

UNDER THE SKIN (w.t.)

by

Walter Campbell and Jonathan Glazer

Based on the novel by Michael Faber

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Producers

Nick Wechsler: 310/309 5759

James Wilson : +44 207/255 1131

EXT. SPACE.

A vast black surface runs back into infinite blackness.

We drift over this void, and sense movement within. Something is articulating itself into form.

The surface begins to flux. Intricate structures start to grow, conjured like some abominable spell. Here and there, a sudden gleam reveals a spike or strand reaching out.

They thicken and waver, then in a moment, become solid with steel-like intent. Then plumes of spikes flourish with explosive urgency. Then they fold in, compressed into a defined triangular form, shocking in it's geometric perfection.

It's as if it's expressing that it can become anything. Another pulse, another transformation. It rotates to reveal itself now as an octahedron which sits within a vast, bowl-like womb. A writhing web of tendrils extend from this bowl, a ragged meandering arterial system that weaves itself into the shapes of arms and legs and a torso. At it's apex, where a head might be, the tendrils disperse wildly like a lace fan. There's something repulsive about this viperous form. Now, the dreadful structure starts to flex and push into a faltering, hideous walk.

Further off, another form waits in the darkness. A THREE-DIMENSIONAL HUMAN SHAPED SILHOUETTE, its black curves blending with black space. Ruts in the figure run along the back from head to feet and stretch with an invitation to enter.

This shocking receptacle is offering itself, showing thousands of openings, dilating like gills.

The arterial man draws close, moving to the human silhouette. Its tendrils reach towards the openings. The cords are drawn in, and interweave until the arterial man is immersed within the black form.

The back closes up. Its gills recovering their rest position. The newly combined silhouette figure stirs.

Now in the foreground, a HEADLESS FEMALE FORM moves above, like an airship through space.

The torso form is hollow. Its membrane a few centimeters thick. A cavity descends from between the shoulder blades to the cleavage like a plunging neckline.

The back of the female form is peeled outward along the spine, flayed in anticipation.

From behind, the silhouette approaches the openings of the hollow form.

It climbs into the flesh like a ballerina stepping into a tutu. Tendons flex as the inner form shifts within.

A HEAD and NECK, also split open along the back to make an access, float into the space. Other elements arrive, ready for assembly.

The head/neck and the torso effortlessly converge in a dovetail. The edges consolidate.

Next, A TONGUE floats into the space, flanked by TWO SPHERES just above. Eyes with optic nerves trailing. The formation drifts into position, coming to rest like humming birds at a flower. The mouth and eye sockets open slowly, perversely wide. The tongue enters. And docks. Then the cavernous mouth closes.

The spheres enter their two cavities as if drawn on threads. Once inside, the eyelids close. The lids open again. EYES shimmer in the gloom, brand new and clear.

Next a complex form weaves towards the head. It is THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUAL HAIRS. Each strand winds its way towards the follicles on the crown, and plant themselves.

A bolt of velvet black hair cascades down to swath the elegant neck.

And so we see it complete. This body, this lethal concoction of sensual paraphernalia. A stunning FEMALE, complete in every way. *A beautiful, sexual machine built to snare the dreams of men.*

The larynx flutters. The chest rises and falls. With a first breath, the voluptuous form straightens perfectly and full of purpose.

The eyes close. Then, as they blink, *we cut to the reverse angle, from inside the head space looking out.* From here the eyeholes are far off pin-pricks of light, like looking up from a deep, deep well.

Suddenly everything is thrown forwards. A roar of movement sweeps us through immeasurable distance and speed. Thrilling combustion bursting into flare.

As we gain on the sockets, we slow. Faint blue light gathers about the inner edges with a warm glow. A lulling, like the calm after the storm.

We close into the bright twin forms until rays pour in and the eyehole shapes fill with light.

The twin ellipses blend into one viewpoint. And through them, through her eyes, we see the perfect sphere of EARTH as seen from space.

We dwell on the blue planet.

The orb centre screen is now replaced by another glowing mass. The haze of a dying coal fire in a black hearth. We fall away from its magnetic light and turn out into a pub.

INT. RUN-DOWN PUB. SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS. LATE AFTERNOON

Slot machines, carpet black with gunk. A fat woman is dizzily spinning about the space drunk. Pale lads play pool in the corner.

In a booth sit two old farmers, WHYSTAN and HORACE. Horace nurses a pint while Wystan abstains. They speak in hushed tones.

WYSTAN

Don't start telling me I'm drunk or my head's gone. For fuck's sake hear me out before you give me the knock-back. I tried telling my lads but they took the piss. Saying I was for the mental home.

HORACE

What have you done?

He looks at Horace, mouth open but no words coming.

WYSTAN

I'm not going daft.

HORACE

Get on with it then. Tell me what happened.

WYSTAN

Just do me the courtesy of hearing me out.

HORACE

I'm listening to you.

Wystan looks about himself. He turns back.

WYSTAN

Here it is.

(beat)

I was out walking and I got caught in a storm. And I sheltered in Mr Johnson's wood under the big pines. It was hammering down. I won't lie to you, I had a little swig out of the hip flask. Had a sleep. Woke up middle of the night. Im not half drunk or half awake, I'm awake. And I can hear a noise coming from somewhere. Strange noise. Like a screeching, piercing noise. I'm low down in the ferns. I'm hidden. I try not to move because I think 'what the fuck's that?' And I look through and I see a man standing forty, fifty feet away. And then I see he's near a doorway in the rock-face. And I'm thinking fuck me he looks like Mr Johnson. Horace, he looked exactly like Mr Johnson.

Horace nods. Wystan looks away. A man questioning everything he's ever known.

WYSTAN (CONT'D)

I was wanting to run, but I lay still. Then out the doorway comes the other fucker. I've never seen anything like this. Creeping out. Slow. Looking about itself. I thought it was a shadow at first. Then I see it's not a shadow. It's a wee man. But it's black. Not like a black man, like a man in a black suit. Like a man in a diving suit. His head and his hands, everything, all black.

HORACE

Like a rubber suit?

WYSTAN

Maybe.

(beat)

Then a bird flies out and lands on a sapling between Mr Johnson and the shadow. It wasn't acting like a little bird. It's like it was in charge. And it seemed like they were all talking to each other.

HORACE

What?

WYSTAN

It's like they were having a meeting. Noises coming out of them. With words here and there. Noises and words all mixed up.

(with dread)

I sat there quiet as I could be, but I must have given myself away. Suddenly they were inside and the door was shut and the bird was up in the trees. And it was like nothing had been there. The bird followed me out the woods. I could see him up above me. Following me home. And he's been sitting outside the house, just looking at the house. All day long. Doesn't move. Unless I take a shot at him. Then he's off before I can get a bead on him.

Wystan rubs his hands over his face. Horace looks hard into him. No expression.

WYSTAN (CONT'D)

When I sees those bastards chatting I thought I was losing my head. I don't know where to turn. I'm bewildered in this.

(with terror)

It's real Horace. And I need someone else to see it. Will you come up there with me?

HORACE

Yeah, I'll come up with you. They were having a meeting you said. What were they saying?

Wystan stares at Horace, aware of the implausibility of his tale. Horace stares back at Wystan.

WYSTAN

They were going on about Laura this and Laura that.

A silence falls in on the chipboard ingle nook.

Horace's nose wrinkles under the strain of suppressed impulse. But the more Wystan's face stares earnestly at him, the more impossible it becomes.

He explodes with a dam burst of laughter. Wystan's head falls. No-one will ever accept his story.

We travel past them to a rain-dappled window, then out to find a nearby tree. On a branch sits a STARLING. It's looking in.

BIRDS EYE VIEW. SAME

We see down into the pub *through the vignette of the starling's eyehole*, tightly focused on the two old farmers.

Horace's laughter subsides.

Suddenly Wystan's eyes are drawn to the window and into the bird's gaze. The bird is still. Wystan's eyes widen. His finger points at the evidence. Horace twists to find the target. Horace takes a deep breath, looks back at Wystan's frightened face and explodes to the next level of hilarity!

EXT. PUB. SAME

The starling, BIRD, walks along the branch. It ruffles its feathers to shrug off the drizzle, then flies off triumphantly.

EXT. SKY. MOMENTS LATER

We travel with the ominous little Bird as it rises up into the evening sky. We glide effortlessly above the mountains, forests and lochs beneath us.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GOVNAH VILLAGE. DAY.

An old house. A gnarly finger presses a doorbell. MEGAN, in her sixties, wearing an apron, opens the door pleasantly yet without a smile.

MEGAN

Hello Wystan.

WYSTAN

Hello Megan, is Mrs McCoghan in?

MEGAN

She's in the garden with her lunch.

She leads him along the hallway. He seems like a child entering some austere grown-up realm.

EXT. GARDEN. SHORT WHILE LATER

A very OLD LADY sits at a table with her soup. She's smiling gently at Wystan who sits opposite her, looking fatigued and anxious.

WYSTAN

Where does a door like that go? I warned those gypsy lads that play up there.

(to himself)

I'm afraid of the place. I'm afraid to go back.

MRS MCCOGHAN

You don't need to go back. You're describing a dream to me.

WYSTAN

No, no, no, no. I wasn't asleep and I wasn't drunk. It was real.

MRS MCCOGHAN

Well, sometimes you think you're awake but you're still dreaming.

WYSTAN

I was awake, believe me, I was awake. I was wanting to run away. It was all beyond me.

MRS MCCOGHAN

Come on now. Get a hold of yourself. Mr Johnson is dead isn't he, so we know he wasn't actually in the woods. And the spooky wee man in black. Well, he's straight out of a dream..out of a million dreams..isn't he. There's nothing unusual about him. And the wee birdie...well, what's a lump like you getting afeared of a wee bird for? I'm beginning to think I'm the one that's dreaming listening to you!

WYSTAN

But it's a horrible wee bird Betty.

(wistfully)

Wee birdie- birdie- birdie.

(MORE)

WYSTAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

It's everywhere. Following me.

MRS MCCOGHAN

You know a bird doesn't follow anyone. It's all different birds Wystan. They just all look the same.

WYSTAN

No, it's the same one alright.

MRS MCCOGHAN

Well it isn't a bird then.

He thinks about that.

WYSTAN

Then what is it?

MRS MCCOGHAN

(candidly)

It's the drink Wystan.

WYSTAN

But I'm telling you I've had no drink.

(beat)

It talks to me Betty, telling me over and over it's all in my head, that I'm imagining it. The very thing in front of me is telling me it's not there.

(defiant certitude)

It's standing two foot in front of me.. and it's telling me it's not there.

(to himself)

Lying fucker. I know what I see.

MRS MCCOGHAN

Poor Wystan.

She leans in and takes his hand compassionately.

WYSTAN

You might think I'm mad but I knew you wouldn't laugh at me. You were the one that listened to us. The other teachers never listened, but you did.

Wystan looks up into the surrounding trees. He tunes into the birdsong. When he looks at her, he sees a trepidation in her.

He's aware of the burden he's put on her. Now he resolves to relieve her of it.

WYSTAN (CONT'D)

It's the drink isn't it. Catching up on me.

She looks back at him again, slightly relieved.

WYSTAN (CONT'D)

Do you think eh? The old drink might be getting too much for me?

MRS MCCOGHAN

You know what I think of the drink.

WYSTAN

I'm a bad boy eh Mrs. McCoghan!

MRS MCCOGHAN

You're getting old now Wystan. You have to be gentle with yourself.

WYSTAN

Aye, just things turning about in a bad boy's head...

(beat)

You're looking well anyhow.

MRS MCCOGHAN

Bless you.

They laugh a little as Wystan stands up and holds her hands in farewell. Then he kisses the top of her head and she waves him away like the silly boy he is to her. As he leaves, he braces himself, becoming taught again. He looks up into the trees, the worried pallor darkening about him.

EXT. A DOOR IN SPACE.

A bolt of blackness, then the extraordinary image of a tunnel which leads to an OPEN DOORWAY, held in space. The camera is behind the Female now and travels with her as she advances to it.

The tunnel's depth is cut into a star-field. The edges bleed with a spectrum of light as though this place was hewn from its reality. We drift towards it. Falling towards it... into it.

A touch of gravity takes her. Just enough to pull her into the black tunnel. Now she moves along it towards light. And through the distant sunlit doorway this traveller will enter our world.

EXT. SCOTLAND. LOWER WOOD. DAWN. CONTINUOUS

She steps through into sunlight and in a few steps we realize she is walking through a gully of DENSE, TALL STINGING NETTLES, her naked body untroubled by them. The nettles soon obscure her. *This is the place that is haunting Wystan.*

Nearby, a naked MALE stands motionless in this wild wood.

His face is a blank page. Unpredictable, unfathomable. His eyes penetrate the land, passive yet devouring. He turns, his face devoid of welcome as the Female emerges from the nettles. She walks past him to a vantage point and stops before the verdant spectacle in front of them. Their eyes scan without feeling, alert to every movement.

A drone slits the air and a fly lands on the female's collarbone. She freezes, held by this intrusion. The fly moves on. She continues, moving deeper into the world like a goddess.

The pair walk silently, looking about themselves, not at the wondrous spectacle of life, but through it.

In the distance they see the outlines of buildings, and quicken. They arrive at the edge of the wood. Just beyond, sits the silent silhouette of a farmhouse. They stop. Safe within cover they watch. It's deserted. The male steps out striding across the field towards it.

EXT. ABLACH FARM. SHORT WHILE LATER

The male reaches the back door of the farmhouse and raises a filthy, upturned cup on the window ledge. Beneath it is a KEY. He wipes away the mould and turns it in the lock.

The door opens and he steps into the house. The female follows.

INT. FARMHOUSE. LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS

The room is bare. The Male collects post from the doormat. The Female walks into the room and, almost automatically, kneels before a pile of wood by the fireplace. The envelopes are addressed to 'Mr. Flynn' or 'Mrs. Flynn'. He opens the first. Inside is a PASSPORT. Then another. A CREDIT CARD. He tears open a package - two perfect GOLDEN RINGS. He sets them down by slapping his palm onto the table. Opens the next and slides out a pair of DRIVING LICENCES. Fans them, then puts them next to the rings. His and hers.

Then, a FLUTTERING NOISE coming from upstairs gets his attention. He moves to the stairs and begins the climb.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Bird flutters hard, hovering, at a bedroom window. The Male enters and watches it. Bird is focused on the distance outside the window.

INT. LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS

The Female is by the hearth opening a box of matches. Her fingers draw out a SINGLE MATCH COVERED IN TIN FOIL. She unwraps it. This match is dry while the others are jaded by time.

The distant sound of baying hounds make the Female stop and walk towards the window to look out.

There, as if dropped from the sky, is a full fox hunt - THIRTY RIDERS and FIFTY DOGS racing towards the farmhouse.

She hurries upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM ROOM. CONTINUOUS

The Male watches a FOX flash along the roof of the barn, as the hounds flood into the yard. The Female joins the Male. The fox is about to jump when jaws snap into it. It's torn apart as the dogs swarm crazed at the smell of blood. The horn sounds as a hand reaches into the frenzy and extracts a bundle of bone, flesh and fur. It's carried high over leaping teeth. The carcass is brought to a TWELVE YEAR OLD HUNTSMAN. The red tangle is smeared across his face and hands, and a cheer goes up.

The horses stream out followed by the dogs. The Male and Female remain rooted to their spot by the window. Expressionless faces.

INT. FARMHOUSE. LIVING ROOM. SHORT WHILE LATER

The log fire is ablaze.

The Male is bent over a clothes chest. His hands reach in and bring out two piles of folded clothes.

Lit by the glow of the fire the Female slides into the clothes. He dresses too. The act is functional.

They are fitting into these clothes not trying them on. No vanity here.

EXT. VILLAGE STREET. EVENING.

Wystan stares through the window of an antique shop on a deserted street. His arms hang down defeated, a bottle held in loose fingers. We round to see what holds his gaze.

It's himself reflected in a theatrical dressing table mirror. It throws back Wystan's grim visage with an unforgiving glare. A staring down of the soul. He raises the bottle to his mouth, draining it gulp after gulp. All the while, the eyes stay locked on his reflection. Darkening.

Adjacent to the shop is a hedge, and sheltering at its base like a rat, is Bird, observing Wystan's misery.

EXT. FARMHOUSE. NIGHT.

Black woodsmoke rises from the chimney. The door opens and the Male and Female step out into the night. He's now fully dressed in the clothes of a farmer - tweed jacket, flat cap, thick sweater, boots. She in those of a farmer's wife.

They walk along the path through the garden away from the farm. Darkness swirls with gathering mist.

EXT. GULGAITH. SHORT WHILE LATER

When they arrive at the outskirts of Gulgaith, it's not yet dawn. Still empty, calm, asleep.

They come upon a car showroom. Huge lights burn. The Male stops and scans the glimmer. A window is filled with gleaming motorbikes. Beyond these, a second hand yard with cars, assorted vans, and small lorries.

He moves to a phonebox along the road, enters, and dials.

MALE

Hello, I'd like to book a taxi for
later today.

We cut to see the Female continue her journey into Gulgaith. We stay with her and before long the Male reappears behind.

They cross the village square. A fox hugs the shadows. They look up at the stone crucifix of the war memorial and unblinking, walk on through the mist.

They stop at the little bank. The Male produces his card and approaches the cash machine. He goes through the system until money appears which he folds into his pocket.

EXT. FARM - DAWN

The Male and Female are walking back. They slow suddenly, eyes fixed ahead. A tractor is trundling towards them. It slows to a stop. The DRIVER lets it idle. A YOUNG LAD stands behind him in the cab. The Male's body changes now almost imperceptibly, becoming more alert, more switched on. The driver leans out, his stern eyes admonishing the interlopers.

DRIVER

Hello! That's private land you're on there.

The Male steps into a smile that is unabashed, Burt Lancaster-ish, generous and unafraid.

MALE

I'm Raymond Flynn, the new owner.

Raymond glances back indicating the property with pride then flashes a disarming smile. The driver pulls in the war flags pronto.

DRIVER

(takes it in)

I just passed a lost looking bloke driving a removal lorry. That must be for you then.

Raymond's big hand reaches up to him, full of solidarity.

RAYMOND

Who are you?

MCKEE

I'm John McKee.

Raymond beams like it's the best news ever.

RAYMOND

Nice to meet you. You're the sheep farmer.

MCKEE

That's right.

RAYMOND

There was a hunt through here
yesterday John, do you happen to
know who the field master was?

MCKEE

(reluctantly)

I'm not sure.

Another flavour of smile flashes in.

RAYMOND

(beaming)

I'm afraid I'm going to have to put
a stop to that. I don't want to be
harsh, but you understand.

MCKEE

I didn't know it had been sold.
I've been using it as a cut through
myself.

Raymond turns dramatically, like a magician revealing his
assistant.

RAYMOND

Don't be silly John.
This is my wife Laura.

