I was even younger than you. She was taken from me. Raped and murdered by scumbags just like these guys...
(beat)
...like me.

Becky says nothing.

APEX

But it's how you handle the painful and hard times that determines who you are.

...A single tear runs down her cheek.

APEX

I let my anger for those bastards turn me into a bad person. But it doesn't have to be that way for you. I know how strong you are. How brave. Much stronger than I ever was. You've shown me that tonight.

It starts to RAIN.

APEX

I'm so sorry for what we've done to you. But don't let the anger tell you who you are. You can *still* be an awesome person, Becky. You don't have to become a piece of shit like me.

Becky just stares at him.

APEX

Here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna go get in that police car over there, drive myself to the nearest police station and turn myself in. I'll go back to jail for the rest of my life.

(motions to cottage)

The lady and the little boy are fine. The cops will come and get you all out of here.

Still nothing.

APEX
 Nobody else needs to get hurt
 tonight. This can all be over right
 now if you want it to be. It's up
 to you. You're in charge here.
 Okay? You're in charge.

Becky remains silent for another tense moment...

Apex watches her closely, looking for any sign
 of...anything.

...

BECKY
 (yells)
 Here, Boy!

Diego emerges from the woods, as if he's just been waiting
 for her to call.

Apex looks nervous.

Diego joins them in the front yard, acting as the third
 point in some crazy Mexican standoff.

He sits obediently between them, but keeps his eyes on
 Becky.

APEX
 Okay. Let's all just take it easy.

Diego lets out a slight WHINE, eyes locked on her.

Her eyes remain locked on Apex.

Apex's eyes shift between the dog and the little girl.

APEX
 I...
 (sigh)
 ...I'm sorry.

Diego WHIMPERS again, and stands.

...

Becky quickly nods her head, once.

Diego immediately charges at Apex, GROWLING and SNARLING!

Apex instinctively steps back. He can only brace for it...

Diego jumps up at him, going straight for the throat. His teeth sink into both sides of Apex's thick neck.

Becky remains stoic as she watches Diego attack.

Apex falls to the ground while Diego relentlessly SNAPS at his neck and face, drawing blood with every strike.

Apex SCREAMS out in pain.

He tries to defend himself against Diego's ruthless onslaught, using his forearm to shield his face and throat.

SNAP

SNAP

SNAP

The dog mangles the big man's face quickly.

APEX
(screams)
STOP! STOP!!! PLEA--

The dog manages to break through Apex's defenses long enough to CHOMP down hard on his jugular.

Diego RIPS a large chunk out of Apex's throat. Apex SCREAMS, to the best of his ability.

BECKY
That's enough.

Diego backs off, chewing on the piece of flesh before eventually spitting it out on the ground.

Apex is on his back, clutching his shredded throat with both hands, GASPING for air.

He looks up at the rainy, night sky. Strangely peaceful... until...

Lightening sears the sky. Thunder CRACKS loudly.

Becky invades his field of view, looming over him.

She lifts the hatchet so he can see it.

Spitting up blood, Apex makes a gurgly attempt to speak...

APEX
(whispers)
Please...

She glares down at him.

BECKY
(screams)
AAARRRGGGHHH!!!!

THWACK!

Becky BURIES the hatchet deep into Apex's face with every ounce of strength and rage that she can summon.

Diego looks on as Apex's extremities twitch and then stop.

Standing above his head, she releases her hand from the handle of the hatchet, heaving as she fights to catch her breath.

Suddenly, she grabs the hatchet and RIPS it out of his face.

She looks up to the sky as the rain BEATS down on her.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly holds Ty between her arms, still bound at the wrists and ankles, sitting on the floor.

Ty just stares at the door, waiting...

BAM!

The front door BURSTS open.

Both Ty and Kelly whip their heads up.

Becky stands ominously in the doorway. She's holding Ty's dinosaur in one hand and the hatchet in the other. The thunder CRASHES and the night sky lights up behind her.

Her clothes are stained with blood. She looks like she's been to hell and back.

KELLY
Becky!
(sobs)
Are...are you okay?

No response.

Becky enters the cottage and slowly makes her way over to them. Diego follows her inside.

Kelly and Ty can only watch as she approaches.

She stops in front of them, standing at Kelly's feet...

KELLY

Becky? Say something! Please!

Becky raises the hatchet over her head.

And swings.

KELLY

(screams)

BECKY!!!

TY

(screams)

N000!!!

THWACK!

Becky SEVERs the zip ties binding Kelly's ankles.

Kelly looks up at her, at once shocked and relieved.

She SIGHS loudly. So does Ty.

Becky looks down at the little boy.

He looks back at her, eyes wide.

She hands him the dinosaur.

Ty quickly accepts it, squeezing it tightly in both arms.

TY

Thanks, Becky.

Becky's eyes well up with tears.

BECKY

I'm sorry I was mean to you.

Ty smiles.

TY

It's okay.

Tears stream down Kelly's face as well.

Becky points to Kelly's bloody wrists.

Kelly lays her arms out straight on the floor. Becky CHOPS her wrist restraints as well.

Kelly immediately throws her arms around the little girl and pulls her in close, SOBBING.

Becky stares at the floor for a moment, but eventually...

She returns the embrace.

Ty wraps his arms around them both.

The three of them hold each other, together, on the living room floor. Diego makes his way over and sits down beside them.

END