

GRETEL

Written by

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OPENING: THE SCREEN IS BLACK

The SOUND OF HEAVY BREATHING.

FADE IN:

A HUGE FARMER in muddy, torn denim overalls and a flannel shirt is walking slowly through the woods. He stands roughly six feet tall, weighing nearly 300 pounds. His face is matted with an unshaven beard. His boots are caked with mud and blood. He staggers as if in a trance, breathing heavily. He drags a heavy axe behind him. In obvious pain and discomfort, he stops, swaying in place.

We circle him to see a large trail of blood flowing out of a tear in his pant leg. He looks about, from side to side, and we begin to hear savage growling. He starts to gasp and choke, frightened. The growling grows louder and closer. The man clutches his chest and a huge stream of dark blood and oily liquid runs from his mouth. He falls limply out of frame.

CUT TO BLACK:

TELEVISION SCREEN.

We hear the voice of a female news anchor over an extreme close up image of a video screen.

NEWS ANCHOR

The search continues tonight for two children missing from a tragic camping trip near Reedsburg. Brothers Joey and Jamie McKinnon have been missing for nearly three weeks in the remote wilderness area in Richland County.

Shots of two young, dark haired boys on screen.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Officials have formed search and rescue teams to comb the area. This is the fifth known incident of such a disappearance this year. Law enforcement officials are unable to explain why so many children are missing in this quiet rural area. Citizens are urged to contact--

CUT TO:

EXT. WILDERNESS OF TREES AND OPEN FIELDS-DUSK

Rainy and dark skies. Thick, ominous clouds. Lightning strikes, and you see the faint hint of trees and jagged boulders as it fades.

Two children sit near a small campfire beneath a large rock outcropping. MAYA and THOMAS. She is eleven; willowy and pale with long red hair wearing a purple sun dress over military green pants. He is eight, with short cropped hair, jeans, a grey sweatshirt, jeans and tan hiking boots. They are huddled in the gathering dark as the rain falls around them. A high, slick rock wall behind them. They are shivering and wet.

VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

I hardly remember that night, only that it was cold, miserable and I was starving. Looking back, I was probably in shock. But it was nothing compared to what was to come. I was only eight years old.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN MADISON APARTMENT - THE PREVIOUS MORNING

DAD, a tired but cheerful man in his early forties, loads luggage and other bags in to the trunk of a black sedan parked on the street outside of the apartment building. He is unshaven, medium height with short cropped hair, T-shirt and jeans, horn-rimmed designer glasses and a studded earring.

The dome of the Wisconsin State Capitol is visible behind him.

Thomas and Maya approach with full plastic bags and knapsacks, which also get loaded into the car.

DAD

You guys all ready to go?

MAYA

Yeah, I guess. How long do you think it'll take to get there?

DAD

You know, its way out in the country, so, probably four, five hours at least. Don't worry though, we can do a sing-along!

Thomas groans, as does Maya.

DAD (CONT'D)  
 (laughing.)  
 What's the matter? You guys don't  
 like singing with me any more?  
 C'mon! You used to love my Elvis!

MAYA  
 You're the worst!

THOMAS  
 No doubt.

DAD  
 (Still chuckling.)  
 OK, fine, lets go. We've got a long  
 drive ahead of us.

The children get into the back seat of the car, as Dad closes  
 the trunk. The engine starts and the car pulls away.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF VEHICLE DRIVING OUT INTO COUNTRY

Various shots as the car leaves the city. Buildings, stores  
 and gas stations become fewer and fewer as the car moves from  
 expressways, to paved highways, to small, rural county roads.  
 The black car weaves through winding hillsides, passing farm  
 fields and thick forests.

CUT TO:

INT. AUTOMOBILE-DAY

DAD  
 So, guys, how is school?

THOMAS  
 (quietly.)  
 We've been out of school for a  
 week.

DAD  
 What?

MAYA  
 He said we've been out of school  
 for a week, Dad.

DAD  
 Boy, seems like Summer came really  
 fast again.

THOMAS  
 (absently.)  
 Not really.

DAD  
 What do you mean "not really"?

THOMAS  
 School is boring!

DAD  
 (Muttering )  
 I always had to go to Summer  
 school, so, anyway...

Everyone is quiet, staring out their own windows. Dad is lost in thought as mellow music plays on the radio. They head further out into the countryside.

Another long moment of silent driving. Finally--

DAD (CONT'D)  
 So, what's up back there?

MAYA  
 I don't want to go to Aunt Helga's  
 all Summer.

Thomas doesn't reply, just sits and stares out the window

DAD  
 You'll have a good time, you'll  
 see. They've got chickens and cats  
 and tractors...

MAYA  
 Oh sure , easy for you to say.  
 You're not the one stuck out there  
 for three months.

Thomas has a small toy motorcycle. He is holding it up to the window, and from his perspective, it looks like the driver is going over hills and across the terrain.

DAD  
 (a new tactic.)  
 So, Thomas, you have any new Pock-a-  
 Lin books?

THOMAS  
 Its *Poky Lynn*.

DAD  
 Sorry. Do you have any new *Poky Lynn* books, then?

THOMAS  
 No.

DAD  
 (resigned.)  
 OK...

Maya is sitting with her arms crossed,

DAD (CONT'D)  
 Maya, look, things aren't that simple.

MAYA  
 Yeah, you just want us to think that. But we could have stayed at your house. You have plenty of room. We'd have been fine.  
 (pause.)  
 Is that what you guys were fighting about the other day?

DAD  
 Nobody was fighting--

MAYA  
 --No, you and Mom always yell and throw things when you're getting along.

DAD  
 (acquiescing.)  
 Okay...Fine, we were fighting a little bit, a *little* bit. Mom and Dad's do that, sometimes, you know?

More silence. Maya pulls a tattered stuffed rabbit from her bag. It has torn ears and a black button for it's one eye. Dad looks at her in the rearview mirror.

DAD (CONT'D)  
 (smiling.)  
 Hey, is that Mr. Pork-Pie?

MAYA  
 (nodding.)  
 Mmm-hm.

DAD

Where'd he come from? Haven't seen him in ages.

MAYA

I found him at the bottom of my drawer when I was packing.

DAD

Man, you used to carry him everywhere. We thought he was glued to your hand. Remember that time you lost him at the beach? You were in hysterics. Thank god we found him.

MAYA

Mom found him.

DAD

(frowning.)

Right...right. Still, you're a little old to be totin' around a stuffed bunny, don't you think, sweetie?

MAYA

(shrugging.)

I like him. Reminds me of better times.

Dad frowns, understanding what she's alluding to. More silence as the car heads further into the countryside.

DAD

So, is Mom excited about her trip?

MAYA

I don't know.

DAD

Was she all ready to go? All packed and everything?

THOMAS

She was like, yelling on the phone this morning, about how somebody doesn't care she's going away. Or something.

DAD

Yelling at who?

THOMAS  
I think it was Andy.

Maya slaps Thomas on the arm, and gives him a look.

DAD  
(acting amused.)  
Oh, really, Andy? Huh?

THOMAS  
I don't know. Maybe not.

After a moment.

DAD  
So, who's this Andy?

Smiling and looking in the rear view.

THOMAS  
Just some guy, I guess.

DAD  
(mulling.)  
Oh, well, that's cool.

He looks forward reflectively. He tries not to let his anger and frustration show to the kids. Another silent space as Thomas starts to play with the motorcycle again. More mellow music.

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL SHOT-DAY

The car heads onto an old steel bridge that spans a fairly wide river.

MAYA  
Wow, look at that river.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

DAD  
Pretty amazing huh? They call that the hardest working river in the State! You know why?

MAYA  
No?



THOMAS

Not really.

DAD

Cause it starts way up north, where all the pine forests are, and it goes all the way to the Mississippi. So before there were cars or trucks, everyone used it to move things! Do you know about this area?

THOMAS

You mean Wisconsin?

DAD

Well, this part of Wisconsin. It's called The Driftless Region. The only part of the State that the glaciers didn't touch. That's why we have all these big hills and rock cliffs and stuff. You know there were some farmers here, back in the thirties, they dug up a Mastodon skeleton.

Thomas becomes suddenly interested.

THOMAS

We studied Mastodons in school. Did you know that people used to hunt them? They weighed eight tons.

DAD

So where does an eight ton Mastodon sit?

MAYA

I don't know.

DAD

Wherever it wants! Ha!

Bad Dad joke.

The kids laugh and groan.

They continues into the River Valley

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL SHOTS OF CAR

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

DAD

You guys getting hungry? You want to stop and get some Taco Bell or McDonald's?

Maya makes a disgusted face.

MAYA

You know I don't like fast food.

DAD

Since when?

MAYA

Since ever!

DAD

Oh that's right. Vegan Girl.

Maya pulls a wrapped sandwich from her bag.

MAYA

Mom made us sandwiches. Want some?

She offers Dad half.

DAD

(skeptical.)  
What's on it?

MAYA

Fried tofu, mustard greens and sprouts with avocado mayonnaise.

DAD

(disgusted.)  
Pass.

The kids laugh and eat their sandwiches. Dad looks ahead, down the road.

DAD (CONT'D)

Ah, perfect. I was more thirsty than hungry anyway.

EXT. RURAL LIQUOR STORE - DAY

The car pulls into the gravel parking lot of a rundown liquor store and bait shop. Dad gets out. The children look at one another, a little disturbed.

After a moment, Dad returns with a case of beer.

He gets in, starts the car and they drive off.

CUT TO:

COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

As Dad is driving along, he is fumbling, trying to open the case of beer he has on the passenger seat next to him. He grabs a can, opens it and pounds it down.

The kids trade more disturbed glances.

Dad reaches for another. The car swerves a bit. He slows and turns down a deserted looking gravel road.

DAD

Oh--I think this is the short cut.  
Shave an hour off at least.

After another beer and more driving, Thomas starts kicking the seat.

DAD (CONT'D)

Thomas can you stop kicking the  
back of the seat?

Thomas stops and pouts.

DAD (CONT'D)

(glumly.)  
Screw it, kick it as much as you  
want.

Dad turns up the stereo, loudly. A hip-hop song called "Green Tea". He pounds another beer, tosses the can, then reaches down for another.

The car swerves and the case of beer tumbles to the floor.

DAD (CONT'D)

(muttering.)  
God damn it.

He has to move a little further to get to it. The car starts to skid a little bit, as his driving is becoming more erratic.

Because of his swaying two and fro on the road, the case of beer slides up under the dash, and he cannot reach it. He stretches down, releasing his seat belt to scoot forward and reach the beer.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERTED GRAVEL ROAD-DAY

The car careens past a speed limit sign riddled with buck shot. It hits a curve too quickly and the tires start skidding in the gravel. The car rumbles off the road.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Dad finally grabs his beer. He pops up to see a huge oak tree directly in front of him.