McKee has to half-lean out the tractor cab to shake hands.

MCKEE

(indicating his son with a nod)
That's my son. Alan.

Alan tears his eyes away from Laura to wave.

The lights of a removal lorry sweep up the road.

MCKEE (CONT'D)

I'll let you get on. If you need
anything we're..

(points to a distant
hilltop)

..up there.

RAYMOND

I could do with some advice. I'd
like to pick your brains about
buying the right one of these, if
you've time.

He taps the tractor.

MCKEE

I might be able to help you out there. I'm selling one. You should come up and have a look at it.

RAYMOND

When would be good?

MCKEE

We'll be at the house all day today.

RAYMOND

Perfect.

Raymond waves and Laura watches them travel away.

Raymond turns back towards the farm and in that movement, extinguishes his glowing personality, like his smile has been stored away in a dark cupboard. Aerial down.

The removal lorry has stopped in front of the farmhouse. Raymond is walking towards it, Laura just behind. A RED-FACED MAN jumps down with a clipboard. He looks over. Too far away to call, Raymond gives him the thumbs-up instead (The vitality in this action does not extend to the face as it's detail cannot be seen at this distance). The man waves back and turns towards the REMOVAL MEN at the back of the lorry.

We hear the jangle of metal and cut to find Raymond's big fingers fishing the keys out of his pocket. They swing round his index finger. The swagger says 'these are the keys to this kingdom and I am the king.'

Laura follows, her attention on the men as they open the roller door and the boxes start to trundle down the ramp.

She holds there so as to not intrude, watching the thickset silverbacks tug and lift, listening to their murmur and grunt.

EXT. LOWER WOOD. DAY

Bird hops along branches as yelps echo. It shadows FOUR PONIES meandering through the thicket below. They are ridden by FOUR RUDDY LADS in their early teens. FANNING is the leader of this feral pack. Another boy, BOXER, rides alongside.

Suddenly one of them, JOHNYGER reigns in his mount before a dense sea of stinging nettles.

His gaze fixes and he shouts with amazement 'Fuck, there it IS!' He's spotted something set into the rockface opposite. The others dismount and move towards him. SAMMY, the smallest, is the last.

JOHNYGER
(pointing incisively)
There! There's the door.

They gather near him, trying to align their vision with his.

SAMMY
Fuck, it is there.

Fanning flicks on his hood and draws it tight. He pulls his sleeves down over his hands like a child on a frosty morning. Fully armored, he steps in, fending the stinging prongs away. The others follow, pulling sweaters and coats over their heads and tucking sleeves down into fists.

They see Fanning ahead in a clearing, mesmerized by whatever's in front. They emerge to find him absorbed by a SOLID METAL BLOCK set into the rock with a bar across it. A door. It is overgrown, but in places the bracken is torn away as if recently disturbed. Fanning moves closer. Then turns round to find his friends looking hesitant.

FANNING
Don't shit yourselves. It's only a
fucking door.

Fanning kicks it. Then Boxer joins in. Fanning has a run up. Wallop. Nothing. The others join. Kicking, barging, cursing in a storm of urgency to open the door.

Exhausted from their outburst of energy they stand staring at it, panting.

JOHNYGER
We should hide. That's when they
come out, when no-one's about.
That's what he said.

SAMMY
(unnerved)
Oh, fuck off.

Fanning moves forward and pokes at the keyhole with a twig. Grime and leaf dust spill out.

He brings his lips to the aperture and blasts a sharp blow to clear it. He pipes a drawn-out whistle into the hole. It echoes down a long passageway. He lines up his eye with it.

INT. BLACK TUNNEL. SAME

From inside, we see his eye held in the rim of light. All around is black and featureless.

EXT. LOWER WOOD. DAY

Boxer leans slowly into the back of Fanning's head.

BOXER
(ghost story style)
Oooooohh, the shadow's coming.

Fanning relents and moves away from the door. Stares at it. Then backs into the corridor of nettles.

A big log rattles violently off the metal door. A reluctant admission of defeat.

As Fanning trudges off disappointed, the others display degrees of relief.

FANNING
Johnyger's right.

BOXER
About what?

FANNING
If we hide, we might see it come out.

INT. MOVING TAXI - DAY

Raymond on the back seat. He reaches into a pocket and takes out the new driving licence. We cut close this time - the ID photo of Raymond stares back at him.

EXT. SHENLEY CARS. OUTSKIRTS OF GULGAITH. CONTINUOUS

Raymond peruses the display. We focus with his point of view. His gaze drifts towards a line of white vans. He dwells on one in and walks across the forecourt to inspect it.

As he arrives at his van, his attention is drawn to a trill of distant drums, from beyond the lot. He moves towards it and arrives at a fence beyond which flags fly, announcing 'Cowdiddle Games'. Pipers drone, the din of dodgem cars. All pulse.

In the mid ground, Fanning, a glass jar full of brightly coloured sweets under his arm, rides his pony. He circles, throwing handfuls over his shoulder.

A gaggle of kids run behind, gathering the sweets and laughing uncontrollably. All the while shouting; 'Stop Fanning! Stop!

Fanning keeps them in range of his wonderful gifts yet lets them feel the excitement of running after the horse. Children in the throes of glorious freedom.

Further along men in kilts pursue a range of strange sporting activities. A giant man steps up to a mark. He takes a grip on a heavy hammer, begins to spin it, then releases. It arches upwards, eyes following, amazed. Raymond's gaze moves to a plane. The hammer tilts through the air. Thud. Cheers peel out. The giant bows theatrically to the crowd.

A voice from behind Raymond politely intrudes.

CAR SALESMAN

Can I help you?

Raymond turns.

RAYMOND

Yes.

INT. MOBILE PHONE SHOP. GULGAITH. DAY

Two boxes containing mobile phones rest on the counter. Raymond stands by and looks about the busy shop as he answers questions from the PHONE SALESMAN who types wildly at his screen.

PHONE SALESMAN

Can you confirm your address?

RAYMOND

Ablach Farm, Glenforsa, Near
Gulgaith, Inverclyde. SH1 2RA.

PHONE SALESMAN

How are you spelling Ablach?

RAYMOND

A-b-l-a-c-h

INT. FARMHOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Laura is in the middle of a gaggle of removal men. Each has a big mug of tea. They're perched on chests or the arms of sofas gazing up at her. Enthralled.

Laura is leaning against the mantelpiece, holding court with her easy smile and twinkling eyes. Wild flowers perfect in a jug behind her.

Each man sits with jaws locked in the grimace of masked supplication. Cheeks hot with impure thoughts.

They will recall their moment with this beauty for years.

INT. WHITE VAN. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY

Raymond takes the twisting roads as if he'd been born to them. Foliage whips against the wing mirrors as he hugs the corners.

INT. FARMHOUSE BATHROOM. EVENING

Laura cleans the sink, then moves her attention to the mirror above. She rotates a large cloth over its surface with mechanical proficiency, the crystal perfection of her image revealing itself.

She turns her head. She's heard the doorbell ring before we have.

INT. FARMHOUSE. KITCHEN. SAME

Raymond moves along the hallway to the front door.

The place is transformed. No bubble wrap, no partly assembled furniture. It's complete. Little pictures illuminated by quaint lamps. Brass fireplace tools frame the hearth. A home, pretty as a picture.

Metal parts clank as Raymond undoes the locks.

He opens the door, revealing a grinning COUPLE IN THEIR SIXTIES holding a large pie.

MCNEAL

I'm Gordon McNeal.
(indicates his wife)
This is my wife Beth.

Raymond's uncertain as to why they're showing him a pie.

RAYMOND

Raymond Flynn.

MCNEAL

We're your neighbors.

Laura appears. Beth looks at her. And is stopped in her tracks by her beauty. She gawks at her.

MCNEAL (CONT'D)

Is now a good time to say hello?

RAYMOND

Yes.

BETH

Sorry if I'm staring. How embarrassing. I'm Beth McNeal. This is my husband Gerry.

McNeal gives a short wave. Beth hands Laura the pie.

BETH (CONT'D)

I hope you like rabbit pie?

LAURA

Thank you. Why don't you come in?

BETH

No, you must be busy.

LAURA

(hospitably)
Just for a minute.

RAYMOND

Come in.

Raymond beckons McNeal and Beth into the house.

Beth is impressed, eyes widening at every turn. Everything's just so, as it should be.

BETH

(a sense of wonder)
How on earth have you done all this in a day?

LAURA

(pleased)
Teamwork.

BETH

That's very good going.

LAURA

Well, we've got a system.

BETH

Even so.

RAYMOND

Can I get you something to drink?

BETH

Not tonight Gerry.

RAYMOND

(winks at Gerry)

Another time.

BETH

(still perusing the room)

Well, this is very nice.

MCNEAL

You got a great bit of land. Good to see someone on it.

RAYMOND

I'm looking forward to it.

MCNEAL

Yeah, this place is a challenge. There's a bit of work to be done.

RAYMOND

Oh I know I've got my work cut out.

(beat)

You've got pigs haven't you?

GORDON

Tamworths. Used to have cows, before the dairy business started to crumble. Haven't got any cows at all now.

BETH

I like your sofa.

LAURA

Thanks very much. I bought it at Hobsons in Edinburgh.

BETH

It's lovely.

LAURA

Do you want to see the kitchen?

BETH
 (enthusiastic)
 Yes please.

Beth follows Laura into the kitchen.

GORDON
 So, what are you going to do with
 the farm?

RAYMOND
 I've got a few ideas. I've got to
 get things in order first. The
 stream needs a lot of repair and
 I'm going to put a fence around the
 lower wood. The Caledonian pines
 in there are being chewed to bits
 by the deer. I have to put a stop
 to that as a matter of urgency.

GORDON
 What else?

RAYMOND
 (jocular)
 Give us a chance.

Gordon laughs.

GORDON
 Oh yes..with the place being empty
 so long these things just take
 their course.
 (beat)
 You know who's got a load of
 fencing..your neighbour.. McKee.

RAYMOND
 Has he?

GORDON
 If it's still there. Might save
 yourself a few quid. Other side of
 the mountain McIntyre put up a big
 fence thinking about it, same sort
 of thing. He got a grant for it.

RAYMOND
 I don't think I can be waiting
 around for grants. Anyway, the
 weather's good, now's the time to
 get it up.

GORDON
I don't know how you want to do it,
but if you want, I can organise the
labor for you. Lads that I use.

RAYMOND
Oh, that would be handy.

GORDON
We're having a gargle in the Pipe
and Drum on Saturday night. You
should come down.

RAYMOND
I'd like that. What sort of time?

GORDON
About eight?

RAYMOND
Whereabouts is it?

GORDON
Have you anything I can draw on?

Raymond passes him an envelope.

RAYMOND
Do it on that.

They hunch over the table and Gordon starts to draw a map.

MCNEAL
It's easy to miss. Between the
garage and the war memorial is a
turn off to the left. Go about a
mile and a half up there...

INT. KITCHEN. SAME

Laura and Beth, arms folded, leaning against the work surface
as if they'd known each other forever. The pie between them.

LAURA
I'd been with him for five years,
then he went off to see the world
or he wanted something different.
(beat)
Then I met Raymond. And within six
months it all felt so right. He
just seemed to want what I wanted.

BETH

(sentimentally)

Ahh...

(beat)

And now you're here making a life together.

LAURA

Well he's always dreamt of living here, and he loves the land you know. Well, farming's in your blood so of course you know.

BETH

Has he family up here?

LAURA

His family left Scotland years ago but he thinks he belongs here.

BETH

Well maybe he's right. I think you two are going to love it here, it's a happy place.

LAURA

Yes. I just want him to be happy.

BETH

And he wants you to be happy, so..

Beth looks at Laura and tilts her head to express how much she's in love with the idea.

LAURA

We better go and see what they're up to.

BETH

Oh I know Gordon will be organizing some trip to the pub.. or a football match.

INT. LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Beth and Laura re-enter.

BETH

(like it's just occurred to her)

(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)

Now on Sunday, don't know if you're churchy people, but Pastor Dain asked me to invite you to the service at one o'clock. If you're not churchy people we have tea and sandwiches after. Come to that. Anyway, Gerry?

Obediently, Gordon follows his wife to the door. Raymond puts his arm around Laura's shoulder as they see them out.

BETH (CONT'D)

Don't come out. It's turning chilly now.

RAYMOND

Thank you for the pie.

MCNEAL

(jocular)
You're taking your life in your hands.

BETH

(serious)
I heard that.

LAURA

Good night.

Raymond throws a gentle wave.

MCNEAL

Good night.

Raymond closes the door. They stand stock still listening to the sound of four feet walk away.

INT. WYSTANS FARMHOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Bird is on the sideboard looking at Wystan who sits at a kitchen table.

He wipes his face with a heavy heart, then his sweaty hand on his jumper, before returning to the balancing of the shotgun along his belly and between his knees.

His eyes widen as the bird's beak spews a high piping whistle. Horrifically, this becomes a machine-like version of Wystan's own voice but drained of all humanity.

BIRD/WYSTAN'S VOICE

I could tell you anything. I could tell you I'm here to rule over you. I could tell you I'm from God. I could tell you I'm a little green man. I could tell you anything but why? What are you going to do with it? What's the point in knowing? You tell me. Speak.

(beat)

I'm not a bird is the truth. And Mr Johnson was never Mr Johnson. We're inside these forms, here to take and eat what we will at our leisure. We prepare the way. We're the advance party. That's what you saw. Now you know. Are you any happier? Any better off? I'm not going to waste my time going into detail. I'm the diner, you're the dinner.

(beat)

A bird talking? They're all sick of looking at you. Be glad to get rid of you. What's stopping you? What are you going to do, go back and say 'oh and another thing', that's going to go down like a house on fire. You had your chance, you missed your chance. You're lost. Face it. Pull it.

(beat)

What are you waiting for, a miracle?

Wystan flusters, the rifle teetering.

We hold hard on Bird as it settles, looking passively on as the man sets himself for the end.

A shocking thunderclap blasts! Bird doesn't stir. Not a blink from its black eyes. Gunsmoke drifts over Bird's head as we hear the shotgun fall. Then silence, only the sound of Wystan's wristwatch ticking on. Bird takes it all in. Then flies off.

INT. FARMHOUSE. BATHROOM. DAWN.

Red lips fill the screen, saying 'come and get it'.

We pull back to show Laura at the mirror applying her make-up fastidiously. Her skin shimmers.

Raymond, stands next to her looking at their reflection. Laura stops what she's doing to take in the same image.

Suddenly a sound emerges, a high-piping whistle. And from it, a voice. Even though it issues from Raymond, it's a very different voice. A voice bereft of emotion, neither urgent nor calm. A voice such as we've never heard before. The Univoice.

RAYMOND/UNIVOICE

How like a man.

Then, in a mechanically synchronized movement, Raymond puts his arm around Laura's shoulder as she slips her arm around his waist. They dovetail together as if choreographed. The farmer and his wife.

We close on Raymond's face. It is like a mask. How not like a man. How like a monster.

Suddenly there is a disturbing movement in his eyes. A too fast shudder from right to left. The eyes flip repeatedly with blurring speed. Fruit machine-like. It's impossible movement, non-human and sickening. An act of hateful impudence, like he's toying with baubles. Then the eyes stop and centre on Laura.

Laura smiles the slightest of smiles. Beautiful, yet with dark complicity.

INT. TRANSIT VAN. EARLY MORNING

The van idles at an intersection. Laura scans her options. She turns left and drives.

In the distance A FIGURE, climbing over a fence. She slows, checking. He's walking up the road fast, powerful. Yes, he's alone. Yes, there's no-one else around. She speeds up.

Laura draws closer to the figure. He's nineteen-ish, thick set and weatherbeaten. She drives past him, pulls in just ahead. He catches up to the van.

DAN

Mornin', y'alright?

LAURA

Do you need a lift?

DAN

Well I ain't going too far.

He leans closer to the van. Sees Laura properly now.

DAN (CONT'D)

You could just drop me up the road there. I need to get a hold of that wee pony in the field up there. See him?

LAURA

Oh, I was hoping you were going to Glenvey and you could show me the way.

Like a light switch, she turns on one hundred watts of pheromones. Her lascivious eyes illuminate.

DAN

(innocently)

Nah, I'm hav'n to take that wee pony to a man in Brannock. She's got to be with him tonight.

(beat)

But it's easy anyway. Follow this road for about a mile, you'll come to a wee fork. Just..

Laura pumps out lust as she leans slightly towards him. Eyes wide. Chest full of breath and blushing neck.

DAN (CONT'D)

Bear right and you'll be up to the Glenvey in about twenty minutes.

LAURA

(disarmingly)

What's the difference between a horse and a pony?

DAN

Er,. well the difference between a pony and a horse, well the simple difference is a pony goes up to fourteen hands. Anything bigger than that is a horse.

LAURA

How many ponies do you own?

DAN

None. My dad owns all the ponies.

LAURA

Is it hard work?

Dan knows something's going on but he's not sure what.

DAN

They look after themselves for the best part. I break them and he sells them on.

LAURA

Sounds like a lonely life. You must be very happy to see your girlfriend at the end of the day.

He indicates nervously he's going to get the pony. Then eases himself away from the situation.

DAN

Alright. Watch the road now. All the best.

He double taps the side of the van and hurries off. Laura drives off. He stands there watching her leave.

EXT. DONRAY WOODS/MCKEES FARM - DAY

Raymond is moving steadily through the woods, gaze fixed. He emerges to find a building up ahead. Then up a steep incline to a yard leading to sheds and a farmhouse. McKee's lad Alan appears at the door chewing a mouthful of food and looking at Raymond. He turns back into the house.

Raymond arrives on the yard. Moments later, McKee walks out and approaches. He's eating a sausage.

MCKEE

You came up through Donray Woods did you?

RAYMOND

Yes.

MCKEE

That's a fair old walk.

RAYMOND

I came about the tractor.

MCKEE

I'll get her out.

McKee turns and walks towards the shed. Raymond follows.

MCKEE (CONT'D)

It's a Massey Ferguson. There's a crane attachment that'll lift about three ton. There by the back door.

(points)

And you've got a rooter. Thirty foot trailer, forks, a muck spreader. You might want a bigger crane from time to time but we can help you out there.

RAYMOND

Sounds good. Gordon McNeal said you had some fencing.

MCKEE

I do. What are you wanting to fence off?

RAYMOND

The lower wood.

MCKEE

The whole wood?

RAYMOND

Yes. To stop the deer getting in.

Mckee considers the job.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

Is that a problem?

MCKEE

No. The fencing I've got is exactly right for what you want. I'm just wondering whether I've got enough.

(beat)

Anyway, here's the tractor.

McKee pulls a shed door back to reveal a tall tractor. McKee's son Alan arrives and joins them.

MCKEE (CONT'D)

(to his son)

Get this out in the yard so Mr. Flynn can try her out.

(to Raymond)

Fence is in the other shed.

They cross the yard.

