

Wrong Turn

By Alan B. McElroy

Revised by Adam Cooper and Bill Collage

5/10/02

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"WRONG TURN"
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Exec. Producers: Erik Feig, Robert Kulzer
Producers: Stan Winston, Brian Gilbert
Director: Rob Schmidt
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To download the script, go to www.screenplayonline.com and use script key code 705turn15

[ADAM HOLDEN] Early to mid 20s. Heroic action lead. All-American good looks, intelligent and resourceful. He's likeable but a careerist, a bit arrogant and self-interested when we meet him. Adam just graduated from medical school and has the world at his fingertips. He's rushing to a job interview when he takes a side route through the Appalachians and crashes into a disabled car in the middle of the remote road. He and three of the group hike to find help while one couple stays with the wreckage. By the end of the film, his talents have been put to the test and he's put aside his own self-interest to help others in the group when they are hunted by a murderous family of three backwoodsmen. LEAD (3)

[JESSIE BURLINGAME] Early to mid-20s. Strong, smart, independent female lead. Athletic and beautiful, she's a graduate student with an uncertain future. Her friends organized a hiking expedition to take her mind off of a recent painful breakup, but they ran over some barbed wire and got stuck on the road. After Adam rears their SUV, she leads the group in search of civilization. What they find is a group of cabins where unspeakable acts have occurred, and realize too late that they've stumbled into a dangerous trap. Admirably cool and resilient, Jessie takes the lead when there's trouble. Wary of trusting others, she challenges Adam, then bonds with him as they increasingly have to rely on one another for their lives. LEAD (12)

[CARLY NUMAN] Early to mid 20s. Sexy, petite fireball with a sharp tongue and a wicked sense of humor. She's Jessie's best friend, and she organized this trip despite her own threshold that anything less than a resort hotel is 'roughing it.' Carly and her talkative fiancé Scott pepper the trip with rapid barbed banter, but it's clear that they're soulmates. They are the perfect contrast and complement for each other. Trapped in the terrible cabin, Carly is the eyewitness to what the others can only imagine. She cannot rebound from the trauma, though she tries to keep up with the others, and becomes a shivering shell of her former self. LEAD (11)

[SCOTT KORBEE] Early to mid 20s. Immensely likable walking encyclopedia who never stops talking. An appealing guy best suited for marathon rounds of Trivial Pursuit and Jeopardy, he's got a twinkle in his eye that he's in on his own joke. He enjoys bickering with his diminutive fiancé Carly, but their true, deep affection is always evident. When the group is cornered, it's Scott who runs interference, knowing that he might be sacrificing himself so the others, including the love of his life, can get away. LEAD (14)

STORYLINE: A group of college grads get stuck on a remote Appalachian road. A murderous trio of backwoods hunters drive them deep into the wilderness as night falls. Classic white-knuckle horror film with special creature / character effects by Academy Award winner Stan Winston...

FADE IN:

EXT. WEST VIRGINIA -- FOREST WILDERNESS - DAY

A lush, beautiful environment. The sounds of wildlife, untainted, serene, surround us, echoing from the depths of this emerald green wilderness.

Pines, hemlock, and sycamore stretch high forming a glorious leafy canopy.

At a rock and moss covered 60 foot ridge-face, a pair of rock CLIMBERS ascend to the cliff edge, their Jeep Liberty parked at the base like an advertisement for outdoor yuppie-dom.

Lead climber, RICH scales the ledge and reaches the top. He secures the climbing rope for his girlfriend, HALLEY.

HALLEY
You got the line?

RICH
Yeah, slowpoke. Come on up.

Halley continues to climb with the rope secured through her hip-harness, when she misses a foothold and FALLS -- she SCREAMS, but it's only a five foot drop...saved by the rope.

RICH (CONT'D)
We're fifty miles from anybody. Who you screamin' for?

She DANGLES IN MID-AIR, struggling to catch her breath.

HALLEY
You!

RICH
When'd you become such a spaz?

HALLEY
Just pull me up.

Rich scoffs and abruptly disappears beyond the cliff's edge -- a mean joke. Halley frowns, then gives it the old college try and attempts to swing herself back toward the rock.

But she can't build the momentum. She glances up.

HALLEY (CONT'D)
I can't get back on the face. Come on, I need a pull!
(getting annoyed)
(MORE)

HALLEY (CONT'D)

Don't be a dick, Richie! I need you to tug the line!

Silence. No movement from above.

HALLEY (CONT'D)

All right, then come down and get me!

She looks up the sheer cliff, sees Rich's face lean out over the edge, set against the blue sky. Halley's momentarily relieved, but something's not right.

HALLEY (CONT'D)

Rich?

Suddenly, his entire *BODY* sails over the ledge, trailing a stream of blood. He free-falls, when suddenly Halley is jerked violently up...someone or something's reeling her in.

Halley SCREAMS, manages to reach the wall and cling to a slight ledge. Fighting the pull from up above, she struggles to unhook her carabiner and sets herself free.

THE ROPE

recoils off unleashed from its tension, sending the carabiner CLATTERING effortlessly up the rock face. Scrambling, Halley tries to free-climb her way down, but she slips and

FALLS FIVE STORIES

into a heavy thicket of serviceberry and cushioned undergrowth. She rolls hard onto mud and moss next to RICH'S BODY. His startled dead eyes stare at her, his neck canted and broken at a sickeningly unnatural angle.

Above, SOMETHING scrambles down the ridge wall with voracious speed. Small rocks and loose stones falling ahead of its rapid descent -- what the hell is it?

EXT. FOREST FLOOR - DAY

Halley gulps air and staggers onto her feet, sees the Jeep. Bruised, bleeding, terrified, she half-limps half-runs towards her automotive salvation.

On her left, something moves with amazing speed through the underbrush. Crashing through foliage with a primeval madness. Churning through thistles and deadfall.

Halley dodges around trees and crashes headlong through leaves and branches. Runs for all she's worth. Panicked breath coming in frantic shallow gulps.

Close behind her, something rushes through puddles and leaps fallen timber. A living juggernaut crashing forward with voracious urgency.

She breaks the tree-line, the Jeep thirty yards ahead. But something dark and fierce leaps out of shadow and soars through the leaves, grunting, snorting...

HALLEY

is hit hard. She screams in dire agony and spills sidelong into a bed of natural mulch. She lies there in pain, eyes wide, mind frozen in inconceivable horror.

HALLEY

(breathless)

Help me... God, help me...

Something grabs Halley's feet from shadow. She claws at dirt and mulch, catches one last glimpse of the Jeep before she's yanked from view into the dark depths of forest underbrush. Her SCREAM cut horribly short.

An eerie silence settles over tranquil wilderness like a pall. The world is a still green ocean of pine, hemlock and sycamore.

EXT. APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS - AERIAL - DAY

Looking down on the endless wooded expanse, like some great primordial forest untouched since the beginning of Time.

Emerald mountains crowned with slow whirling dew mist and shards of low lying clouds. Heat lightning flashes and rumbles across the distant horizon.

Below, the forest and mountains give way to an ever winding strip of highway. On it, find a 1968 FORD MUSTANG surfing the two-lane -- carefully restored, this is someone's baby.

INT. FORD MUSTANG (MOVING) - SAME

Twenty-something ADAM HOLDEN drives intent on the road before him. Already one of life's winners, he hides his All-American good looks behind a pair of aviator sunglasses.

ADAM'S POV

Deep green woods on either side of the serpentine highway. Traffic is sparse. He drives fast past road signs built on steel pylons to clear the trees. Gas, fast food, lodging.

Small pockets of ratty trailers and boarded-up work buildings to the left or right. Colonies dug out of the unyielding terrain -- this sure ain't the America we see in postcards.

REVERSE ON ADAM

He rocks out to safe, urban-cool music -- like Shaggy or Wyclef -- drinking the last of his Starbucks.

ADAM'S POV

Slopes and turns as the two lane winds its way through the heart of the Appalachians. No traffic ahead, or in the rearview mirror.

BACK TO SCENE

Adam steers around a gentle road curve as he checks his Tag Heuer watch, looks up -- startles.

BACK TO HIS POV

Staring into the back of two stopped tractor trailers.

ADAM

Hits his brakes and slows behind the trucks.

ADAM

Shit.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Adam's Mustang stops two car lengths behind the trucks. Beyond the big rigs, three cars and two trucks are stopped at the mouth of a mountain tunnel.

INT. FORD MUSTANG - DAY

Adam gazes out at the stalled vehicles.

ADAM

(sotto, disgusted)
Come on, man...

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Adam steps out of the car and walks between the two semis, dwarfed by the mechanical hulks.

The stopped traffic apparently stretches into the tunnel's darkness. Most telling are the lack of brakelights. The cars and trucks have shut off their engines.

Adam approaches one of the semis, the malevolent metal of Zakk Wylde's *Black Label Society* bleeding out of the cab's window. Due to the cab's elevated height, Adam can't see inside.

ADAM

'scuse me?

But there's no response, his voice drowned out by the music. He taps on the door.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Hello?

Nothing. Caution to the wind, he steps up on the running board to look in the window, met by

A SNUB NOSED PISTOL --

wielded by a TRUCKER who looks like Duane Allman after a crystal meth binge, it's a reminder of the Trucker Code: *never touch another man's rig.*

TRUCKER

(thick W. Virginia drawl)

't fuck off my truck, city boy.

Adam quickly complies, steps off with his hands in the air.

ADAM

Whoa, whoa...it's cool.

TRUCKER

't fuck you want?

The Trucker puts the gun down, sizes Adam up, works a toothpick between his filthy teeth.

ADAM

I'm just wondering what the hold up's about.

TRUCKER

Tractor jackknifed 'bout five mile up. Spilled chemicals and shit all over the road.

ADAM

Any idea how long of a thing we're talking about here?

TRUCKER

Couple hours.

ADAM
A couple hours?

TRUCKER
What, you a fuckin' parrot?

ADAM
No, it's just...

TRUCKER
T'youghta do is git back in daddy's car,
comb your hair a few hundred more times,
and read the stock page.

The Trucker spits a challenging stream of tobacco on the ground, but Adam defiantly holds his gaze.

ADAM
Have a nice day.

Adam turns, looks back at his Mustang.

ADAM'S POV

Four more cars have slowed and stopped behind him. The jam disappears back around the near road bend.

INT. FORD MUSTANG - MOMENTS LATER

Adam gets back into the car in a huff, grabs his cellular phone.

HIS POV - CELLULAR PHONE

The LCD reads: 'no signal'.

BACK ON ADAM

He emits an exasperated sigh, drums his fingers on the wheel for a thoughtful instant before he FIRES UP the engine.

ADAM
Screw this.

EXT. HIGHWAY - FROM ABOVE - DAY

Adam backs the Mustang up and pulls a hard u-turn onto the shoulder, heading in the opposite direction.

INT. FORD MUSTANG (MOVING) - DAY

An irritated Adam speeds down the highway, motoring back the way he came as he passes a sign that indicates "GAS - 1 MILE" down a lonely stretch of road. Adam takes the turn.

EXT. RIC'S GAS 'N GO - DAY

A battered filling station nestled against the deep green backdrop of Appalachian foothills. The dilapidated building sports rusted wind-chimes and faded soda ads from the late thirties and early forties.

An OLD MAN, withered flesh, corpse thin, sits on a "live-bait" cooler sipping Pepto-Bismol straight from the bottle. His milky, cataract-clouded eyes watch as

THE MUSTANG

pulls into the dusty lot and stops by the building, Adam climbing out. The Old Man gives him a disturbing toothless grin, his gums black and purple with decades of disease.

ADAM

Hey, man, you got a pay phone?

The Old Man silently gestures toward a rickety pay phone, Adam marching over to it.

AT THE PHONE

Adam picks up the receiver, but it comes off the console a bit too easily -- the cord's been severed. He SLAMS it down, heads back to the Old Man, stares unblinkingly at him.

ADAM

There another phone I can use?

OLD MAN

(severe Appalachian accent)
Long distinz?

ADAM

What from here isn't long distance?

OLD MAN

You cuttin' wise wit' me, son?

ADAM

I'm just running late and need to call someone.

OLD MAN
'Fraid you outta luck. 'atun there's
m'only phone.

ADAM
How do you call people?

OLD MAN
No one to call.

Adam looks hopelessly around at the bleak surroundings as the Old Man continues to watch him with that blank toothless grin. Something menacing about him.

ADAM
Look, the highway back there's jammed up.
Is there another route south or a way to
circumvent the problem?

OLD MAN
Circum-what?

ADAM
An easy way.

OLD MAN
Mm. Nope.

Adam lets an annoyed GROAN escape him, catching sight of a grimy MAP hanging in the gas station window. He stalks over with renewed enthusiasm, finds his position on the map and traces his finger over a DOTTED LINE.

ADAM
Why's *Bear Mountain Road* dotted like
this?

The Old Man takes a sip of the thick pink liquid, licks his frothy lips.

OLD MAN
Dirt.

ADAM
It's a dirt road?

OLD MAN
Spec' they'ant got 'run to pavenit yet.

Adam furrows his brow, not fluent in the Appalachian patois.

ADAM

It looks like it meets up with the highway down...about 15, 20 miles. That right?

OLD MAN

You say so.

The old man's unrelenting gaze has Adam sufficiently freaked. He nods politely, heads back to his car.

ADAM

Well, thanks for your help. You take care.

The old man watches as Adam climbs into his car.

OLD MAN

(silently, to himself)
You the one gon'eed take care.

INT/EXT. FORD MUSTANG (MOVING) - DAY

The Mustang rolls to a stop at a Y in the road. Adam considers a weather-battered, chipped and dented green sign marking the entrance to "Bear Mtn. Road" to the right. He takes it.

The road leads under a low highway overpass supported with rusted steel beams. The Mustang motors away down the lonely road into the deep forested distance.

INT. FORD MUSTANG (MOVING) - DAY

Adam drives down the winding back road, windows down, wind blowing in. Despite being daytime, the surrounding hemlock canopy casts an air of twilight over the road.

Adam leans back, one hand on the wheel. He yawns, rubs his eyes beneath his sunglasses.

ADAM'S POV

Trees, shadow, and unlined asphalt ducking and weaving through West Virginia back country. The body of a days DEAD BUCK lies on the dirt shoulder to the right.

BACK TO SCENE

Adam clocks the carrion in the rearview as he passes. He reaches over to switch the CD in his stereo. The DISC slides out, but Adam accidentally drops it.

ADAM

Dammit --

Adam bends over to retrieve the disc, driving fast. His fingers snag it and he straightens back up.

ADAM'S POV

A bright yellow NISSAN XTERRA, with mountain bikes on a rear rack and backpacking gear strapped to its roof, sits motionless in the middle of the road on three flat tires.

Adam is right on top of it going too fast to stop or swerve.

BACK ON ADAM

As he throws both hands on the wheel, stands on the brakes, bracing, wide-eyed, for what's coming.

EXT. FORD MUSTANG - DAY

The rear wheels lock up laying down a carpet of blue tire smoke.

INT. FORD MUSTANG (MOVING) - ADAM'S POV - DAY

As the Xterra rushes toward us.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he's violently jarred forward by the brutal impact. Metal roars as it's ripped asunder. Adam's head slams hard against his own white knuckles on the steering wheel. Safety glass cracks and hailstorms in two directions at once.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Beat. Silence. The Xterra, its rear section, bikes, bike racks, have been smashed in and shoved off the road onto the shoulder -- some fifty feet ahead of the wrecked Mustang, which spills fluids like blood from beneath the smoking engine.

ON THE SHOULDER --

EVAN ROSS rises like a specter -- built like a middleweight boxer, he wears a silver earring. His bookishly-pretty girlfriend FRANCINE CHILDES stands awestruck beside him.

EVAN

What the hell?!

FRANCINE
Goddamn drunk-ass hillbilly!

Adam manages to shoulder the driver's side door open with a nasty shriek of buckled metal and staggers out of the wreck. Francine's eyebrows arch -- in khakis and a polo shirt, he's a far cry from Hillbilly.

FRANCINE
Or not.

ADAM
You guys okay?

Evan gets right up in Adam's face, totally pissed.

EVAN
The hell you thinking going that fast around the bend!?

ADAM
The hell you thinking parking your truck in the MIDDLE OF THE ROAD!

EVAN
We blew out our tires, asshole.

ADAM
(apologetically)
Look, I didn't see you. I'm happy to pay for...

FRANCINE
(interrupting)
You're damn right you're gonna pay. This car was brand new.

Adam steps away from the Mustang, still uneasy, and assesses the damage. Realizes that his car is totalled.

ADAM
Six years of work, down the tubes.

Just then, CARLY NUMAN steps from the treeline, her perfectly-coiffed hair and make-up in concert with the color-coordinated outdoor-wear she sports.

CARLY
Hey, did you guys hear that noi...
(sees the wreckage)
Oh, you've gotta be kidding me.

A gangly SCOTT KORBEE trails her out, sees the wreckage.

SCOTT

I knew we shoulda pushed it to the side of the road. Did I tell you? Didn't I say...?

EVAN

(interrupting)

Explain how we were gonna do that. The tires were already blown out.

ADAM

How the hell'd you blow three tires?

SCOTT

We ran over some barbed wire.

He gestures toward a length of RAZOR WIRE, twisted around the Xterra's rear axle. It immediately sparks Adam's curiosity.

CARLY

These redneck assholes don't give a shit whose lives they screw up, dropping their crap everywhere.

Adam bends to examine the dull silver coil, interspersed with home-made razors and long jagged barbs welded onto triple wire steel.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Nobody dropped anything...

They turn to regard

JESSIE BURLINGAME

a painful beauty, she's fit and athletic, in hiking boots, khaki hiking shorts, and a white tank top. Guileless in her perfection, with piercing intelligent eyes.