DAD  
(screaming.)  
NO!--

No time to stop. The car crashes into the tree, head on.

CUT TO BLACK:

The sound of steam hissing in the blackness.

FADE UP:

EXT. CAR

What's left of the car is slammed head-on into the tree.

VOICEOVER  
(Adult Thomas.)  
There are probably only a couple of  
times in your life that you can  
identify the moment that everything  
changed.  
(MORE)

## VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

But that day, the sound, the breaking glass, was a punctuation mark, and forever the rest of my life was either before or after The Crash.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP:

## OPENING CREDITS: GRETEL

The titles show grainy images of road-kill combined with old photos from the 1800s; Wisconsin Farmers, dead bodies at funerals, hunters, and other scenes. Credits will appear over scans of old Wisconsin maps.

In the last part of the sequence, there will appear an old antique piece of paper, and the word GRETEL will slowly appear, as though the ink is bleeding through from the other side. As the title's ink fills the page, the paper catches on fire. As it burns, it reveals the lush countryside of Wisconsin's Ocooch Mountains.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP:

## EXT. REMOTE COUNTY ROAD-DAY.

The entire front end of the car pushed in. Steam and other liquids shoot out from under the mangled hood. The windshield has an enormous hole. Through it we can see Dad positioned unnaturally in the driver's seat. His neck is twisted in an unnatural way. His eyes are shut. Blood begins to seep from the top of his head, pouring into his eyes and mouth. He doesn't move.

Maya exits the car from the rear passenger door. She staggers to the back of the vehicle, uneasily. She moves to the driver's side window. She reaches through the broken window and pushes against her Dad's shoulder. Nothing. She turns away, panicked. Looking around.

MAYA

(panicking.)

Thomas?! Thomas, where are you?!  
Thomas! Thomas, please. Where are you Thomas! THOMAS!!!

Maya slumps on to the gravel, exhausted. She leans against the rear tire of the car and begins to sob. After a moment. Thomas' hand comes in from out of frame. He holds Mr. Pork-Pie, the stuffed bunny. She sees it and looks up. She stands, relieved.

She takes the bunny and hugs Thomas tightly, weeping.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Where were you?! I called and called! What happened to you?!

THOMAS

(slightly confused.)

I...I don't know. I think I hit my head. I didn't know where I was. Then I saw Mr. Pork-Pie in the grass. What happened?

MAYA

We were in a crash, don't you remember?

THOMAS

I guess so. I don't know.

The two look around them. Nothing but thick forests and a few patches of open field. No signs of civilization. After a few, confused moments--

THOMAS (CONT'D)

What should we do?

MAYA

Wait by the car. We should stay by the car, someone will drive by. That's what we should do.

Thomas nods, reluctantly.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOCKED DOWN CAMERA MONTAGE:

Time passes. Various dissolves of the kids doing things to keep themselves occupied; throwing rocks, playing games, wrestling.

## VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

Waiting. Kids spend a lot of time waiting. Waiting and bored. Waiting for school to be over, waiting for Christmas, the next birthday. Waiting to grow up. And then we look back and miss everything that we had; endless Summers and Spring breaks. You look back, because all that time is gone, and you are racing forward. Toward the inevitable.

Thomas remains seated by the vehicle, and Maya stands up. She is pacing back and forth.

MAYA

How long had we been driving?

THOMAS

I don't know...two hours?

MAYA

No, it was longer than that.

THOMAS

Three hours?

MAYA

Its already afternoon. It was more than that.

THOMAS

Five hours?

MAYA

(Getting annoyed.)

Now you're just guessing. I'm trying to figure out where we are. (pause.) Hey! Is there a map in the car?

THOMAS

I think so.

Maya heads over to the passenger side. She opens the door, and begins get in. In her enthusiasm to get a map, she has forgotten about Dad's body in the front seat. She sees it and recoils slightly. She turns her head down and away in disgust.

She takes a deep breath, then quickly leans into the car.

Once in there; she keeps her face turned towards the door. She opens the glove box and rummages around, pulling out owners manuals, papers, and an old road map.

She turns around and approaches Thomas, smiling.

MAYA  
(Happily)  
Got it.

The two kneel down, and spread the map out.

Maya points down and traces a road with her finger.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
(Deliberate and slow.)  
OK, we live here, and we were going  
this way. Hmmm.

THOMAS  
(pointing.)  
Is that a river?

MAYA  
Yeah, we crossed the river. The big  
metal bridge, remember?? Then he  
took a short cut.

THOMAS  
What road are we on now?

MAYA  
I don't think it's marked. It's a  
gravel road.

THOMAS  
(pointing again.)  
What's all this green stuff?

MAYA  
Forest. All forest.

THOMAS  
So where are we?

MAYA  
I'm not sure, probably right around  
here.

As she speaks, she points at the map, there is a section that is all green, with no indication of roads or city anywhere nearby.



THOMAS  
 (Pointing to the edge of  
 the map.)  
 How far away is that town?

MAYA  
 Each of these lines is ten miles.

Maya takes a small twig lying nearby and snaps it into a smaller "ten mile" piece.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
 OK, lets say we're about here.

She lays down the piece, then moves it in small increments in a crude line up the map to the nearest town.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
 (Deeply concerned)  
 Ninety miles.

A long, thoughtful pause.

THOMAS  
 How long would it take to walk  
 there?

MAYA  
 Hmmm. A long time, I don't know.

THOMAS  
 Could we do it?

MAYA  
 Probably, I'm not sure.

Maya slowly folds up the maps.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD-DUSK.

Night is falling. Crickets are chirping and the air is getting colder. The children stand by the car, pacing back and forth, trying to stay warm.

The woods begins to come alive, there is the sound of coyotes, and other, stranger, unearthly noises. Low grows and hissing.

THOMAS  
 (scared.)  
 What was that?

MAYA

I don't know.

THOMAS

What should we do? I mean,  
shouldn't we go find somewhere to  
stay the night? It's getting cold.

MAYA

We can sleep in the back of the  
car.

THOMAS

Oh no--no way! I'm not going in  
there.

Maya backs her way to the car, gesturing to him.

MAYA

It's the best place to stay. Come  
on.

Maya heads for the back door and opens it.

THOMAS

I told you, I'm not going in there!  
I'd rather sleep in the grass!

Maya stands by the open door.

MAYA

Come on. I'm cold. It's warm in  
here.

She gets in the car. Thomas stands in the darkness. More wild  
sounds of howling and growling. Finally giving in, Thomas  
opens the car door and climbs in.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREATURE CAM POV.

A point of view of strange, demonic creatures in the  
underbrush, looking at the car. Their view is hazy and  
blurred with red streaks. Their growls are low and slimy; a  
mix of mammal and serpent with something not quite human.  
They dart extremely quickly from bush to bush, keeping the  
car in sight. Our view cuts to a variety of points of view.  
There are many creatures in the woods.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD-NIGHT.

The car sits in the moonlight, the children tucked safely inside.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP:

DREAM SEQUENCE:

Abstract, slow motion shots of steel bridge girders, the car on the country road, Thomas and Maya laughing in the back seat, Dad chucking in the front seat.

VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

Psychologists will tell us all about the subconscious mind, the hidden loves and hates and longings which we believe are dead and long forgotten. When one of those emotions suddenly comes alive and stands, terribly real and intrusive, between our souls and our everyday lives, the strongest and best of us may stumble and grope blindly after content, or reparation, or forgetfulness, or whatever seems most likely to give relief.

CUT TO:

INT. MADISON APARTMENT - EARLIER THAT MORNING.

The sound of an alarm clock in the fading darkness.

We see a sparsely decorated bedroom with a large bed. Sun is shining in the window, threw the blinds. Dust hangs in the air

Dad is lying in bed. He is wearing a dirty T-shirt and has several days of stubble. He is sound asleep with a YOUNG WOMAN. She is slim, with thick dark hair and olive skin. She has her arm over his chest. He is flat on his back, and the alarm clock continues beeping, obnoxiously.

The Young Woman sits up slightly and pushes Dad.

Dad slowly opens his eyes, groggy. He blinks a few times and clears his throat.

He slowly sits up on the edge of the bed, rubbing his face. He turns off the alarm. He reaches for a pack of cigarettes on the night stand, picks one out of the pack and lights it with chrome Zippo lighter that has a checkered flag emblazoned on the side. He holds his breath deeply and after a few seconds, exhales.

He stands, puts his slippers on and stretches.

YOUNG WOMAN  
(sleepily.)  
You have to go?

DAD  
Yeah, I told you, I can't watch them all Summer.

YOUNG WOMAN  
This is such bullshit. We have so many things that we need to do this weekend.

DAD  
(Matter of fact.)  
I know, I know, but what do you want me to do? It's all set up. I'll be home late tonight. We can hang out tomorrow.

The Young Woman sighs and rolls into the spot where he was sleeping. She closes her eyes.

YOUNG WOMAN  
Whatever.

Dad sighs and puts on his pants and shoes. He kisses the Young Woman on the cheek and heads for the door.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)  
(calling after him.)  
Tell your wife she's a bitch.

DAD  
She knows.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM

Dad stands brushing his teeth in front of the sink. He looks into the mirror.

## VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

Experts in the field of deception detection will tell you that if you are interrogating someone, you normally ask them what happened on a particular day. You know, like "so, can you tell me what happened last Tuesday?" If they start their description with "I got up, I brushed my teeth". They're lying.

He spits and puts his toothbrush away.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALL

Dad walks out the front door and slams it behind him.

CUT TO:

DREAM SEQUENCE: PINE FOREST - DAY

Maya and Thomas are walking through a thick, pine forest. They come upon a road. They step out to the shoulder of the road, and set their knapsacks down.

They look to the left, and immediately a minivan stops for them. We do not see the driver.

The children get into the back seat, and the minivan drives away.

The minivan pulls up into a modern suburban driveway.

The doors to the van open up, and both of the children run toward the front door. As they run in slow motion up to the house, their Mom is there waiting for them on the porch. She is in her late thirties with blonde hair and a gaunt, happy face. She runs forward, and they meet in the front yard. She hugs each of them, kissing their cheeks. Dad comes out of the house and hugs them, spinning them around and laughing. A happy family.

FADE OUT:

INT. CAR CRASH SITE - THE NEXT MORNING

FADE UP:

The sound of flies.

The children are sitting in the back seat, heads resting on each other's shoulders. It seems hot; they are sweaty and exhausted, laying on the back seat.