MCKEE (CONT'D)

That yoke'll keep your farm in good order. You've a bit of tidying up to do on the lake. The run off ain't coping and it'll go to marsh if you leave it.

The big Ferguson roars into life behind them with a growl.

They enter the next shed. Inside this Aladins's cave of junk, the light finds its way to a tower of long metal posts. In front, a pile of 'No Trespassing' signs.

RAYMOND

That looks like enough.
(beat)
What about those signs?

MCKEE

How many do you want?

RAYMOND

I'll have them all.
(dryly)
That'll keep them at bay until we get the fence up.

The two share a chortle. Raymond pleased with himself. Behind them, McKee's son is taking the tractor for a spin round the yard.

They turn to look.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

How much?

McKee smiles, rubs his hands together and looks at Raymond the way a pickpocket looks at a wallet.

EXT. TREE-LINED LANE - SHORT WHILE LATER

Raymond roars along, in the cab of his red monster. Mud spits out over the trailer behind and the signs in it.

Up ahead, a MAN IN A GREEN JACKET sees the tractor coming. He ducks off the road. Gone. The tractor rolls on up hill and down dale. Raymond isn't exactly smug but he doesn't look disappointed.

EXT. DRYSTONE WALL - DAY

Fanning stands legs apart on a the wall. A stream of piss arches out to splatter a 'No Trespassing' sign. The command is getting wetted good and proper.

Beneath, the gang ride their ponies through onto the land. A peel of laughter is released into the air.

Fanning smiles concentratedly as he aims his urine with the perfect combination of hate and comedy.

Bird watches from a distance.

EXT. LOCH ROAD - DAY

Laura in her van becomes alert to a man by the side of the road. He's fumbling with matches. Fishing equipment by his feet. She looks in her rear mirror. All clear. She stops alongside, opens the window.

The FISHERMAN turns and sees her.

LAURA

I'm heading out to the Grenock hotel on the Kelmarsh Estate. Am I on the right road?

The fisherman is hypnotised.

FISHERMAN

Where are you going?

LAURA

I just told you.

FISHERMAN

(snapping out of it)

Sorry, where did you say you were going?

LAURA

The Kelmarsh estate. Do you know it?

The fisherman is stumped. This is his dream come true but it's exactly the wrong time.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You're not heading out there are you?

FISHERMAN
I'd love to be.

LAURA
Does that mean you're not?

FISHERMAN
I've got my brother's kid with me.

A YOUNG BOY doing up his fly, emerges from the scrub.

YOUNG BOY
(sensing something's not
right)
Dad?

The man turns to his son. He turns back to Laura to see the window closing and the van moving off. She's gone.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A wire fence denotes a threshold. Raymond is poised like a statue, a mallet above his head. Down comes the mallet on a signpost. Then another blow and the post shudders deeper into the ground. The blunt end is splintered by the impacts. Raymond touches it. Job done.

He throws the mallet into the trailer with the 'No Trespassing' signs. He moves up into the cab. As the tractor eases into motion, the four riders appear on the ridge and stream down towards him.

As Raymond roars along, they appear behind him and draw level with his wheels.

They stare in. He lets the tractor slow. The boys ride beside. He looks. They look. The ponies look. Raymond lets the tractor stop.

FANNING
Is this your farm now?

RAYMOND
Yes.

FANNING
Do you want us to put those signs
up for you?

RAYMOND
(dismissive)
No, I'll manage.
(MORE)

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

(beat)

You won't be allowed to ride around here any more.

Fanning looks him in the eye. Boxer comes alongside. Sleeves rolled up, wearing a single boxing glove. There's an instant change in the lads demeanor. Their faces tighten, they draw the ponies closer.

BOXER

Why's he looking at us like that?
Is there something wrong with us?

Fanning, puts his foot on a wheel, to imply 'you're not going anywhere until we finish speaking'. Raymond looks at the foot.

RAYMOND

You can get back on the road through the gate, just over that hill.

Raymond releases the handbrake. Fanning plucks his foot away as the wheel turns.

Fanning and his mates shadow the tractor, taunting him.

FANNING

Is that what passes for a farmer these days?

BOXER

(holds up his big boxing glove)
See that fuckheid?

SAMMY

Yer a right wee fucker eh?

JOHNYGER

Yee frosty gobbed fucker.

After they've run out of jeers, they gallop off triumphantly.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD. BEAUTY SPOT - DAY

Laura's van drives, then turns into a car park overlooking a beauty spot. Lochs and valleys as far as the eye can see. She parks, gets out. Looks out into the glistening vista.

Apart from the Volvo owned by the FAMILY finishing their picnic, there are no cars. The family glance at Laura. The FATHER waves. She waves back.

She scans the area and notices a MAN sitting alone on a boulder, framed by the view.

She moves towards him, intently. He looks at his watch, then stands and puts a bearskin on his head. He picks up a set of bagpipes and starts to play 'Amazing Grace'. The powerful notes fly in the wind.

Laura hears a car and turns to see the family Volvo pull away. The father waves again. Laura waves back.

She turns her attention back to the lone piper. Focused on him and the music. Can she take him?

But at that moment a tour bus pulls in. TOURISTS descend. Laura scans them. They're all in groups. They take pictures of the view, and the piper. A few put money in his cup. She stares at the piper again, assessing but concludes it's time to leave.

EXT. PETROL STATION - DAY

Laura replaces the nozzle and crosses the forecourt to pay. She passes a SALESMAN. His head is bowed as he pumps, but he's staring up though his eyebrows at every tilt of her body.

Behind her, a roadster at a pump. Inside, THREE YOUNG LADS. The driver revs the engine lustfully. The roadster drives off, tyres smoking.

Laura keeps moving. She focuses on a HITCHHIKER walking backwards on the main road. He holds up a cardboard sign with one word on it. "MERCY". He smiles at a truck. It rumbles on unaware of the smile. He stops smiling.

Laura moves more urgently now into the shop. ANOTHER LAD who's paid and leaving, stares transfixed as they pass.

She approaches the counter brandishing a card. Gives it to the CASHIER GIRL.

LAURA
Number three.

The roadster peels back down the road to the station, hits the brakes and spins. Smoke pours from wheel arches.

The transfixed lad is right by the shop window now, staring in at Laura like a zombie.

The cashier girl looks at her curiously.

CASHIER GIRL
 You've set them off.
 (shouts over her shoulder
 into the back room)
 Stuart, can you call the police!

The girl hands Laura her card and receipt.

LAURA
 Thank you.

Laura turns to leave.

EXT. PETROL STATION - SAME

The driver's door of the roadster opens and a GANGLY
 TEENAGER, gets out. He moves toward Laura.

CAL
 We're going for a wee drink down
 the road. Do you fancy it?

She keeps walking but he steps into her path.

CAL (CONT'D)
 Just fucking stand still a minute.

Laura stops. Then the Salesman pipes up.

SALESMAN
 Can you no leave her be?

CAL
 (zero tolerance)
 What the fuck do you think you're
 doing!

Cal shifts the focus of his adrenalin and walks up to the
 Salesman. The three other lads pile out of the car.

Laura resumes her walk to the van. What happens now is of no
 consequence to her. It's peripheral noise.

CAL (CONT'D)
 What else?!

SALESMAN
 (pleading for calm)
 Alright, alright...

Cal looks at him hard. Then turns to his mates.

CAL
I think he knows what's coming!

The lads laugh like drains.

Suddenly Cal swivels and lashes one into the salesman's face.
Down goes the Salesman. Laura gets in her van.

CAL (CONT'D)
(Sports commentary style)
And there he is sports fans! Shall
I have it?! I fancy it! Yeah! I
rather fancy it!

Cal stamps down on his back.

CAL (CONT'D)
(like a diagnosis)
Wheelchair.

The Salesman folds up in agony. Laura starts the engine.

CAL (CONT'D)
(manic laugh)
Oh, he's done him! He's done him!
He does NOT look happy!

Laura pulls away, leaving this turbulent testosterone wake.

EXT. OVERHEAD SHOT. LAURA'S VAN - MOMENTS LATER

We follow Laura's van exiting the petrol station and making
its way onto the main road.

INT. LAURA'S VAN - MOVING - DAY

Her eyes scan for that hitchhiker as she accelerates.

Then she sees him up ahead, he's walking backwards with his
sign held out.

She slows to compose herself. Looks at her reflection in the
mirror. Everything is in order.

She refocuses on him. But then a car pulls out of the
junction ahead of her. The hitchhiker's thumb shoots out.
Laura speeds up. But too late. The car ahead pulls in. She
rolls past as he gets in.

The rearview mirror shows an old man driving the car. He's
laughing and offering a cigarette to the hitchhiker.

She refocuses on the distant highway. Unmoved.

EXT. DESERTED STRETCH OF ROAD - EVENING

A DRUNKEN MAN stumbles along the shoulder, thumbing a lift. Cars speed past him.

INT. LAURA'S VAN - MOVING - SAME

He comes into view as Laura pulls up next to him. She slows to a halt then rolls down the passenger window.

The drunk staggers over, looks into the open window. His mouth drops open.

DRUNKEN MAN
Are we going back to your place
love?

He leans further into the van, placing his hands on the window frame.

LAURA
(furtively)
What's wrong with your place?

Suddenly becoming self conscious he removes his wedding band, and in an abandonment of reason, tosses it over his shoulder, almost losing balance.

Laura drives off. We watch the gold band 'ping' as it hits the road and roll through frame, suddenly looming huge and thundering off into darkness.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A sign is held in the headlights of Laura's van. STRANRAER 14 MILES. She plows on through the miserable rain.

Movement up ahead, and she eases off. The beam finds A FIGURE. It half turns. A bomber jacket with a green football shirt underneath and a green scarf wrapped around the head. A bag over its shoulder. She slows more.

He tugs the scarf down to show his face in the beam. He's a beefy farm boy. She pulls up.

The window opens to a gusting howl. His eyes widen as he sees who's driving.

LAURA
Are you going to Stranraer?

COLIN
I'm catching the boat. I've got to
get to a match.

LAURA
I'm going that way. But
I'm just wary who I pick up.

COLIN
Fair enough.

LAURA
Haven't you got any friends or
family who'll take you?

COLIN
No. Nobody likes me.

LAURA
No wife?

COLIN
(perishing the thought)
Nah.

LAURA
Or girlfriend?

COLIN
Nah, I'm totally available at the
minute.

LAURA
(playing dumb)
Are you a football player?

COLIN
Don't be daft, I'm too fuckin' fat!
Hibs are playing Glentorren in
Belfast. I don't play football. I
watch football. And I
watch fucking Hibs. Am I getting
any closer to getting in?

LAURA
When do you have to be back at
work?

COLIN

I sign on again at the end of the month.

A thunderous shake as a truck booms past.

COLIN (CONT'D)

Listen love, are you going to give me a lift? Cos if not, I'll crack on.

LAURA

What's in the bag?

He hefts the bag up to the window and unzips it to reveal balled up clothes. He looks at her.

LAURA CONT'D)

Put it in the back.

He gets in. Laura pulls out. He wipes the rain off his face with the end of his scarf.

COLIN

So what's your story?

LAURA

What do you mean?

COLIN

What are you heading over for?

Laura turns to look at Colin. There is something wanton, almost pornographic, in her pretty face.

LAURA

Oh, I'm not. I'm just driving up that way. I was just feeling restless, you know, couldn't sleep. So I came out for a drive.

COLIN

You're a right good look'n girl to be riding around all alone.

Laura smiles.

LAURA

Do you think I ought to be more careful?

COLIN

Aye, I do.

LAURA
What time's the ferry at?

COLIN
There's one at three and one at
six.

Laura swivels her torso a little in Colin's direction. Gives him a piggy eyeful of the goods.

LAURA
Do you really never miss a match?

Colin smiles.

COLIN
You're a right wee chancer.

Colin takes a long look at her. The good fortune sinks in.

LAURA
I live about an hour in the other
direction.

COLIN
(with profundity)
All my life I've been a Hibs fan
and I've never missed a match.

LAURA
Well..

EXT. ROAD - SAME

The van slows. Signals to pull over. Stops. It idles in the rain signalling. Then the signal flips to the other side. The van swings into a U-turn. Through the wipers we see Laura serious, staring into the night. Colin leans back smiling and unfurls his Hibs scarf out of the window in victory.

INT. THE PIPE AND DRUM PUB. EVENING

Raymond walks in. A Saturday night crowd. He scans the room and sees Gordon McNeal waving hello. Raymond walks over.

A figure sits immersed at a slot machine. Raymond's attention locks onto the machine too. Reading the mathematics in it's vibrating zing, whirr. He dissects its base science in a heartbeat and moves on.

There are old rods strung across the ceiling, photos of people shooting into the sky on the walls.

A half-cut McNeal is one of FIVE MEN sitting at a booth. He stands to introduce his new neighbor.

MCNEAL

Shut up. This is Raymond Flynn.

Raymond focuses on the flurry of faces around him. One of them, DREW, is delivering drinks to the others.

MCNEAL (CONT'D)

What are you drinking Raymond?

RAYMOND

I'm fine thank you.

MCNEAL

Come on, have a pint.

RAYMOND

I won't, I'm an alcoholic.

MCNEAL

How about an orange juice?

RAYMOND

Do you know, I'll leave it. Might get something in a minute.

MCNEAL

This is Drew, this is the guy that's going to get you your labourers. Your workforce. He's a site manager.

DREW

Yeah, nice to meet you. I'll get you some great lads. When do you need it done by?

RAYMOND

Soon as possible.

DREW

Soon as possible's more expensive.

(beat)

Have you got a drink yet?

RAYMOND

I'm not drinking.

MCNEAL
 (turning to the group)
 This is Rory.

RORY
 (raising his pint)
 Cheers Raymond.

DREW
 (indicates)
 And Donnie. And Monsieur Scullion
 who's just come back from France
 where he disgraced himself.

Raymond slides along the bench to Rory, opposite Scullion.

RORY
 You settling in? Everything coming
 together?

RAYMOND
 Everything's coming together I
 think.

Hamish, 40's, drunk, slides in unsteadily opposite Raymond.

He knocks over a glass. Doesn't notice. Points at a drawing
 Rory has opened up. It shows an outlay of the woods and notes
 indicating details about the fence building.

HAMISH
 Alright, Raymond?
 (beat,)
 You alright, son?

RAYMOND
 I'm good. How are you? You been
 out?

HAMISH
 Yes. I've been out. You carry on,
 we'll have a chat later. What you
 doing?

RAYMOND
 I'm trying to get a fence built.
 Rory and Drew are helping me.

HAMISH
 Oh, the big fence. Do you mind if I
 sit in for a minute? I know a bit
 about deer actually, I used to work
 up in the national park.

(MORE)

HAMISH (CONT'D)
I've got my girlfriend with me.
(gestures towards the
drawing)
Can I see it?

He reaches over and draws the piece of paper across the table under his hand.

HAMISH (CONT'D)
Do you mind if I..?

MVHARI, a drunk, sloppy blonde five years past her prime slides in next to Raymond.

MVHARI
(sozzled)
What's Hamish doing?

Donnie, at the head of the table, gives a look like a trapped animal.

MVHARI (CONT'D)
What are you doing Hamish?

Without looking up, Hamish raises a halting finger.

HAMISH
Mvhari, this is Raymond he's a very important man. We're sorting out his fence.

MVHARI
Hello, I've heard about you.

She clasps Raymond's hand.

RAYMOND
Are you alright?

MVHARI
Am I alright?

She examines the question like it's an intruder.

HAMISH
Do you want something with a bit more space around these gates? You don't want to keep them so tight to the path and then you put it up and have to take them down again and put up wider ones.

He looks up at the others with an expression that reveals a delusional self-importance. Rory takes the paper and places it between himself and Raymond again.

RORY

The fence is twelve foot high with an out-turn at the end. So we have to sink the posts deep to stand the strain on that much height. We'll need a digger and two cement mixers..

Mvhari stares at Rory with inscrutable drunk intensity.

MVHARI

Don't say that. You don't mean it.
(Without turning back to Raymond)

I really love Hamish. I'm on my holidays, I'm going to get drunk every day. I'm something special and he knows it. We get drunk out of our heads together.

She looks at Scullion who's sitting opposite Raymond with his legs wide open. His balls bulging against his trousers.

MHVARI

Close your legs princess, no-one's interested.

Scullion shuffles his legs together, gets back in the closet and slams the door.

MVHARI

(turns now to Raymond)
You think you're better than us.

RAYMOND

Oh, you've put me on the spot there.

MVHARI

Where you from?

RAYMOND

Do you know London?

MVHARI

Yes, I know London.

Still clasping his hand, now more intensely.

RAYMOND
Do you know Islington?

MVHARI
Yes, I know Islington. Russells.

RAYMOND
Yeah, it's a nice bar. Do you know Cornwall? Well, I was born in Cornwall and brought up in London.

MVHARI
My friend's got a hotel in Cornwall. Near Whitesands.

RAYMOND
That's a lovely beach.

MVHARI
Do you know St. Michael's mount?

RAYMOND
Yeah, I've been up and down it a few times.

MVHARI
(shouts)
No you haven't!

Everyone in the group, apart from Raymond and Hamish (who's obviously used to such), look away embarrassed by the loud accusation.

RAYMOND
Yeah, St. Michael's mount, yeah.

MVHARI
Who are you?

She puts the squeeze on, gripping Raymond's hand like she hanging on for dear life. The atmosphere is tense, everyone sensing the extreme nature of her instant dislike. Everyone except Hamish. Raymond deals with it by looking into her eyes, and meeting her tense grip with a smile.

RAYMOND
I'm Raymond. We met a minute ago.

MVHARI
You're not from Cornwall.

RAYMOND
No, I was brought up in London. I
was born in Cornwall. So I don't
have a Cornish accent.

MVHARI
(drunk certain)
No, you're not.

Raymond perseveres politely, finding a way to tangle with her
paranoid suspicions.

RAYMOND
Where are you from?

MVHARI
Kent.

RAYMOND
What do you do in Kent?

MVHARI
I'm a show jumper.

RAYMOND
How many horses have you got?

MVHARI
Two horses.

RAYMOND
Do you go riding in Cornwall?

MVHARI
I've heard you've banned the hunt
from riding on your land.

RAYMOND
Are you always like this?

Mvhari lets go of Raymond's hand and shrugs into herself as
if tasting something repulsive. She stands, insulted, but
unsure why. She walks away, then a sway as she loses balance,
and falls into shelves.

Only Hamish is unaware of the tumble. He draws the paper back
across the table. Mvhari is on her knees amidst shelving.
McNeal hauls her up from the floor.

Raymond stands, a pillar of sobriety in the chaos. He lets
the drunken Hamish have a big smile right between the eyes
which he receives gratefully before returning to the paper.

Raymond moves off through the upturned chairs and scramble of rescuers to a corridor which leads to the bathroom.

INT. THE PIPE AND DRUM. BATHROOM. CONTINUOUS.