JESSIE

(holding up a length of wire)

I found this tied to a tree back there. Someone did this as a prank.

She marches over to the XTerra, opens its door and begins packing her backpack with essentials -- water bottles, map, flashlight, etc.

CARLY

Sickos.

EVAN

Whoever did this won't be laughing when I jam my boot up their ass.

JESSIE

Well, I'm not sitting around waiting to meet them. I saw a gas station a few miles back. I'm gonna go call for help.

ADAM

They don't have a phone.

(off her suspicious look)

I was just there. The geezer running the joint said this road crosses the highway. We can flag someone from there.

JESSIE

What's your name?

ADAM

Adam Holden.

JESSIE

You hurt, Adam Holden?

ADAM

Nothing serious.

Jessie chucks a large BACKPACK at him.

JESSIE

Good. Then you're the mule.

SCOTT

I could carry it.

CARLY

You couldn't carry a conversation.

Jessie and Carly slip on shades, tie bandanas getting ready for the walk.

EVAN

Hold on, hold on! Why don't we just stay here, wait for someone to come along?

JESSIE

Like Speed Racer here? Maybe the next guy can ruin what's left of your truck.

FRANCINE

Well, I'm not about to start marching off into the great unknown. We're not in D.C.

SCOTT

I saw this whole thing on *Dateline* about how proactive attempts to secure help in survivalist situations have historically yielded the highest success rate.

CARLY

You know, maybe if you spent less time filling your mind with pixilated trivia, you'd have a job by now.

SCOTT

Whoa, whoa: gainful employment might be the *norm* for post grads, but that doesn't make it the *right* choice. For instance, like Plato, I see myself as...

EVAN

(interrupting)

Look, I don't know what Play-Dough has to do with this, but you idiots wanna go play *Survivor*, West Virginia...? Be my guest.

(pulls out a joint)

Me, Francine and Mary Jane are staying right here and enjoying the afternoon sunshine.

JESSIE

Okay, well, you guys enjoy. We'll be back with munchies.

She starts off up the road, heading past Adam without so much as a word. Carly follows her.

CARLY

(sarcastic, to Adam)

I haven't had a vacation in two years. I appreciate what you've done today.

Scott steps up, offers a handshake.

SCOTT

Scott Korbee. That's Carly, my diminutive fiancee.

ADAM
 (re: Jessie)
 Who's the lone wolf?

SCOTT
 Grad student by day, Tomb Raider by
 night.
 (off Adam's look)
 You can call her Jessie.

Scott hoofs it after Carly, leaving Adam to consider his
 wreck of a car. He checks his watch, then heads off also.

CUT TO:

ROADKILL --

a sun-dried and tire-crushed WOLVERINE, it's West Virginia's
 ugliest indigenous creature...well, one of them.

CARLY (O.S.)
 It's a wood chuck.

SCOTT (O.S.)
 A woodchuck's like a big squirrel-looking
 thing. That's some kind of fox.

EXT. THE ROAD - DAY

Our foursome ambles up the road, birds screeching from the
 darkness of the tree branches overhanging the road's edge.

CARLY
 It's not a fox and you know it. You're
 just being contrary.

SCOTT
 I'm not being contrary. I know what a
 woodchuck looks like and that's not a
 woodchuck.

CARLY
 Well, it's not a fox. Foxes are red.

SCOTT
 Maybe it's a skunk.

ADAM
 It's a wolverine.

SCOTT
 How do you know?

JESSIE

He probably ran it over.

They pass the crushed wolverine lying not long dead on the side of the road.

ADAM

In med school, before you get to work on human cadavers, they prime you on wolverines and other weasels.

CARLY

(to Scott)

Now, there's a job prospect for ya, hon.

SCOTT

Very funny.

(to Adam)

What school?

ADAM

University of Pittsburgh.

SCOTT

Ninth best program in the country after Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Wash U., Duke, Penn, Yale, Columbia and UC San Fran.

Scott drops back to walk with Carly, leaving Adam awkwardly alone with Jessie. He's momentarily dumbstruck by her supernatural allure.

ADAM

So...You guys all from D.C.?

JESSIE

Why, we look like locals to you?

(off his embarrassed smile)

I take it Middle of Nowhere, West Virginia's not your final destination.

ADAM

I'm heading down to Raleigh for this dinner meeting. An interview really. I need to be there by 7:30.

JESSIE

(rolls her eyes)

Mm. Better get a move on then.

She picks up the pace, leaving him in her wake wondering what her deal is.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Evan sits on the Xterra's front hood finishing the last of his joint, before pitching the roach to the ground. Francine sits on the warped running board -- they're a little high, a lot bored.

EVAN

We should've taken her to New York.

FRANCINE

You know how she loves this outdoor stuff.

EVAN

So far, nature sucks.

FRANCINE

Well, next time she gets dumped, we'll take her to New York.

Evan's stoner eyes drift off, mind fogged like LAX at dawn. A long moment before he turns back to her, perplexed.

EVAN

Who we talking about again?

FRANCINE

Jessie.

EVAN

Right, right.

Francine gets up, paces around to the front of the Xterra.

FRANCINE

In the meantime, drop your pants.

(off his confused look,
undressing herself)

When do people always show up, Evan?

What are we doing?

Evan thinks for a beat, then suddenly gets it.

EVAN

I knew I loved you from the moment I met you.

FRANCINE

Consider it an experiment in probability theory. Pants off. Now.

Francine is down to her bra and panties. Evan, eyes wide, wastes no time kicking out of his pants.

EXT. THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Someone or *something* watches Francine go down on Evan on the hood of the Xterra. All we hear is the faint sound of *breathing*.

CUT TO:

BURNING LEAVES AND OLD TIRES --

they crackle and spew black smoke from a haphazardly built, unattended fire some hundred yards into the woods adjacent to the side road.

ADAM (O.S.)

See that fire? There are probably people down there.

EXT. SIDE ROAD - FOOTHILLS - DAY

The road winds and climbs through the meandering hill country. Adam and Jessie stop momentarily, ahead of Scott and Carly by some fifty yards.

ADAM

(calls into woods)
Hey! Anybody over there?

No response.

JESSIE

Whoever built it can't be too far.

They resume their walk down the road, heading deeper into the woods.

ADAM

I miss this meeting tonight and it's my ass.

JESSIE

This interview at a hospital or something?

ADAM

Pharmaceutical company.
(off her unimpressed look)
With the head of the whole damn deal.

JESSIE
Why blow six years of medical school if
you're just gonna go be a suit?

ADAM
It's not just being a suit.

JESSIE
Awfully defensive there, Adam.

ADAM
(defensive)
I am not defensive.

Jessie shoots him a sideways look, prompting Adam to laugh at his own expense -- she's figured him out in all of an hour.

ADAM
Maybe it is just being a suit, but it's a
good job and my dad had to pull all sorts
of strings to set it up. I don't wanna
be a screw up.

JESSIE
If it's so big, why didn't you just fly?

ADAM
Well, you know, I re-built that Mustang
all through med school. I figured
driving it to my first job interview
would be kind of a, I don't know,
rewarding, triumphant maiden voyage.

JESSIE
And now it's the automotive Titanic.
Well done, Commander.

Adam smiles -- she's a little rough, but pretty damn cool.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The crushed Xterra and mangled Mustang sit motionless on the
road shoulder. Evan rummages around the Mustang's back seat.

INT. XTERRA - SAME

Francine sits in the driver's seat listening to tunes.

FRANCINE
(calls outside)
Find anything?

EVAN (O.S.)
(muffled, from Mustang)
Garment bag, pair of shoes, couple empty
coffee cups.

FRANCINE
How about something edible?

EVAN (O.S.)
Still looking.

Francine shakes her head, grabs a pack of cigarettes from
atop the dash, lights up.

FRANCINE
What about CDs? We need new music.
(long beat, no response)
Evan?

Francine leans over, gazes into the side mirror.

INSERT - SIDE MIRROR - FRANCINE'S POV

There's no sign of Evan beside or inside the Mustang. Only
deepening shadows and whirling eddies of dust and leaves
along the shoulder.

EXT. ROAD SHOULDER - DAY

Francine gets out of the truck.

FRANCINE
Evan?
(no response)
Where are you?

Long silence, a hint of stoned paranoia making its way into
her features.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Are you pissing or something?

EVAN (O.S.)
(eerie echo, from the woods)
Yeah.

FRANCINE
(a beat)
Oh. Okay.

Francine walks to the Mustang as she finishes her cigarette.

ON HER FEET

She drops the butt, crushes it with her toe. We can see directly beneath the Mustang's chassis. The hint of dark movement on the car's far side out of view.

BACK TO SCENE

Francine looks inside the Mustang.

HER POV

Adam's garment bag, black wingtips on the floor, some CDs, empty coffee cups -- the standard detritus of a road trip.

BACK ON FRANCINE

as she leans in, grabs a CD: "Best of Louis Armstrong, Vol. 2"

FRANCINE

You gotta be kidding me...

She hums "What a Wonderful World" and leans against the bent Mustang's crumpled door. Scans the CD for a moment, tosses it back inside, then turns and walks back toward the Xterra.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

No cars...no food...no tunes...

Francine stops when she sees something on the shoulder between the two cars. Something she didn't notice before.

FRANCINE'S POV

One of Evan's size eleven Nikes rests roadside.

BACK CLOSE ON FRANCINE

as she cocks her head at the shoe.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

(calls)

Babe...you shouldn't be walking around without your shoes on. There's poison ivy, poison oak...

Francine looks for the mate as she bends down to pick up the Nike. She lifts it off the ground with her right hand.

FRANCINE'S POV

A blood-stained left ear, covered with ants, rests on the ground. Evan's distinctive silver earring stud is in the lobe. Neck and jaw flesh is still attached to the ear.

REVERSE ON FRANCINE

As she stares for a beat, speechless. Her left hand unconsciously moves toward her mouth to catch the rising scream.

A truck motor rumbles from out of the middle distance. Francine looks up, expectant, as terror and confusion mixes with sudden relief.

From behind her -- barbed-wire snap-wraps around her mouth at an oblique angle. Cuts through her lips and across her cheeks.

Blood blossoms instantly as Francine, wide-eyed in sudden shock and horror, is violently yanked off her feet and out of view.

The Nike sneaker drops back on the ground. Less than two inches from its owner's dirt and ant encrusted ear.

We hear truck brakes squeal and transmission-gears crank down.

EXT. SIDE ROAD - DAY

Carly and Scott amble along -- some hundred yards or so behind Adam and Jessie.

CARLY

My bladder's fuller than Pamela Anderson's bra cup.

SCOTT

Why don't you just pop-a-squat and find a leaf? Jane Goodall spent years doing it.

CARLY

Jane Goodall didn't just spend fifty bucks on a bikini wax, babe.

They press ahead, Scott carefully broaching...

SCOTT

You know, I've been thinking a lot about our wedding stuff and I'm starting to feel that the whole idea of ritualized nuptials is for crap -- to wit, I say we forget the society/bourgeois ceremony you've been planning and just elope.

CARLY

Here's what I think: if you ever want to get in my pants again, you make that the last time you say the E-word.

SCOTT

Okay, okay, fair enough. But, I do think the band we're hiring should have one of those Sinatra-type lead singers as opposed to that James Brown kind of guy, 'cause otherwise our wedding song's gonna sound like a big doody. I mean, who wants to hear James Brown singing...

He looks to his fiancée, but the road beside him is empty.

SCOTT

Carly...?

Scott stops and looks around. Dark wilderness lines the road on either side. Nothing but shadows and underbrush.

SCOTT

Carly...where are you?

CLOSE ON SCOTT

as he moves back down the road to the near bend and stares into the distance. The road stretches away, empty.

SCOTT

(towards Adam & Jessie)
Hey guys, hold up...

No avail, they're too far up the road. A twig SNAPS loudly to his right. He whips around at the sound and stares wide-eyed at the forest as its limbs and leaves shift with subtle haunted breezes.

Scott, fear rising, steps back off the road into cover of low hanging tree branches. Watches the dimness.

SCOTT

Carly, this isn't funny.

Silence. A rustling to his right. His breath catches as he slowly backs away from the sound.

SCOTT
Answer me!

Something grabs him from behind and yanks him hard into the dark underbrush. He screams, arms flailing. Scott falls hard into the dirt and rolls away shrieking.

CARLY

stands over him laughing hard enough to bring tears.

SCOTT
Dammit, you scared the shit out of me!

With that, she offers a hand to hoist him up.

CARLY
Know why I love you? 'Cause you're so easy to fuck with.

CUT TO:

A SINGLE-LANE BRIDGE

Made of rusted iron cross bars, it sports a collapsed wooden street panel. A huge wooden rail bars any entrance. A rusty metal SIGN haphazardly nailed to it reads: "BRIDGE OUT."

EXT. DEAD END ROAD - DAY

Jessie and Adam stare down into the gorge beyond.

JESSIE
Nothing like stating the obvious, huh?

The dirt road ends at the jagged lip of a deep gorge with moss coated cliffs. A narrow river runs at the bottom.

ADAM
(pissed)
They couldn't have put a sign back at the turn-off?

JESSIE
I guess we head back.

ADAM
Oh, this is just amazing.

Scott and Carly round the bend, seeing what's up.

SCOTT
What's the story?

JESSIE
Magellan here brought us to a dead end.

CARLY
Oh, are you even kid...

Her sentence is cut short by her SCREAM, ankle buckling in a POTHOLE. Scott grabs her, rights her balance.

SCOTT
Careful, honey, careful.

CARLY
You have no idea how many hours of
massage I'm gonna need after this --
car wrecks, dead ends, potholes...

Jessie takes a step closer to Carly.

JESSIE
Wait a minute...that's no pothole.
(looks closer)
That's a footprint.

She steps her boot into the PRINT -- it's more than triple
the size of her foot.

CARLY
Who the hell has a foot that big?

SCOTT
(gravely)
Sasquatch.

ADAM
Spare me.

Without missing a beat, Adam follows the FOOTPRINTS off the
dirt road and into the overgrowth on the side of the road.

CARLY
Where are you going?

SCOTT
White man calls him Big Foot, Red Man
call him Yeti -- but the facts remain...

ADAM

(emerging from the brush)
The fact remains it's a person, who, I am
assuming, moved this...

He proffers an orange and black "Detour" sign, covered in
foliage. The arrow points to the RIGHT.

JESSIE

(back towards the bridge)
There must be a trail that runs parallel
to the creek...there.

She directs their attention to a narrow, overgrown JEEP PATH
- two dirt strips with weeds in between which leads into the
deep, dark woods. It barely meets the definition of "road."

CARLY

Screw that. I'm going back to that gas
station.

JESSIE

It'll be dark by the time we get back
there.

SCOTT

(playfully ominous)
And darkness...brings Yeti.

CARLY

Look, whatever. Just get me to a motel,
run me a very hot bath and be prepared to
provide me with a lot of orgasms. Are
you listening, Scott?

SCOTT

Limber tongue. Got it, sweetie.

Carly and Adam take the lead up the dirt Jeep path. Adam
turns to Jessie, smiles thankfully.

ADAM

Nice call on the footprints.

He heads up the road. Jessie considers him for a moment --
maybe this is the beginning of a friendship. Maybe.

EXT. ACCESS ROAD - DAY

The trail narrows as it ascends the Appalachian foothills,
the slope growing steep, arduous. Carly and Scott trudge
ahead sharing the last of the water between them.

Adam walks with Jessie, who looks closely at the map.

JESSIE
This road isn't on here.

CARLY
(calling back to her)
That's because you don't have Rand
McNally's Inbred Edition.

ADAM
Lemme see that.

JESSIE
Easy, alpha male. I said, the road's not
on the map.

Ahead, Scott stands at a bend in the road.

SCOTT
(shouts, whoops)
Can I get an amen! I think we've just
been saved.

Scott gazes through low rolling mist at something just out of view beyond low hanging Hemlock and deep forest Maple leaves. The others join him.

THEIR POV

A group of OLD CABINS and OUTBUILDINGS materialize out of the slow whirling forest mist. The buildings, brown, mossy green, are nestled back inside the forest's jealous womb, almost camouflaged.

They have an almost historic quality. Only the presence of several cannibalized modern vehicles shatters the image -- a dozen cars, trucks, minivans, and SUVs, mostly old, lay scattered across the wooded acreage.

Most are up on blocks missing wheels, axles, doors, hoods, engines -- except for a familiar Jeep Liberty.

BACK TO SCENE

The four stare at the cabins and buildings. Scott hustles up the moist dirt road toward the property.

CARLY
Appalachian Bed and Breakfast. Charming.

Adam starts forward, psyched. Jessie catches his arm for a beat. He looks back at her.

ADAM

What?

JESSIE

(a beat, wary)
Nothing.

Adam walks up the road toward the cabins. Jessie looks around, then follows.

EXT. CABINS - DAY

Adam, Scott, Carly and finally Jessie walk up amid the abandoned cars. Trunk lids up or missing, windshields gone, tires scattered about along with frame and engine parts.

ADAM

(calls out)
Hello? Anybody home?!

CARLY

Maybe the Dukes are out picnicking.

Jessie looks at the buildings, a tentativeness to her gait.

JESSIE

I've got a bad feeling about this.

SCOTT

I second that emotion.

Adam surveys various cars littered about on cinderblocks and stacked up on woodcut stumps.

ADAM

It's probably just some kind of auto body shop.

JESSIE

(looks around, haunted)
Little out of the way for an auto shop,
don't you think?

Adam crosses to the nearest cabin, which happens to also be the largest. He knocks hard on the rust-laced screen door.

ADAM

(calls inside)
Hello?!

No response. He grabs the door latch and finds it unlocked. Pulls it open an inch.

JESSIE

What are you doing?

ADAM

I thought I'd go in.

JESSIE

You can't just go barging into someone's house.