They wake up. The sun is rising through the rear window glass, distorted by the cracks and dirt.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD-MORNING

Thomas and Maya exit the vehicle on either side at the same time. They meet at the back of the car and look through the rear window. Their Dad is stiff. Dried blood and flies collected on his face. An advanced state of lividity and rigor mortis.

THOMAS

I can't stay in there another night.

MAYA

I can't either. I don't think that anyone passed by all night. I'm not even sure that this is a real road.

THOMAS

Why don't we go back where we came from?

MAYA

It was pretty far back before we turned on that gravel road. I think we should head the other way.

She gestures down the gravel road. The children open the trunk of the car and grab their backpacks.

Maya goes into the back of the vehicle and grabs Dad's Zippo lighter that slid on to the floor. She examines it, then puts it into her pocket.

She approaches Thomas, who is standing with his backpack on, waiting. As we look through the car's rear window, we see them walking away down the gravel road. As they do, each one looks back reluctantly.

VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

It felt like we were lost beyond the moon.

(MORE)

## VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

I had no idea where to go, how to survive. I was so scared. I think we were running on autopilot.

CUT TO:

## FLASHBACK - CHAINSAW LESSON

Dad is cutting wood, hewing a large fallen tree near a log cabin. Thomas and Maya look on with wonderment.

Dad help Thomas cut a small log with the chainsaw, reaching over Thomas' back and guiding his hands.

Dad starts the pile of branches on fire with his Zippo lighter.

The kids throw more branches and logs on to a large burning brush pile.

## VOICEOVER

No matter who your Dad really is, doesn't matter. Up until a certain age, kids thinks of their dad as a combination of Superman, a doctor, a great comedian, and a professional athlete all rolled into one.

Dad puts his arm around Thomas and Maya's shoulders as they stare into the flames.

CUT TO:

## EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - LATER THAT DAY.

After a few miles the gravel road is blocked by a gate, and a weathered sign saying "NO TRESPASSING". The children walk around it, and travel further into the woods. The road is becoming rougher and more rugged.

Eventually, they reach abandoned stretches where the road is completely washed away. They have to climb down into the washouts to continue along. The gravel part gives way to a dirt path, and eventually that disappears as well.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREATURE CAM POV.

The slimy sounding creatures are following the children. They dart and squirm amongst the hiding places in the forest. The children are being hunted.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED FIELD-DAY

Maya and Thomas are walking along the edge of a field, and the foliage along side is darker and thicker.

They reach the end of the field, and they follow a narrow path into the woods. The path takes them deeper and deeper into the wooded hills. The colors of three trees fade without sunlight. Greens and yellows and oranges all become a pale slate gray.

THOMAS  
(stopping.)  
I have to pee.

MAYA  
(pointing.)  
I'll be down there. Just follow the path.

Thomas walks into the woods. He stands at the base of an enormous oak tree.

He starts to pee.

He looks around into the woods, hearing noises. He turns his head around and looks over his shoulder. He turns back, zips up, and heads back towards the path.

CUT TO:

Maya walks down the path. She Walks for a fairly long while, then slows, realizing that Thomas is no where to be seen. She stops, looks around, and slowly turns back.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
(Calling.)  
Thomas? Hey, where did you go?

CUT TO:



EXT. CREATURE CAM POV.

The creatures stare at Maya through the underbrush. Their slimy growling is low and menacing. They dart from bush to bush, log to log, keeping her in sight.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOOD PATH.

Maya continues walking back along the path until she reaches the point Thomas entered the woods.

MAYA

Thomas, where are you?

She looks back and forth, and sees nothing under the big oak.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREATURE CAM POV

The creature creeps slowly toward Maya, ready to pounce.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED PATH.

Maya slowly turns back towards the path, and heads back down. She gets about twenty yards, when Thomas leaps out at her from behind another tree, scaring her.

THOMAS

(roaring.)

RAAAAR!

Maya screams, and jumps back. Thomas falls down laughing.

MAYA

(Yelling.)

You ass!

Maya steps forward and kicks Thomas in the butt.

MAYA (CONT'D)

That is not funny!

Maya then starts to cry. Thomas stops laughing and gets up. He approaches Maya and tries to put his hand on her shoulder.

THOMAS

It was just a joke--

Thomas touches her shoulder.

Maya spins around quickly.

MAYA

(angrily.)

Stop following me! Back off!

Thomas stands alone, not saying a word.

Maya turns back and begins walking again. This time Thomas hangs back a little further. They move along silently through the woods.

Maya is walking in the front, Thomas following behind a little ways. Light is streaming down through the leaves in the trees.

CUT TO:

EXT. THICK WOODED PATH--LATER THAT DAY

Light of the sun breaks through the canopy of the trees.

The kids walk along the path.

In the distance, there is sunlight and the trees appear to open up slightly.

The children exit the woods and have reached the first clearing. It is the edge of a huge abandoned quarry.

Maya stops at the edge, and puts her hand out. She stops Thomas from stepping off the edge.

MAYA

Whoa!

THOMAS

(surprised.)

Oh my god.

They look down as a stone falls and hits the bottom. They're a long way up.

They move away from the edge. They creep along until they are able to reach an area where they can walk to the bottom of the quarry.

They reach the bottom. As they walk along the flat gravel area, they hear a far away whirring sound. They look up and see a small Piper Cub airplane in the distance, coming towards them.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
 (excitedly.)  
 A plane!

Maya looks at the plane, excitedly. They both start jumping and yelling and waving their arms in the air.

The plane flies directly over their heads and keeps going toward the horizon, away from them.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
 (still excited.)  
 Did they see us?! Did they see us?!

Maya sits down on a rock nearby and looks at the sky.

MAYA  
 (dejected.)  
 I don't think so. No. We're just too small.

Thomas gets angry and starts shaking his fists and kicking at the ground. He starts to pick up large rocks from the quarry floor, throwing them at an even larger pile of boulders. He yells and screams. He walks away, his tantrum starting to cool. He hangs his head with his hands on his hips.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
 (after a moment.)  
 Feel better?

THOMAS  
 (Sulking )  
 No.

MAYA  
 Calm down! You need to use your head! If you get hurt acting like a big baby, then we're really stuck!

Thomas still has an angry look on his face, and his fists are clenched. He stares at her for a minute but cannot come up with anything to say. He slowly unclenches his fists, and takes a deep breath, then exhales.

THOMAS  
 Okay.

MAYA

Let's just keep going. That plane was pretty low, there must be an air field or something nearby. We can head that way.

She points in the direction of where the plane was flying

They hike along the edge of the quarry, until it becomes wooded once more. They see a very narrow opening in the trees.

THOMAS

(frustrated.)

This doesn't go anywhere.

MAYA

I think that's a deer path.

THOMAS

Doesn't look like much of anything to me.

MAYA

(snapping.)

I really don't see any other way out of here! What do you want to do, just sit here and wait for another plane?

THOMAS

(grasping.)

Maybe we could...start a big fire. Signla somebody!

Maya turns around and looks back at all the rocks in the quarry. She turns back and looks and Thomas quizzically.

MAYA

Out of what exactly? And who's gonna see it out here!

Thomas looks at the rocks and stones and sighs.

MAYA (CONT'D)

We don't have time to wait. Lets see if we can get somewhere before the sun goes down.

They enter the woods and follow the narrow path. It is covered with dead, dried leaves. They walk for a while, listening to the leaves crunch under their feet.

THOMAS  
You hear that?

MAYA  
What?

THOMAS  
The leaves are crunching. Really  
loud.

They walk further, saying nothing. Just the crunching leaves.  
The deep orange sun is setting behind the trees.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Hey, you ever notice that snow  
crunches when its really cold?

MAYA  
Yeah.

THOMAS  
How come it crunches when it's  
really cold?

MAYA  
Cause the snow is frozen?

THOMAS  
Snow is always frozen.

FLASH CUT TO:

The children in the same spot, walking as snow is falling.  
The path is covered in snow.

FLASH CUT TO:

The kids are walking the leaf-covered path again.

MAYA  
(a little annoyed.)  
I don't know, it just gets  
crunchier. Maybe there air is  
frozen too.

THOMAS  
(a goofy grin.)  
It sounds like we're dancing on  
Styrofoam.

MAYA  
(smiling.)  
You are so weird.

Maya sighs and shakes her head. They continue down the wooded path.

VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

It was hot that day, and there was no end in sight. I was so afraid. I think we pushed each other further than either one of us would have gone. We were on our own. The sun was going down, we had no food, no shelter, and it was much more dangerous than I realized. We had no idea what was coming next.

The children reach some giant rock formations on a hillside. They get closer to the rocks and the path narrows. Far in the distance, the sound of thunder.

MAYA

We need to stop. It's going to be dark soon.

THOMAS

(exhausted.)

I want to go home.

MAYA

Me too. But we need to stop.

THOMAS

Let's just go a little further, maybe we'll see something.

MAYA

Or maybe we won't. And we'll be stuck in the dark.

(Slowly and adamantly.)

We need to *stop*.

Thomas stops, and looks around, a little ways ahead. He stops.

THOMAS

Okay, lets find a spot.

As they walk they come across an overhang in the rocks. The light is fading rapidly.

MAYA

Thomas!

Thomas stops and turns.

MAYA (CONT'D)

This is a good spot. Protect us  
from the rain.

THOMAS

What rain?

A huge thunderclap erupts and rain begins to fall. Maya looks at Thomas and smiles, as though she had been able to predict the weather. The children throw their bags up under the rock ledge and start foraging around in the forest.

Slowly but surely, they assemble a large pile of sticks and wood.

Thomas is trying to break off pieces of fallen timber. Maya works diligently stacking up small pieces of kindling and little bits of bark.

The light gets even lower, and Maya retrieves her backpack. She opens it and withdraws an old metal flashlight. She hands it over to Thomas, and then pulls the Dad's lighter from her pocket.

Maya makes a small Boy Scout tee-pee out of kindling, and then picks up the lighter. It is almost totally dark.

MAYA

Shine the light over here so I can  
see.

Thomas sits under the shelter of the rocks, holding the flashlight in both his hands.

Maya fumbles with the lighter, until she is able to burn some of the small bark shavings that are under the sticks. The fire begins to burn, and is getting bigger.

The children huddle together under the rock shelf, warming themselves. They stare into the fire, tired and weak.

THOMAS

I'm hungry.

MAYA

Let's see if we have anything.

They rummage around in their backpacks for a bit, shuffling items around. Maya pulls out a Kit Kat candy bar.

THOMAS

Vegan Girl, huh?

MAYA  
(smiling.)  
Shut up.

Maya unwraps the candy bar and breaks it in half. She hands half to Thomas.

THOMAS  
Wait-this is it?

MAYA  
This is it.

THOMAS  
That's nothing.