The door swings open into the drone of a hand dryer being used by the Man in a Green Jacket Raymond saw on his land that morning. The man lets half an eye rest on Raymond as he enters. Raymond rolls his hands under the water, rubbing deep, and squeezing off every trace of Mvhari. Green Jacket leaves without a word. Raymond finishes up and walks back into the pub.

INT. PIPE AND DRUM. CONTINUOUS.

Moving to the bar Raymond looks to see Green Jacket now at a cigarette machine near the exit. He turns away as he feels Raymond's gaze.

Raymond gains the bar and nudges Rory.

RAYMOND

Who's that at the cigarette machine?

RORY

(repulsed)

Ah, he's a poacher. No-one has anything to do with him, thieving bastard. You wouldn't mind if it was to feed his family, but he hasn't got a family.

The barman arrives.

RAYMOND

It's my round then.
(without irony)
Mvhari, another?

The Poacher puts a boney shoulder to the door and steps out.

INT. FARM. SMALL OUTBUILDING. LATER.

We are in a lit outbuilding. A ground sheet is spread under a motorcycle - a superbike - up on blocks. Mechanical parts are positioned methodically on the canvas. Raymond lies on his side tuning the engine. There is a drone from the lane, a vehicle approaches.

EXT. FARM. BARN. SHORT WHILE LATER

Bird perches on top of the open barn doors. It's looking down, expecting Laura's headlights.

It sees light emerge from around a bend.

The van rolls up the drive. Colin sits in the passenger seat. An expectant grin on his face.

The van drives into the barn.

INT. BARN. SAME.

LAURA

Come on Colin.

She moves out of the van. He pulls his Hibs scarf from the window, and ties it round his neck as he gets out. He turns, to find her looking coyly over her shoulder at him. She is radiant in the half light. He walks towards her as if on a leash. They come to a hayloft ladder, the top of which is shrouded in gloom. Colin watches as Laura climbs, then he follows, lost in the lurid suggestions of her every move. Up-up-up into darkness where finally Colin emerges to see Laura now gaily walking ahead of him. Here the floor becomes harder underfoot, like marble. She seems to be descending another staircase which falls away into some strange black distance below. Colin follows.

INT. BLACK STAIRCASE - SAME

As they go down, Laura begins to remove her clothes. A shoe is left on a black marble step. Then her dress on another. Colin grins, removing his jacket. On they go down the black stairwell. She removes more of her clothes...the other shoe..... her bra.. The steps end as they reach the flat, black floor of a tall black corridor. He is panting, salivating. He removes his football shirt, grimy vest, a belt, a boot, another boot, jeans, pants. Naked now, except for his Hib's scarf.

COLIN

(lusty)

There is a God.

THREE BLACK SILHOUETTE figures, aliens, edge down behind him, a few steps away. He's unaware of them, his eyes on the prize. Laura entices him on.

His big fingers slip the knot of his thick green scarf with all the erotic crescendo of an L.A. stripper. She backs away sensuously. He steps eagerly towards her.

The shiny black floor starts to *give way beneath him*. Like molasses. Undaunted, he strides on sinking deeper into the floor with each step. His eyes and his mind are locked on her. Oblivious to the bizarre falling away of the world as he knows it. He's wading deeper all the time, sinking into the black viscous pit. Eyes still locked on her, trance-like, driving forward feverishly. Until he's completely submerged into the syrupy black.

Gone.

The floor reforms.

EXT. BARN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Footsteps, then Laura, fully-clothed, emerges from the barn. She walks on towards the house, past Raymond whom she passes without a glance.

Raymond closes the barn doors and walks back across the yard. Only his foot steps break the silence.

INT. FARMHOUSE. BATHROOM. DAWN

Laura is putting the finishing touches to her make up. A fat brush dusts her cheek into a faint blush. Her eyes judge her handiwork.

Then, in a fleeting moment, *she catches her eye directly and is held by the splendor of her own reflection.*

INT. FARMHOUSE. LANDING. SAME

Raymond stands by a window that allows him to scan the ridges behind the woods.

He stares at shapes, breaking cover at the brow of the hill. It's a ragged silhouette at first, but he can soon make out the forms of four young riders - Fanning and his gang.

He looks away. Assessing.

EXT. LOWER WOOD. DAY

Raymond is on the move. His stride urgent. He moves like an animal, propelled by an inner force.

We hear the distant crash of objects striking metal and mischievous voices echoing off the trees.

MISCHIEVOUS VOICES

Come out yee wee Shadowman bastard
yee!!

He thrusts into the swarm of towering nettles. Powering towards the impish laughter, pushing without hesitation at the serrated stinging leaves that snag him.

The sounds suddenly die and scamper. Raymond quickens through the tangle. He can glimpse the very top of the metal door.

Nettles hang from his clothes as he steps out into the clearing.

Rocks and branches are strewn about the door, and the area is trampled flat from activity. A freshly broken path leads away, off and out of the gully.

Raymond touches the door, as if to check its integrity. He stops moving and stands, head tilted slightly backward.... listening... listening. Distant hooves thunder away.

EXT. A LITTLE VILLAGE. DAY

Sunshine. Laura's van rolls down the main drag of a village. The streets are strangely empty.

Laura slows. We take in her point of view as she looks into an open door of the village store where a woman reads the paper behind the counter. We track to a bakery. An old dear wipes off her display case.

We travel on, arriving at the open door of a pub. Inside, the space is crammed with men silently watching the national football team. Engrossed by a penalty being taken.

As we hit the apex of our passing the doorway, we hear a voice announce for a beat "tonight could see this young man becom---" the voice is lost, all the faces remain locked.

Laura refocuses on the road and lets the van gather speed along the empty streets and out of the village into the country lanes.

EXT. LONG ROAD. DAY

Laura's van drives through the lowland.

EXT. COAST ROAD. DAY

Laura is driving along the coast road near the Sound of Arisaig. The sun is strong. She sees a half visible sign through a bush, 'BEACH', and turns.

EXT. BEACH CAR PARK. DAY

Laura drives in, scanning out the window, she suddenly focuses on something and stops.

She steps out. Leading over the dunes towards the beach, are the splatter of many footprints.

She moves along the path led by the footprints, then suddenly moves off it to the left.

She is following one distinct set of footprints.

The imprints weave off along the dunes eager to find a spot far away from all the others.

She is drawn with them. Far off she can see the main beach and its sprinkle of holiday-makers.

'There' are families and a flat stretch of sand; laughter and dogs barking. 'Here' is rocky and quiet. Those significant footprints re-emerge again by the shoreline.

A LONE MAN carrying a rucksack, with his trousers rolled up and boots in hand walks in the breakers.

A short distance to the east, a YOUNG COUPLE sit on a gleaming rock. They watch their YOUNG CHILD splash in a shallow pool. The sun sparkles off the water around him. The couple lean closer and become one shape against the ocean. The space between them flashes like a message. Kiss - Sparkle - Kiss.

Laura focuses on the lone man again. He is pulling his shirt off. He's about thirty, toned. Trouserless now, boxers flapping in the breeze. He suddenly runs towards the sea. In he goes like a dart.

Laura looks at the muscular swimmer as she walks to the beach. The sun plays around her perfect flesh and hair.

He swims through the glitter like he's on rails. Laura sits on the sand near his rucksack.

He comes back into the shallows. Laughter beckons his attention along the beach towards the family. Laura follows his gaze.

The child is now in a rubber ring and his father is swimming around him. The young mother walks into the breakers. She laughs as the undertow shifts her gently.

Now the swimmer is walking back towards his things.

The father splashes the little boy. They giggle and yelp.

As the swimmer approaches, Laura smiles. He almost stops dead in his tracks but makes it to the rucksack. He pulls out a tea towel and rolls it around on his head.

LAURA

You're a good swimmer.

ROSS

Am I?

LAURA

You seem good to me. I never learned.

ROSS

Well, you could still have a paddle.

LAURA

Is it cold?

ROSS

Not too bad.

LAURA

You're not from here.

ROSS

No, I'm from the Lake District.

LAURA

On holiday?

ROSS

No, I'm not on holiday. I'm living up here.

LAURA
All alone?

ROSS
Yes.

LAURA
Do you live near here?

He points to a small orange triangle in the distant dunes.

ROSS
I live in that tent.

A shout cuts across everything. The young mother's. An unmistakable sound of panic. Ross steps away from Laura and looks out to sea. Laura follows his gaze.

The couple are both swimming towards the toddler in his ring. The man is closer than the woman but the ring is moving away rapidly on an arc. A whirlpool turning in on itself.

The child reaches desperately towards his thrashing father. The ring tips and the child almost comes out. The woman screams.

Ross is now running away from Laura and down the beach.

The woman clasps hold of an overhanging rock. Her child is at the lip of the hole where the water seems to form an edge. Then, in an eternal second, his angelic face tips away into darkness.

Gone.

The father ploughs through the water towards the hole. In another few strokes he'll be there too. His arms emboldened as they plough in pursuit.

Gone.

The mother's face frozen. An open mouth. No sound. Gulls scream above.

She is treading water. Just looks at the spot. The distant whirlpool rotates eerily. Beckoning. She looks at it. Eyes boiling red. Then she releases her clutch from the rock, giving herself over to the pull.

Ross is running hard and hits the water like a torpedo. He is moving rapidly towards her.

As he gets to her, she kicks out against him. The tide draws them harder, their combined mass easier for the current to take.

He tries to wrestle for control. Him against the pull. Her, writhing to free herself. He forces the fight out of her then ploughs back against the current. She squirms against him as he throws a long, exhausted stroke clear of the sheeting water, stroke clear, kick clear, clear.

Soon his feet touch down. He pulls her limp body towards the beach. She is no longer fighting but not helping either. He collapses into the sand, chest heaving.

She stands...and walks back into the sea. Soon she's swimming. Out into it. He tries to raise himself. Tries to follow. But he's spent. She seems calm. Carried away with it. She strokes with the draw of the whirlpool. Kick, stroke, kick stroke, then into the eye.

Gone.

Laura is looking. Nothing. No response.

EXT. BEACH. SHORT WHILE LATER

Ross's body is half out the water. Laura enters frame without urgency and leans over him. She studies his face as he passes out.

She takes hold of him at the belt buckle and heaves him away from the tide.

She hauls her prize towards the dunes, stopping from time to time to get a better grip. She spots his abandoned rucksack a short distance away. She goes to retrieve it, puts it over her shoulders and tightens the strap across her body, so as not to interfere with the job at hand.

As she takes her bearings again, she sees his body tremble and move. His elbow pushing into the sand, delirious, trying to get his groggy head up.

Dead-eyed, she sets off towards him urgently, plucking a large stone from the sand as she goes. She arrives, delivering a single, sharp blow to the back of his head.

He slumps flat out at her feet. She casually looks about. Finding a path through the hillocks she is off again. Clearing the dunes she stops, cautious, as the car park looms. She half-stands, and watches the last car pull away in the soft dusk light.

EXT. BEACH CAR PARK. SHORT WHILE LATER

She opens the passenger door and leans him against the opening. She hauls the body up onto the seat, dragging the legs into place, then fastening him in with the seat-belt.

His head flops about. She steadies it with her spare hand as she drives out across the bumpy car park to the road.

INT. VAN. ROAD - LATER

Laura drives. Ross wakes suddenly. He looks at her. His eyes reach out the window and weave, trying to understand where he is.

LAURA
We're nearly there.

ROSS
Nearly where?

LAURA
My house.

He is wet. His bag is on the floor by his feet. These are his only certainties.

ROSS
What's going on?

LAURA
(mock confused)
I'm Laura.

ROSS
(bewildered)
Excuse me. Where am I?

LAURA
They should have taken you to hospital.

ROSS
I just want to know where I am.
(beat)
Did I get her out?

LAURA
Do you remember what happened?

Ross opens his mouth to speak. Nothing comes out. He brings his hands up to cover his face, closing out the world.

ROSS
I couldn't even do that.

LAURA
We'll get you warmed up, then I'll take you to hospital. You said you were fine. But you're obviously not.

He sobs into his hands with deepening despair.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARM. BARN - NIGHT

Footsteps, then Laura emerges from the barn. She closes the big doors behind her then walks across the yard towards the house.

INT. FARMHOUSE. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Laura rolls up her sleeves then turns on the tap.

She rubs her hands together under water until they're clean. She turns off the tap and looks down into the sink. The sandy water whirlpools away clockwise. Her eyes dwell firmly on the last of the little vortex as it screws itself down.

An unexpected beat of contemplative stillness ensues.

We're seeing a burgeoning. The meaning of the event she witnessed connecting with her.

She looks away.

EXT. FARM. FIELD. NIGHT.

We are high up from Bird's point of view, looking on a shadowy figure below hurrying by a hedgerow. He throws his leg over a fence and gets low again.

We arch out wide then dip towards the ground, rushing in low over the fence and passing just a few feet above the secluded figure. It's the poacher.

We sweep up again and tilt to circle over the fields.

Suddenly a thrashing sound. The poacher turns to see Raymond running hard towards him. Raymond is taugth and ominous, pounding over the field.

The poacher drops the dead hare he was slipping into his sack and turns on his heels.

He runs with the speed of terror but Raymond is there at his shoulder in a moment. Raymond throws an arm around the Poacher's neck slowing him in a strange running embrace. Then something glints near the poacher's throat and everything stops. The poacher folds out of Raymond's arms onto the ground. Dead.

EXT. GYPSY CAMP. NIGHT.

Footsteps at the edge of the camp. We find Raymond slowly untying four ponies from the branches of a tree. Beyond, a tangle of half dismantled cars and rusting trailers. A big dog sleeps by the caravans at the end of the site.

The animals seem untroubled as he gathers the frayed leads and ropes in his hands and walks them away from the camp.

They ease away into the long grasses swaying in the breeze.

He steps with them into the trickle of a midnight stream. They cross obediently and gently. One stoops to drink. Raymond waits and as it drinks he strokes the flank of Fanning's little pony. He looks into its deep black eyes and it looks back into his.

EXT. FIELD. SHORT WHILE LATER.

They move on, silent as ghosts. The stars are out as they reach the brow of a hill which looks down into a field secluded by high trees on every side. In the field, we see Raymond's tractor wait silently, it's digger arm high in the air hovering over a large mound of freshly dug earth.

Raymond starts the horses down the hill towards the hole.

We cut to the ample blackness of the open hole. The poacher's body lies in a corner. His head thrown far back over his shoulder. The raw jugular gapes empty and glistens softly as steam rises from the wound.

INT. CHURCH. MORNING

The entrance to the church. Laura and Raymond are among a throng of congregants milling about before the service.

Church orderlies take coats. Laura absorbs the ornament and atmosphere. Beth McNeal walks up to her with the Pastor who offers his hand.

PASTOR

How do you do?

LAURA

Nice to meet you.

PASTOR

I was just telling Beth how happy I am Ablach Farm has new owners.

A smiling orderly mechanically reaches out for Laura's coat. She removes it and hands it over. The orderly hesitates. Her charms seem to send out an inaudible signal that turns heads.

She jostles through to join Raymond, who's chatting with a TALL OLD MAN, Mrs. McCoghan (who Wystan met earlier) and a CHUBBY WOMAN in her fifties.

RAYMOND

This is Georgina McFarland and her father, Percy. And this is Betty McCoghan. They're telling me the history of the farm.

LAURA

Oh.

PERCY

Yes, I was telling Raymond I used to fish on your river when I was a boy. In 1939!

GEORGINA

You were up to 1985. Naughton was on it by then.

PERCY

As a tenant, but he wasn't up to the job and was getting into all sorts of bother with various ventures that were causing problems with the other land owners. He didn't last long.

While Percy speaks, we see Mrs. McCoghan's mind elsewhere. Probably with Wystan's memory.

PERCY (CONT'D)

He was off the land by '86 or '87
and then it went up for sale proper
and that's when Mr. Johnson came on
to it and he was very good. You're
a lucky man and good luck to you.
You've got a proper slice of heaven
there.

INT. CHURCH - SHORT WHILE LATER

Pastor Dain is at the pulpit. He leads the congregation.

PASTOR/CONGREGATION

Yea though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death I
will fear no evil for thou are
with me, thy rod and thy staff they
comfort me still.

As the pastor reads, we see the different faces of his flock.
Amidst the piety and primness, a large proportion of the male
congregants nibble at Laura with furtive glances. Amidst it
all, we see Horace, hands covering his face, perhaps in shame
at not supporting his friend Wytan.

PASTOR/CONGREGATION (CONT'D)

My table thou has furnished in the
presence of my foes; My head thou
dost with oil anoint, and my cup
overflows. Goodness and mercy all
my life shall surely follow me. And
in God's house for evermore my
dwelling-place shall be.

Pastor Dain closes his big tome.

PASTOR

And now Arnold, Wytan's eldest son
will read.

A PORTLY MAN shuffles out along the pew. He moves unsteadily
in this funeral suit, breathing shallow as he makes his way
to the lectern.

INT. VAN. SHORT WHILE LATER

Raymond and Laura are driving back from church.

Up ahead, Fanning and his mates are walking on the verge
beside the road.

They see each other in the same instant. Fanning snatches up a stone.

As the van moves past, we see an intense glare towards Raymond from Fanning, and a placid glance returned.

Fanning lashes the stone at the van.

Snap! A thin white line flashes up the window.

Raymond calmly pulls in. The door opens and he emerges. He walks purposefully but without haste towards the lads.

Fanning plants his feet square as Raymond arrives. The gang read a hard glare on his face.

FANNING

Go on then.

Raymond stops. Fanning takes a casual step towards him. Looks Raymond up and down, uneasy about what he sees. Suspicious of something unnatural in his non-response.

OTHER LAD

What's wee yee? Got some grit in your fanny?

Raymond turns to face the lad behind him who is suddenly wielding a heavy stick.

OTHER LAD (CONT'D)

Do it then yee ganch. See what happens.

All are milling around Raymond who looks back to Fanning.

FANNING

You're a wrong'un. Something rotten wi yee.

BOXER

Has he lost his tongue? - He's a mong- He cannee talk. EEEAAGGHHH MUUGHH!

The lads do spastic hands to augment the insult.

Raymond rotates back to Fanning, still blank, assessing a strange puzzle.

Raymond feels something touch his back. It's something he has no reference for, like a kiss but with dark intent.

He turns to a RED-FACED LAD who stares up at him with blank insolence.

He is aware of that queer something happening again behind him. He turns to face the next lad, BOXER, with the single boxing glove. He rocks his bony shoulders at Raymond as if about to throw one.

Raymond feels that suggestion of a touch again. He turns and is confronted by the ginger one who sucks his cheeks in with that 'you're not going to get anything out of me' expression. Raymond hears that noise. And something touches his back again. He returns to meet Fanning's gaze.

FANNING

Where are the ponies?

RAYMOND

(feigning innocence)

I don't know anything about fucking ponies! What are you on about?