SCOTT

Seriously, West Virginia has some pretty vicious trespassing codes, man. I heard it on NPR on the way down here. You get busted and it's...

ADAM

Look, I need a telephone.

CARLY

And a bathroom.

SCOTT

Whoa, whoa, whoa! Have you guys gone coo-coo for friggin' CocoPuffs? Does the word *Deliverance* mean anything to you?

JESSIE

Scott's right. We should probably just wait for the owners to come back. For all we know, there's a dozen Rottweilers right behind that door waiting to tear us to shreds.

ADAM

(shakes his head)

If there were dogs they'd be barking.

SCOTT

Not if their owners cut out their vocal chords to make them more vicious. People do that, you know.

Adam rolls his eyes.

ADAM

(graciously)

Okay, how about this: I'll go inside to use the telephone. You guys can either come in or stay out here. I'll be right back.

Carly, Jessie and Scott share an uncertain glance -- the raw sense of dread surrounding the exterior of the cabin offering no great salvation. Maybe inside's not so bad.

JESSIE

All right, let's use the phone and get back to the cars.

Adam grabs the screen door latch, pulls it open with a loud rusty squeak, and strides purposefully inside. Jessie follows. Carly steps up next, regathers her moxie.

CARLY

I just hope they've got indoor plumbing.

Scott steps up to the door, looks around uncertainly, enters.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Adam, Jessie and Carly stand unmoving a few steps inside as Scott enters behind them. He has to take a huge step down onto a dug-out dirt floor and stops as well. Stares.

The cabin's sprawling interior is dark, grim, oppressive. Made up of browns, blacks, and greys. Heavy wooden beams support the roof and splintered rafters.

There are an odd assortment of shelves, cabinets, and wire strung like clothes line bearing tools on iron clips. Something simmers, steaming, on a distant cast iron stove.

The cabin is filled with hand-made furnishings intermixed with grimy picnic chairs, folding stools, and even bench seats torn from automobiles.

Along the walls and on shelves and metal racks made from old chassis frames, are various tools. Knives, scythes, longbow arrows with barbed home-forged hunting tips.

Carly steps deeper inside taking all this in. Scott stands rooted to the door stop, staring at the almost otherworldly surroundings.

SCOTT

Who lives here?

CARLY

Someone who doesn't have cable.

ADAM

moves into the cabin and looks around -- no immediate sign of a telephone. He passes close to a long wooden dining table cut from the local trees.

On the table are three battered stainless steel bowls still wet from recent use. The bowls' insides are coated with rough layers of caked and dry-petrified food from untold years without washing.

Mason jars for glasses bear traces of a dark sap-brown fluid. There are no utensils except for long boning knives with knobby wooden handles.

JESSIE

slowly crosses forward, scanning the weird array of furniture. All of it battered and torn from years upon years of over use. Nearby are a pair of cots with thin mattresses atop wooden frames.

JESSIE'S POV

There are torn strips of clothing on the floor, heavily stained black and dark brown. What look like bits of blouses and dresses scattered. Both cots are saturated with dark brown stains. The floor nearby is also lined with dry rivers of brownish black.

ON ADAM

as she moves near kitchen sinks clogged with a black oil slick of retched ooze. Pots, heavy utensils, and bowls sit in the water and are strewn across wide cutting boards, chipped, scratched and heavily stained.

One of the boards glistens, still wet from recent use. A cleaver, knife, and long barbecue fork are propped up in a metal dish drainer.

Adam offers an involuntary cringe. Huge horse-flies buzz and circle over everything.

CARLY

looks around with growing interest mixed with disquieting trepidation. She ducks under hanging wires bearing claw hammers, iron mallets, and small animal skulls.

CARLY

(to Scott)

Come here...help me find a bathroom.

Scott has only moved a few steps in from the door.

SCOTT
Judging from the crap everywhere, I think
this is the bathroom.

CARLY
Just start looking.

SCOTT
(walks deeper into the cabin)
What if this place belongs to some kind
of cult? I read in *Newsweek* about how
economically-depressed areas breeding
grounds for all kinds of apocalyptic
visionaries. Order of the Solar Temple,
Jombola, Church of the Lamb of God, The
Chijon Family...

CARLY
Maybe they're vampires.

SCOTT
I'm talking *Newsweek*, you're talking Ann
Rice.

ON ADAM

standing beside the huge, heavy black iron cook stove.
Various soot encrusted pipes jut out of the massive eighty
year old oven.

On the stove top, a large black pot sits on a low flame. The
lid trembles and quietly clanks as steam escapes around its
lip. Adam touches the protruding ladle causing the lid to
slide several inches aside.

ADAM'S POV

Inside the steaming pot bubbles a thick dark reddish brown
concoction. Touching the ladle brings up what looks like a
heavy chili.

AT A CLOSET

Scott pulls open a heavy, creaking wooden door and peers
inside. Stares from floor to ceiling at what he sees.

SCOTT
Carly, check this out.

Carly turns, steps close to Scott. Both stare inside at stacks of luggage and odd assortments of travel related accoutrements.

CARLY

That doesn't look like a bathroom...

Duffle bags, suitcases, a pretzeled mountain bike, picnic coolers, fishing tackle, an infant car seat, tents, sleeping bags, a portable cook stove, and a heaping mound of shoes.

SCOTT

They could have one hell of a garage sale.

JESSIE

crosses the room and passes a large wooden bowl filled with old and new jewelry. Watches, rings, necklaces, bracelets.

She lifts a string of cultured pearls out of the bowl worth thousands. Amid the jewelry are eyeglasses of all different types. Bent, broken, some with cracked and missing lenses.

Then she sees something on the floor, furrows her brow.

JESSIE

You guys, check this out.

JESSIE'S POV

She picks up a large bale of home-made razor-wire. It is exactly like the type responsible for flattening the tires on the Xterra.

CARLY

That's that same wire.

JESSIE

These are the assholes who messed up Evan's truck.

CARLY

In that case, I very well might not flush.

ON ADAM

as he searches for a telephone. He opens a latched wooden door between tall shelves. The door opens into a back room illuminated by a pair of hanging naked yellow bulbs.

THE BACK ROOM

contains two puttering gasoline-powered generators, a huge, deeply stained, iron wash tub and three industrial-sized refrigerators circa the early nineteen Forties. Oversized, once white, now grime-grey, with huge steel double-clack latch handles.

Beneath the refrigerators are large stains of corrosion and seal-leakage. A stream of brown fluid flows from them to a drain-hole cut in the wall several feet away.

CLOSER ON ADAM

as he slowly approaches the trio of buzzing refrigerators. The naked yellow bulbs are coated with dead insects. The floor audibly sticks to the soles of her shoes.

BATHROOM - ON CARLY

as she opens a door into a long narrow bathroom, initially relieved.

CARLY

Okay, now we're talking.

But then it hits her -- she gags on the irrepressible stench of urine and feces as flies BUZZ and circle in angry clouds.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Ugh.

Carly covers her mouth and looks around. There are two toilets, beyond disgusting, a broken sink, and a clawfoot bathtub at the room's far end.

CARLY'S POV

The bathtub is filled to its lip with a dark red skim of thick viscous fluid. Something floats at one end along the liquid's filmy surface.

REVERSE ON CARLY

as she eases closer to the tub. Above her, the room is illuminated with an old-style buzzing and flickering donut-shaped fluorescent throwing shadows across the shelf-lined walls.

The shelves are filled with jars of dentures, bridges, various oral appliances, and teeth. Some of them still bearing gold and silver crowns and fillings.

BACK ON CARLY'S POV

looking down at the tub of liquid. Realizing that the something floating on the surface -- is a large clump of dead gray human hair.

REVERSE ON CARLY

as she backs away from the tub, gagging, looking around with mounting dread. She turns, exits the bathroom in a half-run.

BACK ROOM - ON ADAM

as he reaches for the heavy steel latch on the closest refrigerator. His fist wraps around the filth-laden steel and pulls back.

INSIDE

the 'fridge are shelves stacked front to back, top to bottom, and along door racks, with large opaque plastic containers of varying dimensions.

ADAM'S POV

Each container has something dark, heavy, and meaty inside -- just like medical specimens. A hint of fluid keeping the odd shaped contents moist and fresh.

REVERSE ON ADAM

as he stares, brow furrowed, leans back -- Scott is right behind him. Adam nearly jumps out of his skin.

ADAM

Jesus, man!

SCOTT

Sorry.

(re: containers)

What are those?

ADAM

I don't know...but they sure can't get enough of them.

Carly enters the back room, rushes to Adam and Scott, swallowing a rising knot of panic.

CARLY

I think we should leave. Now.

SCOTT

What is it?

Before she can answer, Adam reaches inside and grabs a container off a center shelf with a scientist's curiosity.

ADAM

What the hell?

Scott and Carly watch Adam burp the container open, peer in at the floating contents, and recoil. He reseals it quickly, and shoves it back onto the shelf.

SCOTT

What?

Adam backs away from the refrigerator, repulsed. So many containers.

ADAM

We don't want to be here.

CARLY

Hel-lo? What'd I just say?

ADAM

We need to go *right now*.

Adam, scared, turns, exits. Scott and Carly follow suit, rightfully scared by their *de facto* "leader's" sudden alarm.

IN THE MAIN ROOM

The trio bursts towards the front door, incognizant to the familiar LOW RUMBLE of an APPROACHING TRUCK -- we heard it earlier with Francine.

ADAM

Where's Jessie?

CARLY

JESSIE!

Jessie bursts from a doorway behind them -- startled herself, she scares the living shit out of the trio.

JESSIE

What is it?

ADAM

We need to get back to your friends.

The RUMBLE grows louder, but they still haven't tuned-in.

JESSIE
What about the phone?

ADAM
There is no phone, let's go.

He heads towards the door, finally picking up on the RUMBLE.
It stops him dead in his tracks.

CARLY
What is it?

ADAM
(a beat, dire)
Someone's coming.

Adam backs away from the door, his definitive movement
stopping the rest of the gang.

SCOTT
(feverish)
Oh man -- oh God --

Outside, brakes squeal as the truck groans to a halt. Adam,
Jessie, Scott, and Carly are caught in a terrified tableau.

JESSIE
Back door.

They break for the back door.

BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Our foursome pours into the room, snaking through the
refrigerators towards a moldy wooden BACK DOOR. Adam grabs
the knob, turns it, pushes -- it won't budge.

He throws his frame into it -- no dice.

ADAM
It won't budge.

From outside, sounds of someone APPROACHING.

ADAM
We gotta take cover.

JESSIE
(nowhere to hide)
Where?

ADAM
Back in there.

MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Adam grabs Jessie's wrist and searches desperately for a hiding place. Carly grabs the closet door, yanks it open, shoves Scott inside, pulling the door closed behind her.

CLOSE ON ADAM

looking around, frantic, Jessie stares at the screen door. Hears the truck's doors creak open, the sound of heavy footfalls stepping down onto mossy earth.

ADAM

Under here.

He directs her attention to a large cot positioned against a pair of thick wooden beams.

ADAM (CONT'D)

(off her reluctant look)
It's our only choice.

She casts a wayward glance at the door, then drops to the ground and slides under the cot. Adam follows. They force themselves as far back as possible, out of view.

UNDER THE COT

Jessie and Adam crowd into the cramped shadowy space against one another, fighting to control their gulping breaths. Their eyes wide in the darkness under the rusty cot frame.

Jessie is spooned behind Adam, fighting down panic. Adam tries to quiet his own shivering by clenching his fists together.

THEIR POV

Only a floor level sliver of half the room is visible from beneath the cot. The screen door bangs open o.s. followed by two sets of incredibly heavy footsteps and one set of frenetic scuffling, shuffling steps.

Two pairs of tree-trunk sized legs and one normal sized pair enter frame wearing thick, laceless, mud and blood caked decades old leather work boots. Talk about Big Foot. Dirt flakes off in clumps with every step they take.

The dirt floor quakes under the weight of these "men." We can hear their thick, guttural grunts and bestial breathing. The normal-sized scuffler breathes with a frenzied slathering psychomaniacal hunger.

There's something instinctively forboding and primeval about their dim and weighty presence. An ominous devolved quality that rests closer to the borders of Neanderthal than human.

REVERSE ON ADAM

as he stares at these booted legs. Behind him, Jessie covers her mouth and nose, eyes watering from the sting of the Mountain men's raw, feral stench. The frantic scuffler giggles, scuttles and snorts like a petulant asthmatic.

BACK ON ADAM AND JESSIE'S POV

Staring out at the shuffling feet of the Mountain men. They drag something behind them and drop it into frame directly in front of us.

FRANCINE'S CORPSE slams onto the dirt floor with cold dead eyes, staring at us at half mast. Mouth parted, features scarred by deep cuts from jagged barbed-wire. Jessie lets out an almost imperceptible cry.

CLOSE ON ADAM

staring in stark, icy horror. Throat working against his need to shout, to flee, to distance himself from the death in front of him. He begins to shake.

CLOSE ON JESSIE

as she stares, quaking, at Francine's corpse, then shuts her eyes tight. Bites into Adam's shoulder to keep herself from screaming.

ADAM'S POV

Dark blood pools from beneath Francine's neck and torso. Moves toward us with agonizing slowness.

CLOSER ON ADAM

as he gazes at the pooling blood, helpless to move away as it stretches out to touch him. He wants to cry out, seeking some momentary catharsis that will stop his involuntary trembling.

BACK ON ADAM'S POV

as Francine's blood-tide breaks against the edge of his tightly clenched fists. The cold, wet kiss of death as Francine stares at him with her dead grey eyes.

ON ADAM

grimacing from the blood kiss. Jessie lays a hand on Adam's shoulder and squeezes for comfort. It's enough to keep him from erupting into bare naked hysteria.

BACK ON ADAM'S POV

Francine's body is suddenly lifted and gruffly dragged out of view, startling he and Jessie. Then, the sound of her corpse being thrown onto a wooden surface. The scuffler snorts and guffaws with snivelling drool-drenched anticipation.

ON JESSIE AND ADAM

as they take a shivering breath. Sharing wordless horror over what they've just seen.

BACK ON THEIR POV

as a well-worn shotgun butt is set down against the cot with a heavy thud and scrape. A dirty double-ought shell falls onto the floor in front of the cot in e.c.u., bounces, and rolls toward us.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as the shell stops an inch from his face. He barely has time to react as heavy footfalls and shadow dim the floor nearby.

ADAM'S POV

A huge, grimy, dirt, blood, and matted hair-covered hand SLAMS down onto the floor.

ADAM AND JESSIE

Jump out of their skins, Jessie's fingernails digging into Adam's skin.

REVERSE ON

Craggy fingernails -- torn, scarred, callused cuticles -- and scab-laden knuckles make up the knobby twenty pound appendage. Massive digits scramble under the cot to find the wayward double-ought shell.

BACK CLOSE ON ADAM

as the searching fingers scratch mere inches from Adam's face. Jessie's eyes are huge saucers over Adam's shoulder, watching, horrified.

BACK ON ADAM'S POV

as the fingers skim the floor with a repugnant arachnid frenzy. Closer and closer into shadow.

REVERSE CLOSE ON ADAM

as the scurrying hand finally grabs the shotgun shell less than an inch from Adam's chin and quickly withdraws with a grunt from its owner. After a beat, Adam brings himself to breathe.

ON JESSIE AND ADAM

as sounds reach them from the depths of the room. The sounds of cutlery, of gruff laughter, snuffles, shallow harried breathing, and saliva-wet giggles. Furniture is shoved, doors open and slam shut, liquid pours and is drunk with huge gulps followed by gargled guffaws.

ON THE CLOSET DOOR

We cross the room very slowly, pushing in on the far closet door -- as we hear the Mountain men move back and forth across the room.

We hear Francine's body, o.s., thrown onto a cutting board. Cleavers, boning knives, and pliers go to work on the meat and skeleton.

CLOSER

on the closet door until we are looking at a small keyhole. In the dark of the keyhole we see an eye trembling, bearing witness to the harsh nightmare in progress.

It is Carly's eye that watches in living horror everything that takes place in the cabin.

ON THE KEYHOLE

So close now that we see the tremor of Carly's eye even as we hear the gruesome activity o.s. in the cabin. The twist and snap of ball and socket joints. The tearing away of cartilage.

Under all this come the grunts, guffaws, snorting and sounds of rapacious consumption.

Carly's eye blinks, weeps, but cannot bring itself to look away. Trapped by raw shock into watching events no human being should ever see -- while we are forced to listen.

UNDER THE DOOR

A tiny puddle of urine appears...sheer terror having pushed Carly's bladder to the limits.

EXT. APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

Low clouds cast shadows across an emerald green carpet of dogwood, hickory, and Virginia pine, to the west. Storms threaten the western slopes of the Shenandoah.

In the eastern sky, the daytime full moon has already risen above the trees of the Monongahela.

OVERHEAD

a flock of Canadian geese sails low searching for a pond to bed down on along the eastern Panhandle. Locusts chatter in unison across a hundred miles of mountain slopes and steep cut foothills.

INT. CABIN - CLOSE ON ADAM - DAY

Still under the cot with Jessie. She shivers afraid to breathe. Clutching his shoulder. Adam adjusts, listening.

JESSIE

(whispers)

What?

Adam shushes her with a raised hand. Listens to the cabin's dark, eerie silence, broken by waves of irregular deep breathing.

ADAM

(whispers)

I think they're asleep.

Above Adam and Jessie, the cot sags heavily from its weighty occupant.

ADAM'S POV

A thick clump of greasy, dirt encrusted, blood caked hair hangs down over the side of the bed like a curtain of gnarled vines. The cot moves ever so slightly from breathing.

BACK ON ADAM

as he listens to the breathing, hears nothing else. After a long contemplative beat, Adam eases over onto his stomach. Jessie grabs him hard, scared, makes him look at her.