MAYA  
Do you want some or not?

THOMAS  
Yes, please.

He takes it and they begin eating.

Thomas picks up a stick, and pokes at the fire.

They become silent, and the sounds of night in the woods blend with the campfire. The kids stare out into the darkness. After a moment-

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Tell me a story.

MAYA  
(thinking.)  
Uhm...okay. Have you ever heard of  
The Tale of Hansel and Gretel?

THOMAS  
That's for babies. A brother and  
sister get lost in the woods, find  
a candy covered house owned by a  
witch. They burn her in the oven.  
The end.

MAYA  
(shaking her head.)  
No. I'm not talking about the  
little kid's story. I'm talking  
about the *real* Hansel and Gretel.  
The scary one. The one your parents  
are too afraid to tell you.



THOMAS  
(smiling nervously.)  
Okay.

CUT TO:

ANIMATION SEQUENCE.

As Maya tells the story, it is illustrated through a stylized animation sequence; a beautiful and dark style with flows of black ink that swirls, creating beautiful and horrifying silhouettes.

MAYA VO  
It's the thirteen hundreds in Europe, and there's a famine. Crops won't grow. Millions are starving to death. People dig up dead bodies for food. They even eat their own children to survive. Hansel and Gretel live in the forest with their father, a Woodcutter, and their angry, evil Stepmother. The Stepmother convinces The Woodcutter to kill the children so they can have something to eat. The Woodcutter doesn't want to, but he reluctantly gives in and takes Hansel and Gretel into the woods to kill them with his axe. But when the time comes, he can't do it. He loves his children too much. So he abandons Hansel and Gretel and tells them to run away as far from their Stepmother as they can. The Woodcutter leaves them, but what he doesn't know, is that he has a hole in his pocket and he's leaving a trail of bread crumbs back to the house. Hansel and Gretel follow the trail of bread crumbs, but when they finally get back home, the Stepmother catches them, and without the Woodcutter's knowledge, she kills Hansel with a butcher knife. Then she forces Gretel to secretly prepare and cook Hansel's corpse for the family meal. Gretel is horrified, but she gives in to her Stepmother's demands.

(MORE)

## MAYA VO (CONT'D)

As she's cutting up Hansel's body, she secretly takes out his heart and hides it inside of a hole in an old tree trunk. The Woodcutter unknowingly eats his own son for dinner. After the meal, Gretel takes her brother's bones and puts them inside the tree with his heart. The next day a huge black crow emerges from the hole in the tree. He caws loudly, "CAW! My Stepmother killed me! My sister cooked me, and my Father has eaten me! But I am now a Crow and safe from my Stepmother!" Horrified that he's eaten his own son, the Woodcutter throws himself into the river and drowns. The terrified Stepmother tries to kill the Crow by throwing a lump of salt at it, but she misses, and the lump of salt falls back on to her head, killing her instantly. So Gretel lives with Hansel, who is now a Crow. Every morning he flies into the forest and brings her back berries and nuts and other good things to eat. And together, they cook and eat their Stepmother for dinner. The End.

CUT TO:

## FANTASY DREAM SEQUENCE

The children are spinning playing "Ring Around The Rosie" in an open meadow. We see their delighted faces as they sing to one another.

## MAYA AND THOMAS

Ring around the Rosie, a pocket  
full of posies, ashes, ashes--

CUT TO:

They spin faster, then fall to the ground as they sing--

MAYA AND THOMAS (CONT'D)  
--ALL FALL DOWN!

Maya and Thomas sit up from their fall. They look lifeless and catatonic. They begin to bring their hands up toward their faces. They are covered in dark, thick blood.

Flower petals begin to fall from the darkening sky like lightly falling snow

The children begin screaming and smearing the blood on their faces. They cry out in agony.

The flower petals continue to fall.

CUT TO:

Image of a pack of wild Creatures tearing flesh and breaking bone.

Cut to:

Maya is laying in the fetal position on the ground. Thomas is standing at Mayas feet, looking up at the sky with his arms outstretched.

A HOWLING NOISE begins, and persists as it picks up in pace. It sounds like a mix of a hurricane and a giant machine grinding.

The flower petals turn into hard driving snow.

From out of the darkness crawls an emaciated old woman, at least a hundred years old. She wears nothing but a gas mask and a leather loincloth. Her skin is greasy and filled with open sores and infected boils. Veins crisscross her flaccid breasts. She is walking/crawling on all fours at the camera like a chimp.

We see the back of Thomas' head. He spins to face the camera. His face freezes in place. His eyes become sunken and go black. You see veins spreading on his cheeks, and his lips start cracking. Suddenly, everything dissolves and his entire head turns to ash.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP:

EXT. WILDERNESS FOREST - MORNING

The sound of birds chirping and various shots of the woods coming alive; a deer grazes in the field, dew drips from the end of a tree leaf, blue puffy clouds hover in the sky.

The children awaken and stand around what is left of the fire, now just a smoldering ash heap. They hold their arms crossed, rubbing the cold from their bodies.

The hot Summer sun rises higher in the sky.

The children are quiet, except for the sounds of them moving about, gathering their backpacks, and walking out along the rocky path.

VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

Home. We think of home as a place to return to. But home is a state of consciousness. It is familiarity, a sense of safety. Home was ripped away from us, and neither of us was going to discuss it. Truth is, without anyone to return to, our home had ceased to exist. The map was gone, but all I really thought about at the time was how hungry I was.

CUT TO:

EXT. THICK PINE FOREST - DAY

The children are walking further and further into the dark wilderness. It seems the farther they go, the darker the wilderness becomes, the more it fades in color to an ominous grey. The light here has a near impossible time getting through the trees.

As they walk, Maya points at a tree.

MAYA

What are those?

Thomas looks and sees that the trees around them have strange symbols and runes carved into their bark. Old, ancient looking symbols; crosses, eye symbols and other glyphs.

THOMAS

Trail markers, maybe?

MAYA  
 (warily.)  
 Maybe.

They come to a small clearing in the middle of the dark woods.

THOMAS  
 (pointing.)  
 Hey, look.

They walk into the clearing and see an eerie sight; a small raised bed made out of woven tree branches and twigs. It has deer antlers tied on to each of the four corners. It resembles an Indigenous Native structure. It sits about four feet off of the ground. The trees here also have the strange symbols and runes carved into them.

The raised bed is covered with a variety of trinkets hanging from rough twine; key chains, small pill bottles, ball point pens and other assorted knick-knacks.

Thomas takes one of the trinkets and looks hard at it. It is a small pink anime hippo character on a key chain.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
 (under his breath.)  
 Whoa...

MAYA  
 What is it?

THOMAS  
 It's Kukaba.

MAYA  
 What?

THOMAS  
 He's a Poky Lynn character. Kukaba-  
 The Pink Hippo who can fly.

MAYA  
 Huh.

Maya looks at the top of the bed structure. She peels back some of the branches to reveal a jacket.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
 Hey, a jacket.

She holds it up. It is a filthy boy's jacket with a hood, a dark blue body and dirty grey sleeves.

THOMAS  
Looks like a kid's size.

MAYA  
We should take it. It gets cold out  
here at night.

THOMAS  
Yeah.

Thomas takes the jacket, looks at the lining, then drops the jacket in shock. He looks at his hands. They are covered in dark sticky blood from the jacket.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Oh god...

MAYA  
What?

THOMAS  
The tag...on the inside.

Maya picks up the jacket and looks at the sewn-in tag in the jacket's lining. It reads: "Joey McKinnon."

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
(hugging himself.)  
Joey McKinnon. He's one of those  
boys that disappeared last month.  
Oh my god...

They both look around, cautiously.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREATURE CAM POV.

The creatures eye Thomas and Maya from the tree line.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED CLEARING

Maya carefully folds the jacket and puts it back on the raised bed.

THOMAS  
(fearfully.)  
How did it...What's it doing here?

Maya covers the jacket with branches. She turns slowly to Thomas.

MAYA  
(quietly.)  
We have to go.

Thomas nods, and they head carefully and quietly out of the clearing.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED CLEARING

From a deep, dark part of the woods we see a foreboding figure. An OLD WOMAN. She is naked, her body filled with scars and pustules. We can't make out her face, but her hair is greasy and long and her body is twisted and gnarled. With a long nail on her warted hand she carves another rune symbol into the tree next to her. Her breathing is gurgling and labored and we hear the sounds of the Creatures with her. Her eyes begin to glow red in the darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED PATH

Thomas and Maya walk nervously and quietly together for a while. Thomas stops, breathing heavily.

THOMAS  
(Almost weeping.)  
Maya...what...what was that? Why was...where is he? Where did they go?

MAYA  
I don't know, Thomas.

Thomas looks around, extremely frightened.

THOMAS  
Was it a witch? A witch in the woods? Oh my god! Oh my god, we're gonna die!

She takes his shoulder.

MAYA  
Thomas, call down. Breathe. I don't...I don't know what happened. I don't know where they are.  
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

I don't. All I know is, there's a town that way, (pointing.) and we have to keep going if we're gonna make it out of here. Together. We can make it if we stick *together*...Right?

THOMAS

(collecting himself.)  
All right.

She hugs him for good measure.

MAYA

Okay. I promise I'll get you out of here. Let's just take it one step at a time.

Thomas nods and the two head further into the forest.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - THREE DAYS EARLIER

It is evening in a nicely appointed Colonial suburban house. The kitchen is a complete mess; there are dirty pots and pans and soiled dishes everywhere. Maya and Thomas' MOM stands by the sink, cutting an orange. She wears neat and tidy business attire. She is in a heated conversation with their Dad, who leans against the stove with his arms crossed.

DAD

So, now what is it? I can't give you any more money.

MOTHER

(tersely.)  
Don't worry, I don't want your money. We need to talk.

DAD

Okay, so talk.

MOTHER

I can't watch the kids this Summer.

DAD

(sneering.)  
Do you ever?



MOTHER

Don't be an asshole.

DAD

Fine. What's the big drama now?

MOTHER

I need to send them up north to stay with my Aunt Helga.

DAD

What? That's like four or five hours from here! I won't get to see them at all!

MOTHER

OK, than you take them.

DAD

You know I can't do that. I'm on the road four days a week. What are they gonna do when I'm not there?

MOTHER

I guess that's your problem, isn't it? I knew you didn't want them, so my Aunt is the best--

DAD

--"Didn't want them"?! Hold up a sec, you haven't even explained why yet!

MOTHER

(Really tense.)

You know I can barely make a living right now where I'm at. The pay is for shit and it's not like you help that much. My company's expanding, and I need to go retrain for a better position. More money.

DAD

Great. So?

MOTHER

So it's in Florida, "so".