Fanning nods his head aggressively. Remains silent.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

(indignant)

My wife's in that van and you can thank your lucky stars she wasn't hurt. And it's just a crack. If that window had smashed..

(beat)

Now, do you think, between the lot of you, your parents are going to be able to scrape together enough money to replace that window?

FANNING

(feigning unflinching innocence)

What are yeh on about? What crack?

A thunderous stand-off. Raymond and Fanning glare like grand masters across a chess board.

BOXER

Tee fuck yur just an Elmer Fudd eejit. - fuck yeh! -- And take that eejit dolly wee yee tee.- She's a prossey.

The indefinable sensation on Raymond's back repeats. More sniggering and impertinence.

He looks hard at Fanning one more time then walks off. As he does, we see his back is covered in long gourds of spit.

The lads fold with laughter as he gets into the van.

EXT. FARM YARD. LATER. AFTERNOON.

A match is sparked and let fly at Raymond's petrol-soaked jacket with a nonchalant flick. The little bonfire at the foot of a wall bursts into life. Raymond scans the fields before turning back into the house.

INT. FARMHOUSE. LIVING ROOM. EVENING

Raymond and Laura stand in the living room, still and silent. Neither looks at the other or at anything in particular. No words, no filing of thoughts. On the back of an armchair Bird is perched, motionless like taxidermy.

Their eyes, open and staring at nothing, subtly change. The black pupil at the centre of the iris reduces down smaller and smaller until it disappears completely. Perverse, blank eyes now neither receiving nor projecting. Like something turned off.

The evening light dwindles about them, like abandoned objects forgotten by their owners.

EXT. LOWER WOOD. NIGHT

We find Fanning's gang with difficulty, hiding on the edge of the nettle filled gully. It's the spot Wylan described on the night he saw what he said he saw.

They are hunkered down low in cover. All eyes on the metal door, waiting for what might never happen. Little Sammy sits in a bush, his coat pulled around himself against the chill.

Boxer's in a hole, a fern reaches over him like an umbrella. His eyes are half shut but still aim straight for the door. Johnnyger is flat out in the heather with an unlit cigarette butt stuck to his lip. Fanning sits obscured by the ferns, his back against a tree set still for the long haul. His focus on the door.

Nothing happens.

Johnnyger turns himself on his side and puts his arm under his head for some comfort.

JOHNYGER
(whispering)
I'm closing my eyes for a bit
Boxer.

Fanning stands silently.

FANNING
(whispering)
I'm gonna take a walk down and have
a wee look at the house.

Fanning slips away leaving the bored lads to toy with sleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAWN.

Laura steps out into the yard. She moves to the barn, and unlocks the doors. The van waits inside. She enters.

INT. VAN. LANE. DAWN.

Laura drives. Movement catches her eye. Something up on the hill. A figure reaching the ridge. A TEENAGE GIRL holding a sheet of plastic over her head with one hand while dangling a bag with the other.

As Laura slows to look, the girl looks over her shoulder glaring. She doesn't look away and nor does Laura. The burning eye contact between these two is intense until Laura has to let her gaze return to the road. She drives on.

INT. FARMHOUSE. BATHROOM. DAWN.

Raymond looks intently at his image as he wipes suds from his face.

INT. FARMHOUSE. LANDING. SAME.

Raymond walks to the end of the landing and stops by the window. He scans down into the meadows and up over the ridge.

All seems quiet, no riders, no prying eyes.

He finishes his surveillance and is about to move away when he stops. There's something there. He focuses out to a plastic sheet taking the lip of the ridge. The teenage girl trudges along holding it over her against the rain.

Raymond traces her projected path and there, startlingly is another figure. It is Fanning. Hunched down and staring straight at the house. At Raymond.

Then, new sounds approach the yard. Fanning stands and slips away over the ridge towards the girl.

Raymond moves away from the window. There is no urgency in his movement.

Through the next window, he can see two lorries arriving loaded with fence posts. McKee's shouting from his tractor. McNeal's shouting back. Twenty other LABOURERS are ambling about. He picks his shirt up and puts it on as he walks downstairs.

EXT. RIDGE. SAME.

The teenage girl, ISLA, pushes through the long grass towards Fanning. They greet with a touch. Isla hands over the plastic bag and Fanning fishes out a sandwich, takes a big bite.

ISLA

Johnyger said you were still here.
What are you doing?

FANNING

I'm smelling something. Something's
going on.
(beat)
And I'm having a look.

He looks down to the busy yard. Bird rises out of a bush and takes a low turn about them, then flies off towards the farm.

EXT. FARMHOUSE. YARD. SAME

The labourers are standing around chatting. McKee leans out of his tractor. Shouts to McNeal.

MCKEE

There's no point in them standing
here Gordon. We're not putting this
fence around the garden.

McNeal, claps his hands to round up his labourers. Raymond walks over to McKee's tractor as McKee and his gun dog dismount.

RAYMOND

Shall we go and have a look then?

MCKEE

Yep. I'm going to bring the gun with me. Maybe get a crack at a pheasant.

(beat)

You can put it in your pot.

Raymond nods. McKee fishes the shotgun out of his gun box.

EXT. FIELD. SHORT WHILE LATER

Raymond and McKee walk across the field. McKee's dog bounds ahead. McKee points into the distance.

MCKEE

See that hill up there?

Raymond nods.

MCKEE (CONT'D)

If you were to buy that hill, you'd own everything you can see.

RAYMOND

Who owns it?

MCKEE

I own it.

RAYMOND

Is it for sale then?

MCKEE

Everything's for sale.

EXT. FIELD NEAR LOWER WOOD. SHORT WHILE LATER.

The workmen unload fence posts. Raymond and McKee stand at a blackberry bush amidst thorns and high nettles. McKee tentatively reaches in and plucks out a berry; looks at it admiringly then pops it in his mouth.

His attention is drawn to something deeper inside the spiky bush. A real beast of a berry bursting with juice. He points at it.

MCKEE

Look at that beauty in there. Mr Johnson could have reached in and got that without getting stung.

He reaches for an easier prize as he speaks, and gets stung going for it.

RAYMOND

Nah!

MCKEE

(looking at his hand)

No really, it's like he didn't feel them.

He bends to pick a dock leaf and rubs it into the ball of his hand.

MCKEE (CONT'D)

Apparently there's a trick to it. If you grasp the nettle you don't get stung.

RAYMOND

What idiot worked that out?

McKee's dog bounds towards them with a dead pheasant. Suddenly, another clutch of pheasants take to the sky. McKee sees them.

MCKEE

Here we go.

He raises the automatic shotgun. Gets a line. Fires. Misses. Shoots again and hits it. The dog runs off again to retrieve the bird.

RAYMOND

Nice shot.

He passes Raymond the gun. Raymond takes the weapon immediately accustomed. As if born to it.

McKee looks at Raymond and sees everything he expects in a farmer, a man ready to take the life out of something without hesitation.

A pheasant rises out of the heather. Raymond raises the gun up to the sky in no-nonsense style. Crack! Kills it.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

(nursing the gun)

Where did you buy your gun?

EXT. SAND DUNES. DAY

Laura walks along the dunes. She is making for the little orange tent Ross had pointed out from a distance.

On arrival, she dips inside; folds away the worn blanket and pillow, and without breaking rhythm, starts to dismantle the tent.

She moves inside and out expertly. Bit by bit it rolls away, creating a tiny bundle that fits under her arm.

She stands and looks at the spot.

All that is left is a flattened rectangle in the sand. The winds are already blurring the edges of the shape into obscurity.

EXT. ROAD. NIGHT.

Laura pulls up at traffic lights. A car comes along side.

Laura sees that the driver, KEV, a lad with a trendy haircut, is leaning out the window talking to her. Mates and girlfriends fill the car. Laura winds her window down and thudding music comes into focus.

KEV

I thought you was going to ignore me for a minute?

LAURA

No.

KEV

Out dancing tonight?

LAURA

Not tonight.

The lights change and the car bleeds away in it's version of a burn off. Laura moves off.

EXT. ROAD. NIGHT

Laura drives. A man and woman emerge from bushes. She drives on. TWO LADS appear in the road. They smile and reach for the van's wing mirror as she passes.

She drives on. A swaying bloke walks half in the road. His girlfriend is laughing. He raises his hands jubilantly as Laura passes. She drives on.

EXT. ROAD. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE. NIGHT.

Laura sees a FIGURE on the opposite side of the road thumbing a lift. He is alone except for a kebab which he attends to with gusto.

Laura keeps a bead on him as he turns away from the road towards a supermarket car-park.

She drifts down the road, scanning, trying to spot him.

She stops and gets out. She walks at his pace then slows. She can see headlights and other people moving. A deep beat thuds. She turns to walk back to the van.

A white stretch limo has pulled up. A HORDE OF WOMEN pour out. Unsteady on their heels, some stumble with drunken abandon. They are giggling at anything - a dropped hat is hilarious, an exposed breast is gut-aching comedy.

Laura is reaching her key into the van door when one of the passing girls approaches her.

DRUNK GIRL

Hello love, yee alright there?

Laura nods quickly. The girl leans into her.

DRUNK GIRL (CONT'D)

Yee are gorgeous yee.. what yee doing out here all in the dark alone love? Has some cunt upset yee?

Laura intimates that she is about to leave.

DRUNK GIRL (CONT'D)

It's only one o'clock hen, I'm not letting yeh go home yet. I'm not letting yeh. Girls come here, this lass is saying she's away home. Have yee see her? Here love, show the girls..

She steers Laura towards the crowd of girls. They gather round peering in at her, then they start to chant.

FOURTEEN DRUNK SCOTTISH WOMEN

'Come on out tee night.. come on out tee night.. looking right tonight..come on out tee night'

SKINNY DRUNK GIRL

Look at her..she looks like a film star.

She waves the girls away but they start to hug her with over-familiar zest. It's all good humoured, but there's a volatile energy to it.

FAT GIRL

We are taking you intee the party and we are gonna find out who's upset yee.

Laura is swallowed into the happy throng. Gathered up in their flow towards the club entrance. She's almost invisible in this moment, part of the party machine.

BIG MEN in black jackets and other figures gather at the doorway of the 'Deer Park Nightclub'. Lads being drawn out by the high pitched energy of drunk girls on a hen night.

INT. DEER PARK NIGHTCLUB. SHORT WHILE LATER

The dance floor is heaving. Party people shoulder to shoulder. The drunken girls are going wild. Lights strobe, music booms. Laura is at the centre of the action. Lithe, vivacious. Intoxicating. A lean LITTLE MAN is dancing close to get her attention. His moves come thick and fast. The girls notice. The fat girl leans in between the little man and Laura.

FAT DRUNK GIRL

Throw him back, he's a tiddler!

The little man looks offended, but he styles it out trying to show his worth with an uncertain smile.

There is a building energy as she turns away and looks into the crowd. The embarrassed little man moonwalks away. Men are staring at her from all directions. Some openly, some furtive.

ANOTHER BLOKE starts to dance in front of her. He smiles hard into her the whole time. Other men hover, their eyes locked on her.

People are talking to her. Lads laugh at nothing, hoping she'll join in. She does. A couple start snogging nearby. The man overtly looking at Laura as he forces his tongue hard into his girl's head.

The dancing and music build. The girls are all going wild, spinning like dervishes and braying like donkeys. A spotlight finds Laura.

DJ
(over the P.A.)
Holy Moly!!

There she is - the disco queen. The girls laugh, flattered by the attention.

Then the spotlight whirls off her and a strobe light kicks in. An disorienting pulse of light and dark. Flashframes of outline, then form, outline-form. She looks about her, gauging a route off the dance floor.

From above, we see her squeeze through the endless frenzy of bodies. She tries another direction. We shift with her. She turns again, looking for a different path.

Consternation. Overload. Her head is swirling like something's going to fuse. Her warning lights are flashing red. Out! She needs to get out!

INT. DEER PARK NIGHTCLUB. RED CORRIDOR. MOMENTS LATER

Laura moves anxiously along a curved red corridor. Looks back to check the wild girls aren't following. Walking wounded litter the long corridor. A girl overcome with booze, legs splayed out. An underage lad gagging air into the floor. On the curving red wall, she sees an 'EXIT' sign. She quickens in its direction.

Things quieten as she walks deeper into its long red plushness.

She stops. Another 'EXIT' sign points back in the direction she came from. She turns back on herself. She sees a door open up ahead. A girl emerges. Laura heads for the door.

INT. DEER PARK NIGHTCLUB. BATHROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Entering, she is confronted by a line of ten identical doors. She turns to see a mirror wall reflecting the same line of doors. She freezes. She's lost her bearings. Then the door flings open and a YOUNG MAN walks in. It's the bloke she followed into the car park. He looks at her, then smiles nervously.

ANDREW
I don't usually walk into the
ladies.

(MORE)

ANDREW (CONT'D)

But there's a line of blokes out
there waiting to ask you to dance.

(shrugs his shoulders)

No alternative.

(beat)

My name's Andrew.

And in that moment everything shifts back into alignment for her. She's in control again. Of where she is. And why she is here.

INT. DANCE FLOOR. SHORT WHILE LATER

Laura is on the dance floor, moving, tempting. Andrew is dancing next to her, smiling his head off. She smiles back.

He sees his moment and moves even closer. She turns spinning, on the shining floor. He leans into her ear.

ANDREW

I was on my way home.

(beat)

Pleased I came back.

Laura leans into his ear.

LAURA

I can't be seen leaving with you.

ANDREW

No problem.

He kisses her neck. Laura gives him a cautious smile. He smiles back and winks as he boogies on.

INT. BLACK STAIRCASE. BARN. SHORT WHILE LATER

Laura is on the black floor now. Still dancing. No music now. Just the sound of her and Andrew's dancing feet. She turns, showing flesh. Andrew's slipping deeper into the floor with each movement. He's unaware of anything but her as he sinks into the blackness. She smiles. He is just a head looking up at her, adoringly. She turns away as he slips under.

The floor becomes solid again. She walks back over the spot he went through. Picks up her skirt and proceeds back up the stairs.

INT. UNDER THE FLOOR. CONTINUOUS

Andrew is looking up at the spot where Laura would be if he could see through the blackness around him. His eyes adjust. He realizes he's looking at the other side of the floor.

That he's beneath it. Laura's footsteps click..click overhead, diminishing.

He looks behind him to see the steps ascending into the underside of the floor. He feels for the spot he came in through, but it's gone.

He looks down at his feet. His toes slow slide along the lip of the step. He tries to shift his weight, but his feet can't make contact. He is weightless, as though underwater.

As he desperately tries to regain a footing, he drifts further away. Or the stairs drift. He can't tell which.

Everywhere is blackness. Only the stairs hold any affirmation of reality. But there they go. Moving gently away into the dimming void, until the last suggestion of them is gone. He hangs in this amniotic space deserted by everything he understands.

Suddenly the far-off darkness shifts.

Something is out there. Indistinct. But something big and heavy. A barely recognizable form drifting in the abyss.

A mass of deformed flesh. Bellies balloon around it like a ghoulish Marilyn Monroe skirt.

Particles waft near it like plankton. As they drift away, deep gutters eaten into flesh are revealed. This is a man, and he is disintegrating.

Andrew drifts closer and sees a face, a distended bulk with tiny eyes. They are alive these hopeless eyes, and they are looking at Andrew.

We realize this is, was, Colin. His healthy frame mutated into this horrific form.

Andrew tries to speak but can't. He stares terrified. Colin's eyes jolt with pain; gulping, swallowing and breathing at the same time.

Andrew is close now, and sees that more sections of the body are being eaten away, as if some dissolving agent is at work.

Suddenly, Colin reaches his giant arm up. The gnarled fingers plead for grasp. Andrew looks at the hand and takes it. This monstrous claw is somehow tender. Needing this touch.

Andrew looks into Colin's face. It is submitting to the decay now. The mouth almost gone. The left side of the head is breaking away like wet bread. Helpless eyes lock on Andrew as they dissolve into the gloom.

Then without a jolt, the hand separates, coming away from its owner. Andrew looks at it, frozen by its desperate hold. The fingers open and the forlorn hand falls away. The digits still reach with longing for him as they disappear into the darkness.

Andrew is alone again. Held by the black silence and terror.

INT. FARMHOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

We enter through the dimming room with Laura. She moves from window to window drawing each set of curtains precisely shut.

We are aware of furtive footsteps behind her.

She turns, and sees two dark figures enter from the yard and in along the hallway.

Raymond arrives first. He draws out a chair then goes to stand at the right side of the table. The next figure is a black alien form. It walks to the head of the table.

It takes the proffered seat. Before it, we see the place setting of an honored guest. Plate, knife and fork. And beyond that, a shallow serving dish.

Raymond leans in and removes its lid, revealing a BLOOD RED TERRINE.

The alien sits in front of it. Then, its elegant black arm reaches out slowly. Its knife hovers over the aspic, then splices through to the bottom of the dish. It lifts a portion clear and brings it to the plate.

Then the fork twists into it and lifts a mouthful up to its dark head. Where the nose would be on a human head, and with a sudden dilation, a mouth-sized hole opens up like an aperture. We see the fork aim towards this horrid maw which then close around it. The fork is now retracted having dispatched its load, and in the briefest moment those four little fork-holes re-fill and the orifice is gone. Only a solid surface remains, as though there was never a hole there.

There is a beat.

An evaluation. Assessing. Calculating.

Raymond stands in attendance like some patient butler. A menacing silence hangs over them all. Raymond, the alien form, Laura.

Then it leans in and gathers the same amount from the dish. Then brings it up to its head. The hole re-opens. The fork is inserted as before. The hole seals around the load as before. Then the fork retracts clean again. We cut to the black arm as it swings up to the mouth repeating these same actions piston-like. We return to the maw watching this bizarre gorging repeat over and over like a devilish production line.

INT. FARMHOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY.

A cupboard door opens. Raymond's hands reach in for a tea cup. He puts it next to a boiling kettle.

Sounds of gravel crunch, car door, and footsteps. Raymond walks to the front door.

INT. FARMHOUSE. CONTINUOUS

Raymond at the front door. The doorbell rings. He opens up.

PASTOR

Hello Mr. Flynn. I was passing.

RAYMOND

Come in, come in.

PASTOR

Thank you. It's Raymond isn't it?

RAYMOND

Yes. The kettle's just boiled, would you like a cup of tea?

PASTOR

Oh, how nice.

RAYMOND

How do you have it?

PASTOR

Just milk please.

Raymond moves back to the kitchen.

The Pastor takes in the living room.

INT. FARMHOUSE. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Raymond pours the water into a teapot. Then, through the slit in the door hinge, watches the Pastor look at a sexy photograph of Laura on the mantelpiece.

The Pastor's gaze drifts around the room but returns to the photograph. She is standing on the deck of a boat in a swimsuit. It's like she has solicitous eye contact with him. He tears himself away, alarmed at his own thoughts.

