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The Shrike: An Original Screenplay

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THE SHRIKE: AN ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

By

Louis Fisk

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

THE SHRIKE: AN ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

By

Louis L. Fisk

Nothing quite describes us the way our fears do, specifically the way we cope with those fears. In moments of great duress, facades are stripped away and what remains are honest, if unsettling, images of ourselves. In an attempt to capture an "honest portrait" of humanity, I have written a horror cinema screenplay that combines the ordinary with the bizarre. Using my hometown of Watersmeet, Michigan as inspiration for this story's rural, wilderness setting, I asked myself the question: "What would happen if a truly terrible monster invaded our usually peaceful, but sometimes divided community?"

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2013

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INTRODUCTION

The external formatting of this thesis (title page, table of contents, introduction) follows the format suggested by the *MLA Style Manual* and the Department of English. The internal formatting of the screenplay follows industry standard conventions.

The goal of this project was to produce a commercially successful screenplay. I took inspiration from my own life, growing up in a small rural town, and infused elements of "horror cinema" to gain a new understanding of my childhood community and how it might react in a crisis situation. As a note to readers: elements of the script written in all capital letter reflect several things, usually the introduction of new characters, sound effects, important props, or significant actions.

Inspiration for the story's monster, "The Shrike" was taken from the small hawk-like birds of the same name, which have the unsettling habit of impaling their prey on thorns, barb-wire fences, or in trees.

This script was written with the intent of commercial sale, either independently or in conjunction with the WGA (Writer's Guild of America) West.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT (MANY YEARS AGO)

Through the dark tips of oak branches, SMOKE rises.
A RED MOON low in the sky.

Far below, a small campfire burns against the night.

AROUND THE FIRE - A DOZEN NATIVE AMERICANS FROM LONG AGO.

Most are seated, talking, laughing.

A YOUNG WOMAN braids the hair of a LITTLE GIRL.

A FEW BRAVES stand guard.

Everything is peaceful.

UNTIL -

An OLD WOMAN starts having FITS. She is SEIZING.

Friends rush to help. Her seizure lasts an intense moment.

ABRUPTLY STOPS.

Exhausted, she struggles to speak -

 OLD WOMAN
 (weeping)
 The . . . Shrike is coming.

SUPPRESSED PANIC in the group. Everyone rushes to action.

Braves prepare to defend. Bows and knives.

A woman throws WOOD on the fire. It blazes.

A MOTHER clutches her BABY. It doesn't even cry.

EVERYONE moves close to the FIRE. They huddle against it
although it burns intensely.

. . . silent, tense moments.

The fire burns on. The heat SCORCHES their skin, but no one
moves away.

The old woman's LABORED BREATHING.

Eyes look to the trees. Arrows taut on bowstrings.

An OWL hoots nearby, flies away, scaring a brave. He fires an arrow at the noise.

It disappears into quiet darkness.

The fire burns more intensely.

Baby CRIES OUT. Mother quiets it.

SILENCE . . .

A LONG WAIL through the soft night. It is THE SHRIKE.

The noise grows louder and louder, moving closer --

A BLACK MASS OF FEATHERS -

SLAMS near the fire, scattering Natives. One falls dangerously close to the coals.

Smoke everywhere. The Shrike moves faster than any animal.

Up a tree, it flies screaming. Descends again.

Arrows miss.

The Shrike grabs a brave and both disappear in smoke.

Reappear in a tree, SCREAMING.

The monster moves too fast to see. It is black lightning.

One by one it snuffs people like candles. Quick and violent.

Mother grabs a FLAMING BRANCH and swipes at the Shrike. SCORCHES the monster and it DISAPPEARS into the trees.

Baby starts CRYING. Mother tries to soothe him.

The fire burns hot.

FROM MOTHER'S P.O.V. - BODIES on the ground, in the trees.

A SHAPE drops from a tree; walks disjointedly towards her.

It is too dark to see features, but --

WE HEAR - A CHIRP.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - LILY'S BEDROOM - DAWN

LILY snaps awake!

She is SHAKING from the nightmare. Early sunrise barely lights her young face. She has sharp Native American beauty and long raven black hair. She is in her late teens.

Her room is messy and small. A DREAM CATCHER hangs above her bed. Charcoal sketches tacked to the wall.

NANA (O.S.)

(through door)

Lily! School bus comin in fifteen minutes. Jimmer and Mitchell havin pancakes, you want some?

LILY

(still breathless)

Ahh . . . sure!

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - 15 MINUTES LATER

CLOSEUP - JIMMER EATING

Lily's little brother JIMMER is mowing pancakes as fast as a 9 year old can. He has an impish charm to his looks.