DAD

So take the kids to Florida then. They'll love it, swimming pools, Disney World.

MOTHER

I can't keep them where I'm staying. It's a cheap hotel. There's no room. I just can't.

DAD

Can't? Or won't? Its not like you ever had trouble turning your back on us before, when you got the itch to do something for yourself.

MOTHER

Listen, I need the money. I can't afford to feed and clothe these damn kids, much less live in a decent neighborhood. You see the bills piled on the table? You have a better solution, fine, otherwise they need to go to my Aunt's.

DAD

(Frustrated. Worn down)

I don't know, you know, they don't even know her that well. She barely speaks English. What if there's a problem?

MOTHER

(Very short.)

You'll be closer. You deal with it.

DAD

(Sarcastically. )

Nice...way to look out for your kids.

MOTHER

They're your kids too, you know.

DAD

Yeah, that's why I have them every weekend, *and* pay child support. Which is more than you do. What did you do today? See them after you came home from work and give them a couple TV dinners? Now you want to abandon them all Summer?

MOTHER

No ones abandoning anyone! Stop being so dramatic. I'm trying the best I can without a man in the house. Besides they'll be fine. They love the country.

DAD

"Man in the house"...right. I was  
the man in the house till you  
fucked that up. Remember?

She throws an orange at him, he ducks and it hits the wall  
with a splat.

MOTHER

Fuck you! Asshole!

There is a long pause as they collect themselves. Dad looks  
at the orange spot on the wall.

DAD

Real nice.

MOTHER

And you need to take them out  
there. My piece of shit car won't  
make it.

Maya appears in the doorway wearing flannel pajamas and  
hugging her Mr. Pork-Pie bunny.

MOM

(seeing Maya.)

Oh, Baby, what are you doing out  
here?

DAD

Sweetie, are you all right?

Dad moves toward Maya and kneels down next to her. He gives  
her a hug, and holds her shoulders in his hands. The mother  
stays in the same place in the kitchen, putting one hand on  
the counter, and another on her hip, looking annoyed.

MAYA

Are you guys fighting?

DAD

No, no, your Mom and I just got  
excited about our opinions, that's  
all, nothing to worry about.

Mom takes a couple steps forward, and the Dad reluctantly  
stands up, keeping one hand on her shoulder.

MOM

C'mon, time to go back to bed now,  
lets go.

Mother puts her hand on Maya's back and pushes her down the hall in a less than loving manner, a little rough.

She shoots a cold glance back at the Dad.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK WOODED PATH - DAY

MAYA

You know what's weird?

THOMAS

I dunno, what?

MAYA

Gravity. You know the moon stays close to the earth because of gravity.

THOMAS

Yeah, so?

There are steep rock out-croppings everywhere. They walk around huge boulders as they make their way through the forest.

MAYA

Well what's in space?

THOMAS

I don't know, nothing I think.

MAYA

So how can gravity from earth hold on to the moon from that far away?

THOMAS

Maybe there's little wires that hold it in place.

He laughs, bending over, pleased at his own line. He stands quickly, holding the back of his neck.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Hey--is it raining?

Maya stares at Thomas, horrified.

MAYA

(whispering.)

Thomas...

We see what she sees; Thomas has blood streams running down his face. He sees the blood on his hands and stiffens. He looks up, slowly.

Above the children is an eviscerated cow hanging from the trees. It's hooves are tied to the trunks of the trees, pulled in all directions. The bones and tendons are stretched to breaking. It's chest is heaved open and it's innards are spilled out and hang like a bloody chandelier. Various trinkets and wooden carvings are hung from the cow's corpse with that same dirty twine. The children are frozen in shock and fear.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Who...who would do this? Why?--

Thomas is breathing heavily. He looks at the blood on his hands.

THOMAS

The blood...

Maya looks at Thomas.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

...it's still warm.

He looks at Maya, horrified.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(barely breathing.)

This is fresh!

He looks about him, into the thick forest. He begins to hyperventilate.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Oh my god. Oh my god! OH MY GOD!!!

He runs in fright.

MAYA

Thomas!

Thomas runs through the trees in fright. He comes to an opening and is blinded by the sudden sunlight. He trips and falls, screaming.

We see that they've been hiking on the ridge of a very high, rocky hill. Thomas has reached the edge and is now hanging by his finger-tips from the rocks of a shear cliff. The ground is a hundred feet below him.

Maya comes out from the trees and kneels at the cliff's edge.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Thomas!

He can't hold on. She lunges forward as he falls. She gets his hand just in time.

With all of her might, Maya pulls Thomas up. She grabs the back of his shirt and pulls him the rest of the way. He scrambles over the ledge and on to safer ground. They hold each other tightly for a long moment. She wipes away her tears.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Promise me you won't do that again?

THOMAS

(he smiles.)

I promise.

They stand and collect themselves. Thomas looks reluctantly into the forest.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I can't go back in there again.

MAYA

We have to. There's no other way.

THOMAS

(looking around.)

Are you sure?

Maya points at the cliff. Thomas nods and they warily make their way back into the forest.

The children are walking along a lower rock formation. As they are hiking along the rocks, they come to a ravine in the dark woods. They move into the natural funnel of the ravine and make their way along. When they reach the end, they have no other option but to begin going down the hill.

VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

We always had each other. Even from a very young age. When Mom and Dad were fighting, we hid in our rooms. Whispered to each other. Sometimes I wondered how two people who couldn't stand each other created us. Or if that fact is what made us different.

As the children are walking through the woods, there is a hint of light at the bottom of a ravine. Even though it is midday, the heavy tree make it feel like it's almost nightfall.

Ferns cover the ground. The hill is steep, and as they descend, it is difficult for them to move without slipping and sliding downward. At the bottom of the hill, Thomas sees something in the underbrush.

THOMAS

Look, mushrooms!

Thomas crawls over to some large mushrooms growing out of a rotted fallen log.

MAYA

(warily.)

Don't touch them.

THOMAS

But I love mushrooms. And I'm so hungry.

MAYA

I don't know, its probably a bad idea to eat them.

THOMAS

We can just try a few. Please?

MAYA

(Thinking.)

Well, don't eat the red ones. The other ones should be okay, I think.

Thomas picks a large, brown, button mushroom begins eating it.

THOMAS

They're pretty good.

Maya picks one up and looks at it for a moment. She hesitates, and slowly raises it to her mouth. She looks over to Thomas who is chewing enthusiastically. He is swallowing one mushroom and has several more in his hand.

Maya takes a bite, and makes a slightly unpleasant face. She has a hard time eating it, but forces it down and eats more.

In the far distance there is the sound of a tractor. After a minute it stops, and is followed by the sound of another, smaller motor running.

Thomas tilts his head up slightly and strains to listen.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I hear something.

MAYA

It's a motor running.

THOMAS

We should go over there, maybe  
someone can help us.

MAYA

I can't tell what is, is it a  
tractor?

THOMAS

Who cares. Let's go!

They break through the dark woods and head into the light. In the clearing is an ancient rusty tractor. Attached to the back of the tractor is an old power saw rig; cast iron, belts and pulleys that drive a huge, rusty circular saw blade. At the saw is a huge, lumbering figure feeding a long cut log into the saw. The children stand and stare, transfixed.

The figure turns to grab another log from the pile, when he sees them. He is a HUGE FARMER, the man we saw dragging the axe at the beginning of the story. He is massive, with hulking shoulders, a filthy face and a grey, dead left eye. He wears an old leather tool belt covered with hanging knick-knacks and trinkets, all hung from dirty twine. He looks at the children and spits a wad of chewing tobacco. A trace of which dribbles on his chin. He gets closer to the kids, and literally blocks out the sun.

FARMER

Well hello there! What on earth are  
you doing way out here?

He looks around, nervously.

Maya stammers, but is unable to speak.

FARMER (CONT'D)

(smiling uncomfortably.)

That's okay, I don't bite. Are you  
okay? Are you lost?

MAYA

Yes.



FARMER

Oh boy. Well, come on with me,  
it'll be all right. I'll get you  
out of here. Where's yer folks?

The children approach a little closer, but are careful to keep their distance.

MAYA

Our Dad, he uhm..

FARMER

What?

MAYA

We were in a car crash. Our Dad  
died.

FARMER

(Sympathetically.)

Oh no! Okay, you follow me. I'm  
gonna get you out of here. We'll  
get you back home.

The Farmer stands up, turns around and begins to amble along towards the tractor.

FARMER (CONT'D)

You had anything to eat? You  
hungry? My Mama could make you some  
lunch. She's a real good cook.

He turns and leers at Maya, touching her hair with a dirty finger.

FARMER (CONT'D)

She loves cookin' fer pretty little  
girls.

He turns back and begins working at the tractor.

FARMER (CONT'D)

Okay, let me just unhook the saw  
and I'll drive you back down to our  
place. It's just down yonder. Yes  
sir, Mama loves cookin' for pretty  
little girls, all right. She makes  
flapjacks and hot dogs and beans--  
you like beans?

As The Farmer bends over the tractor, working, Thomas looks at his tool belt, then nudges Maya. He points.

Maya sees that one of the trinkets hanging from The Farmer's belt is another Poky Lynn character key chain; a yellow goose wearing a motorcycle helmet. Thomas looks at Maya and whispers.

THOMAS  
(frightened.)  
Run.

They run away, out into the field, and head to the woods. The Farmer turns and sees them. He looks confused and concerned.

FARMER  
Wait! Hey kids, where ya going?  
(To himself.)  
Damn it, Mama's gonna kill  
me!(yelling) Wait, wait! I can help  
you! Don't you want hot dogs,  
pretty girl? Come on!

He starts after them, but he is large and heavy and has a gout-riddled foot.

VOICEOVER  
(adult Thomas.)  
Never talk to strangers. Never talk  
to strangers. It was drilled into  
our heads. But we always thought  
that, in a harsh world, the  
kindness of strangers would rise  
up, stronger and more common than  
the evil intentions of the few. I  
think we were wrong.

Maya and Thomas disappear into the forest.

The Farmer begins to breathe heavily, and has to slow down.

He continues to walk through the field, and is sweating and tired.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREATURE CAM POV

The Creatures rush from the woods and attack The Farmer

His leg is slashed open, and blood begins to run down his leg and out of his pants. He screams.

FARMER  
Ahh!!!

The Farmer whirls around and begins swinging the axe at the ground. All around him is the sound of growling and wet snarling. The Creatures attack and attack and attack, until he is nothing but a bloody, panicky mess. He swings and swings, unable to defend himself.

FARMER (CONT'D)

Ahh!! No! Not me! It's not--  
supposed to be me! Not me! No!!!