JESSIE
 (silently mouths)
 What are you doing?

Adam motions her to follow him quietly. She doesn't want to go, holds Adam's wrist in a vise-grip. He looks at her with silent assurance. His eyes also say that this may be their only chance to get out.

ADAM
 (silently mouths)
 Trust me.

Not easy for her under the best of circumstances, but Jessie nods. They soundlessly, slowly squeeze from beneath the cot.

IN THE CABIN

as Adam crab-crawls from under the cot with Jessie moving close behind. Both of them silently clear the cot and rise anxiously to their knees looking cautiously around the room.

ADAM'S POV

The Mountain men are even more terrifying in person. The two giants are sprawled on cots while the normal-sized yet disproportionately long-limbed scuffler sleeps on the floor.

They are face down, inhuman, with thick mats of greasy flea, tick, and lice-laden head and beard hair that has grown unchecked for years.

Their bodies are leathered and blocky, knotted with ugly asymmetrical bricks of veiny muscle. Each man, the product of indiscriminant inbreeding since before the Civil War, the two largest are well over six-eight and hovering easily at four hundred pounds.

All are dressed in cannibalized layers of clothing patched and stitched together to suit their primitive utilitarian lives. The men are universally repulsive. Vile of both sight and odor and terrifying to behold.

There are well-used weapons beside each Mountain man. Long-handle axes, boning knives, a home-made hunting bow, ancient Remington shotgun, and various other vicious steel tools.

BACK TO SCENE

Adam and Jessie slowly rise to their feet. Afraid to breathe, afraid that the sound of their beating hearts may very well give them away at any moment.

Jessie looks toward the distant closet door. Sees it creep open ever so slowly. Its hinges sing with a brief groan of corrosion.

The door stops moving. Jessie and Adam are statues. Waiting for damnation.

The Mountain men do not stir.

AT THE CLOSET

Scott eases out between the partially open door and the jamb. With effort, he draws Carly out into the cabin's forbidding dimness.

Carly, hunched, reluctant to be moved, stares at the Mountain men like a skittish animal. She has aged in the few short hours since entering the cabin, hollowed out by horror. She constantly shakes her head and shivers, mind short-circuited by what she's seen.

Scott quietly guides her forward through the room toward Adam and Jessie.

ADAM

watches their approach, tense. Looks down and sees looming disaster. Scott is looking at the sleeping Mountain men and not at his own feet.

Adam urgently raises his arms in the air, making a panicky, "stop" signal. Scott jumps at the motion, but doesn't take another step. He looks down to see...

HIS FOOT

is raised above an overturned tin drinking jug. One more step and he would have kicked the jug setting off noise like a klaxon. He carefully sets his foot down beside the jug.

BACK WIDER

Adam releases a breath. Scott and Carly join him and Jessie. But the cabin screen door still seems a light-year away from where they are.

ADAM
(silently mouths)
Slow.

The four of them move across the cabin as though in a minefield. Each step sounds concussive in their ears.

Eyes shifting back and forth from their steps to the three death-dealing throwbacks sleeping in their wake. Each step is more agonizing than the last as hope steadily grows closer.

Adam drips sweat as he follows Jessie toward the screen door. Carly holds Scott's wrist in a fierce two-handed white-knuckle grip. Only a few more steps to freedom.

ADAM'S POV - LOOKING BACK

at the sleeping Mountain men and the aftermath of their repugnant debauchery. The dining table is a mess of drying blood and scattered bone fragments.

JESSIE

nears the screen door, licks her fear-dried lips, raises her hand toward the door's rusted metal latch. Hesitates, staring at the corroded hinges. Recalls their hideous earlier screeching.

Jessie withdraws her hand. Looks at Adam for an answer. He thinks for a beat, appraises the door, then eases forward and places his body against the hinges as a sound buffer.

Adam reaches overhead and holds the rust-eaten spring arm connecting the door to the jamb -- the jagged, raw metal will surely tear his flesh. He takes a deep breath, nods for Jessie to open the door -- slowly.

She reaches forward, clutches the latch, and clacks it open as silently as she can. Cuts her eyes back toward the Mountain men.

No movement.

ON THE SCREEN DOOR

as Jessie pushes it open very slowly. Beside her, Adam leans against the jamb hinges as they offer muffled snaps and cracks.

CARLY

sweats, shivers as she looks back and forth between the door and the Mountain men. Her nerves close to shattering, veins straining along her neck and brow. Scott holds her, keeps her just shy of screaming.

ADAM

Keeps his back to the hinges, lets his hand quiet the spring overhead. Watches as Jessie gets the door just wide enough to slide through.

CLOSE ON ADAM'S HAND

as the rusty springs bite deep into his wrinkled palm.

ON ADAM

grimacing hard, grits his teeth tight against the sudden pain. Shivers it out, dripping cold sweat. He toes his quaking foot over, using it as a door-stop.

ADAM
(silently mouths)
Go.

JESSIE

slips slowly between the screen door and the jamb as quietly as possible. She looks back at Adam as she draws completely out into the daylight.

Adam nods for Scott to hurry. Scott wipes sweat from his cheeks, looks back at the three sleeping giants, and pulls Carly along with him toward the door.

SCOTT AND CARLY

ease between the door and the jamb one after another. It's an agonizingly slow process. Carly weeps soblessly, jaw twitching.

Adam watches them with nervous anticipation from his position against the hinges. Willing them with his eyes to move faster.

ADAM'S POV

Carly finally slips through the door and outside. Scott comes around on the other side of the screen door and holds it in position for Adam.

ON THE SCREEN DOOR

as Adam slides away from the hinges, lets go of the spring above one finger at a time, palm bloody from the jagged steel coils, and eases toward the partial opening. Turns himself sideways to fit through.

Adam gives the cabin's repulsive occupants one final wary glance -- and freezes.

ADAM'S POV

of the Mountain man lying face down on the near cot. His face, gritty, caked with dirt and blood, is barely visible through the steel-wood forest of head and facial hair.

ADAM'S POV - CLOSER

on the Mountain man's face. Focusing on his dark, dead cold, eyes. BOTH ARE OPEN. They stare like gun-sights directly at us. Feral and chilling at the same time. The eyes of a fearsome mountain predator turning angry.

CLOSE ON ADAM

frozen, staring. A deer caught in Death's headlights.

ADAM

Oh, fuck.

BACK ON ADAM'S POV

as the Mountain man explodes off the cot like a mad black storm -- it's nothing but a ferocious blur. His voice rising in a guttural rasp of madness and fury to rouse his brothers.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Adam slams out of the cabin in a mad rush chased by the sound of the howling Mountain men.

ADAM

Go! Go! Go!

Carly screams, clawed fingers digging at her cheeks, letting go of the fetid horrified shriek she's held boiling inside.

Adam grabs Jessie's hand as he passes. Scott has Carly and the four run pell mell for their very lives.

ADAM (CONT'D)

This way!

They pass a huge, mud-covered, weather-beaten tow truck that bears the mangled Xterra and Mustang on hook and tow-chain.

The four crash through underbrush into the black primeval woods bordering the cabins.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Adam, Jessie, Scott, and Carly run through forest so old and mature that underbrush has vanished, leaving only a carpet of mist, mulch, and dead leaves. The afternoon sun shines scattered beams through the leafy canopy.

ADAM

Up! Go up!

The ground slopes up into the Appalachians as the four run.

EXT. WOODED SLOPE - DAY

Adam, Jessie, Scott and Carly duck under low hanging branches and around jutting moss-covered rocks along the steepening ascent. The slope leads up amid oak, white pine and hemlock.

The four rush up the hill, driven by fear of what may be behind them. Carly trips on a root, cries out with naked terror.

CARLY

(sobs)

I can't I can't --

SCOTT

Carly, come on!

CARLY

Francine -- What they did to her --

SCOTT

Carly, you need to keep moving, baby.

Scott grabs Carly, drags her up the slope. Makes her get her feet moving.

Adam and Jessie make their way up the slope ahead, using the trees to push off and propel themselves further.

JESSIE

This can't be happening --

ADAM

(pushes himself)

Don't look back -- don't slow down --

Thunder rumbles over the mountains. Birds take flight from the high trees feeling the coming threat above and below.

THE FOUR

rush up a winding dry creek trail over shale, mud, and small stones. They cut around the crest of a mossy ridge following the trees and a narrow deer path that leads still higher.

FROM ABOVE

Watching the four cut along the slope trail single file. They sprint, fall, clamor up, and run on with no destination, only an instinctive need to flee.

EXT. RIDGE ROOF - DAY

Adam, Jessie, Scott and Carly reach the top of the timber ridge. Winded, sweaty, terrified.

JESSIE

Are they back there?

ADAM

I don't know. I don't think so.

Adam tears off a strip of fabric from the bottom of his shirt, ties it around his bleeding palm...call it a crude bandage.

JESSIE

Did you see them? Their bodies were...
fucked up.

ADAM

(humorlessly)

I think they've been swimming in the shallow end of the gene pool for some time now.

Carly collapses, still crying uncontrollably.

CARLY

I can't. I can't. I don't deserve this...it's not fair --

SCOTT

Carly, get up, come on.

CARLY

You didn't see them -- but I did --

Carly clings to Scott's legs and quakes, washed by waves of post-traumatic stress. Scott tries to pull her off.

SCOTT

Carly, please. I need you to focus, okay? Think about our wedding. Your family. Your friends.

CARLY

MY FRIENDS ARE DEAD!

SCOTT

But you're alive, okay? You're gonna make it.

Adam looks around.

ADAM'S POV

A huge dark lumber camp sits on the far edge of the timber ridge. One building still stands, partially reclaimed by forest encroachment.

ADAM

There. I see a building over there.

Adam starts ahead. Jessie helps Scott get Carly back onto her feet and moving. The four head through the timber toward the distant lumber camp.

EXT. LUMBER CAMP - DAY

Scattered tree limbs overhang the scattered, decomposed remnant of a dark brown and green log building built over a half century ago. The surrounding land is overrun with trillium, wild orchids, ferns, and rhododendron.

Adam, Scott, Carly, and Jessie make their way into the midst of the camp. Thunder rumbles as they rush toward the only standing building.

ADAM

Inside.

EXT. LUMBER MILL - CONTINUOUS

A tall wooden door stands partially open. Adam enters followed by the others and stops dead in his tracks.

ADAM

Shit.

The building is only two walls of what's left of a facade. The rest is an acre of tall grass and wild foliage encroaching on a graveyard of scattered rusting and moldering logging equipment.

JESSIE
Nice call.

CARLY
(searches, panicked)
There's nothing here!

Adam's head snaps at the RUMBLE of the tow truck's engine.

ADAM
No.

He goes back to the door, looks out into the camp.

ADAM'S POV

The tow truck stops and one Mountain man emerges from the cab while the other two climb out of the truck bed. They make their way side-by-side into the camp.

Though we will see only glimpses of these men, these monsters, through the action, if you were to see them full on, here's what they would look like.

ON THE LEFT

one hulking Mountain man carries a long-handle axe. The huffing giant stares around with one good eye, and one milky right eye under a drooping necrotic grey lid, clearly blind.

IN THE CENTER

is the scuffling mouth-breather. Normal-sized, gangly overlong limbs, hunch-shouldered with lanky, frenzied simian movements. The Mountain man holds serrated boning knives in his bony, hair matted fists. His left hand, much larger than the right, has only a thumb and two long gnarled fingers misshapen from birth.

ON THE RIGHT

the largest of the three brothers carries a home-made longbow, with corkscrew-barbed hunting arrows in a leather tie pouch off his stony shoulder.

He perpetually offers a malevolent, demented wide smile showing black gums and a greying dental graveyard of jagged saw-teeth. His brow bone, heavily protruded, hides dim glistening pupils in a black eye-socket abyss.

ALL THREE

carry an array of other edged implements dangling on rope and hide belts. Hair hanging like claw-torn fur over all their jagged, inbred, cinderblock faces.

BACK ON ADAM

as he turns, fights down hyperventilation, and sees Jessie gazing at him, saucer-eyed.

JESSIE

Them?

Adam nods. Carly's mouth opens to scream. Scott covers her lips, lets her bite into his palm to vent her terror.

SCOTT

Come on, baby, keep it together.

Jessie looks around the overgrown lumber camp. A haunted forest of forgotten equipment. She sees something.

JESSIE

Over here!

Jessie dodges around old saw-beds and huge milling equipment. She reaches a ten foot stack of wooden timber palettes turning slowly to compost.

Scott turns and pulls Carly with him.

CARLY

(shies away)

No.

SCOTT

We have to hide, Car. They're coming.

He forcefully pulls her behind the stacked rotten palettes. Adam brings up the rear, cutting his eyes toward the open mill door. Awaiting the inevitable.

BEHIND PALETTES

Jessie, Scott, Carly and Adam slip deep into dim shadow just as the Mountain Men enter the field of rusting lumber equipment.

The Mountain Men search slowly eyeing the shadows.

Carly bites back terror as do the others. Praying the Mountain Men don't come their way.

The Mountain Men search with the truculent slowness of natural predators. They search to the far left, then change direction and move toward the stacked palettes.

ADAM

points at rusted timber hoppers a few feet away in deeper forest shadow. Underbrush offers the barest cover between the palettes and the piled hoppers.

ADAM

(silently mouths)
That way.

The Mountain Men, circling closer, overturn weather-worn crates and empty equipment bins as they search.

Jessie follows Adam's gaze to the timber hoppers. She starts to rise. Carly grabs her and shakes her head vehemently.

THE MOUNTAIN MEN

ease still closer. Jessie, Scott, Carly and Adam are on one side of the palettes. The Mountain Men are on the other. All they need do is ease a few inches to the left or right.

JESSIE

silently, slowly crawls through thick underbrush to the nearest pile of timber hoppers.

JESSIE

(silently mouths)
Bring her.

Scott takes Carly's hand and leads her slowly, on hands and knees, across the shadows to the hoppers. Holding their breath. Desperate to make no sound.

Adam keeps a wary eye on the searching behemoths as he makes his way across the stretch of ground to the hoppers. Listens as the Mountain men grumble and rasp in frustration a half dozen feet away.

Jessie slowly moves into deeper shadow creating distance between herself and the Mountain Men. Scott follows, and then Carly. Adam waits until Carly starts moving and then cautiously brings up the rear.

The Mountain Men violently smash the palettes to splinters with whirling axes and fists.

BEHIND RUSTED TIMBER HOPPERS

Jessie turns to Adam. Scott holds Carly close to keep her from springing away in panic. They all whisper urgently.

JESSIE
What do we do?

ADAM
(beat, thinks)
Their tow truck.

JESSIE
We'll never get there.

ADAM
We don't have much of a choice. We have to get there.

JESSIE
How we gonna do that? Between us and it are THEM.

Adam's mind churns, the proverbial bulb alighting over Scott's head.

SCOTT
Someone leads them in the wrong direction. The rest commandeer the truck. Circle back for the runner.

The group's collective glance begs the question: how'd you come up with that?

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Colin Powell's autobiography had a whole chapter about how he and Schwarzkopf pulled this move on Saddam Hussein.

JESSIE
Good enough for them, good enough for me. Who goes?

ADAM
(definitively)
Me.

THE MOUNTAIN MEN

slice through underbrush getting close to the hoppers. Scott, Carly, Jessie, and Adam scatter silently into the shadows amid the piled hoppers and holds their breaths.

CARLY

creeps deeper into wet shadow. Her foot strikes a rotten timber. Wet brittle wood SNAPS audibly.

Everyone freezes. Carly swallows a shriek, shuts her eyes tight.

THE MOUNTAIN MEN

slowly turn and crisscross through nearby shadow and overgrowth. Three-finger capers and snorts with slathering anticipation.

Axe-blades slash through heavy weeds like machetes. Cold steel whips by inches above Scott and Jessie lying in low shadow amid the rusting equipment.

ADAM

hugs dimness against a huge corroded lumber conveyor.

One-eye passes close sweeping his axe down through shadows. The blade slices deep sidelong across Adam's left calf.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he bites back a trembling scream of pain.

ADAM
(a silent cry)
Hghhhmmmmmm...

Shivers as agony races through every nerve. One-eye slowly moves on. Adam gasps, grabs his bleeding leg.

SCOTT

watches Saw-tooth search mere inches from Carly as she shrinks away. Quaking in dire panic.

CLOSER ON SCOTT

as he realizes Carly's moments away from bursting into the open and running. He thinks fast. Picks up a rusted bolt and hurls it across the camp into the far underbrush.

All three Mountain Men turn at the sound and move to investigate. Fists filled with weapons.

JESSIE

looks up from her cover, sees Adam wounded. She toggles a "thumbs up/thumbs down" at him, trying to gage his status.

ADAM

Offers a pained, regretful "thumbs down." Jessie frowns, knows it's up to her when

SCOTT

Makes a low CLICKING NOISE with his mouth to get her attention. He mimes: "I'll go." Carly sees his decision and vehemently shakes her head. Desperately mouthing "No" over and over.

SCOTT

I need you to be strong.
(kisses her)
I'll meet you at the truck.

She's still shaking her head when he suddenly rushes away from the others. He runs low and fast through the weeds.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Hey, assholes!

THE MOUNTAIN MEN

Spin to the cry with rattlesnake quickness.

CARLY

stares after Scott with huge disbelieving eyes, shaking her head like a terror-stricken child. Voice torn from her throat by fear.

JESSIE

crawls through shadow and grabs her wrist. Pulls her away from the reacting Mountain men.

SCOTT

races through the brush in a wide circle along the camp's far edge. The Mountain men turn to pursue their prey.

ADAM

rolls onto his feet, sees Scott running as the bait, and immediately lets adrenaline overshadow his pain.