NEXT TO HIM -

His cousin MITCHELL. They could be twins.

Mitchell isn't touching his food. His fork is stuck in a small stack of pancakes. He looks SLEEPY.

NANA (O.S.)

Mitchell!

Looming behind him is grandma, who everyone calls NANA -
60's, short and round, IMPOSING. A large t-shirt covers her lumpy figure; she wears her salt-and-pepper hair in a bun.
Her kitchen is small and a bit messy, but very "homey" and filled with love. Artwork from the kids hangs on the fridge.
She is EYEING Mitchell's plate.

NANA
You don't eat your cakes and you'll
be sorry little man.

MITCHELL -

LOWERS his head, defiant mischief in his eyes. He reluctantly takes a bite. Nana nods approvingly before turning her back.

Mitchell slyly TOSSES a pancake on the floor. The FAMILY DOG "D.O.G." (Dee-oh-gee) RUSHES into the room and eats it.

Michell smirks.

NANA
(looking out window)
Oh! School bus is here!
(yelling towards the bathroom)
Lily!

Jimmer and Mitchell jump up and grab their backpacks. One has Spiderman on it and the other Batman.

They rush out the door, stopping to get kisses from Nana.

Lily enters the kitchen, dressed and ready.

NANA
You didn't eat breakfast!

She pauses to kiss Nana on the cheek on her way out.

LILY
Sorry.

As Lily is walking out, Nana stops her with a question:

NANA
(serious tone)
You feeling okay Lily?

Lily doesn't answer; looks down.

NANA
(realizing)
You having dreams again, ain't you?

Lily is quiet . . .

LILY
I'll be home a little late tonight.
I'm working on a project with Mr.
Wells.

Nana nods; Lily goes out the door.

CLOSEUP - NANA'S FACE

She's worried.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. RURAL ROAD/BOBO'S VAN - AFTERNOON

A beat-up, rusted-out, red box van ZOOMS down a rural road.

INSIDE -

loud hip-hop on the speakers. Garbage everywhere. Fuzzy dice
and a lot of air fresheners. This van is a ghetto mess.

BOBO, JER, RJ, and DERRICK laugh it up and drink 40's.

This is JER'S GANG.

JER
Come on Bobo, you drive like a
shithead! Make it fly.

BOBO
Holy cry, it don't go no faster.

RJ
Hahaha, fuckin Rez Runner is dope.
Don't hate.

The boys are Native Americans, late teens, dressed in baggy clothes and gold jewelry.

Derrick lights a cigarette. He has a skinny, mean face. He CHECKS HIS WATCH and starts laughing.

DERRICK
3 o' clock. Let's go fuck with some guppies.

The others LAUGH in agreement.

RJ
Yeah! Whoop!

Bobo steps on the gas. Sweat rolls down his fat cheeks.

OUTSIDE -

The van cruises down the road, blows away autumn leaves.

After it disappears, only SILENCE remains. A bird CHIRPS.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL - ART STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Inside a small art studio, LILY works a clay pot on a SPINNING WHEEL. Her strong hands shape it with care.

Like the rest of the building, the art studio is badly in need of a renovation. Shoddy lighting reveals old posters, worn-out supplies, and a cracked concrete floor.

LILY
(lightly singing; Anishinabe)

Her voice is soft and delicate, in contrast to her sharp beauty. The words drift slowly from her mouth.

Her reverie is interrupted by Mitchell, SHOUTING from the doorway.

MITCHELL

Lily! They got Jimmer again! He's
outside!

She JUMPS UP and rushes out, hands still wet with clay.
Her beautiful clay pot SPINS INTO PIECES off the wheel.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT BEHIND SCHOOL - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Outside of the school, Derrick, RJ, Bobo and Jer have Jimmer
surrounded.

RJ

(holding palm out)
Come on, Jimmer! Give me some skin.

Jimmer does nothing. Looks tough.

BOBO

How 'bout some money!

Bobo bumps his big belly into Jimmer, knocking him down.

The Gang LAUGHS.

Jimmer gets up strong. There is some BLOOD on his palm.

BOBO

Eh, tough guy don't cry, eh?

JER

He deserve some whiskey for that!

Jer pulls out a pint of whiskey. Flaunts it at Jimmer.

JER

You ever try deer blood Jimmer?

Derrick lights a cigarette, enjoys the show.

BEHIND THEM - A DOOR BURSTS OPEN.

Lily is furious, Mitchell just behind her.

She marches up, SMACKS the pint bottle from Jer's hand.
It SHATTERS.