He stops as something pulls him up off the ground. A very large Creature. In an instant he is dragged at high speed through the thick forest. The trees and branches go whipping by, striking his head as he screams in agony.

He comes to a sudden stop, his back against the trunk of a tall pine tree. Blood oozes from his mouth as he writhes in agony, unable to move.

CUT TO:

The children run into a small clearing by a boulder. They hide behind it, catching their breath.

MAYA

I think we lost him.

THOMAS

Did you see that? On his belt?

Maya nods.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You think he took those boys? Those brothers?

She nods again.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You think he killed them?

MAYA

(after a moment.)  
Yeah, I think so.

Thomas leans forward and vomits into the grass.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Oh my God, are you okay?

Thomas spits out the last of the retch and takes a breath. He nods at her.

THOMAS  
Bad mushrooms.

CUT TO:

The Farmers upper torso is impaled on to a branch in the tall pine tree. His upper body is dismembered. Blood splashed everywhere. There is nothing below his rib cage except a pile of glistening, bloody intestines. Crows are picking at the entrails, fighting over the remains.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

The sun is setting. The children walk to an open area that is the edge of the cornfield. The walk between the edge of the field and the dense woods on the other side. As they walk they come upon a sea of old machinery; farm implements, rusted cars, tractors and school buses, all piled into massive, rusting heaps.

CUT TO:

EXT. EERIE SCULPTURE FIELD.

The piles of rusty machinery gives way to a misty clearing filled with strange sculptures made of twigs and straw. There are dozens, some resembling humans, some half-human, some completely unnatural. They are adorned with deer and elk horns, rotting cow and sheep's heads, animal hides and assorted, unidentifiable bones. Many of the sculptures bear the markings of the runes and symbols carved into the trees the children have passed on their journey.

They weave their way in and out of the eerie army of silent sentinels.

CUT TO:

EXT CREATURE CAM POV.

The Creatures stalk the children from behind the sculptures. They hiss and gurgle with hunger.

CUT TO:

The creepy Old Woman is hidden in the shadows of the tree line. Her bleeding, gnarled fingers etch more symbols into a tree trunk as she slowly hisses a chant.

OLD WOMAN  
(whispering.)  
Hassa-naaaa...nassa naaa...Hassa  
naaaaa...

She repeats guttural chant this over and over as her eyes glow red in the darkness, her fingers bleeding profusely from clawing at the tree trunk. A thick, dark liquid oozes out between her rotting teeth.

The children hear her hissing chant echoing in the trees. They stand in the clearing, frightened. The chanting reaches a fever pitch, and--

All of the sculptures in the clearing burst into flame, as if ignited all at once by napalm. The children leap back in shock.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREATURE CAM POV.

The Creatures dart around the edges of the clearing, growling and hissing with delight.

CUT TO:

EXT. EERIE SCULPTURE FIELD.

After a moment Maya grabs Thomas by the sleeve and they run from the flames and down another path into the forest.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREATURE CAM POV.

The Creatures give chase after the children.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK FOREST - THAT NIGHT

With the fiery sculptures burning behind them, Thomas and Maya come to a series of paths branching out into the thick woods.

THOMAS  
(terrified.)  
Which way?!

Maya looks up into the sky.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK EXT. CAMPFIRE - EVENING

Maya, Thomas and their Dad sit on camp stools around a fire. Behind them, in the darkness, is a green tent.

Thomas is busy roasting a marshmallow on a stick.

MAYA

(to Dad.)

That's easy. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west.

DAD

(grinning.)

Okay, but what if it's night time, like now? You've got no sun, no road signs, no markers. What do you do, then?

Maya thinks for a moment.

THOMAS

(mouthful of marshmallow.)

He got you, Maya.

MAYA

All right, so what do I do?

DAD

Well the ancient sailors would use the stars for navigation.

He points up and out at the sky.

DAD (CONT'D)

You see the two Dippers? The Big and Little Dipper?

Thomas and Maya both look up.

THOMAS

Yep.

MAYA

Uh-huh.

DAD

Well if you look at the bright star  
on the handle of the Little Dipper.  
See it?

The kids nod.

DAD (CONT'D)

That's the North Star. For most of  
the year, no matter how the sky  
changes, the North Star always  
points...well, North.

MAYA

Huh.

DAD

So if you align yourself with that  
star, then South is behind you,  
East to your right and West to your  
left.

THOMAS

Wow. Easy.

Maya stares, transfixed, at the stars.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK FOREST - THAT NIGHT

Maya spots the Northern Star through the tree tops. She turns  
and points to a path to their right: Northeast.

MAYA

That way!

They make their way down the path and into the woods.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WOODEN CABIN - NIGHT.

The children come out of the forest to a clearing and see an  
old, wooden hunter's cabin. Well over a hundred years old.  
The roof is leaning in and some of the windows are cracked  
and broken.

MAYA

In there!

Maya and Thomas run to the cabin, bolt through the front door and shut it behind them. It is quiet.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN - NIGHT

Maya and Thomas stand quietly for a long moment, listening for what might be out side. Nothing.

THOMAS  
I don't hear anything.

MAYA  
I think we're okay. For now.

THOMAS  
I can barely see.

MAYA  
You have your flashlight?

THOMAS  
(checking his bag.)  
I think I dropped it.

They start searching the cabin in the fading light; an old bed with a lumpy mattress and dirty blankets, a table and two chairs, an old wood stove and worn kitchen cabinets.

On the walls are strange decorations; bloody deer horns and a number of bleeding ceramic Christ crucifixes.

Thomas looks into a corner and finds an old chainsaw and a shotgun.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Oh my gosh. Maya, look at these!

Maya opens one of the doors of old cabinet. It is stocked with cans of beans, chilly, soup and bottles of orange soda.

MAYA  
(smiling.)  
I found something better.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN - THAT NIGHT

Maya and Thomas sit on the floor eating chilli and beans out of the cans with their fingers.



THOMAS

Oh my god, this is the best chilli  
ever!

Maya takes a deep drink of orange soda and belches loudly.  
They both laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Inside the cabin, Maya and Thomas sit at the candle-lit  
table. They have also lit candles on wall sconces. A fire  
burns in the small wood stove. Moonlight pours through the  
windows. They are both exhausted.

MAYA

We could stay here a while, I don't  
want to get stuck out there again.

THOMAS

Okay, I guess.

MAYA

How long do you think it will take?

THOMAS

What?

MAYA

How long, you know, until someone  
rescues us?

THOMAS

(shrugging.)  
What do you think?

MAYA

I don't know either.  
(shivering.)  
Put some wood on?

Thomas gets up slowly and goes to the wood stove. He picks up  
some pieces of wood from a bin and feeds them into the stove.

He looks over at a basket in the corner that contains an old  
newspaper. He picks it up and takes it to Maya.

THOMAS

Look at this. An old newspaper.  
Might give us an idea of where we  
are.

Maya takes it and starts to read.

MAYA

Boy, it's really old. It says 1896 on it.

THOMAS

What's it say?

MAYA

That's the weird part. Listen to this story. "A young woman, twenty years of age, occupied a cell at the La Crosse Police Station on Friday night. She came from Winona and wanted to go to St. Louis, but was without money."

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WOODEN CABIN - NIGHT

Behind a tree, outside the cabin, we see the shadowy form of the Old Woman. She rocks back and forth as she scratches at the tree's bark.

MAYA

"She was evidently suffering from some form of dementia, for she persisted on sitting on the floor of her cell, refusing food and talking strangely."

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

MAYA

"She claimed that something terrible had befallen her, but refused to say what it was. She was released and sent on her way the following day."

THOMAS

What do you think happened to her?

MAYA

A lot of people went crazy back then. I heard of something called "cabin fever."

THOMAS

What's that?

MAYA

Being left alone in one place for too long, I guess.

The kids look about at the empty cabin, uncomfortably.

CUT TO:

CREATURE CAM POV

The creatures are stirring. They are pacing back and forth outside the cabin like lions in a cage.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN - LATER THAT NIGHT

The fire in the wood stove has died down. The children have crawled into the bed and have dozed off. They are sleeping on their sides with their hands under their heads. They look like the picture of peaceful, childhood sleep.

CUT TO:

CREATURE CAM POV

Deep in the woods, moving through smoke and mist. Moving down and towards the cabin.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

There is a very loud, unearthly howl. Maya and Thomas sit up quickly, frightened and groggy.

THOMAS

(Loudly.)

What was that?

MAYA  
(Whispering.)  
Shhh! I don't know, it came from  
outside!

Thomas picks up an old oil lantern and lights it. He tiptoes quietly to the window. He gets closer and closer and eventually peers out.

A tree branch taps the glass, and he jumps back.

He leans back in, straining to see out into the blackness. The steam of his breath fogs the glass. Maya stands over his shoulder.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
Do you see anything?

THOMAS  
No just a mist. It's really dark  
out there.

He pauses, looking back and forth. There is a shadow moving out across the yard.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Wait...

MAYA  
What?

Behind Maya, a shadow starts to stretch along the wall, moving back and forth.

Thomas turns and looks at Maya, his face still close to the window.

From out of the blackness one of the CREATURES springs and lurches against the window. Although covered in patches of fur, it has slimy tentacles with suction cups that adhere to the glass. It's grey, oozing body fills the entire window pane. It's long claws gripping the sides of the frame. Looking like a twisted octopus from Hell, it's head slowly pokes out of a large sphincter that sits in the middle of it's body. The features are almost human; hairless and scaled, it's two eyes are rimmed with pus and glow a sickly green color. It's mouth opens into a wide maw filled with rows of jagged, shark-like teeth. It screams a high-pitched, demonic whine and bellows like a cat in heat.

On instinct, Maya grabs the shotgun from the corner. She starts to rummage through the draws for shells as Thomas hides against the foot of the bed. He cradles his knees to his chest, his eyes glued to the Creature.

THOMAS  
 (panicking.)  
 Oh god, oh my god, no, no, no, no,  
 no...

The Creature begins breaking holes in the window, it's clawed tentacles weaving their way in.

Maya finds a box of shotgun shells in a drawer. She dumps it over and the shells tumble on to the counter and the floor. She quickly loads one in.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - LEARNING TO SHOOT

Maya, Thomas and their Dad are out in a wide, open field. It is Fall. Maya holds a large, over and under shotgun. Her Dad stands over her shoulder, guiding her. Thomas sits in the grass nearby next to a portable skeet launcher.

DAD  
 You put the shell in.

She does.

DAD (CONT'D)  
 Then close it up.

She does.

DAD (CONT'D)  
 All right, you ready?

VOICEOVER  
 (adult Thomas.)  
 When we were with Dad, whether we knew it or not, he was teaching us valuable skills.