Jessie, holding Carly, gets a shoulder under Adam's arm and moves them all in the direction of the truck. They stay deep in tree shadows as they proceed.

CARLY
(low cry)
Scott...

JESSIE
(lowly)
You have to be quiet.

EXT. LUMBER CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Jessie supports limping Adam as best she can. His wounded left calf soaked with blood. Carly is right beside them.

ADAM'S POV

The Mountain men's huge tow truck sits across the camp at the road's far edge.

BACK TO SCENE

Adam, limping badly, scrambles toward the truck. A dim ray of hope as he pushes himself, following Jessie's lead. She yanks open the door, when suddenly

EVAN'S BODY

spills out of the cab at their feet, Jessie and Carly SCREAMING at the bloody mess. Jolted himself, Adam manages to somehow keeps his wits about him.

ADAM
You guys gotta get in.

Jessie jumps in. Adam ushers Carly.

CARLY
We can't leave him..!

ADAM
Get in!

He pushes her inside, hops in himself on his good leg.

INT. TOW TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

As foul an environment as the Mountain men's cabin. Animal bones and dried blood throughout. Adam, Jessie and Carly gag from the overpowering stench.

JESSIE
There's no key!

ADAM
It's the screwdriver.

He grabs the screwdriver jammed into the splintered age-rotted dash console and turns the handle. The engine cranks and coughs.

CARLY
Wait -- Scott? -- where's Scott -- ?!

JESSIE
He's coming --

CARLY
We can't leave without Scott -- !

JESSIE
We won't, Carly --

CARLY
Scott -- !

Carly tries to leap from the truck.

ADAM
Get a hold of her!

Jessie forcefully grabs her. Adam's lips moving in silent prayer as he repeatedly twists the screwdriver. The truck's engine sputters.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Come on, sugar. Talk to me. Lemme hear your voice.

The engine GRUMBLES to life. Adam, giddy with relief, rips the gear shift lever down and stomps on the gas pedal.

EXT. LUMBER CAMP - WORK ROAD - DAY

The tow truck lurches, fishtails forward throwing up a roostertail of mud as it careens away down the rutted dirt road. Adam steers around the camp's far side to meet

SCOTT

Who sprints for all he's worth through the underbrush and around the rusted equipment. He races toward the tow truck as it bounces along the mill road toward him gaining speed.

INT. TOW TRUCK - DAY

Carly stares at Scott with a tearful grin as he makes his way closer. The Mountain men smash out of the tall grass far behind him.

JESSIE

There he is -- slow down -- !

CARLY

(first sign of relief)
Scott --

OUTSIDE

Scott smiles as he runs toward the truck, seeing Carly's eager visage through the grimy windshield. He has a more than a healthy lead on the pursuing Mountain men. Scott stutters steps, then slows a beat. His expression falters as his eyes grow quizzical. Then ripen with pain.

IN THE TRUCK

CARLY

What's wrong?! Scott -- come on!

OUTSIDE ON SCOTT

He struggles to keep going. He looks down at his shirt and sees blood-blossoms forming around the protruding points of BARBED HUNTING ARROWS.

Another gnarled arrow-head thunks hard, piercing Scott's sternum as though growing from somewhere inside his torso. He staggers and twists as his balance fails. Revealing his back as a ghastly pincushion of hunting arrows.

He stares at the love of his life one last time.

CARLY

(silently, through the glass)
-- NnnnoooOOOO -- !

SAW-TOOTH

grins wide and looses a fatal arrow that sails fast and true. Slices through Scott's carotid. He spins hard from the impact and sprawls into the overgrowth.

INT. TOW TRUCK - DAY

Carly screams and bangs on the truck window with open palms as they rumble away. Scott's body left behind, the Mountain men descend upon his carcass like rabid wolves.

ADAM

Don't look back...

CARLY

(weeps, dying inside)
Oh God...Scott...SCOTT!!

ADAM

DON'T LOOK!

Carly's face and hands press despairingly against the smeared glass. Emotions stripped raw. She slides down and digs her fingers into her cheeks, eyes squeezed tightly shut. Jessie holds her like a small child.

JESSIE

Go faster.

Adam flattens his foot on the gas pedal. The lumber camp is slowly swallowed by leaves and haunting shadow. Hell left behind in the forest's darkness.

CARLY

(broken, blabbering)
This isn't my life...it's someone
elses...somebody screwed up...

Jessie holds Carly, comforts her. Sheds tears of her own.

EXT. LUMBER CAMP - WORK ROAD - DAY

The tow truck's taillights vanish into the vast dimness of the Appalachian forest.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - DAY

The clouds break as the storm slowly passes overhead giving way to dim sunlight. Misty clouds of evaporation rise off the leaves of the tall timber.

A swarm of Virginia big-eared bats swoop low over Cheat Range and Dry Fork deep within the Monongahela forest region.

THE TOW TRUCK

makes its way along a winding muddy track through thickening tree stands. The road slopes upward along the mountain side and narrows drastically.

INT. TOW TRUCK - DAY

Adam drives over increasingly rough road. Branches and leaves SLAP and SNAP across the windshield as heavy trees close in on both sides.

JESSIE

Are we going the right way?

ADAM

I sure hope so.

ADAM'S POV

The forest timber strangles the trail ahead as the road rapidly ceases to exist. Nothing but tree roots, boulders, and mud ruts ahead.

EXT. WORK ROAD - DEAD END - DAY

The tow truck reaches the top of the slope where the road simply dies. Nothing save thick forest on all sides.

INT. TOW TRUCK - DAY

Jessie's face falls, a renewed sense of dread settling.

JESSIE

No.

Adam throws the truck into reverse, gears GRINDING.

CARLY

What're you doing?!

ADAM

We have to turn around --

CARLY

No -- they're back there. Just keep driving --

ADAM

There's no more road.

EXT. WORK ROAD - DEAD END - DAY

The tow truck backs up and slams into a tree trunk. Adam adjusts but the trail is too narrow to maneuver. The tow truck jogs forward and quickly bogs down in a deep rut, stuck fast with no way to back up or turn around. Tires spin uselessly throwing mud.

INT. TOW TRUCK - DAY

Adam feverishly tries rocking the truck back and forth with no success.

ADAM

Shit!

JESSIE

Stop the engine.

ADAM

I'll get it!

JESSIE

You're grinding the gears! They'll hear us!

ADAM

I almost...

Jessie reaches over, yanks the SCREWDRIVER from the ignition. The truck's diesel engine STOPS. Adam turns to her, drenched in his own blood and sweat, panting...adrenaline racing.

JESSIE

(breathing hard, but reasonable)

Testosterone isn't gonna get us out of this. I need you to get your shit together and think.

Adam breathes hard, reeling from all that has transpired. Called to the carpet, he knows she's right, wits drifting back in.

ADAM

We need to get to a vantage point, see where the hell we are, locate a town or another road.

Jessie nods her consent, it makes sense.

EXT. WORK ROAD - DEAD END - DAY

The truck door GROANS open and SMACKS against a near tree truck. The three slowly climb out. Surrounded by dark wilderness.

Carly finds a red spruce and curls against its trunk. Adam, favoring his wounded leg, plops to the ground and rips off his pant leg from the knee down. He twists it and ties it around his bleeding calf, forming a tourniquet.

Jessie steps a few feet away, tries to size up their surroundings.

JESSIE

It looks like the highest peak is that one there.

CARLY

(a wreck, re: Adam)
If he's going, I'm not.

Jessie closes her eyes, barely able to deal with her own emotions let alone Carly's.

JESSIE

Carly -- don't --

CARLY

Scott is dead! Francine is dead! Evan is dead! They're all dead because he crashed into our car!

Adam shivers, guilt starting to take root. Jessie sees Adam caving in to blame.

JESSIE

He didn't put the barbed wire in the road -- those "men" did. They trapped us -- like animals.

CLOSE ON CARLY

as she tears away fabric from her clothes. Digs scratches into her arms until they bleed.

CARLY

Why?! I don't understand?! Make me understand and I'll be okay!

Jessie steps over, holds Carly gently and speaks to her as if she were one a child -- patient, firm.

JESSIE

Your *boyfriend* was killed by killers. He did what he did so we can escape. And so you either come up that hill with us, or he died in vain.

Carly turns away, sobs, chest heaving. Long beat. Silence.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

We gonna do this?

Carly nods, eyes filled with tears, matching Jessie's. Adam steps over, offers his hand to Carly.

ADAM

I'm sorry.

She takes it, stands, looks up at the hill. Then, without prompting or explanation, she begins to walk up -- as if heeding what Scott's telling her to do.

Jessie turns to Adam.

JESSIE

Leg okay?

ADAM

I'll live.

JESSIE

(looks back)

They're going to keep coming aren't they?

He doesn't even need to answer her, the both of them sharing a resigned look. After an instant, they turn to face the hill and start to head up.

EXT. FOREST WILDERNESS - DAY

A family of deer rush through the thick understory of redbud, papaw, and hydrangea. They ford a river tributary dammed by woodchucks and beavers.

Adam, Jessie and Carly make their way along trail switchbacks bordering the river.

EXT. FOOTBRIDGE - DAY

Adam, Jessie and Carly, still cold, shivering, reach an old, weather-battered footbridge. The bridge stretches over a shallow horseshoe gorge, shrouded by trees, where the river runs amid moss-covered limestone cliffs.

JESSIE
Think it's safe?

ADAM
One way to find out.

JESSIE
(earnestly concerned)
Adam, wait.

ADAM
(re: Carly)
Right now you're doing her more good than
me with this leg. I'm the best guinea
pig.

Jessie's respect for Adam grows yet again, as he tentatively starts across. The sagging footbridge sways terribly, CREAKS, but the oak planking holds Adam's weight.

ADAM'S POV

looking down around the footbridge to the river gorge below. The swift current offers a low rumble over rocks.

BACK TO SCENE

Adam continues across to the other side. He takes a breath, turns, and waves Carly and Jessie to cross.

ADAM (CONT'D)
(re: the bridge)
I think she'll hold.

Jessie takes Carly's hand and makes her look up. Offers a calm, soothing voice.

JESSIE
We're just going to walk, okay?
(off her weak nod)
Don't look down. Don't stop.

ON JESSIE

as she goes first with Carly bundled close behind her. They cross slowly and steadily.

JESSIE'S POV

The bridge CREAKS terribly beneath her feet. Adam waits on the other side with obvious anxiety, waving them on.

BACK ON JESSIE

as she and Carly move step by step. A painstaking process under leaf-scattered daylight.

ON ADAM

as he silently urges them closer. He alternates between watching Jessie and Carly and watching the other side of the river.

ADAM'S POV

The other side of the river is dark, silent. No sign of movement save for wind through the high leaves.

BACK ON ADAM

as Carly and Jessie reach the other side and step up close by. All three look back at the swaying bridge, the river, and the dark forest across.

JESSIE

Do you think they're out there,
just...watching?

Adam stares into the shadows. That exact thought already deep in his mind, festering behind hollow, weary eyes.

ADAM

I don't know.
(long beat)
Let's go.

The three turn as heat lightning flashes. Revealing a

TOWERING DARK FIGURE

with huge twisted arms raised to attack. Carly SCREAMS as Adam and Jessie backpedal in horror. Shadows settle and the trunk and gnarled branches of a

DEAD PINE

is all that stands before them. Their hearts start again after a collective breath.

JESSIE

I'm really starting to hate the woods.

The three move on single file along the horseshoe ridge, gradually ascending through ferns and mountain laurel into the thick of tall ancient hemlock.

EXT. FOREST PRIMEVAL - DAY

Adam, Jessie and Carly pass between huge hemlock trunks. Some are easily six feet in diameter reaching sixty and seventy feet into the forest canopy.

EXT. FOREST DEPTHS - DAY

Jessie and Carly walk ahead between towering trees. Adam, trailing, slows beside a smaller tree trunk. He leans against it, resting his wounded leg, face ashen from pain and exhaustion. He looks around at the world wondering how this nightmare came about.

Jessie looks back, sees Adam's condition. She touches Carly's shoulder, stops her -- she could use the break anyway.

Jessie walks back to Adam, takes a knee. She doesn't want to lose him to the fear, needing his strength to feed her own.

JESSIE

Hey.
(no response)
What's going on?

Adam manages an ironic smile.

ADAM

Wanna hear something wild? I've spent the last six years of my life preparing for this exact moment.
(look at his watch)
Friday the 21st. 7:30PM. The exact moment I'd sit down with Jack Keller of Keller Pharmaceuticals, order a single malt scotch, accept his fancy job offer...and begin my fancy life.

His look tells us how meaningless it all is, in spite what has happened. And from the look on Jessie's face, we know Adam's spiritual growth hasn't fallen on deaf ears.

Adam slides down the tree trunk feeling the cold arms of surrender closing around him. He leans his head back, looks toward heaven. Stares straight up.

ADAM'S POV

The "trunk" he's leaning against is actually one of four large wooden legs of a FOREST FIRE WATCH TOWER.

The tower's shadowed underbelly and extended ladder catwalk are clearly visible through the branches and leaves directly above.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

BACK TO SCENE

Adam slowly rises as Jessie and Carly both look up. Adam grins, daring to hope.

ADAM (CONT'D)

It's one of those watch tower things.
For forest fires?

JESSIE

Thank you, God.

(calls high)

Hello, in the tower! Anybody up there?
Hello?!

Her voice echoes, answered only by birds and the dying wind.

Adam, renewed, hurriedly hobbles to another of the tower's wide legs. There he finds wooden rungs leading up to the ladder-catwalk eighty feet above.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

(follows him)

I don't think anyone's up there.

ADAM

(excited)

There's probably a phone or radio. At least, it's shelter, and we should be able to spot the nearest road or town!

Adam grabs the pylon rungs, and hops up to start the eight story climb. Jessie looks at Carly and sees her backing away.

JESSIE

Carly --

CARLY

Forget it.

JESSIE

You'll be fine.

CARLY

I'll wait for you down here.

JESSIE
They're down here.

CARLY
I'm not going up there.

Silence. Jessie searching for a card to play.

JESSIE
All right. I'll stay with you.

CARLY
Jessie --

JESSIE
I'm not leaving you down here alone.

CARLY
Don't be stupid.

Adam turns to them, gets Jessie's gambit. He walks back over to them.

ADAM
Look, either we all go up...or we stay down here.

Carly looks at Jessie and Adam, sees that they're serious.

ADAM (CONT'D)
(indicates, bluffing)
We should keep heading west. The highway should be west.

Adam starts walking. Jessie follows. Carly stares after them both. Shuts her eyes tight against her own trembling fear.

CARLY
All right. I'll do it.

Adam and Jessie both turn. Glad not to have their bluff called. Carly swallows, goes to the pylon ladder, and starts climbing before she has time to chicken out.

Carly reaches for the next rung, when

A POSSUM

runs across the pylon and HISSES in Carly's face. She SCREAMS and falls backward. Adam catches her. The possum jumps down and runs off into the underbrush. Everyone takes a long moment to breathe.

ADAM

(to Jessie)

Building Rome wasn't this hard.

She appreciates the levity, smiles at Adam's disarming moment of frustrated charm. He returns the smile -- the spark of a connection between them.

JESSIE

After you.

Adam takes the ladder, heads up after Carly.

EXT. FIRE WATCH TOWER - WIDE - DUSK (MAGIC HOUR)

Carly, Adam and Jessie are ants slowly climbing the ladder leg of the watch tower. It's small log cabin-style hut sits just above the forest roof of tall hemlock.

EXT. WATCH TOWER - LADDER LEG - DUSK (MAGIC HOUR)

Carly climbs with a steady, quivering white-knuckled grip on each rung. Below, Jessie remains close, watching Carly.

JESSIE

You're doing fine.

CARLY

Don't talk to me.

Adam tries using both legs to climb the ladder. Each step up more agonizing than the last.

EXT. WATCH TOWER - CATWALK - SUNSET

Carly, Jessie, and Adam reach the catwalk directly beneath the watch tower hut. The catwalk leads to another small ladder under the hut's access door.

The three sidle across the narrow catwalk to the ladder. Adam climbs up to the door and finds a badly rusted broken padlock.

Adam, wary, shoulders the tower hatch open. The trap-door flops up and over with a bang in the darkness.

INT. WATCH TOWER - TWILIGHT

Adam climbs into darkness as the last hint of daylight slips beneath the western horizon. What light exists bleeds in through the hut's shattered windows and mesh screens.

The tower is obviously abandoned. It's interior has been gutted, save for a few broken built-in cabinets and desks. Adam begins to search the drawers, shelves.

JESSIE

enters and moves to the hut's broken windows, gazes into the night. As far as the eye can see there's nothing but forest and mountains.

JESSIE

(tense)

I don't see any roads or towns out there.

Adam comes to the windows, joined by Carly. They peer out, faces falling slack. Adam does a slow three sixty around the hut.

ADAM'S POV

The forest and mountains stretch from horizon to horizon. No lights, transformer towers, or any sign of civilization in any direction.

REVERSE ON ADAM

as he stares across a carpet of hemlock for a long beat before mustering his hope one last time.

ADAM

C'mon, maybe there's a radio.

Jessie joins him as Carly shakes her head and offers jagged, panic-fueling laughter.

CARLY

(utterly crazed)

We're all gonna die. We're all gonna die and get eaten by a bunch of fucking cannibals.

Adam drops to the floor, rummages through some low shelves, locating a cruddy old telephone jack. Jessie opens a set of cabinets. She pulls out several boxes.

Adam's eye spots something in the cabinet Jessie's rifling through.

ADAM

Wait, wait! What's that thing?

She turns a clunky METAL BOX sideways, revealing it to be a large ancient RADIO.

JESSIE

I think it's a radio.

Adam joins Jessie as she lifts the radio on a counter.

ADAM

Find the power switch.

JESSIE

Here.