INT. FARMHOUSE. LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS

Raymond arrives and sets the tea things down.

RAYMOND

No biscuits I'm afraid, the removal men had them all.

The Pastor fishes a small package from his pocket and hands it to Raymond.

PASTOR

A little house warming present.

Raymond opens the quaint wrapping with care. It's a Bible.

RAYMOND

Oh, that's very kind.

Raymond fans the gold edges of the pages then sets it on the arm of an armchair with a satisfied pat.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

Thank you.

PASTOR

(sipping his tea)
Thank you.

RAYMOND

You've been here before of course.

PASTOR

Yes.

RAYMOND

He seems to have been quite popular old Mr. Mr Johnson.

PASTOR

Yes, he was a very nice man, very decent, God rest his soul.

He looks at Raymond in a way that says "I'm not sure how you're going to take this."

Raymond looks back at him with a very confident 'what?' on his face.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

So...Well, I'm actually at a loss
as to how to talk about this.

RAYMOND

Really? Oh dear, is it something
we've done?

PASTOR

Well no, it's about Laura.

Raymond looks at him, focusing in on his words.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

There was a sort of disruption in
the church on Sunday.

(beat)

A distraction. Laura. Didn't you
notice?

RAYMOND

(disarmingly)

I don't understand. What kind of
distraction?

PASTOR

Some members of the congregation
were distracted...I mean, their
attention wasn't with the service.

(beat)

It would be remiss of me not to say
anything.

RAYMOND

I'm lost.

PASTOR

Many of the congregation...the
men...were...er, not attending.
They were looking at Laura.

RAYMOND

Looking?

PASTOR

Yes.

RAYMOND

Ogling.

PASTOR

Well, yes.

RAYMOND

I'm not sure what to say about that.

The Pastor shrugs and takes a long sip of tea. Raymond looks at him like he's `meat, and the Pastor looks back uncomfortably.

PASTOR

Well we've never had the problem before.

RAYMOND

What were you thinking?

PASTOR

There is a little shop in the village that sells those very nice dresses...You know the sort the older women wear....like a suit aren't they. With a jacket.

RAYMOND

Cover her up?

PASTOR

Well, I'm worried about their thoughts.

RAYMOND

So it's their imaginations you're worried about?

PASTOR

Their souls.

RAYMOND

(Dismissively)
Next!

Shock. Then a hard silence.

Raymond lets it land.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

It's their imaginations you're worried about.

PASTOR

Yes.

RAYMOND

What do you imagine they're
imagining?

PASTOR

I'm a man of the cloth.

RAYMOND

But you're a man after all.

PASTOR

Yes I am.

RAYMOND

So what are they imagining?

PASTOR

I'll tell you what they're
imagining. The flesh.

RAYMOND

But we can be more than flesh.

PASTOR

Yes we can..

Raymond moves to some shelves and slots the Bible in on a high perch. He talks to the Pastor over his shoulder as he presses it in slowly, with a significant finger that says, 'that's your place, STAY in it'.

RAYMOND

Then I think you should go and tell
your flock to be more than flesh
and not come here telling my wife
to be less than what she is.

(beat)

She's not wearing anything too
short. She's not wearing anything
too low or too tight. It's just her
in a dress. An ordinary dress.
She's a person sitting in a dress.
She's an attractive person, but
that's not her fault. It's the
people who are looking at her..
they are at fault.

(beat)

They need to do something
differently or you need to do
something differently.

PASTOR

No, you're right. I'm being
foolish.

Raymond shows him the door, dismissive.

RAYMOND

I'll mention that shop to Laura.
She'll be sorry she missed you.

Admonished, the Pastor turns and walks out. Raymond shuts the door, satisfied he won't be bothered by him again. He picks up the cup and saucer and heads to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN. MOMENTS LATER

We are close on Raymond's fingers moving over the cup. It rotates in spray as the hands dig away at something invisible to the naked eye. Something filthy that must be expunged. The cup is set on the draining board. The hands return to the water, rolling over in a cleaning frenzy.

EXT. ISOLATED FARMLAND. DAY

Raymond unzips a long leather case as a mist rolls off a field.

He brings out a shotgun. Puts it to his shoulder and lets it nestle. Then swings the weapon extravagantly to the sky.

Now he brings it down, snaps it open, loads two cartridges and flicks it closed.

He reaches to a low wall where a canvas bag lays open and grabs a clay disc. Then hurls the disc high. He brings the gun to his shoulder, aims and "Crack"! Reduces the disc to powder.

We enter a sequence in which Raymond throws first one, then two, three, four, and five discs at a time. He picks them off with mechanical accuracy in a frenzy of gunfire.

We see him fire underarm, one handed, from the hip. This is ominous gunplay, at an extreme level. Fearful virtuosity. Spent cartridges build at his feet until he reaches into the bag and finds it empty.

He slips the gun back between the folds of its leather envelope as a cloud of smoke gently dissipates.

EXT. DESERTED ROADS. NIGHT.

A distant FIGURE in a trench coat is walking by the side of the road, bent over against the rain. The van draws along side him but he doesn't even look at it. Just moves on.

The van persists there at walking pace. Finally he stops. The van stops. His head is still bowed into the rain, then slowly he lifts it and half turns to face the van.

INT. VAN. ROAD. SHORT WHILE LATER.

Laura's driving. The man in the trench-coat sits in the passenger seat half turned towards the window. Rain thunders down on the van.

LAURA

You should get that coat off.

He fumbles awkwardly at the sodden coat to remove it.

His head is still shrouded by the hood of his sweat top. He pushes into the seat so as to obscure himself from Laura's vision. His hand comes up to draw the hood back, and there is a moment...a moment of halting sorrow. He draws it back.

The first note of disquiet is to see the paleness of his skin. Alarm heightens as deformed lumps and bumps reveal themselves to be lips, eyelids and ears. A mish-mash of monstrous features collide. There is no balance to the broken landscape of this face.

He leans down to the coat and transfers a glinting whistle from it's pocket. He taps the rain out, sucks it dry, then tucks it safe into his shirt pocket.

Now he turns in her direction, revealing it all, and she is already there, waiting for his eyes to meet hers. And once they do, he sees her face is entirely untroubled by his. His mother wouldn't have been able to look at him as she does now. When people look at him they feel genetic shame. But she looks at him like he has a normal face.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Do people scream?

UGLY MAN

Children scream.

LAURA

Do you get used to it?

He shakes his head.

Laura smiles, then turns a little, showing him her openness and letting him see into those eyes.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Is that why you ended up here?
(beat)
Scotland? Middle of nowhere? Under
a willow?

He doesn't respond.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Do you really live under a willow?

UGLY MAN
I'm on a waiting list.

LAURA
Where on the list?

He shrugs his shoulders.

She looks at him. He tries to distract himself from the beauty of this temptress by looking out of his window.

UGLY MAN
(bemused)
How could this be?
(to himself)
What would be happening?

He finds his mouth working again almost without warning. It's all suddenly too much for him.

UGLY MAN (CONT'D)
I can't for the life of me, looking
over there at you, imagine what you
see looking over here at the likes
of me..is it a joke or something?

LAURA
What are you talking about?

UGLY MAN
You looking at me like you want it.
Like it's on a plate.

Laura looks over to him.

LAURA
You must be disgusted by me.

UGLY MAN

Please don't fuck me about. Just keep your eyes on the road.

LAURA

I'm sorry I kept you standing in that rain. I just suddenly thought, 'Who am I picking up?' But then I thought, I can't leave anyone to walk in this.

UGLY MAN

You're right to ask.

LAURA

Do you go to Doach often?

UGLY MAN

I go to Dolmart Street where they come and hand-pick labour.

LAURA

Why are you travelling at this time of night?

UGLY MAN

I walk there.

LAURA

So.. you're all alone in the world.

UGLY MAN

I've got old George.

LAURA

(delicately focusing on
the new information)
You didn't mention old George.

UGLY MAN

He's my dog.

LAURA

And who looks after him when you go off?

UGLY MAN

He'll be under the willows.

LAURA

Where is this place you live?

UGLY MAN
Grancha Park. It's about five miles
back.

LAURA
Would you come and work for me
today instead.

We see his hands move furtively as he takes a nip of skin
between his thumb and finger...and pinches himself.

UGLY MAN
I can't understand how a bird like
you doesn't have a man about.

LAURA
Well I don't.

UGLY MAN
What are you doing up here all
alone? Driving around all alone?

LAURA
I get asked that question a lot.

UGLY MAN
Do you ever answer it?

INT. BLACK STAIRCASE. SHORT WHILE LATER

Laura walks across the black floor looking over her shoulder
as she lets her top drop through her fingers.

The ugly man moves as if on a chain. Eyes locked on her.

He pulls his shirt up over his torso. The steel whistle pops
out of his pocket and falls through the darkness like a
slither of sunlight. It lands with a sharp *tinkle-tinkle*.

The noise brings on a silence like that after a gun crack.

Stirred, he looks at her, the otherworldliness is gone. The
spell is broken. He opens his mouth weakly.

UGLY MAN
Ha..Cha Hel Hello...

LAURA
Hello.

UGLY MAN
This is ..I am . This is...I am
asleep?

LAURA

Yes.

UGLY MAN

You're asleep too?

LAURA

Yes I am.

UGLY MAN

This is great isn't it...I love this.

LAURA

Yes.

UGLY MAN

Cold.

LAURA

We won't let that stop us.

UGLY MAN

I feel cold? I'm asleep aren't I?

Suddenly afraid, his eyes come off her and he turns the other way. His eyes search the darkness. They don't need to search far. There, frozen in different moments of creeping stalk, are four black aliens.

At first they're just shapes, dream images, unthreatening. Yet in a moment, as the idea of them becomes clearer, they become totally menacing.

He steps backwards, away from them and towards Laura.

UGLY MAN (CONT'D)

I don't like it...

Suddenly she is there on his shoulder.

UGLY MAN (CONT'D)

Where's George?

LAURA

Under the willows.

UGLY MAN

My mouth's dry. Everything's going at a hundred miles an hour.

LAURA

Come to me.

UGLY MAN
I'm dreaming...dreaming.

LAURA
Yes, Yes we are.

UGLY MAN
Good.

LAURA
You don't want to wake up do you?

UGLY MAN
No, never.

LAURA
They're gone.

UGLY MAN
They better be. Gave me-self a
right fright there.
(reproaching himself)
Fucking shitter.

LAURA
Come closer. It's warmer here.

The Ugly Man comes on reluctantly, like a man stepping onto the gallows. He tries a smile, coaxing himself.

UGLY MAN
(reassuring himself)
Eyes on the prize.

Laura is working hard to keep him in line. He steps on and looks to the floor as it takes him in. He double takes. Laura beckons. He breathes hard, eyes questioning. His limbs into action. The shadow figures withdraw. At each step he persuades himself to take the next.

The frailty of his progress compels her. Her body falls into a new rhythm, deeper, more insistent.

Her gyrations become a rolling, sensual dance. Her fingers click-click-click to provoke him. His eyes widen. Her arms, hips and neck scintillate. His mouth hangs open.

Soon he is in it up to his chin. He takes a long, terrified look at Laura. She smiles at him like nothing's happening. He takes a deep, terrified breath, holds his nose and puts his head under.

Laura stops her dance, turns and moves back towards the black stairs, collecting her clothes as she goes. On the landing at the top of the space she stops and dresses.

We read the echo of fragility in the movement of her eyes, even her body. *She seems less exact, less vigorous, less disconnected.*

EXT. MOONLIT ROADS. NIGHT

Raymond is driving. A series of images of the tractor pulling through the landscape.

As the headlights flare towards us, he pulls up by large metal gates. He looks beyond them into a large parkland.

EXT. GRANCHA PARKLAND. SAME

Raymond steps out into the squall. He moves to the gates. They are locked. He steps back, scanning the area.

He goes to the tractor, turns the lights off, locks it up.

He returns to the gates and in a moment throws his leg over metal spikes.

He walks up the pasture. Three weeping willows rustle in the wind. He gets to about twenty feet away and stops.

RAYMOND

(calls)

George!...George!

Nothing. He looks about. Moves closer to the hulking trees. Listening. The trees groan and click in the wind.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

George.

Suddenly there is a scramble in the leaves near him. He turns to face the sound.

The wind whistles. Then aggressive barking...but in the other direction. Raymond turns. Suddenly he reaches for his leg and spins. His hands tear at whatever is grasping his thigh. In the half light he can see. George. A MASSIVE ALSATIAN. Eyes rolling in anger, teeth locked into his leg. George twists trying to tear the leg off. Raymond raises a fist but as he brings it down, the beast is gone.

The scene seems empty again. Raymond moves towards a fallen tree and gathers up a long stick.

Armed, he turns, but at that moment, George is in the air leaping at his throat. Raymond gets his arm up. George knocks him to the ground and is on him, teeth locked on his forearm. Raymond reaches into the muzzle to tear it away. George snaps viciously at the hand then bounds off.

Raymond gets unsteadily to his feet. The beast is moving at the edge of the willows.

Raymond looks at it. It looks at him. He reaches into his pocket. Takes out the Ugly Man's whistle and holds it to his lips. We hear nothing, but George bounds out into the clearing. Then checks and returns into cover.

Raymond turns too and strides for the gate. He clammers over it. We see George weave amidst the trees. There, ominous for a moment, then gone.

INT. TRACTOR CAB. CONTINUOUS.

Raymond climbs in. He rolls back the ripped sleeve and we see the forearm in the faint light. Here and there the surface is broken, showing something black beneath the pale skin of the forearm. A living black.

Raymond lowers the sleeve over it again.

EXT. GRANCHA PARKLAND. SAME

Raymond jumps back over the gate. He gathers his shotgun from under his arm and loads two cartridges. He brings the dog whistle to his lips and blows.

Silence. The wind moving in the trees and over the grass.

EXT. LOWER WOOD. NIGHT.

Fanning hides in the ferns. His eyes are fixed on the metal door beyond the nettles, but they ache to close. He folds his hands under his armpits for heat and yawns. His eyes slowly shut as he's sucked into sleep.

A new noise within the sounds of the wood. A metallic rasp. Something pushes through undergrowth. Fanning's eyes half open. He looks down to the door. The fucker is open! He pulls his eyes wide not sure if he's dreaming. Something is happening by the door. He can't move, but he starts to shake a little.

TWO FIGURES, silhouettes, moving.. holding each other? No. One is holding the other...one is hurt...or dead? No it's not dead, it's standing now. They glint...they're wet. And the other is a woman. Her hair trails over the man as she struggles, holding him. The sodden figures move slowly. He can't make them out. They step uneasily with each other. She's leading him. He's naked.

She lets him walk now. He manages a step, holding on to trees, but then seems to find his feet. He judders off through the nettles, unsteady but moving. She turns away, and in a moment is back at the door.

Fanning stands bolt upright.

INT. METAL DOOR ENTRANCE. CONTINUOUS.

Inside the tunnel now, with Laura. She doesn't look back to the wood or at the naked man fleeing. She closes the metal door, shutting her and us in. We are in darkness with her. The breathlessness of her effort, or panic, is all we hear.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE. BATHROOM. PRE DAWN.

Close on Laura's face looking squarely into the camera. But her absorbed look is beyond us and into the distance. Wet hair clings to the pallor of her cold skin. Her eyes, are set on one spot like lasers. Reaching and set forever. Pure tranquility. Enlightenment.

EXT. FARM. SUNRISE.

The stillness that is the threshold of dawn. End to end flat dark. Then the sky starts to show itself as heavy blue. Sunlight begins to occupy the rim of the land. Bird song bleeds in. Rousing. This is dawn declaring.

EXT. FARMYARD. SAME

Raymond drives the tractor towards the house. As he turns into the yard, he breaks hard on seeing the barn doors open and Laura's van still there. He looks down into the field as if checking what might be wrong. He can't see any of the workforce even though their vehicles are there.

He parks and steps out, giving the van a second look. His right hand holding his torn sleeve in place.

INT. FARMHOUSE. CONTINUOUS

He moves through to the kitchen scanning for signs of why Laura isn't already on the road. He moves up the stairs, then stops to listen. A moment, then he moves on to the bathroom..

INT. FARMHOUSE. LANDING. CONTINUOUS

Here he can see Laura standing with her back to him. She's looking into the mirror. Held in eye-to-eye contact with it. Reflection and reflectee mesmerized.

Raymond remains there, still, captured in thought. Then, a pulse of alarm moves through him. He steps into the room and towards the mirror.

INT. FARMHOUSE. BATHROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Laura's reflection fills our frame. Suddenly everything shifts. The room and Laura's face tilt. Raymond is turning the mirror to the wall. The reflection is gone, the dusty wooden back shows itself to the room. Raymond faces her. Laura doesn't flinch. Her focus remains uninterrupted. Locked on a point in space.

She looks up at him like a child coming out of a trance. He looks at her. Her bedraggled hair, the streaks of eye-makeup, the lipstick held ready for work between a trembling thumb and forefinger, but unapplied. His eyes hover over all these signs and can't comprehend them.

RAYMOND/UNIVOICE
(incisive)
Stay there.

Laura speaks with an identical voice.

LAURA/UNIVOICE
(pretending awareness)
What time is it?

RAYMOND/UNIVOICE
(incisive)
You're not in control.

Laura looks at him. Her eyes still lost.

Banging on the front door draws Raymond from the bathroom.

RAYMOND/UNIVOICE (CONT'D)

(incisive)

No mirrors.

He goes downstairs, changing into a fresh shirt.

Laura moves to the sink, filling her hands with water and drawing it over her face. Washing away her waking coma. She seems more herself again.

A sudden fluttering outside as Bird lands on the windowsill, then TAP, TAP, TAP! with it's beak on the glass. Bird looks at Laura expectant. She doesn't move. Bird locks on her face. She doesn't meet it's gaze and recoils from the window to the landing.

Bird puffs up in protest and alarm, then takes flight.

INT. LANDING. SAME

She turns towards the stairs, but then stops. Held by an ominous longing. She slowly looks back...

To the spot through the doorway where the turned away mirror rests like a shadow of itself.

She stares at the wood, at nothing, yet it's as if in it she sees everything.

INT. FARMHOUSE. YARD. SAME.

Bird sweeps down over Raymond and McKee who are hurrying towards the field. McKee is in a sweat, tugging at Raymond's sleeve to quicken him.

Bird flashes low past the pair. We see Raymond reading Bird's unrest by his sudden bursts of flight.

Raymond looks back. He sees the van turn in the yard. Laura is inside. She is off.

EXT. FIELD. SAME.

Bird shadows the pair towards the woods. McKee talks frantically. Raymond stares ahead as if he can see the distant things McKee is talking about.

EXT. LOWER WOOD. MOMENTS LATER.

They pass the outposts of the new fence, some already strung with wire. An abandoned cement mixer turns. Shovels lie in the grass. No one is working. In a few strides they can see the workers and McNeal in a huddled circle.