DAD  
 Okay, you tell me when.

VOICEOVER  
 (adult Thomas)  
 And what topped the list of all of them--

MAYA  
 Pull!

Thomas pulls a chord on the launcher. A clay pigeon flings into the sky. Maya quickly aims and shoots. The clay pigeon bursts into a thousand pieces.

Maya smiles, proudly.

VOICEOVER  
(adult Thomas.)  
--Always protect yourself.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

Maya turns, the gun loaded. She calmly takes aim and squeezes the trigger. The gun roars like a cannon.

The window explodes outwards and the Creature screams in agony. A black, oily ooze of blood is spattered against the window frame where a few of his now dismembered tentacles still hang on.

Maya looks out the window and sees nothing. Hears nothing. She quickly turns and grabs some large boards that were sitting near the wood stove.

MAYA  
Thomas, help me!

Thomas still sits with his knees to his chest. We hear the high pitched buzzing in his head from the gun shot.

THOMAS  
What?  
(he taps his ears.)  
Maya, what?

The buzzing slowly dissipates.

MAYA  
Grab that tool box, we need to  
block this window...c'mon!!!

Thomas snaps to, grabs the tool box and brings it over to her. He takes a handful of nails and a rusty hammer and begins nailing the boards over the open window as Maya holds them up.

CUT TO:

CREATURE CAM POV

The creatures slink and twitch in the tall weeds surrounding the cabin, biding their time.

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN - NIGHT

Thomas and Maya finish blocking the window. They drop their tools in the tool box and step back from the window.

THOMAS

What the hell was that?

MAYA

(Shaking and scared.)

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

They sit at the table in lamp light and look around. Quiet; the sound of wind blowing in the distance and the crackling of the fire in the wood stove are the only things heard.

THOMAS

(Reluctantly.)

Do you think those things killed Joey McKinnon? And his brother? And those other kids?

MAYA

(Shaking her head.)

It was probably just a--rabid raccoon or something.

THOMAS

(incredulous.)

What? Come on, did that thing look like a raccoon to you?

Maya chews the inside of her cheek, thinking.

MAYA

Maybe we should just try and go back to sleep.

THOMAS

(Frightened. )

I can't sleep. I'm tired, but there's no way I'm gonna sleep now. You should reload the gun in case there's more.

Maya takes a shotgun shell that rolled on to the floor and puts it in the gun. The two sit, listening for any signs of more Creatures. There is silence.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
It got quiet.

MAYA  
Yeah.

THOMAS  
You think maybe we scared 'em off?

MAYA  
(thinking)  
We should go outside, see what's  
going on.

THOMAS  
I'm not going out there, no way!  
You go, you have the gun!

Maya looks at the shot gun and thinks for a moment. She stands.

MAYA  
You're right.

She starts for the door, but Thomas stops her, grabbing her arm.

THOMAS  
Maya, no, I was kidding! We don't  
know what's out there.

MAYA  
(resolved.)  
But we should.

Thomas looks hard at Maya, then drops his hand. Maya walks to the door, opens it and steps outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

Maya stands by the front door, looking out into the night. The landscape is a dark muddy blue with thick clouds of mist hanging near the ground. It undulates like waves on a seashore. She looks around her, squinting into the darkness. Then--

MAYA  
(calling.)  
Hello?...Hello?



She walks further and further out into the darkness, the cold air making her hunch her shoulders.

Noises begin emanating from all around her, the growling and hissing of the Creatures. She freezes.

In the darkness she sees dozens of pairs of sickly green eyes peering back at her. They start to move. The growling becomes louder and more aggressive. She turns to run.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREATURE CAM POV.

The Creatures pursue Maya as she rushes back to the cabin. She opens the door and leaps in, slamming the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

Maya leans with her back against the door, out of breath. The scratching, growling and scabbling of the Creatures can be heard.

THOMAS

What did you see?

MAYA

(shocked)

Those eyes...those green eyes, they were all around! They're everywhere!

There is a long pause as the sound of the Creatures dissipates.

THOMAS

(whispering.)

We should be very quiet.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WOODEN CABIN - DEEP IN THE NIGHT

The cold mist seems to enshroud the cabin like a blanket.

In the dark shadows of the woods is the gnarled Old Woman. We see dark liquid ooze from her rotted teeth as she begins an eerie chant in a guttural whisper.

## OLD WOMAN

Oooo-na...beee haaaa...Nom esta en  
beee haaaa...

She repeats this over and over. The hissing and growling of the Creatures grows.

CUT TO:

## INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

The children sit wearily on the bed. Maya has the shot gun on her lap. Thomas dozes, his head resting on her shoulder.

The Old Woman's chanting is heard from outside. Thomas awakens with a start. Louder chanting. Louder growling and hissing. The children stand listening to the growing noise.

There is sudden banging on the walls and roof from all directions. The children look around wildly.

Thomas crawls up under the table, Maya joins him. They stand back to back, preparing for the worst.

## VOICEOVER

(adult Thomas.)

It felt like we were surrounded,  
it's probably because we were. I  
could feel them moving out there.  
Slithering on the walls and the  
roof. I don't know what it was that  
they wanted from us, but I know  
that they were predators; part of  
some ancient, cruel and primitive  
tribe. I realized then that, even  
though we grew up in the safe  
confines of a civilized, suburban  
neighborhood, we were going to have  
to play by their rules. Tribal  
rules."Survival of the fittest."

The window by the kitchen shatters and the curtain blow back. A Creature slithers through.

Another Creature breaks through the boards that cover the blown out window. And another, somehow, emerges from one of the kitchen cabinets.

Maya shrieks.

The first Creature slices it's clawed tentacle against a leg of the table. The children fall.

Another Creature slithers at Maya. She grabs a broom in a corner behind her and tries to fend it off.

Thomas takes the table, now on it's side, and uses it as a shield against the other two Creatures. They swat and hiss, and their gruesome heads emerge from their blow hole sphincters.

Maya pushes her Creature into a corner and traps it against the wall with the broom. It squeals and hisses in rage. It's tentacles whipping around, wildly.

Thomas has his feet against the table as he tries to keep the two creatures at bay. He looks behind him at the wall.

Maya is doing her level best to keep her Creature trapped in the corner.

MAYA  
(desperate.)  
Thomas!

Maya hears a chainsaw starting up and revving. She turns to see Thomas standing heroically with the running chainsaw, exhaust streaming around his head. He lunges at the two Creatures by the table.

He corners one of the Creatures and runs it through with the chain saw. Dark, slick blood spray onto his face as the Creature squeals in pain, it's tentacles flailing in all directions. The other Creature hisses at Thomas and slashes the back of his leg with it's clawed tentacle. Thomas goes down to one knee.

THOMAS  
(in pain.)  
Ahhhh!!!

The Creature shoots under the bed for cover. Thomas angrily crawls over to the bed and runs the chainsaw underneath it. There is wild screaming and hissing as dark, oily blood runs out from under the bed and pools at Thomas' elbows.

Maya still struggles with her Creature. It angrily breaks off the end of her broom, leaving a jagged end. She rears back, then plunges the sharp spear into the middle sphincter of the Creature. It screams. It's head appears from out of the sphincter, the broom handle plunged through one of it's eyes. Maya raises the Creature on the end of her broom spear and heads to the wood stove.

In sync with Maya, Thomas crawls to the wood stove and opens the top lid.

Maya plunges the Creature into the opening in the stove, down into the flames. It screeches in pain. The Creature's tentacles flail frantically in the air as the rest of it's body cooks inside of the stove. It continues to struggle for a moment, then falls limp.

Thomas lays back on the floor, clutching his wounded, bleeding leg. Maya rushes to him.

MAYA  
Are you okay?!

THOMAS  
(in great pain.)  
Yeah...I think so.

Maya helps him up and to the bed. She sits next to him. She pulls Mr. Pork-Pie from her knapsack and hugs him.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

The Old Woman stands in the woods, angry and frustrated. A low, unearthly growl seeps from her mouth. She makes her way through the thick ferns, dragging something behind her. The moonlight flickers off of her hunched and grotesque body.

She stops at the edge of the clearing where the cabin sits. She picks up what she's been dragging; the freshly killed carcass of a small deer. She snaps the deer's neck and holds the carcass above her head. She squeezes and the fresh deer blood trickles down into her gaping mouth. It trickles down her chin and on to her flaccid, sagging breasts. She chants again.

OLD WOMAN  
(hissing.)  
Noo-moo dann a haaaa....Noo-moo  
dann a haaa...

She digs her clawed fingers into the gut of the deer and pulls out it's entrails. She rubs the gut and liver and intestines over her body. She writhes in dark, perverse joy as she chants.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)  
(louder)  
Noo-moo dann a haaaa....Noo-moo  
dann a haaa...Noo-moo dann a  
haaaa....Noo-moo dann a haaa!

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

The children sit on the bed, hearing her grotesque chanting. It grows louder, echoing through the trees. Their fear grows.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

The Old Woman holds her bloodied hands on her forehead. She cackles with glee as her fingers begin to crack and grow. Huge bony protrusions grow on her warted, naked back. Her finger and toe nails become long, razor talons. The bones from her rib cage burst outward. She screams in sick ecstasy.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-NIGHT

Her screaming echoes around the children and they clutch each other in terror. They hear tree branches breaking and snapping as the sound of heavy footsteps and growling come closer and closer to the cabin.

She is almost upon them. Then--

A KNOCK at the door. Silence.

DAD'S VOICE

Kids! Kids, it's me!

Maya smiles and stands.

MAYA

It's Daddy!

THOMAS

(confused.)

No.

DAD'S VOICE

Come on! I've got the car! I'm gonna take you home!

MAYA

He's come to rescue us!

THOMAS

No, he isn't...he can't. Don't you remember?

Maya turns and heads for the door. It's as if she's floating on air. She reaches out for the doorknob as a grim blue smoke trickles through the keyhole. She turns the doorknob.

The door flies open, violently. In the doorway stands the Old Woman. Her body has grown into a huge, grotesque shape; meaty ribs sticking through her skin, huge, animal-like feet with long claws, razor-sharp talons for fingers and huge, prehistoric antlers growing from her forehead. Her mouth opens into a sick, enormous maw covered with rotting fangs. Her black tongue darts like a serpent.

The Old Woman Creature reaches out to grab Maya, but Thomas leaps up and pushes Maya out of the way.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

NO!!!

The Old Woman Creature has Thomas by the legs. She pulls at him, but he clutches the door frame, trying to hold on.

Maya goes to Thomas and reaches out to him with Mr. Pork-Pie in her hand. He grabs the stuffed bunny. Maya holds on to the other end. There is the sound of the boys's bones breaking. Thomas screams.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

AHHHH!!!