Jessie finds a switch on the back and flips it ON. The radio remains silent.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Dammit!

Adam scrambles, loots along the cabinet's shelves and finds a storage box. He opens it and takes out a large pack of fresh LITHIUM BATTERIES.

ADAM

Check it out.

JESSIE

(re: the batteries)

Pray they're still good.

Adam flips the radio and finds a battery compartment on the back. He uses a sliver of window molding to break off the bolted battery panel.

JESSIE

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon.

Adam inserts the batteries and flips the radio back over. Jessie turns on the power. The radio buzzes to life.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Thank you, God. Thank you so much.

CARLY

(delirious optimism)

We're saved.

Jessie picks up the microphone and clicks the talk button.

JESSIE

(into mic)

Hello, hello? Can anybody hear me? This is an emergency -- can anybody hear me?

Jessie releases the button. The radio screams with SQUELCH and STATIC. No response.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Hello? Anybody -- State police? --

ADAM

Change the frequency. There should be an emergency band.

Jessie twists the frequency knob. More SQUELCH and STATIC shrieks from the radio.

JESSIE

(into mic)

This is an emergency -- this is an emergency -- can anybody hear me?

Nothing save static. Hopes fade. Jessie and Adam trade despondent glances, when...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(filtered through radio
statio)

This is Ranger Base, Emergency, we copy.
What's your position, over?

JESSIE

I don't know my position!

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Describe what you...

Silence. No squelch. No static. It's DEAD. Adam adjusts the dials, bangs on the radio in frustration.

ADAM

Work, you stupid thing. Work!

It won't work. He smacks his hand hard against the ledge, looks off into the woods. Suddenly, his EYE focuses on something below, new dread rising in his throat like bile.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Oh fuck me.

BACK ON ADAM'S POV

as he sees the approaching glow of THREE BURNING TORCHES eighty feet down on the forest floor. The torches illuminate enough of the bearers to reveal the three Mountain men.

Saw-tooth, Three-finger, and One-eye approach the watch tower following Adam's, Jessie's and Carly's tracks. Muttering and grunting between each other as they grow closer.

BACK ON ADAM

as he leans back from the hut's edge, ashen, trapped. Jessie looks up and reads it in his eyes, her knees weaken.

JESSIE

No.

ADAM

Yeah.

A guttural HILLBILLY CRY rises from somewhere below. A cross between a laugh and a dare. Adam crosses to the trap-door and looks down.

ADAM'S POV

The three Mountain men climb the tower rungs with terrifying swiftness. Each carrying his primitive torch aloft.

BACK CLOSE ON ADAM

as he shuts the trap-door and fights down hyperventilation. He looks at Jessie and Carly. They know what he's just seen. Carly, broken, launches herself at Adam with fists flying.

CARLY

Are you happy now?! You've killed us all!

Adam covers his face with his arms and shoves her off. Jessie drops the radio mike and grabs Carly before she can attack him again.

ADAM

(frantic)
You think I wanted this?!

CARLY

Who cares what you wanted? We're all in it now!

JESSIE

(to Adam)
What do we do?

ADAM

I don't know! I don't know!

Carly spins away tugging on her own flesh.

CARLY

This isn't fair -- !

Adam looks around, then jumps at the cabinets and wooden desktops. With terror-driven strength, Adam tears cabinets from the rotted hut walls and drags them onto the trap-door.

ADAM

Grab some stuff and cover that door!

Jessie takes the instruction, using pieces of desktop. Carly drags over broken detritus. Piles all of it atop the trap-door. Hundreds of pounds of wreckage quickly shoved onto the small space.

FROM BELOW

something slams into the trap-door. Muffled grunts of ferocious effort as shoulders shove fruitlessly against the weight of the piled debris.

ADAM, JESSIE AND CARLY

back away from the pile as it bumps but doesn't move. The Mountain men are effectively stopped below. Three more hard desperate thumps. Then silence.

Adam, Carly and Jessie wait and listen. No sounds.

JESSIE

Are they giving up?

ADAM

I don't know.

Adam eases closer to the trapdoor. Listens.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I think they're going back down.

JESSIE

I doubt they're leaving.

ADAM

Well, at least they can't get in.

Adam turns, offering a wan smile of momentary triumph. Jessie starts to let out a relieved breath.

From outside, SMOKE rises and curls around the watch tower's corners. Slowly seeps inside through the broken windows.

Adam sees tongues of flame dance into view on the far left and right as the corners begin to blacken. Jessie cuts her eyes from the smoke to the growing flames outside.

JESSIE

Fire.

ADAM

(beat, realizes)
They're smoking us out.

CARLY

What -- ?

ADAM

We can stay here and burn...or clear the trapdoor and climb down...

JESSIE

We can't go back down.

CARLY

I need Scott...where's Scott?

ADAM

Jessie, we don't have a choice.

ON CARLY

as she turns to the hut's window. She picks up a larger piece of wood and SMASHES it through the remaining glass.

JESSIE

Carly!

Carly climbs up on the window sill. Adam spins and grabs Carly a heartbeat before she jumps.

CARLY

Let go of me! I'll die my own way -- let me jump!

ADAM

pushes Carly away from the window, lets her go, then looks outside at the trees. To the right and left, smoke swirls in through the windows as FIRE climbs the walls.

ADAM

(re: trees)
She's right. We'll jump.

JESSIE
What?

ADAM
(points)
Those hemlock branches are just a few feet below us.

JESSIE
(joins him, looks down)
That's more like twenty feet.

ADAM
You'd prefer this?

Adam gestures toward the flames slowly claiming the floorboards -- it's about to become an inferno.

INT./EXT. WATCH TOWER - NIGHT

Adam helps Jessie climb up onto the hut's ragged sill. Huge hemlock trees bordering the burning watch tower on all sides

ADAM
Don't worry, the first step's the worst.

JESSIE
This is insane.

Carly crouches at the radio, quaking with desperation.

CARLY
(into mike, frantic)
Somebody help us! Anybody!

ADAM
Carly! You have to go.

He scoops her up, brings her towards the ledge, where Jessie gets ready to fly.

JESSIE
Wish me luck.

She eyeballs the thick branches below and leaps into free-fall.

JESSIE'S POV

The dark branches rush toward us in a confused blur of darkness and leaves. Jessie grunts as she slams into hemlock.

EXT. HEMLOCK TREE - BRANCHES - NIGHT

Jessie hits several branches, breath coming in panicked gasps as she struggles to gain purchase. Arms and hands, cut, scratched, flailing to grab something, anything, and hang on.

She hooks a thick limb under her left armpit and dangles. Her feet manage to find a thick branch directly below.

She turns back to the fire tower, nodding to Carly.

JESSIE

(to Adam)

They'll hold. Send her down.

EXT. FIRE WATCH TOWER - SAME

Adam steady's Carly's quaking legs.

ADAM

Okay Car...here you go.

She takes the first big step.

EXT. HEMLOCK TREE - BRANCHES - SAME

Carly's body slices through the thin upper branches -- she's off course.

JESSIE

Shit.

Jessie stretches her right hand out and snares the screaming Carly as she careers down the branches a foot away. She uses Carly's own momentum to swing her onto a nearby limb close to the trunk. She balances on her toes and grabs hold.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

(panting from exertion)

You're okay, you're okay.

INT. FIRE WATCH TOWER - SAME

The space is consumed by fire, engulfing the dry wood. Smoke pours out of the broken window, as Adam climbs up.

EXT. FIRE WATCH TOWER - WIDE

No time for ceremony, Adam leaps away from the hut. His arms pinwheel as he sails through space into the snap and crash of tree limbs.

He is heavier than the women and falls PAST Jessie and Carly hitting hard across his abdomen on a WIDE BRANCH. The air knocked out of him for a painful, dizzying beat.

JESSIE

Adam!

He steadies himself on a branch nearby, slowly recovering, arms shaking. He gets to his knees on the wide limb and clings to the trunk.

ADAM

(sheer courage)

I'm okay.

Behind them, the watch tower continues to burn. Wind rustles through the trees. Adam looks to the branches above to meet Jessie's worried gaze.

ADAM (CONT'D)

We should be safe here in the trees.

JESSIE

We can't stay up here forever.

Good point. Adam considers, listens. He hears hurried movement below and gazes down toward the ground.

ADAM'S POV

Sixty feet down, along the forest floor, the Mountain men's torches glow as they angrily circle the tree trunks.

ADAM, JESSIE AND CARLY

listen as the Mountain men grumble with coiled frustration. Suddenly,

A BARBED ARROW

slings blindly into the trees. Slams harmlessly into a branch twenty feet below. A SECOND ARROW hits timber with the same useless effect. The trees offering effective cover.

BELOW

A sudden burst of movement. Something scrambles into the trees, climbing with grunts and breathy giggles. Three-finger huffs and snorts from below. Scrabbling up the thick trunk of a hemlock to its branches with simian ease.

CARLY

Sees who's coming up the trees, continues her downward spiral into sheer mania.

CARLY

(to Adam, terrified whisper)
Safe in the trees...you said we'd be safe
in the trees...

The limbs fifty feet down crack and shake as the gangly Mountain man scuttles up.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he looks down toward the forest floor. Saw-tooth and One-eye circle holding torches, keeping watch for their elusive prey.

BACK ON ADAM'S POV

looking at the adjoining tree branches stretching away across the forest in all directions. A twisted timber highway of thick limbs.

BACK ON ADAM

as he points into the adjacent tree.

ADAM

(quiet instruction)
Go! That way.

Jessie stares, wide-eyed, sees what he has in mind. She hesitates, offers a tight nod, then looks down.

JESSIE

(a whisper)
Carly --

Jessie points at the tree branches and pantomimes crossing from one tree to the next.

Carly vehemently shakes her head, then looks down as the branches shake below. Closer.

ADAM

turns, leans out, grabs an overhead branch, and swings across to the thick gnarled limb of an adjacent tree. He hand-walks overhead from one branch and catches a firm hand-hold on the next.

ON JESSIE

as she balance-beams from the wide limb of the first tree to a slightly thinner, but sturdy branch one tree over. She steps across more branches clustered close to the tree's trunk and looks back.

JESSIE'S POV

Carly, backlit by the watch tower blaze, now fully involved, moves from the first tree to a second with a blind leap. She crashes into limbs and luckily catches hold before tumbling.

IN THE TREES

Adam slowly straddles across to another limb, favoring his bad leg as he uses his hands on branches to provide balance. His face shivers, eyes darting, making sure of his footing.

Jessie, moving directly from one tree to the next, judges limbs with quick glances. She hazards a look back and hears eerie movement and chattering breathy grunts amid the trees below and to the side.

Carly, behind Jessie, uneasily steps side to side, searching for the thickest limbs to stand on. Sweat drips from her nose and chin, chased by the snorts of the Mountain man closing the gap behind her.

FROM BELOW

Adam, Jessie and Carly move through the trees with perilous uncertainty. Smaller branches break away under foot, dropping out of view to the forest floor.

FROM ABOVE

Adam crosses a tangle of smaller irregularly shaped limbs.

Jessie is one tree over trying to find her next line of footing.

Carly drops further behind waiting to move to the next tree.

The world yaws sixty feet below.

CLOSE ON CARLY

Sounds and movement close in behind her. Panicked, Carly pushes off from a branch and side-steps to another. Her foot strikes an OWL NEST and sets the young BIRDS SCREECHING into a frenzied cloud of angry feathers.

Carly shrieks, flails her arms, slips, and dives to the tree trunk for balance.

ADAM AND JESSIE

look back from their vantage points. Carly hangs onto the tree trunk and tries to catch her breath.

ADAM
(urgent whisper)
Carly, hang on!

BACK CLOSE ON CARLY

as she musters every last ounce of sanity, gets some semblance of wits and slowly ease up to a standing position.

Something WHISTLES in the air directly behind her. She looks back.

CARLY'S POV

staring edge on at a side-whipping broad-head axe whirling in fast. Blade cycloning through leaves as it closes the gap right at us, filling our line of sight.

REVERSE CLOSE ON CARLY

as she opens her mouth to scream.

ON JESSIE

as she turns, stares, shocked. Then screams in tattered peals.

JESSIE
NO!

ON ADAM

as he looks back and sees the horror. Eyes widening, aghast.

CLOSE ON CARLY'S RIGHT EYE

as the pupil slowly dilates and grows fixed in death. We slowly PULL BACK and reveal that the axe-head has cleaved side-long right through Carly's head, between her upper and lower palette, and imbedded in the tree trunk.

Carly's body, from her cleanly severed lower jaw on down, falls away from the hemlock trunk and topples gracelessly into space.

Carly's skull and upper jaw rests neatly on the flat axe-head imbedded sideways in the tree trunk. Eyes frozen open in graying death-trauma.

BACK ON ADAM

as he shivers, then sees Jessie starting to reel, spent scream dying on her lips. Adam crosses to Jessie on the wide branch, catching her before she falls.

ADAM

Come on --

JESSIE

(weak, reaching out)

Carly --

Jessie buckles, stomach nauseous. Adam looks around, listening to sounds rushing through the trees. Three-finger, moving with terrifying agility, approaches swiftly across limbs laughing and capering with fresh joy.

ADAM

Jessie, we gotta move.

Adam drags Jessie across the branches behind him, fighting his way into the thickest part of the knotted hemlock overpass.

LARGE HEMLOCK TREE - AMONG BRANCHES

Adam reaches a wide branch and pulls Jessie in close with him against the tree's huge damp trunk. Mist rises around them from leaves and the forest floor.

JESSIE

(shaking)

Why?why?why -- ?

ADAM

(close, whispers, intense)

Jessie, listen to me -- listen. Hang on, okay? Can you do that?

JESSIE

(crumbling)

Carly -- my God --

ADAM

(shakes her)

Look at me. Look.

(she does)

I need you, Jessie. I need you. We're all we've got.

JESSIE

We're not going to make it --

More crashing through the trees to the right as the Mountain man snivels guffaws. Branches crunch only a few trees away.

ADAM

stiffens, puts a quieting finger to Jessie's lips as he realizes there's nowhere left to run.

CLOSER ON ADAM

as he looks around at the nearby branches, searching for a weapon, an idea, anything. He sweats, then locks his eyes on a branch at eye level.

He quickly pulls his woven leather belt out of his pants loops, side-steps out several feet, and slips the belt around the medium-sized limb.

ADAM

(to Jessie)
Help me.

Adam, backing toward the trunk, pulls hard on the belt bending the branch slowly into a bow.

Jessie steps up behind Adam, grabs the belt strap, and tugs. The branch, wet, pliable, bends with creaking protest.

ADAM (CONT'D)

(whispers, taut)
Can you hold it by yourself?

JESSIE

Yeah.

ADAM

Don't let go until I say.

Adam lets go and starts to move to an adjacent branch. Jessie holds tight to the belt strap.

JESSIE

What're you doing?

ADAM

Making sure he comes this way.

Jessie realizes what Adam has in mind, quickly hands him the belt.

JESSIE

No. With your leg you'll won't be able to do what you have to.

ADAM

I'm not letting you go out there as bait.

JESSIE

Deal with it.

Jessie moves on amid the shadowy limbs. Adam reaches to stop her, but she's gone.

ADAM

Jessie!

No use, he'll just have to do his part with the branch.

CLOSE ON JESSIE

as she eases along the branches and stops. Her eyes shift as a silhouette approaches through the leaves.

JESSIE'S POV

A long limbed dark figure shoves through the leaves stepping without caution from one branch to the next. Moonbeams edge across the hair-shrouded face of Three-finger.

He drools, laughing and mouth-breathing, holding his serrated boning knife aloft as he advances. He licks his lips and snuffles with joyful anticipation.

BACK ON JESSIE

as she shakes a tree branch overhead and purposely snaps a small limb. Then moves back on a specific course.

JESSIE

(sotto, tense)

Come on, big boy, over here...

She watches Three-finger's silhouette change direction and move toward her. Stepping from branch to branch, easing closer.

She moves back across the target branch and sees

ADAM

holding firm -- he's got the branch held at the ready. Their eyes meet, he's worried about her. Jessie stays cool. She shakes another branch as a lure and eases back onto another limb.

JESSIE

sets her weight back on a small crossing branch. The limb buckles and snaps free. She topples backward, falls through branches, and just manages to catch hold. Legs dangling in open space.

ADAM

gasps but can't let go of the belt strap to help her. He watches Jessie struggle to maintain her precarious hand-hold. Helpless to save her.

THREE-FINGER

hears the commotion and moves toward Jessie with rapacious glee. One more branch and he'll be standing in the direct path of the bowed tree limb.

CLOSE ON JESSIE

as she grimaces and tries to hang on. Fingers slipping. She can't find enough purchase to pull herself up. Arms trembling badly as her strength fades.

CLOSE ON ADAM

hanging on with everything he has. Lactic acid screaming in his aching biceps and forearms, begging him to let go.

ON THREE-FINGER

as he looks around, apish, head-cocked and sees Jessie hanging onto a narrow lower branch three feet away. Easy prey.

Three-finger hisses a chuckle, raises his huge knife, and crosses to the next branch. Ready to strike.

JESSIE

takes a breath as she sees Three-finger settle both feet on the closest branch. Unaware of the trembling bowed limb two feet from his head.

Jessie and Three-finger lock eyes for a terminal moment. He raises his THREE-FINGERED HAND up to show her the blade of his rusted knife.

JESSIE

Three fingers, huh?
(make Clint Eastwood proud)
Well here's one more.

With that, Jessie flips him her MIDDLE FINGER, three-finger cocking his head, before...

JESSIE (CONT'D)

NOW!

Adam's hands fly free from the leather belt strap.

The tree limb takes-off like a wicked catapult. Slamming into Three-finger's face with the speed of a rifle-shot.

He sails off the branch crashing backward through leaves and smaller limbs as he falls into space.