By them, stands Fanning on a high rock. The lad looks at the approaching men, his eyes narrowed, scrutinizing Raymond.

The gathering turn to see them and automatically open up to reveal the object of their attention.

And there it is. A naked human form (we see that it's the Ugly Man) lying face down in the dirt. His arms outstretched, his flesh all blistered with a million, livid stings. Flies buzz about the wounds and dirty arsehole.

The men are speechless. Bird darts above the gathering. Raymond performs the correct behaviour.

RAYMOND

(horrified)

What's gone on there?

(beat)

Does anybody recognise him?

MCNEAL

No.

One of the workers, a SMALL MAN, steps through a gap in some bushes just a few yards away.

SMALL MAN

He's come through this way.

(indicating)

From there, just like the wee lad said.

He points back through the gap to a trail of crushed foliage reaching deep into the wood.

MCKEE

I asked you not to touch anything.
Did you not hear me say 'don't go
wandering about'?

The man moves back towards the group his head down, eyes hard on the ground.

Raymond stares at the dead man. He wonders how to play this. He sways, then leans against a sapling under the fatigue of nausea.

RAYMOND
(panting)
..excuse..

Raymond moves away, shaking. The crowd look away as one, allowing him his privacy. He crashes through the trees to a secluded spot. Only Fanning is watching him.

He doubles over into himself and crouches down until he's obscured by a large bush. Fanning sees Bird fly down and enter the same bush.

He watches for a moment. Then Bird reappears, exploding into the air.

Fanning watches Bird fly off, then refocuses on the bush. Raymond emerges from it and walks back to the group. Back to his old self.

EXT. SKY. MORNING.

Bird soars out in the direction he saw Laura leave. But the roads are hard to read, cloaked by trees on either side. He sweeps left and right, searching for the white van below.

EXT. GULGAITH HIGH STREET. SHORT WHILE LATER.

Laura pulls up opposite the village green. Her phone is ringing on the seat. She stares ahead, transfixed by nothing. The insistent phone gets no attention. Laura gets out and crosses the empty street. She steps towards the green and sits down on a bench.

We watch her, no agenda beating in her. A strange peace.

Her eyes drift through the village, finding the pockets of activity.

A cat slips out of an alleyway and finds a sunny spot... A butcher draws his canopy out... Men talk loudly at the end of the street. The shout of 'Alright Derek!' echoes off the house fronts... A country bus stops and three women get off... Across the green, infants file through a school gate.

Laura's attention is taken by the clicking heels of a woman bustling along. It's Beth McNeal. Seeing Laura she slows, then crosses to her with a beaming wave.

BETH
What are you doing here?

LAURA
I'm buying a dress.

Laura slides to her left and Beth sits.

BETH
Oh, I'm picking up a dress. The McAlon's youngest is getting married today. They've been altering it...(smiling) Taking the hem up a bit... but I'm worried it might be too short. My legs are so short. Oh look, there's Jilly now.

Beth stands. A LARGE WOMAN in her fifties teeters along delves into her bag and produces a bunch of keys.

BETH (CONT'D)
Tell me what you think of it. Tell me if I look stupid.

Laura smiles and they both get up and cross the street towards the windows of Bella Fashion.

INT. BELLA FASHIONS. MORNING

They enter through the tinkling door.

SHOP LADY
God, you're early. I've just opened.

BETH
I've got to get the car washed, get my hair done, got Gerry to organize. This is Laura by the way. Jilly.

JILLY
Hello Laura.

LAURA
Hello.

Laura moves to the centre of the shop without looking at anything. Jilly presents Beth's dress on the counter top.

JILLY

Here you are love, I took the waist out and took it up from there so the hem has that nice wee spilt at the back of your knee.

BETH

Oh good I was worried about that looking wrong once you took it up.

JILLY

That's why I took it up from the waist.

Jilly hands Beth the dress, then draws back the curtain to a cubical. As Beth slips inside, Laura catches a glimpse of herself in the distant mirror.

LAURA

I'd like to try on the grey dress in the window please. I'm a size eight.

SHOP LADY

Oh, right. Sorry now, you've caught me on the hop this morning. I haven't opened up properly yet.

Jilly does fancy fingers over a nearby rail of grey dresses and plucks one out. She hands it to Laura.

SHOP LADY (CONT'D)

Give me a second, I'll get the lights on in here so you can see.

She draws another curtain back. Laura disappears inside the dark booth. Then lights flutter around the mirrored cubicle, revealing Laura already engaged in her own reflection again. The grey dress hangs on the door forgotten.

EXT. LOWER WOOD. SAME

Raymond hears a siren. Through the trees he can see a POLICE LAND ROVER with blue light flashing, move up the fields towards the spot where the figure lies. McNeal walks towards the Land Rover as it pulls up. Two portly, country POLICEMEN step out putting on their hats.

POLICEMAN 1

Who's in charge here?

MCNEAL

I am. Gordon McNeal.

POLICEMAN 1

And what exactly is the purpose of the work going on?

MCNEAL

We're building a fence.

The police look at the mountain of flesh and are taken aback for a moment. Then pulling themselves together they produce notebooks.

POLICEMEN 1

Who found the body?

A SKINNY MAN with long black hair steps forward.

SKINNY MAN

The boy did.

POLICEMAN 1

What's your name?

FANNING

Peter Fanning.

POLICEMAN 1

Lets step over here...

They move away from the group.

POLICEMAN 2

(announcing)

We're going to be taking witness statements, so no-one leave until we speak to you please. Okay, what I want, is for everyone to step this way.

He points to a spot twelve feet to the left of the body.

POLICEMAN 2 (CONT'D)

In a line, away from the area.

He beckons them to the spot. A few of the workers, McKee and Raymond line up like the seven dwarfs.

POLICEMAN 2 (CONT'D)

Watch where you walk. If you see anything unusual, stop and tell everyone else to stop.

Policeman 1, who is with Fanning, brings his radio up to his face and starts talking.

POLICEMAN 1

(into radio)

Yes, there is a body here.
Suspicious death, we need C.I.D
please. On call D.I, the F.M.E and
a supervisor.

EXT. SPACE.

A vast black mass. Then movement. Something articulating,
itself into form.

It begins to grown more complex structures.. As we saw Laura
being made in the opening scene. Whatever this is, it comes
from that same hand.

A rectangle separates itself and rotates and transforms into
an octahedron. A black circular pillar emerges. On the end
of that a more elaborate web of structures. Like the parts of
a broken object.

This three-dimensional puzzle combines into a single object.
It is like watching stone being unshattered.

Suddenly the knitting together is done.

The octahedron retracts back leaving the black pillar hanging
in the void. And on it's leading face, a *section of ancient
rock.*

The pillar aligns and moves forward. We drift over the
massive object and turn to face where it points.

We are on the other side of the tunnel, which leads to the
metal doorway hidden amidst the nettles.

The rock-tipped pillar starts pushing its way into place.
Slowly gliding home. A round peg in a round hole.

These two elements from opposite sides of the cosmos
dovetailing together. Plugging. Completing.

INT. BELLA FASHIONS. CHANGING BOOTH. SAME

Laura is exactly as we left her at the mirror. Jilly calls
from the other side of the curtain.

JILLY

You OK in there?

LAURA
I'm just coming.

Laura snaps out of it, and emerges from the changing booth.

JILLY
How did it look?

LAURA
Not quite.

JILLY
Beth's nipped back to the car, she forgot her purse.

Laura looks out from the window. Across the street, Beth McNeal is standing with THREE WOMEN.

The older woman, drawn, leading the proceedings. She clasps a wad of flyers. Next to her, a younger woman, whom the spark has gone from. She holds more flyers. By her side, a teenager. Eyes staring out along the street - challenging it. Beth looks sympathetic towards something they're saying. They hand her a flyer then move on. Beth returns towards the shop.

As she folds the flyer into her purse Laura just sees the word MISSING as she tucks it in.

Back inside the shop, Beth does a little twist, showing Laura the length and cut of the dress.

BETH
It's not bad is it? (another quick twist from the heels.) The legs don't look too short do they?

She stands still to let Laura decide.

LAURA
No. You look good.

Beth walks to the counter with her purse open.

BETH
Not too short?

LAURA
Not at all.

EXT. LOWER WOOD. AFTERNOON

Several police cars are here. FORENSIC INVESTIGATORS erect a tent, others prod around the corpse. Raymond looks on. McKee and McNeal stand by him. Workers sit in the grass. Fanning is flanked by a stocky DETECTIVE and the policeman who interviewed him. The detective looks about as he speaks to Fanning, piecing together what he's hearing.

DETECTIVE

She went back inside.

FANNING

She helped him for a bit, then went back inside.

DETECTIVE

What do you mean by that?

FANNING

She was helping him walk.

DETECTIVE

Did you recognise her?

FANNING

No, too dark. They were too far away.

DETECTIVE

So he was alive when you got to him.

FANNING

Aye.

DETECTIVE

And he spoke?

FANNING

Aye. He was saying she'd done him.

DETECTIVE

Who?

FANNING

He just said 'she'. I thought he meant the woman who was with him.

DETECTIVE

But you said she was helping him.
Which was it, was she helping him
or not?

FANNING

I don't know. He was wet, he was
choking, he was shaking. He said
she took him down into hell. He was
shitting himself.

As we listen, we see the policeman and Raymond walking
towards us. They are followed a few steps behind by McKee and
five burly workers with various tools.

DETECTIVE

And neither of them spoke the whole
time.

FANNING

No.

DETECTIVE

And you stayed here all night
because you thought someone was
going to open this door?

FANNING

Well they did, didn't they.

The police, Raymond, McKee, McNeal and the group of men
arrive. The Detective responds by approaching Raymond with a
nonchalant flick through his notes.

DETECTIVE

(To Raymond)

Do you know anything about this
doorway the lad's talking about?

Raymond gives a 'first I've heard of it' shrug.

RAYMOND

No mention of it on the deeds.

The detective folds his book away into his pocket.

DETECTIVE 1

Lead the way then.

Fanning moves off business-like, flanked by the detective and
policemen. McKee and Raymond follow. The rest of the assembly
bring up the rear.

The young gypsy lad leads the trail of men into the murky interior of the woods.

They reach the place where Wystan woke and saw the doorway with its strange visitors. A parting emerges in the bed of nettles. The body's trail, incriminating like a smoking gun.

Fanning looks at Raymond, and directly to him, and for all to hear, announces...

FANNING

Now we'll see.

Raymond does not respond.

Fanning flicks his hood up over his head drawing it tight about his face. Pulls his sleeves down over his fists and walks into the stinging forest with conviction.

The policemen, Raymond, McKee and the others follow. This time Raymond walks through the nettles cautiously.

Feet stamp the ground, forcing nettles over onto themselves. Finally they emerge in the clearing by the rock face and the metal door set into it.

They look at it for a moment. Absorbing it. Then the detective steps through the crowd.

DETECTIVE

Open it.

A sledge-hammer is passed to a worker. He crashes it against the door. Another sledge appears, and a pile driver is wedged into the gap opened by the first blows. The two set to work in rhythm. A cacophony of metal fury. Then, clang, the door falls from its hinges and crashes at their feet. Silence.

Eyes widen, jaws drop. There, behind the door, a baffling sight. Not a cavern or a passageway, but a blank, ancient rock face.

From where he stands, Fanning can only see Raymond's profile. He seems calm. Unreadable. The only person who isn't surprised.

The first to move is the portly policeman removing his hat. He tucks it under his arm, and scratches his head.

RAYMOND

Why would someone hang a door on a rockface like this?

DETECTIVE

Well he didn't come out of there.

FANNING

He did come out of there.

DETECTIVE

He couldn't have.

The detective tests the face of the rock with his foot.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

This is a dead end all round.

Turning away, the Detective brings his radio up. Fanning looks at the policeman, reads the weakness in his face and the strength in Raymond's.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

(in radio)

Come in Ian, come in Ian..
 (listening)..no, we're on our way
 back to you. It's just a waste of
 time. It's like candid camera. No,
 I'm not explaining it, just come
 and see it..(listening) He's been
 up all night with his head full of
 stories. We'll bring him back to
 the station, get him something to
 eat and go over things with him
 again. (listening) Well,
 it's..no..a minute ago I was sure
 we had his tracks leading right to
 a cave or something.. now I'm not
 sure what. (listening) There's
 evidence he's seen something, but
 this isn't it.

He starts making his way out of the nettle bed. Raymond stays close to the detective. Fanning stays close to Raymond, watching the back of his head as he walks.

INT. FARMHOUSE. LATER.

The farmhouse door closes behind Raymond dismissively. He moves with resolve through the house, up the stairs then along to the bathroom. The back of the mirror greets him. He takes it up into his hands. He holds it there just above his head for a moment, thinking. Then brings it down with force. A thousand shards splash into the air then fall into silence. Raymond is still.

INT. LAURA'S VAN. LATER

A LEAN MAN sits in the passenger seat while Laura drives. On his head, a battered top hat. Beneath it a face both tough and sensitive. His raincoat is unbuttoned over the more elegant fabric of a dress coat. He looks over at Laura, thoughts racing in his eyes.

He sits back with a warm smile, then begins a made up song. All the while he is looking at her enthralled, so we understand he is singing about what he sees.

MAGIC MAN
(*something like the following*)

Weeeeeeeell, Laura, Laura Laura was
a beauty rare. The kind your eyes
will rarely see. Her hair was dark
as the deepest night and her eyes
were a shining sea.

His shanty is heartfelt. A personal piece from him to her.

MAGIC MAN (CONT'D)
Aaaaand when I dream of Laura. She
walks with me down darkest streets.
And she walks with me in the far
flung fields. And she talks with me
on the cold-cold nights.

The van purrs down country roads. He jigs his knee and taps his toe to accompany his able voice.

MAGIC MAN (CONT'D)
And when Laura smiles the golden
smile the world is right with me,
and when she takes my hand in hers
I'm the man I dream to be.

He looks into her face, keen to see if she finds his effort pleasing.

She looks away from the road and towards him. We cut to see him poker-faced. His hat has disappeared and there on his head is a very small baseball cap.

She looks back to the road then back at him. The poker face is still there but the original hat is back on his head.

MAGIC MAN (CONT'D)
Are you not allowed to laugh?

LAURA

Why do you want me to?

MAGIC MAN

I want to see what a smile looks like on that face.

She shows him a beaming smile.

MAGIC MAN (CONT'D)

That's a beautiful smile, but I'm not satisfied with that. I want a real one.

LAURA

I don't know if I can give you a real smile.

MAGIC MAN

If you can give me a fake, you can give me a real one.

(beat)

Just tell me one thing. Do you want to smile?

Laura considers. Like glass comprehending light.

LAURA

Yes.

MAGIC MAN

That's a good starting point.

EXT. COUNTRY BACK-ROAD. DUSK.

Now they are trundling along a track. They pull off the into a forgotten field. At it's far end, a broken down barn. The van stops a few feet away.

They step out of the van and drift by mutual consent towards the large doors. He swings them open, bowing like a gentleman as she passes inside.

He is suddenly at her shoulder and has acquired some potatoes from the sacks by the doors. Juggles them high walking backwards with his eyes on hers. They go higher and higher up into the beamed roof.

She follows them up and back down to his hands. Then she is watching his eyes. All the while they are smiling directly at her.

INT. BROKEN DOWN BARN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Laura stands naked, in this wreck of a place. She moves with the most beautiful grace. Not not leading, as before, but led. She looks always into him and he into her.

He lays her down in the hay. His body, flushed with life and lust, moves over her. In this moment she is breathtaking, more than we've seen her before.

This is no longer a set piece. She's risking, exploring. Like a young girl who wants something to happen to her, uncertain what that something is.

She kisses him.

He moves over her, finding his position to enter. She reaches her hand along his back drawing him close.

He bears down, then withdraws shifting his shoulders, realigning. Pushes down again hesitantly. He moves back with a caution. Places his knees lower and eases into a more relaxed embrace, his head on her shoulder. His cheek between her shoulder and chest. He nestles there, his eyes full of quiet disturbance.

She embraces him in return, deeply and with equal disquiet.

She reaches between his legs. Not luridly but delicately.

We see him respond to her touch. His back tightens and he moves with her gentleness to and fro. She kisses him on his neck. Then he kisses her face. Their tempo gently builds, becoming committed again.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW. CONTINUOUS

We are high in the barn above Laura and the man. We look down through the eye sockets of Bird, just as it did at Wytan and Horace in the pub. Through this vignette, we see their bodies embracing, melding. Our point of view flits closer, astounded by what's happening. Hands sweeping over bodies, mouths locking together.

INT. BROKEN DOWN BARN. CONTINUOUS

Laura's hand comes from between his legs. He holds her head, his eyes locked on hers.

Then he rolls off her, still holding her, and they lie there side by side. We see his eyes become heavy. He smiles as he gives into blissful sleep. Laura watches him drift away.

INT. BROKEN DOWN BARN. SHORT WHILE LATER.

Laura, dressed now, moves through the barn and pushes the doors gently open, they groan on their hinges. The naked Magic Man stirs. He drags himself into consciousness as if aware something terrible's about to happen. And it is. Laura's about to leave.

LAURA
I'm going now.

MAGIC MAN
Where?

She turns in the doorway.

LAURA
I don't know.

She moves on out into the night. He brings the top hat to his chest and makes it pulse in a perfect expression of a human heart smitten.

EXT. BROKEN DOWN BARN. PRE-DAWN

Stars still fill the sky. Laura gets in the van and slips away out of the fields and onto the road.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADS. MORNING

She drives up into the mountains under a brightening sky. Deeper and calmly she drives. A sign reads LOCH CROMLECH.

She takes a narrowing road to a place next to the loch. The stillness of deep water reaches out to an expanse where the boundaries of land and sky are soft.

She parks by a large sycamore gets out and walks into the vista.

EXT. LOCH CROMLECH. CONTINUOUS

This could be Eden. Butterflies dance above her as she wanders. The earth is lush and the firs glisten. All is at ease.

Bird sweeps down onto the roof, then drops onto the bonnet of Laura's white van. It stands there looking out towards the water. Beneath it's feet, the insistent ring of the forgotten phone in the van.

Laura is barefoot at the loch's edge.

A fallen tree stretches out from the bank. It's boughs reach over the water.

Laura climbs onto it, edging out over the loch.

She is looking down at a perfect reflection of herself. It looks back at her. We see the water busy with ticks, and below the surface, parasites teem in their billions.

She reaches her foot down to the reflection. The toes enter the water. The image tremors then disrupts.

The foot swings, swirling the water. It glistens on her skin like liquid silver.

DISSOLVE TO:

She is in. Naked, opening her arms into the cleansing water. She moves with an easy rhythm, embracing its purity. She glides, sparkling.

A cloud's shadow is rolling in over the lake as she emerges. She touches the mud at the water's edge. Senses its under her fingertips.

She watches herself make footprints. Like a child. Then her shadow moving across dryer land until it mingles with the shadows of trees.