MAYA

Thomas!

Thomas begins breathing, gasping, with incredibly rapid gulps. The agony is too much. He is going into shock. His breathing slows and he looks sadly at Maya.

THOMAS

(barely audible)

I'm so-...I'm sorry.

The Old Woman Creature wrenches Thomas away. Mr. Pork-Pie Slides through Maya's fingers.

She sits up to see the Old Woman Creature dragging Thomas' dying body away. Like a rag doll, he bumps on the ground and slaps against tree trunks, never letting go of the stuffed bunny. They disappear into the darkness of the thick forest.

Maya sits in absolute shock as the door slowly blows shut. She opens her mouth to cry, to scream, but nothing comes out. Her grief and pain so powerful that she cannot find any words, any noise. Tears stream down her cheeks. Then the dam bursts.

MAYA  
(screaming primordially.)  
NAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!

She falls to the floor and curls up in a ball, utterly spent.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-DAWN

The sun slowly rises above the horizon, illuminating the old cabin. No one could imagine last night's horrific events in this peaceful, golden light.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-DAWN

Maya lies in the same position on the floor. Her face is a portrait of grief, fear and exhaustion. She stares blankly as the morning light streams through the broken windows and illuminates the dust in the air.

She stirs as she hears a noise outside: footsteps?

She sits up and takes the shot gun that was lying on the floor next to her. She looks down at the rumped old rug on the floor, and notices something hiding beneath it; a trap door. She pries her fingers under the lip of the door and lifts it.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN CELLAR-DAWN

Maya limps her way down the stairs of the cellar with her shot gun in tow. She shuts the hatch of the trapdoor and goes the rest of the way down.

As her eyes adjust to the light she sees a gruesome scene. The room is filled with human bones, skulls, trinkets, children's lunch boxes, sneakers, clothing, jewelry, eyeglasses, action figures, Matchbox cars, doll heads, wood carvings, deer antlers, human hair, baseball caps and more, each hanging from the ceiling by it's own individual piece of dirty twine. An eerie, sickening mobile. There are bloody tools on an old workbench; knives and bone saws.

Scrawled on the cracking concrete wall in dried blood are the words "Play With Daddy" along with children's hand and foot prints.

Maya tucks herself into the corner, her sanity barely hanging by a thread.

She hears the door open and feet walking across the floor. She holds the shot gun closer, shaking.

The trap door starts to open.

She cocks back the hammer on the gun's trigger.

The trap door opens fully. A large figure is silhouetted in the sunlight that is pouring in.

Maya stand and points the gun.

The figure reaches toward her and calls out in a MAN's voice,

MAN

No!

She pulls the trigger. It clicks, harmlessly. Maya drops the gun and faints to the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD WOODEN CABIN-MORNING.

Slow motion.

From the doorway of the cabin steps a RESCUE WORKER. He is tall, with dark hair. He wears jeans, a flannel shirt and a bright green rescue vest. He has Maya cradled in his arms in a blanket. He calls out.

RESCUE WORKER

I found her! I found her!

Other rescue workers rush to him.

We soar above the cabin to see a group of police squad cars and an ambulance parked by the old cabin.

The Rescue Worker lies Maya in the grass as two EMS workers tend to her.

Police rush into the cabin, guns drawn.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP:



TELEVISION SCREEN.

We hear the voice of a female news anchor over an extreme close up image of a video screen.

NEWS ANCHOR

Breaking news from Richland County tonight. Authorities are saying they have closed the case on five child abductions and murders in the Reedsburg area.

Close up image of the Huge Farmer.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Police say this man, Forty-three year old Crawford Kinley, a local farmer, had abducted and murdered five children over the past eight months. This was discovered when search parties found a lost girl, Maya Hackenburg, who went missing from a car accident in the area three days ago. Search teams found the girl holed up in the basement of a hunting cabin owned by Crawford Kinley. Authorities found evidence to indict Kinley on multiple counts of first degree murder and child abduction. Ironically, police discovered Kinley's dead and mangled body on his 200 acre property hours later. Kinley had been doing heavy lumber cutting with a mill saw. Police are calling his death an industrial accident.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP:

INT. JUVENILE MENTAL HOSPITAL - MONTHS LATER

Maya, dressed in pajamas and a robe, is sitting in a wheel chair in the hospital. It is a large, airy sun room with visitors and patients conversing in various corners. She looks out a large set of windows. Her stare is blank.

We hear a voice from across the room.

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
Hello, Dr. Patterson here.

DOCTOR PATTERSON enters. He is a tall, gentle looking African American man in his mid-forties. He's dressed in slacks, shirt and tie, over which he wears a white doctor's coat. He carries a clipboard filled with notes. He slides a metal folding chair over to Maya and sits across from her.

DOCTOR PATTERSON (CONT'D)  
Hello, Miss Margaret. How are you  
doing today?

Maya says nothing. Just stares, blankly.

DOCTOR PATTERSON (CONT'D)  
Maya? How are you doing today?

She still stares, saying nothing.

DOCTOR PATTERSON (CONT'D)  
(smiling.)  
You know, it's a silly conversation  
if I'm the only one talking.

Same silent stare. She looks down at her hands. We see she has heavy bandages wrapped around her wrists. There are also fresh "cutting" scars on her hands.

DOCTOR PATTERSON (CONT'D)  
(checking his notes.)  
So...how are you feeling this  
morning? Did you have any of those  
dreams last night? Dreams about  
hurting yourself?

No answer. He jots some notes on the clipboard.

DOCTOR PATTERSON (CONT'D)  
You think you're doing better with  
the new pills?  
(pause.)  
Look, we can't help you if you  
don't talk to us, Maya. This is a  
two-way street, remember? So what's  
going on with you?

Maya mumbles something under her breath.

DOCTOR PATTERSON (CONT'D)  
What, sweetie?

MAYA  
(looking at him.)  
Thomas...I want Thomas.

Doctor Patterson sighs and scratches his forehead, wearily.

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
You know we can't do that right  
now, Maya. We talked about this,  
over and over. It's not possible.

MAYA  
But, why?

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
We told you--

MAYA  
He's in the woods! I showed you!  
You have to go find him! I showed  
you!

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
No, Maya--

MAYA  
(crying.)  
But why?! Why?! I want Thomas! Let  
me see Thomas!

She turns away from him and stares back out the window.

DOCTOR  
(after a frustrated pause.)  
Tell you what, I'm gonna run out  
into the hall for a minute. Just a  
minute. But when I come back, we'll  
get you back to your room and you  
can watch some TV, okay? How's  
that?

Maya continues to stare out the window, sadly. The Doctor  
sighs, stands and heads out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY.

The Doctor stands outside the room, looking at Maya through the glass in the door. Maya's Mom stands next to him.

MOM  
(tearfully.)  
She doesn't seem any better. It's been months. Why isn't she better?

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
We have to be patient--

MOM  
--I can't do this! What if she tries something again? What if she actually does it next time? I can't...I can't lose her.

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
We need to give her more time. She's been through hell. She lost her father--

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD

We sees Dad's dead body in the wrecked car. Dried blood on his face.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. JUVENILE MENTAL HOSPITAL

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
--and her brother in the same accident.

We see Maya's sad, weary face staring out the window.

DOCTOR PATTERSON (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
(off-screen.)  
Her mind could only take so much. It's all hanging by a thread right now.

FLASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK MONTAGE:

All of these scenes have a hazy feel and echoing dialog.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD.

Maya is outside the car, just after the crash.

MAYA

Thomas?! Thomas, where are you?!

We see this playing out on the other side of the car. Thomas' twisted and bloody arm hangs out of the passenger side door.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Thomas! THOMAS!!!

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD.

Maya sits on the gravel by the car, hugging Mr. Pork-Pie.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD

Maya measures the twigs on the map as Mr. Pork-Pie sits nearby.

MAYA

Each of these line is ten miles  
so...Ninety miles.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD

In the car, through the rear window, we see Maya holding Mr. Pork-Pie by the paw and walking away with her backpack on her shoulders. In the back seat we see Thomas' body, his neck bent at an odd angle.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. ROCK OUTCROPPING.

Maya starts a fire with a pile of twigs using her Dad's lighter. Mr. Pork-Pie sits next to her.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT WOOD PATH

Maya hikes along carrying Mr. Pork-Pie along a thick wooded trail.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT WOODED GLADE

Maya stands alone looking at the bizarre bed of sticks and deer heads, looking at the child's jacket.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT FARM FIELD

Maya stands alone, looking up at the Huge Farmer. She holds Mr. Pork-Pie.

MAYA

Our...our dad died. In a car  
accident.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. OLD WOODEN CABIN

Maya sits on the floor of the cabin eating beans. Mr. Pork-Pie sits nearby. She takes a drink of orange soda and belches, laughing.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. JUVENILE MENTAL HOSPITAL

We are back in the hospital looking at Maya's sad and weary face.

MOM  
 (off screen.)  
 Will she ever be the same?

CUT TO:

Mom and the Doctor in the hallway.

MOM (CONT'D)  
 (tearfully.)  
 Will she ever be my little girl  
 again?

The Doctor looks at the floor, sighing.

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
 I'm sorry...I really don't know.

There is an uncomfortable pause. The Doctor then smiles a fake smile and pushes open the swinging door to the visitor's room.

DOCTOR PATTERSON (CONT'D)  
 (happily.)  
 Well, time for TV, Maya! And look  
 who's here to take you back to your  
 room!

MOM  
 Hi-ya, sweetheart.

Mom strokes Maya's hair. She doesn't respond.

The Doctor unlocks the wheelchair chucks and Mom pushes her to the door.

MOM (CONT'D)  
 (hiding her tears.)  
 Let's go watch the Poky Lynn Show.  
 That's your favorite, right, baby?

DOCTOR PATTERSON  
 (still smiling.)  
 Everybody loves Poky Lynn.

Mom pushes the chair out the doors and down the hallway. From Maya's perspective we see the sad and mentally challenged children in the hospital. Some play games, some walk in random circles, some merely sit in chairs, rocking back and forth.

At the end of the very dark hallway is Maya's room. It is dimly lit with a single light bulb.

Appearing in the doorway is a dark figure, silhouetted against the room light. We cannot see his face, but from his physical bearing and size, we can tell that this is Thomas.

Maya looks up and sees him, smiling brightly.

MAYA  
(whispering under her  
breath.)  
Thomas...

The silhouetted figure of Thomas reaches out from the darkness into the lit hallway. In his hand is Mr. Pork-Pie.

Maya smiles gleefully, holding out her bandaged hands in front of her, reaching out to him.

The chair wheels closer and closer to the stuffed rabbit.

FADE OUT:

THE END.