JESSIE'S POV

Three-finger smashes down through countless branches. Wood splinters into a timber-tornado around him as he plummets bouncing, crashing, and slamming off limbs during the five story free-fall to the carpet of tree roots and mulch-earth below.

THREE-FINGER

slams into the ground like a fleshy meteor, landing on his back. The impact drives several shattered and splintered pieces of sharp hemlock into his torso.

ADAM

rushes to Jessie, grabs her forearms, and drags him back up onto the thick branches. They hold each other, gasping from exertion and stare far below.

THEIR POV

gazing down at the motionless Mountain-man. Three-finger spits blood and slowly crawls back onto his feet, blood dripping from the ends of wooden pikes impaled through his chest.

He walks a dozen feet toward the tree, staggers, and finally collapses into a wretched heap.

ON ADAM AND JESSIE

as they continue watching the Mountain man sprawled in the darkness below.

A chilling pair of nightmarish wails rise from nearby. One-eye and Saw-tooth rush from between the tree trunks toward their fallen brother.

BACK ON ADAM'S AND JESSIE'S POV

as the two other Mountain men sink down beside Three-finger in angry, confused disbelief. Prodding him to rise.

REVERSE ON ADAM AND JESSIE

as they force themselves to look away and rise slowly. Adam takes Jessie's hand and leads her across a thick landscape of interconnected branches.

ADAM

We gotta move.

Jessie stares back and down at the fallen Mountain man and his emotionally wounded siblings. Brief remorse in her eyes, the unadrenalized-reality of her actions settling in.

JESSIE

(sotto, small, lost)
We killed him...

ADAM

(a beat, shaken, doesn't want
to think about it)
Come on.

Adam leads the way across the branch thicket. They quickly vanish amid the high trees.

EXT. HEMLOCK FOREST - AERIAL - NIGHT

The forest stretches away into the night's depths as the full moon lightly kisses the western horizon. In the middle distance, the watch tower blaze dwindles to a charred diminished ruin.

The burning tower COLLAPSES in on itself swallowed by the forest.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - NIGHT

Adam and Jessie emerge from the hemlock forest and stumble, exhausted, down the mountainside.

Adam, limping badly, using a branch for a crutch, loses his balance and sprawls. Jessie drops to her knees beside him.

JESSIE

Adam!

ADAM
 (spent, gasping)
 I'm okay, I'm okay...let's go.

Jessie looks up, sees something hidden amid beech trees, maple, ferns and blue-bead lilies.

JESSIE
 Look.

JESSIE'S POV

The collapsed entrance of an old COAL MINE is camouflaged by the undergrowth.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
 It's some kind of mine.

BACK TO SCENE

Jessie helps Adam get back on his feet. She leads him toward the hidden mine.

ADAM
 We shouldn't stop.

JESSIE
 Listen: we need to fix your leg and get some sleep. We try to outrun them tired like this, we're food.

Adam surveys the surrounding mountains and forest for signs of close pursuit. None in sight, he nods.

EXT. NEARBY TREES - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

Adam and Jessie gather some small, dry firewood.

EXT. MINE SHAFT - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

Adam and Jessie work with branches to wipe away their footprints.

INT. MINE SHAFT - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

Jessie holds a small torch as Adam heaves a large BOULDER in front of the opening to the shaft, a small fire burning deep in the shaft behind them.

ADAM
 Okay, that should keep us safe.

They turn around, immediately confronted by

A COPPERHEAD SNAKE

West Virginia's worst, it's four feet long and thick as someone's fore-arm. It rears up and HISSES viciously.

Our heroes JUMP out of their skin, Jessie throws the torch at the reptile, sending it slithering off. They breathe easier.

INT. COAL MINE - LATER - NIGHT

Dark, damp, close. The mine, sixty years old, more a jagged meandering cave, stretches out of view into the earth's dark depths. Soft mulch soil, smooth bed-moss, and fallen timbers make up the ancient interior.

Adam and Jessie sit on soft moss halfway down the mine's stony throat, small fire crackling. She pulls strips from her tank top to make a new bandage for Adam's leg, wraps it around his leg, working tirelessly.

JESSIE

Too tight?

ADAM

No, it's good.

JESSIE

I don't want it to hurt, so tell me if it's too tight.

ADAM

Jessie...t's okay to be upset.

Adam holds her eyes, his gentle look affording her the luxury of something very rare to her: a moment of vulnerability.

JESSIE

Last Friday I came home from maybe the worst week of school I've had in years. Finals, papers due, the whole bit. But I get through it and get home and there's a message on my machine from my boyfriend of six months. He says...

(laughs despite the pain)

...that he feels like he's dating the "right person at the wrong time." He says, he needs to go "figure out" what he wants to do with himself. He says "it's not about me, it's about him." This is what he said on my machine.

Adam smiles with her, sympathetically.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

And within twenty minutes of me telling Carly, she had Scott, Evan and Frannie blowing off work this week to take me out here hiking. Twenty minutes. That's the kind of friends they were.

She holds that smile for an extended moment, then tucks them away in her memory as her smile fades.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

And now they're dead. All 'cause I have shitty taste in guys.

Jessie looks up into Adam's eyes. He meets her wet, vulnerable, pleading gaze.

Adam carefully leans into Jessie, giving her every opportunity to retreat. She doesn't budge. He kisses her softly. After a moment, Jessie kisses him back more firmly as the two slowly wrap their arms around each other. Each hungry to feel passionate and alive one last time...

EXT. MOUTH OF THE CAVE - THE NEXT DAWN

The sun pokes through the trees, casting long morning shadows. A lowly FIELD MOUSE makes its way across a flat piece of rock near the entrance of the cave, when

A SIZE 20 BOOT

Crushes it, bones splintering under the enormous weight -- there's no doubt whose boot this is.

INT. THE MINE SHAFT - DAWN

Adam startles awake, shocked by the slightest little noise. Jessie sleeps across his chest.

They have moved themselves deeper into the mine shaft, taking cover between some large ROCKS and an old COAL HOPPER.

ADAM

(panicked)
Jessie --

Jessie's eyes snap open, disoriented, then freezes as does Adam. A sound slowly bleeds into the mine's mouth -- FOOTSTEPS and guttural BREATHING -- followed by the telling flash of torchlight.

Adam slowly turns, face filling with dread.

Jessie listens, fresh terror haunting her eyes. She bites back a rising scream as Adam grabs her wrist.

ADAM (CONT'D)
(jumps up, breathes)
Come on.

INT. COAL MINE - CENTRAL TUNNEL - DAWN

Adam and Jessie rush into the mine's depths. Shafts of light sift weakly through cracks and crevices in the eroded moss-coated ceiling rock.

The Mountain men's breathing and quickening footfalls echo behind them. An angry rasp of eureka peals through the dimness, closing in.

ADAM
This way. We'll circle down, then back to the entrance.

INT. SIDE SHAFTS - DAWN

Adam, limping, driven by fear and adrenaline pulls Jessie down side shafts to the left, then right. The two of them duck and dodge around rotted fallen ceiling timbers heading deeper into a twisting labyrinth of dark, twisting cave-like mine shafts. The moldering intestines of Hell.

The snarled breathing of Saw-tooth and One-eye echoes from somewhere behind them. A confusing cacophony of bouncing sounds and whirling darkness.

ADAM AND JESSIE

scramble around rusted mine equipment and splash through mud-filled tunnel depressions. They reach a caved-in dead-end.

ADAM
Back this way.

They back track quickly, and rush down another shaft. Growls of laughter echo closer on their heels. The nearing flash of threatening torchlight casts eerie shadows.

JESSIE
They're ahead of us --

ADAM
No, they're behind us -- this way, come on --

Jessie hesitates then follows.

INT. COAL MINE - NARROW SHAFT - DAWN

Adam, breathing in hard gulps, sweating with panic, turns down a narrow side shaft. Sees a hint of daylight from a sloped incline at the tunnel's far end. Adam smiles, rushes ahead -- and topples forward into blackness.

JESSIE

Adam!

ADAM

twists and barely catches hold of an aged wooden ladder rung as he FALLS through a vertical shaft opening. His feet swing around and slam against the dirt wall. Dangling over an abyss for a horrific beat.

Loose rocks and timbers splash a hundred feet below. A lower tunnel cuts across the vertical shaft just out of view beneath Adam's feet.

Jessie pulls Adam up and holds him, breathless.

JESSIE

One more time and I'm gonna start charging you.

ADAM

'preciate it.

They both turn and gaze across the six foot gap at the hint of daylight beyond. Behind them, the sound of heavy footsteps.

ADAM

We have to jump.

Adam steps back, runs, pushing off with his good leg and lands on the lip of the shaft. He turns and motions her over.

ADAM (CONT'D)

You can do it.

Jessie steps back, takes a running start and leaps. Adam readies to catch her. Their fingers brush.

ADAM'S POV

Out of the vertical shaft, from the crossing timbers of a lower sub-tunnel hidden by shadow, One-eye lunges straight up like a hungry Great White, teeth-bared, and snatches Jessie right out of mid-air.

Jessie is yanked down and just grabs onto the shaft's edge. She fights hard against One-eye. Kicking and pummeling the snorting Mountain-man. Her fists raining blow after blow onto his filth-crusteD misshapen brow. To no avail.

One-eye yanks and pulls Jessie down along the shaft's edge. She thrashes and twists, screaming, but can't break One-eye's vise-like grip.

Jessie, numb with terror, turns imploring eyes to Adam.

JESSIE

Adam!

REVERSE ON ADAM

Jessie's pleading gaze, raw with terror, locks on Adam's as she's violently dragged out of view down into the deep shadows and onto the shaft's crossing timbers with One-eye holding her. He vanishes down the dark intersecting sub-tunnel. Her screams echo and fade.

ADAM

No!

Adam moves forward to jump down to the shadowed crossing timbers, not wanting to lose Jessie, not wanting to think about her limited life expectancy.

A dark torch-bearing silhouette suddenly rushes forward. Adam looks up just as

SAW-TOOTH

leaps across the gap. Adam is knocked off his feet by and slammed backward down the tunnel like a rag doll. Lands hard amid dirt and rotted timbers.

Adam, stunned, looks up. Freezes as he stares at the bipedal horror-show stalking toward him down the shaft.

ADAM'S POV

Saw-tooth, puffing like a Grizzly, looms forward, longbow across his back, drawing a double-edged axe from his belt. Blade reflecting his mongoloid features.

BACK ON ADAM

as he spins up, arms pinwheeling, to his feet. Pivots away from Saw-tooth's swinging axe and

FALLS BACKWARD

down the steeply sloped incline. Tumbles toward the splinter of distant daylight.

EXT. MUDDY SLOPE - MORNING

The narrow tunnel shaft opens onto a hillside. Adam slams out of the tunnel opening and avalanches down the mud-choked slope out of control. Arms and legs sailing as he picks up speed bouncing through wild orchids, ferns, and serviceberry.

EXT. ROADWAY - MORNING

Adam crashes out of the mud, shrubs, and underbrush onto the hard flat of unyielding asphalt. Adam, arms splayed, head reeling, looks up just as BREAKS SQUEAL.

ADAM'S POV

A CHROME BUMPER comes to a sudden brake-locked, tire screeching halt, less than an inch away.

CLOSE ON ADAM

staring at the bumper and gulping air. He slides backward, sweaty, shaking, just as siren lights whirl to life atop the State Ranger Ford Expedition. The SUV has elaborate off-road lifted suspension for greater ground clearance.

A PARK RANGER

late thirties, tall, imposing, wearing the requisite crisp tan uniform and hat, steps out of the SUV wearing aviator sunglasses and a hardened expression.

ADAM

Oh, thank God...

RANGER

You okay?!

Adam staggers to standing, points emphatically up the hill.

ADAM

They got her! They took her!

RANGER

Calm down, calm down...

ADAM

We gotta move it, they're...

RANGER

You one of them folks who called out from the fire tower last night? I've been looking all over...

ADAM

(interrupting)
Would you shut up and listen to me.
People are dead!

RANGER

Dead? What people?

ADAM

These people I bumped into! There's a cabin in the woods and...

RANGER

What in the hell?

Adam sees the Ranger's glance dead set on

SAW-TOOTH

standing motionless half-way down the muddy slope, bow up, a barbed broad-head hunting arrow notched and ready.

ADAM

Shoot him! Shoot him in the head!

The Ranger snaps his hand to his holstered gun just as Saw-tooth looses the hunting arrow. The Ranger is promptly hit in the left eye with the barbed arrow.

Adam shouts and startles back an involuntary step.

The Ranger convulses for a beat where he stands, brain sparking in shocked death, then falls backward onto the asphalt, arrow protruding from his skull.

ADAM

scrambles backwards, grabs the front fender and starts to swing into the idling SUV.

A second barbed arrow slices through the Expedition's windshield like a bullet. Hits the driver's seat two inches above Adam's head. A heartbeat later, a third arrow slams home an inch closer.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he falls backward out of the SUV onto the blacktop. Scrambles out of view down the road shoulder on the other side.

ADAM'S POV

Saw-tooth makes his way down the slope. Momentarily obscured by the SUV.

ADAM

cuts his eyes to the dark woodland depths behind him. Readies himself to flee. Then has a desperate thought. He looks back at the Expedition.

ADAM'S POV

Gazing at the SUV's undercarriage and its modified off-road lifted chassis. Giving it substantial ground clearance.

BACK ON ADAM

as hesitates, then makes a terrifying decision. He dodges out onto the road on all fours, scampering behind the Expedition just as --

SAW-TOOTH

comes around the front of the SUV toward the Ranger's dead body. Hooks his fingers into the Ranger's mouth.

EXT. RANGER'S EXPEDITION - REAR - DAY

Adam slides feet first under the SUV's chassis as Saw-tooth hauls the Ranger's corpse around the rear fender. Throws open the tailgate and tosses the body in like groceries.

EXT. RANGER'S EXPEDITION - UNDERCARRIAGE - DAY

Adam holds his breath watching Saw-tooth's heavily booted feet. The Expedition rocks hard as Saw-tooth slams the tailgate shut.

ADAM'S POV

Saw-tooth crosses to the road shoulder. He hesitates there at the blacktop's edge. Sees no sign of our hero.

REVERSE ON ADAM

as he soundlessly gets finger and toe-holds high in the Expedition's undercarriage. Pulls himself off the asphalt and into the SUV's under-shadow.

Adam hangs just low enough to keep an eye on Saw-tooth at all times. Watching him in breathless horror. Shivering, praying for one chance. One narrow hope of survival.

ADAM
(silent, over and over)
Pleasepleasepleaseplease --

BACK ON ADAM'S POV

Watching and listening as scans the tree-line at the road's edge. GRUNTS with confused frustration.

A beat. Two beats. Saw-tooth suddenly turns and head straight back toward the SUV. Blood and mud covered boots moving straight for us.

CLOSE ON ADAM

wide-eyed, trembling. Awaiting discovery and death. The heavy footfalls a dirge of heinous finality.

ADAM'S POV

Saw-tooth's boots reach the Expedition -- climb up one at a time off the road. The SUV sags deeply as Saw-tooth squeezes his bulk behind the wheel of the idling Ford.

ON ADAM

giving himself a moment's breath.

The SUV's engine guns as it's ripped into gear. Accelerates away at high speed. Adam hangs on.

His face, pinched with fear, is two inches from the whirling drive-shaft. He grits his teeth and holds tight as the asphalt roadway passes mere inches beneath him.

EXT. ROADWAY - DAY

The Ranger's Ford Expedition roars down the dim, winding two-lane, and quickly vanishes beneath the forest canopy.

EXT. CABINS - DAY

Even in daylight the ancient cabins, shrouded by slow whirling MIST, rest in haunted tree shadow.

The Ranger's SUV careens up the dirt road bouncing to a halt behind Adam's wrecked Mustang.

EXT. RANGER'S EXPEDITION - UNDERCARRIAGE - DAY

Adam, sweaty, shivering against the chassis from muscle fatigue, watches as Saw-tooth climbs down from the driver's seat.

His eyes following the huge Mountain man's boot-steps around to the back of the truck.

ADAM'S POV

Saw-tooth stops behind the Expedition, opens the tailgate, and unloads the dead Ranger.

Saw-tooth carries the corpse by his mouth. Lets the Ranger's hands and feet drag in the mud as he's hauled around the SUV toward the cabin.

BACK TO SCENE

Adam's eyes sweep with Saw-tooth as he moves out of view toward the main cabin. He hangs down enough to see Saw-tooth, dragging the dead body inside the cabin.

Adam drops hard onto his back, quaking, and lets out a hollow rattling breath. Arms and fingers curled against his chest in knots of bundled agony.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Saw-tooth drags the dead Ranger through the cabin and offers a jagged, breathy grin -- to Jessie as he passes her close.

JESSIE

lays on one of the blood-stained cots, wrists and ankles tied with wire to the frame leaving her spread-eagled atop the naked mattress. Mouth gagged with braided leather.

Behind her, One-eye tosses wood into the free-standing pot-bellied iron stove. He slams the flame-licked cage door shut with a short shovel and turns his attention to sharpening three large boning and filleting knives.

Several empty plastic containers stand open on a wooden counter beside a huge tabletop cutting board.

Cleavers and knives rest close by, waiting to do their work.

ON JESSIE

watching Saw-tooth pass, hauling the Ranger's dead body behind him. She strains her head around, shaken to see the murdered authority figure -- the personification of salvation, reduced to so much worthless meat.

JESSIE'S POV - WIDE ANGLE

At a bizarre distant angle, partially obscured by hanging skins and a timber support column, she watches as Saw-Tooth hefts the Ranger onto the broad kitchen counter. The Ranger's head hooks face-down over the lip of a steel sink.