Her gaze falls on a hazel bush as a starling alights on it. She looks directly at it.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW. SAME

Through this perspective, we see her unawareness of Bird as anything other than a bird. Just another little creature. Smiling, she pulls back her gaze and lets the next moment take her fancy. She is in the now. We are witnessing her enter the simple state of a human being.

EXT. LOCH CROMLECH. CONTINUOUS

She arrives back at the base of the fallen tree where her clothes lay. She dresses, then sits a while within the broken foliage, lulled by it's soft to-ing and fro-ing.

Low clouds creep over the mountains. Bird is motionless in a nearby bush. It is focused on Laura, reading her strange temperament. It hops to a closer branch. It's head moves, searching for sense in what it sees.

Laura lies down and goes to sleep.

Bird flits to the ground. It looks at the sleeping head. Inexplicable.

Bird launches itself from the bush and beats an urgent beeline across country back to Raymond.

We cut overhead, drifting higher as we look down through branches on Laura. She is foetal, like a newborn in the bosom of this wilderness.

A mist rolls above her until soon we see nothing but white.

We cut close to her. A film of sweat coats her face. She is trying to rouse herself, to force her eyes open.

Then she wakes, and in a feverish split second looking about she feels the engulfing whiteout. Blinding mist everywhere.

She finds focus in the high distance, a streak of sunlight and blue sky. She has woken in a cloud.

Confused, she looks down at the hem of her dress, and sees a *dirty green forearm extending in*. She starts bolt upright. The arm remains.

She stares at the OWNER OF THE ARM. He looks at her impassive, possessed. She jolts to her feet, recoils, turns and flees.

She moves deep into the cloud, her clothes dampening in the heavy mist.

Suddenly the sound of a rip halts her.

She is snagged on a thorn bush. As she fumbles to free herself, she hears the muddied footfalls of the man advance through the mist.

She gets more entangled. It's as if the thorn bush were pecking at her. She twists to get free. The dress tears. She steps on with trepidation.

Off in the whiteness, more uncertain sounds. Then she freezes. A precise, delicate stepping sound.

She stares into the mist. A broken form. Cloud swirls and gathers and the form vanishes then reappears - unveiled now as a STAG, just feet away. Then footsteps off to the left. Suddenly its flanks shudder and it bounds off. The beat of hooves dwindling into a distant thrash. The footsteps quicken. Laura changes direction, edging away from them. She starts running again.

She fumbles her keys from her pocket, presses the remote hard, while scanning the mist for its effect. The faint orange lights of her van blip in the distance.

She makes a bee line for it, deciphering by the car's lights that her van is half in the air, tipped up helpless, hanging from a tow truck.

She crouches in the mist. Her phone rings in the distance. A figure comes into detail as the ringing stops.

VOICE FROM THE MIST

Forty-two missed calls! You're keen.

A thickset man, fat face, dirty green boiler suit, with her phone to his ear saunters towards her. The TOW TRUCK DRIVER. Laura shifts back onto her heels, considering her options.

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER

(into phone)

So what are you to her?

(beat)

Are you her husband?

(beat)

Yes, she's here.

She steps back, he steps forward.

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER (CONT'D)

(winks)

I don't think she wants to speak to you.

She backs away. He follows.

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER (CONT'D)

(shit-eating grin)

I think she's trying to avoid you.

She's giving me a funny look.

(beat)

I'd calm down if I was you, that's no way to speak to someone.

He holds the phone out to his side at arm's length then looks at Laura like he's got a bad taste in his mouth.

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER (CONT'D)

(conspiratorially)

It's like a hand's going to come out the phone and grab me by the throat.

He returns it to his ear.

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER (CONT'D)
 (conspiratorially)
 I'll tell you what, I'll have a
 word with her. Give us a ring back
 in about twenty minutes.

He hangs up. Shakes his head in mock despair.

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER (CONT'D)
 What a fucking wanker.

He leans back, winding into the classic action of a discus
 thrower. He launches the phone into the air as it rings
 again. It disappears, the ring-tone becoming fainter.

Now Laura's running. Behind her, mist closes in around the
 tow truck driver.

INT. FARMHOUSE. KITCHEN. SAME

Raymond stands in the silence of the kitchen. Phone in hand.
 The air suddenly snaps as Bird lights at the open window.
 Raymond and Bird look at each other, an intense silence
 surges between them.

EXT. LOCH CROMLECH. SAME

Laura runs hard. Behind her heavy footsteps pound just out of
 sight. Whiteout and bewilderment.

Then, just over her shoulder, two arms flail in the mist a
 few feet away. She leans into her run to open the gap. The
 mist re-absorbs them. But then the big grabbing hand looms
 into view again.

Suddenly there it is on her shoulder. He throws her to the
 ground. They tumble through mud. She tries to get away but he
 pulls her back. Gets on top of her, pins her down.

Above her on all fours, he tears at her dress and bra. A
 flurry of grabbing. He reaches down into his pants. She
 lashes into his eye. He returns with a vicious swipe. Hard
 sweeping movement from his elbows contain her struggling. His
 crazed eyes force down into his prey.

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER
 Your tears mean nothing to me, you
 can stuff them up your arse.

The sound of more clothes being torn. The tone of the fraying
 changes. Long intrusive reaching.

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER (CONT'D)

I need a hole, I need a hole..

He pulls hard on giving fabric. A low sound like a sealed vacuum wrenched open. Then a gasping like escaping gas. Suddenly he stops.

We hear him stand. Jiggle his trousers up. He turns, like a drunk half-snapping out of a stupor. Then he reappears staring, open mouthed. His trousers still at half mast, his obscene cock shameless in the chilly mountain air.

He's staring right through us, scared at whatever's behind us.

We spin around to find Laura standing up facing us/him.

It's the BLACK SHADOW FIGURE inside Laura exposed through "her" torn flesh. The alien. Which clutches Laura's skin as if protecting its modesty. It struggles, like it's carrying too much washing.

Tight on the alien "eye". The Tow Truck Driver is reflected, frozen, in its lens.

Tight on the Tow Truck Driver's wide, horrified eye. The alien is reflected in his lens.

Laura hobbles off gathering herself to herself. She reels from the effort of moving this disconnected body which slips from her with every jolting step.

She rests on an old oak stump, looking at her human skin. She is holding her torn neck and much of her face between her hands.

The beautiful, gentle face looks up at the black alien head looking down.

Hunched over her "self", in an extraordinary separation. The inside looking at the outside, the outside looking at the inside.

Bewildered footsteps, and the tow truck driver staggers back into the scene.

She tries to gather her exhausted selves together, suddenly realizing his intent. She juggles the elements of the once perfect body as best she can, but it's too late. He clatters a tin above her head and pours. She staggers, trying to move away from the petrol flowing over her.

He wrestles his lighter to strike. We race with flames as they leap through grass. Then speed away from them, to find Laura's stumbling heels. They slip as the flame gains on them, flaring around her ankles. Then in a beat, the blaze flares up onto her body.

It swarms all about. She's engulfed. Unable to run, the wet soil slipping under her. The mass of flames crumple to the ground, then turn rolling down into a ditch until it rests by the base of a tree.

EXT. SKY. SAME

From high up, Bird swoops and sees the ball of flames by the tree. It lands nearby transfixed, then turns its attention towards the sounds of footsteps scrambling through sloshing mud. It skips into the air and finds the Tow Truck Driver moving fast. Like a deserter fleeing the battlefield. He reaches the door of his truck and clambers in. It starts, red lights spinning over its cab and another set at the rear which illuminate Laura's shackled van.

The truck and van lurch away. Bird rises into the air in pursuit.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD. SAME.

We move fast over blurring tarmac. Raymond powers ruthlessly forwards on his superbike. It roars as he pushes his wrists and the road dips under him. He lashes through gears and the bike feels the road again with a sigh.

We are tight on the back-end now as a corner looms. It begins leaning into it. Tendrils of hedgerow whip over his helmet. The edge of the tyre plumes with a little smoke as the weight adjusts on the apex of the bend. Then more speed and vibration. Mechanical adrenalin.

We are up ahead of the machine now looking back. See the undulating road and how the vehicle clings to it perfectly. Here come the cavalry.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADS. SHORT WHILE LATER

Mists swirl. Raymond leans into a sweeping right, then powers on up the gradient, the pulse throwing the bike across frame and sucking the air out of the space behind. As the visibility becomes less, he slows. He takes stock, then pulls off the road, stops and dismounts.

In the distance on the next mountain he can see the faint halo of a fire. He looks at it pondering.

EXT. LOCH CROMLECH. SHORT WHILE LATER

Raymond walks through heather. A short distance away smoke rises from a tree, blackened and still burning. He stops to study footprints, her footprints, that weave in the mud.

Tracing them backwards, he sees that they set off from the lakeside, so he walks towards them. He sees the footprints meander aimlessly at the waters edge. He finds the place where she slept by the reeds. He crouches to see her form impressed in that swaddling nest.

He moves on, following the prints. Longer strides now, and there joining them, heavy prints in their wake. He follows them until the ground is churned and the little footprints disappear.

He looks towards the burnt tree, spitting with red embers, and walks over to it.

He focuses on a large dark patch at its base, and notices tangible signs. A heel from Laura's shoe. The delicate mound that could be an elbow or ankle. He sees her charred belt buckle. And a melted button. He exhumes them and puts them in his pocket.

He moves to a section of her charcoal hand. Finds the smoke-coated wedding ring on the brittle finger and snaps it off. Conceals it in the same pocket.

He surveys the Pompeii-ish remains. At the edge of the blackened circle lies the husk of her petrified face, split and fractured by the fury of fire.

He applies his heel to it matter-of-factly. The black crust snaps underfoot throwing grey powder into the air.

He grinds the evidence into nothingness with his boot, looking around like he's putting out a cigarette. All that's left is a black formless blot on the earth and a ghostly plume of dust.

He turns to the verge, focusing on the tow-truck's tracks. His gaze traces them to the road and into the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARMYARD. DUSK.

Several policemen are in the yard looking into the field where official vehicles crowd near the incident scene.

Now Laura's van approaches. It comes to the entrance and indicates the familiar turn onto gravel. Now we see it's Raymond at the wheel. A YOUNG POLICEMAN standing guard nearest the farmhouse looks up. As the headlights sweep over the yard, Raymond sees the shed is open with two further policemen inside. He slows, uncertain as to what could be happening now. He stops and steps out with a wave to the familiar face of the young policeman.

Raymond wields a plastic bag as he turns.

Now a policeman with his flashlight flaring, backs down the stepladder from the hayloft.

POLICEMAN.
(to his colleagues)
Nope, nothing.

Raymond slams the van door closed with his bum. He brandishes a local newspaper.

RAYMOND
(indicating the newspaper)
Seen this?

YOUNG POLICEMAN
No sir.

RAYMOND
There's a picture of you in it.
Come and have a look, I'll put the
kettle on.

YOUNG POLICEMAN
That's very good of you Mr Flynn.

A burly SERGEANT approaches.

SERGEANT
Evening Mr Flynn, is your wife
back?

RAYMOND
Eh?

He turns the key and puts his knee to the door.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
Oh..hello, come in a second I'm
putting the kettle on.

SERGEANT
 (to the Young Policeman)
 Can you go to my car and bring me
 the white envelope on the rear
 seat.

The young man goes off at a sharp pace.

INT. FARMHOUSE. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Raymond unloads his plastic bag on the kitchen table. Looks about distracted. Almost as if he's stalling.

Raymond
 Oh sit down-sit down, I'm just
 wondering,..do you know what, I
 think forgot the milk.

He opens the fridge. Reveals an almost empty bottle.

RAYMOND
 Oh, it's alright, we've got enough.
 It's a bloody nightmare this body
 and everything I can tell you.
 When I told her what was going on..
 well, she was horrified. You can
 imagine, tears.. she didn't want to
 come back.

The kitchen door opens and the Young Policeman brandishes the white envelope. The Sergeant beckons him in and looks into the envelope before placing it on the table.

SERGEANT
 Sit in, we're just going to go over
 a few things...

He draws out a chair and sits down.

YOUNG POLICEMAN
 Oh don't go to any trouble for me
 Mr. Flynn...

RAYMOND
 No trouble.

Mid-pour Raymond nonchalantly unfolds the newspaper on the table and points to a picture of the investigation site. In the foreground, the Young Policeman is standing guard at the taped perimeter. A headline under the picture reads, 'MAN DROWNED IN WOODS'.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

That's you!

Both policemen crane to look at it and smile. As they do, Raymond turns to the sink as if wondering where a spoon is, and in the same movement effortlessly sets Laura's pristine ring next to the taps.

INT. BEDROOM. SAME

In the wall is a large, rectangular black hole. A portal. Beyond, the black void of space and its star field. It's edges pulse and bleed phosphorescent light like the shattered corners of a prism. Two dimensions squarely next to one another.

A figure moves. A female figure. We recognize it's movement, its presence. Another Laura. A perfect replica. Brand new, as in the first moment she stepped from the passageway in the woods.

She is dressing stealthily. Quiet like a burglar. The finishing touches, a twist in the skirt, a caress of her stockings.

INT. STAIRS. SAME

The long creak of the bedroom door as it opens. The six eyes scan the stairwell expectantly.

Delicate footsteps, then there she is. She looks at her attentive audience as she descends with regal elegance.

RAYMOND

The officer's here to ask you some questions.

LAURA

Okay.

As she arrives, Raymond goes over and puts a supportive arm around her.

SERGEANT

They're just routine questions. We just want to know if you saw anything.

LAURA

This is a very unpleasant situation.

SERGEANT

It's very unfortunate that it's happened here.

LAURA

But why here? Why our farm?

SERGEANT

Well it may be that the land's been empty, that may be a factor, if someone was intending to bury the body.

(beat)

We still need to piece all the evidence together.

He takes out a notebook.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

We were hoping you could just answer a few questions..fill us in on your movements the morning before you left.

Laura slips into a seat as Raymond attends to the tea.

LAURA

Yes?

SERGEANT

What time did you set out for, er.. (consulting notes) .. Glasgow?

LAURA

About seven thirty.

SERGEANT

Had you been outside at all before you left?

LAURA

No.

SERGEANT

Did you see anything suspicious from the house.

LAURA

All I saw were some of the workers arriving. I don't know which ones.

SERGEANT

Were these men you'd seen before?

LAURA

Yes, they were the regular men that come.

SERGEANT

Good-good. Now in the days before the body was discovered had you seen anyone suspicious..any strange vehicles..anything unusual?

Laura sits back and thinks.

LAURA

No.

He makes a note in his book.

SERGEANT

I'm afraid I want you to look at a photograph of the dead man.

LAURA

Oh dear.

SERGEANT

We're just trying to identify him.

Fingers slip a print out from the envelope. He holds it face down while he delivers another warning.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Now, the man looks this way because he suffered from a congenital deformity, so don't be shocked..his features aren't the result of an attack.

He turns the page. Laura sees, then looks away repulsed.

LAURA

No-no I've never.

SERGEANT

Okay,..thank you. Sorry I had to show you that.

Laura defers to comment on what she's seen.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Well that's us done for now. We're going to have people here for a day or two yet. These things happen and they have to happen somewhere.

(MORE)

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

It's not aimed at you in anyway.

(beat)

If you feel the need, we can have a counsellor visit.

LAURA

That's reassuring, thank you.

The policemen stand to excuses themselves.

EXT. HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING FARM. SAME.

From distance we see the farm front door open and the policemen leaving. They are shaking hands and waving good night like old friends.

Bird watches from a wavering branch.

It's looking away from us and down at the farmhouse below. A solitary police car chaperones the yard now.

Something at the base of a nearby tree shifts. Another watcher full of creep and ominous intent. We see the silhouetted form more distinctly now.

It's Fanning.

Bird sits in the tree unaware.

Fanning inches forward stealthily, bringing up a catapult to his eye and straining the elastic back. He tilts towards a high branch, letting his eye gain aim on Bird.

Bird remains unaware, focused instead on the farmhouse.

A girl's voice calls out.

GIRLS VOICE

Boo!

Bird flashes into the air at the alarm.

Fanning looks round to see Isla, without vex, and then back over his shoulder to see Bird fly up in a cautious arch before returning to a higher perch.

He turns back to Isla. She walks towards him smiling, her coat thrown wide by the breeze, her pregnant belly taugth with life.

They kiss. They slip into a nook of the tree. He throws an arm around her drawing her into him. All the while he's locking down to the farmhouse.

FANNING
(becoming serious)
Don't you come up here any more.

Her eyes follow his, wondering what he's searching for. She looks into his face, her eyes brightening with news.

ISLA
It's a boy.

FANNING
Good.

ISLA
It's a girl.

FANNING
Good.

ISLA
No, it is a boy.

Fanning turns and looks at her with the certainty of a king.

FANNING
Good.

She leans into him. She gives him a knife. He takes it.

FANNING (CONT'D)
Don't worry about me. He's afraid
of me.

ISLA
Why are you up here on your own?

FANNING
If there's a crowd of us they don't
come out. You've got to hide.

ISLA
What will you do?

FANNING
I don't know, but I made a promise
to the wee man before he died that
I'd get them.

They hold hands. Two fragile, robust, totally alive little hands holding in a deep ardor of promise.

EXT. TREE BRANCH. CONTINUOUS

Bird looks down on them from his high branch. Then flies up to the sky. The evening clouds are joined by another fast-moving black cloud-shape.

Bird sweeps up towards it and loses himself in a swarming FLOCK OF STARLINGS. They are pulled and thrown on currents as one. Bird is with them now as they turn in the half-light. A mass of energy held together by God knows what.

EXT. LOWER WOODS. MORNING

Blue skies. Fanning is walking through the woods with his gang. As they go along, they pick up the tools that are strewn about the forest floor; a sturdy chisel, a pick-axe, a heavy mallet.

In the near distance, two policeman, backs turned, chat as they guard an otherwise empty crime scene.

Fanning marches on, arriving at the familiar nettle-filled gully. Without hesitation he wades in, dismissing the stinging threat.

He arrives at the buckled door on the ground. Above it, the frame it was hung on holds fast on the ancient rock face. He stops for a moment, then steps forward and places his chisel at the centre of the rock face. He strikes it hard with the mallet. It's a heavy blow. He re-positions his chisel and brings the mallet down with venom. Shards of rock splinter and fly. He sets the chisel again. Crack! Down comes the mallet. He looks over his shoulder to where the others are standing. Looking out to them - and to us the audience - we see him beckon with an inviting tilt of the head. As he turns back to his task, we close on the rock and see hands coming into frame about him. Rough, dirty little hands, full of irrepressible touch, finding a nook or cranny that takes their fancy. And from many different angles, they now methodically attack the stone with pick axes, sledge hammers, pile drivers and crowbars. The chorus of bash and crack quickly sucks up the silence in a vicious, soaring din.

END