Saw-tooth catches Jessie's eye, a spiteful smile playing over his features -- he's torturing her with a front row seat to his pending actions. He grabs a large cleaver.

Jessie shakes her head, a silent plea.

No chance. Saw-tooth lops off the Ranger's head at the nape. The body falls away hitting the floor in a tangled heap.

REVERSE ON JESSIE

as she snaps her head away, eyes shut hard, trembling, spraying tears, and screaming behind her gag. She wails with quaking madness, for help, for hope, for God.

EXT. CABINS - BEHIND RANGER'S EXPEDITION - DAY

Adam crouches behind the Expedition as Jessie's strangled SCREAM reaches him. He shivers, frozen, eyes shut against rising panic.

ADAM

(sotto)
Jessie.

They have her alive. But a sense of weary helplessness immediately takes hold. How can he expect to take these men on alone? He looks around and gazes at something -- momentarily spellbound.

ADAM'S POV

The dirt trail stretching away from the cabins and winding its way into the distance.

The trail leads back to the side road -- and eventually to the two-lane blacktop and highway further on.

REVERSE ON ADAM

as he stares at the trail, at escape, at freedom. Only a few short steps away, he can practically taste it. The return to the easy path. His life.

Another wave of gargled shrieks issues from the cabin.

ADAM'S POV

Light filters from the cabin in eerie flickers. Sounds of pots and pans banging, mixed with the groans and hillbilly patois of the Mountain men.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he takes a deep decisive breath, pushes himself to his feet behind the Expedition. In everyone's life, there is one defining moment -- this is his.

INT. CABIN - ON JESSIE - DAY

As she tries to work her wrists loose from the binding wires. Her skin tears and bleeds as she pulls to no avail.

In the depths of the cabin Saw-tooth and One-eye busy themselves in different rooms as they gut and fillet the Ranger. We hear knives working and bones breaking away from cartilage.

Jessie quakes, straining harder against the wires. Her desire to survive overshadows any momentary pain.

EXT. CABINS - DAY

Adam moves low amid the field of cannibalized vehicles. He reaches under the open hood of an old Ford and pulls out a long narrow fluid transfer hose.

Moving quickly, Adam searches the trunk of one car, then another until he finds what he's looking for...a tire iron. He hooks it through his waistband, checks around inside different vehicles until he finds something else...a pair of old empty liquor bottles.

ADAM

rushes back to his Mustang, slides down beside the fuel door, opens it, unscrews the gas cap. He shoves the fluid hose into the tank, sucks out a bit of gasoline to start the siphon, spits, and fills the empty bottles.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he tears off his tattered shirt, rips it to shreds and stuffs the cloth into the bottles as makeshift wicks for his Molotov Cocktails.

Satisfied, he turns his attention to the Ranger's Expedition. Rushes to it and climbs inside through the passenger door.

INT. RANGER'S EXPEDITION - DAY

Adam rifles through the glove compartment, tosses out papers, maps, and other extraneous items. He searches the floorboards, frenetic, then pops open the ashtray...and finds a Zippo lighter.

ADAM

Okay...

Mind-racing, Adam slides behind the steering wheel, crouches down, and begins stripping wires from beneath the dash console. He uses the tire iron's long edge to crack apart the plastic steering column housing so he can dig deeper into the ignition wires.

His fingers move with surgical precision. His eyes intent on his ultimate goal...saving Jessie's life.

INT. CABIN - ON JESSIE - DAY

as she pulls and tugs on the wrist wires. Her face knotted, sweaty with the knowledge that her time on this earth is running terrifyingly short.

A dark, heavy shadow falls over her, huffing with locomotive breath. One-eye stares down. His bear-paw sized hands glistening red from his damp work in the kitchen with the Ranger.

Grabs Jessie's face with his left hand, turns her head to expose her jugular. Simultaneously, he draws a long-knife from his belt-loop with his right, blade offering a blood-dulled gleam.

CLOSE ON JESSIE

as she shies and bucks, violently thrashing from side to side screaming. Eyes wide, staring into the face of her own demise.

JESSIE'S POV

The huge darkness of the Mountain man begins to descend. Black roaming eye, cold, remorseless -- staring at her throat as he brings the knife around to make his cut.

CLOSER ON JESSIE

as she screams without end, face purpled, veins distended. Eyes shut tight as the cold wet blade just kisses her skin.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Adam, standing beside the Expedition, hurls one of the Molotov Cocktails against the cabin door.

It shatters on impact and EXPLODES turning the threshold and jamb instantly into a firestorm.

INT. CABIN - DAY

One-eye turns his attention away from Jessie as flames whirl and consume the screen door. Across the cabin, Saw-tooth emerges, staring warily, from the door leading into the Refrigerator Room.

EXT. CABINS - DAY

Adam leaps into the Expedition, twists together a pair of starter wires. The SUV's engine CRANKS but doesn't turnover.

ADAM

(under cranking engine)

Come on -- Come on --

The SUV suddenly catches and rumbles to life. Pantera's *Cowboys From Hell* blasts from the Expedition's CD player.

Adam grabs the steering wheel and gear shift lever. Eyes locked, jaw set, he's determined to make a difference.

INT. CABIN - DAY

One-eye, knife in hand, crosses toward the front door, hairy countenance knotted in confusion. Flames taking the door's entire wooden frame in short order.

One-eye steps closer, grabbing a torn rag to beat down the blaze. His monstrous physicality fills the door-frame -- as Adam pilots the Ranger's Expedition through the cabin's front door and most of the surrounding wall like some mad charioteer.

One-eye, stunned, is struck hard and slammed backward with the violent wet snap of sternum and vertebrae.

The SUV roars forward like a steel juggernaut, crushing One-eye against a huge wooden support beam. The beam splinters in two and the broken Mountain man is sucked beneath the Expedition's front bumper in a blood-splattered heap.

ADAM

catapults out of the Expedition with the second Molotov Cocktail raised high in a pitcher's wind up, already burning in his right hand.

Saw-tooth roars like a wounded buffalo as he charges forward.

Adam fastballs the firebomb right into Saw-tooth's chest. It explodes and envelopes Saw-tooth in an instant inferno, but doesn't slow him down.

Adam brings around the tire-iron, point-end out like a pike, allowing Saw-tooth to run right into it chest-first. Momentum carries Adam back hard against the Expedition's left front fender.

Saw-tooth, impaled, aflame, staggers away along the SUV's front grill. The burning Mountain man howls, rears back, and drops to his knees, finally toppling out of view.

ON ADAM

as he turns, breathless, rushes to Jessie's side. Pulls away her leather gag and goes to work on the wires around her wrists.

JESSIE

(shattered)

Oh, God -- Adam --

ADAM

(quaking, still reeling)

It's okay -- we're getting out of here --

Jessie's eyes go wide, staring at something over Adam's shoulder.

JESSIE

(horror)

No --

Adam turns, face eclipsed in sudden darkness as he's collected by huge burning fists -- and flung, windmilling, across the cabin's length into a rack of wooden shelves above the kitchen sinks. Mason jars shatter and fall with Adam onto warped floorboards.

SAW-TOOTH

stands, breathing heavily, body still aflame, in the center of the cabin. He still has the tire-iron in his heaving chest as he turns toward Adam, grabbing a two-headed broad axe hanging on a nearby rack.

JESSIE

has one hand free and works feverishly to unknot the wires around the other. The entire front of the cabin is now engulfed.

JESSIE'S POV

The Mountain man's longbow is propped against a bench just out of reach. Barbed arrows slung beside it.

ADAM

rises from the floor and ducks quickly to the right in a fast crab-crawl just as Saw-tooth roars and swings down cutting through the kitchen counter. Instantly transforming it into kindling.

Adam picks up a fallen shovel, spins and blocks aside an incoming axe swing, then another as the power of each impact drives him back.

Saw-tooth roars as he swings again -- tearing the shovel from Adam's fists.

CLOSER

as Adam spins away and backpedals, crashing against the free-standing oven. Howls as he SEARS his arm against its red-hot pipes.

Saw-tooth, scorched face twisted in saneless rage, holds the massive axe in an extreme overhead double-fist as he charges Adam. Nothing can stop this seething monstrosity as he freight-trains forward.

Adam slams back against a wall of racks, toppling tools, jars, and odd souvenirs. The Mountain man's double-barrelled shotgun falls off a shelf onto the floor nearby.

ON ADAM

as he dives for the shotgun, grabs it two-handed, and rolls up shouting as Saw-tooth swings. The shotgun snaps from Adam's grasp firing a single barrel as it's struck aside by the hulking Mountain man's guillotine-swing.

Adam reels backward from the shock-sting of impact in his arms.

ADAM'S POV

Saw-tooth sprays drool, towering above, jagged teeth bared, as he brings the axe back around in a bullet-blur of motion.

REVERSE ON ADAM

trapped against the wall. Watching, wide-eyed, helpless, as Saw-tooth swings the axe down toward his face.

A BARBED-ARROW

hits Saw-tooth just under the left ear. Saw-tooth freezes in mid-swing, staggers sideways pawing at the arrow shaft.

He twists and crash down through a set of tool racks.

ADAM

stares at the fallen Mountain man, stunned, then turns to see where the arrow came from.

ADAM'S POV

Jessie sits twisted around at a painfully awkward angle on the cot, ankles still wire-tied, holding the longbow in a shaking grip. She slowly lowers the bow and lets out the breath she's been holding.

BACK ON ADAM

as he breathes relief, looks down at the motionless, smoldering Mountain man, and crosses quickly to Jessie. They hug each other hard for a long shivering moment.

JESSIE

(a beat, taut, quaking)
Is he dead?

ADAM

Yeah.

They finally pull apart and both work quickly on getting Jessie's ankles free. Saw-tooth lays on his left side, his back to them, in the room's far corner. A ghoulish heap amid broken shards of wood, glass, and metal debris.

BACK ON ADAM AND JESSIE

as they get her ankles loose. Adam helps Jessie onto her feet just as a burning rafter smashes down onto the cot setting the naked mattress aflame. A blizzard of hot cinders whirls as the cabin's roof roars into angry inferno.

ADAM

(re: burning ceiling)

Come on, we gotta get out've here before it collapses.

They head toward the shattered cabin wall and stop dead in their tracks. Staring in godless horror at what awaits them.

THREE-FINGER

stands on the threshold of the destroyed, burning door-frame. His blood-washed torso still bears splintered remnants of the jagged, broken hemlock branches that skewered him earlier.

THEIR POV

as Three-finger wails with a shrill, angry banshee scream and steam-rolls forward on churning piston legs, arms flailing, coming right at us. His twisted bloody-haired death's-head face flayed open from the earlier branch impact.

ADAM

shoves Jessie to one side -- as Three-finger slams into him full force. Pile-drives him backward through a flaming oak beam.

Burning furniture shatters as Adam is driven through the table and slammed into the far wall. Adam's right shoulder cracks on impact setting him howling in dire agony.

THREE-FINGER

flips Adam aside into the fiery rubble, turns, and heads back for Jessie, who rises shakily brandishing a splintered chunk of rafter burning at one end like a torch.

JESSIE

stands her ground as Three-finger advances drawing a pair of boning knives from his rope-belt. He grins and growls with brutish ferocity as the cabin rains ash on all side.

JESSIE

Come on, asshole. You wanna die again?

Jessie swings for Three-finger's head with all the strength she can muster. He catches the burning timber on the point-end of his long-knife -- and rips it from Jessie's grasp.

ON JESSIE

as she stumbles backward with nowhere to go except into a wall of flame.

Three-finger licks his blood-stained lips and slides his two blades together with sheer fury. The blades singing a steely death rasp as they pass against one another.

JESSIE'S POV

as Three-finger starts forward -- and is suddenly hit from behind by a barbed razor-wire chain. Its blade-edged links wrap around Three-finger's throat like a lasso, yanking him around.

ON ADAM

standing amid inferno holding the chain's other end. He pulls with his left hand, broken right arm hanging limp and useless at an odd angle.

Adam's face is ashen with pain, red with sweat from the heat of the surrounding flames -- but his eyes are set in stone. Fear banished.

ADAM

Come on, you inbred son of a bitch --
squeal like a pig.

THREE-FINGER

charges, shrieking, through the flames straight toward Adam with both knives raised.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he turns, picks up the two-headed axe, and spins up using every ounce of his body's momentum to give the axe maximum centrifugal velocity.

Adam utters a primal scream as he pendulum-swings the axe up from the floor in a ninety degree arc.

Three-finger runs all out, capering, arms ablaze, knives held high, only seeing Adam's eyes as he closes the gap in a heartbeat --

-- and is hit center-chest by the axe's razor-sharp broad-head. The blade buried to the shaft in flesh and blood.

ADAM

rolls to the left as Three-finger, toppling forward under his own momentum, crashes headlong into and through the huge blazing oven. Vanishing in a tornado of shattered iron and whirling flames as he falls.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he stands, wobbly -- flames licking at him from all sides. He turns, gazes through smoke and rising ash -- and finally sees Jessie beckoning from the cabin's far end.

JESSIE

(over roaring inferno)

Hurry -- !

Adam stumbles through soot and flames as the cabin disintegrates around him. Walls and ceiling become char and cinders on all sides.

Adam passes the wrecked Expedition. A charred hand shoots out from beneath the chassis, grabbing Adam's ankle in a vicious death grip.

Adam falls face-down hard, twists, and sees --

ONE-EYE

grinning from shadow with a reaper's heinous joy, dragging his broken torso from under the SUV. Using Adam to wrench himself forward.

ADAM'S POV

One-eye claws toward him, hissing blood bubbles between shattered teeth. Clutching Adam's ankles, knees, and thighs, on a relentless death hunt climb for Adam's throat.

CLOSE ON ADAM

kicking, thrashing desperately against the Mountain man. To no avail as One-eye's massive paw-hands creep across Adam, stretching out and closing vise-tight around his larynx.

ON JESSIE

as she screams and pile-drives a barbed arrow down through the back of One-eye's neck. Drives it deep into the top of his massive knotted spinal column.

The Mountain man rears back with an agonized roar. Claws, wild-eyed, screaming, at the arrow jammed into his vertebra. Then collapses onto his face.

Jessie drags Adam to his feet. Adam, gagging for breath, sees the fallen double-barrel shot-gun Saw-tooth axed from his grasp. Grabs it quickly as he rises.

ADAM AND JESSIE

turn and stumble together through smoke to the cabin's far end. They chance a backward glance and both stop cold. Staring, frozen, horrified, at something they see through the flames.

THEIR POV

Saw-tooth, a human torch, slowly, amazingly, rises in the cabin's depths. He weaves badly as he burns, reaches down and drags Three-finger, also ablaze, half dead, back onto his feet.

One-eye, charred, coughing blood, crawls forward -- bent, twisted -- fighting to stagger upright.

BACK ON ADAM AND JESSIE

motionless, mesmerized, staring in doe-eyed shock at this hellish triumvirate. Nightmares made flesh.

JESSIE
(losing it)
Why won't they die?!

ADAM
Go -- Jessie -- Go.

Adam shoves Jessie out of the cabin through the shattered wall. He backpedals after her into the open.

EXT. CABINS - DAY

Adam stops and turns, gazing back inside the cabin. Flames reflected across his bruised, bloody, horror-aged, and oddly strengthened face. His eyes, matured, are now forged with something steely and resolute.

ADAM'S POV

The dying Mountain men desperately gather themselves. Each struggles to overcome the pain of their wounded, burning bodies. They fill their fists with fresh weapons and, one by one, slowly turns toward Adam.

CLOSE ON ADAM

as he locks eyes with the Mountain men. Watches them lope-walk across the burning cabin. Passing close on either side of the SUV.

ADAM

(to Mountain men)
Still hungry?

Adam raises the double barrel-shot gun to his shoulder. Sights down on the crashed Expedition's tail-mounted spare fuel tank.

ADAM

Eat this, motherfuckers.

Adam fires the shotgun with dead aim.

The burning SUV's spare tank and gas tank erupt in sub-atomic succession. Flames belch and mushroom as the cabin and the Mountain men are eviscerated by the blast.

Adam and Jessie scramble clear as the main cabin ruptures from the explosion. Splintered shards of wood and metal debris sailing away like meteors in every direction.

The surrounding cabins catch fire as do tree branches and leaves above. The main cabin reduced to a crater of whirling inferno.

ADAM AND JESSIE

gaze at the blazing cabins for a long beat, then back away holding one another. They watch over their shoulders as the main cabin, a ghastly chamber of horrors, burns down to its stone foundation.

Dying wood shifts and collapses eerily at the fire's heart. A pyre of godless evil slow to surrender its last faint gasp.

EXT. CABINS - WIDE - DAY

Adam and Jessie walking back toward the dirt road. Behind them, the main cabin's last standing wall falls in and sends a cloud of cinders soaring high into the forest darkness.

EXT. TWO-LANE ROAD - DAY

Looking like war victims, Adam and Jessie emerge from Bear Mountain Road. A PICKUP TRUCK rumbles along the two-lane road. Adam casts his thumb out to grab a ride as the truck slows down for them, captained by a pleasant DRIVER.

DRIVER
Where ya headed?

JESSIE
(to Adam)
Raleigh?

Our hero thinks about it for a second, then...

ADAM
Think they need one more doctor in D.C.?

She smiles, nods.

EXT. CHEVY PICKUP (MOVING) - DAY

Adam and Jessie are huddled together in the Chevy's tailbed under a tan tarpaulin. They hold ~~each~~ other close, eyes dull, shell-shocked, haunted by their shared experience.

Adam takes off his watch, looks at it one last time and throws it away. Jessie manages a smile and cuddles closer to Adam -- maybe she's found the right guy after all.

WE PULL BACK to allow the pickup to slip away into the middle distance. Passing a road sign that reads: "Now Leaving West Virginia -- come back soon!"

BLACK OUT.

THE END