JER
Hey bitch!

She SLAPS him in the face, leaving a WET CLAY HAND PRINT.
All of his friends freeze . . . then LAUGH at his face.
Jer holds back anger.

LILY
You keep away from Jimmer!
(to the rest of the gang)
He don't need punks like you in his
life!

MITCHELL
(from behind Lily)
Yeah!

Mitchell kicks dirt at Jer and hides again behind Lily.
The gang looks to Jer, waiting for his response.
He touches the clay on his face, scowls.

JER
(to Bobo)
Start the van! I gotta wash this
shit off my face.

Bobo rushes off.

JER
(pointing to Lily)
You owe me for that pint!

He turns to go and the rest of the gang follows.
Derrick FLICKS his CIGARETTE at Lily and the boys.

MITCHELL
Jerk!

Mitchell FLIPS THEM THE BIRD.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Around Nana's small kitchen table, Lily, Jimmer, and Mitchell eat dinner with Nana and TWO OTHER ADULTS.

They are JUNIOR and KIM, 30's, Mitchell's parents. Junior is very serious at the table. Kim seems relaxed.

NANA

Mitchell! Pass Nana the butter.
That's a good grandson!

She pats Jimmer on the head, who is sitting by her side.

NANA

You too, Jimmer. I got such good
little grandsons!

JUNIOR

(cuts in sternly; to the boys)
What'd I hear about trouble today
at school?

NANA

Ah?

JIMMER & MITCHELL

(interrupting each other)
It wasn't us! It was those jerks
Bobo and . . . had me surrounded

Mitchell impersonates Bobo's wide-eyed BELLY-SLAM.

JIMMER & MITCHELL (CONT'D)

(interrupting)
trying to take his money and make
him drink deer blood! and . . .

JUNIOR

(cutting them off)
What'd I tell you about bullies?

The boys FALL SILENT. Junior is about to lecture.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

You gotta stand up to them. If they hit you, you hit 'em harder. You understand?

KIM

I don't know about that.

JUNIOR

(to Kim)

No, dammit! These boys need to get tough. It's a mean world out there.

NANA

My grandsons are plenty tough. They don't need to get no meaner!

(aside to Jimmer)

Isn't that right, Jimmer?

KIM

It's those older boys should be ashamed, pickin' on these kids.

JUNIOR

And that's right! Let ME get a hold of them stick necks. We'll see how tough those punks are!

KIM

Junior!

But Mitchell and Jimmer are in agreement:

JIMMER & MITCHELL

(together)

Yeah!

MITCHELL

You shoulda seen what Lily did to Jer!

(imitating the blow)

SMACK! Hahaha!

The WHOLE TABLE looks at Lily, who has been quiet until

LILY

(embarrassed)
He deserved it . . . Nobody messes
with my little brother.

JUNIOR
Ha! If you're so tough, you can
come bail me out of any trouble at
the Roadhouse tonight!

KIM
(annoyed)
You going to the Roadhouse tonight?

JUNIOR
Haven't been there in a week.

NANA
Lily, come help Nana with the
dishes! Mitchell, Jimmer, time to
get ready for bed!

She gets up and CORRALS the kids, moving them away from the
ARGUMENT that is just starting between Junior and Kim.

KIM
I just don't see why you gotta be
spending money--our money--on
gettin drunk. You just started
working again.

JUNIOR
I'm a grown man Kim. I need to
relax.

NANA
Come on Lily. Let's wash dishes.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NOT MUCH LATER

Lily and Nana are WASHING DISHES together.

Junior and Kim's argument is still going, BARELY AUDIBLE
from another room. Mitchell and Jimmer are put to bed.

NANA

So . . . you having visions again.

Lily is reluctant to talk about it.

NANA

You know I used to dream about them
same people when I was younger too?

She rinses a dish and hands it to Lily, who is drying them.
Lily works on in silence, until -

LILY

One looks like Mom.

(pause)

At least, how I remember her.

NANA

Mmm.

Nana STOPS WASHING, reaches over and touches Lily -

NANA (CONT'D)

Let me tell you something about
your momma . . .

But Junior INTERRUPTS -

SLAMMING OPEN the bedroom door, STOMPING into the kitchen,
and OUT the FRONT DOOR.

His dramatic exit leaves the conversation hanging . . .

From outside, we hear - A CAR ENGINE

start up roughly, drive away aggressively.

Nana watches through the window . . .

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. ROADHOUSE BAR - NIGHT

Junior pulls up to the Roadhouse Bar in an old Camero.

The outside of the small place is lit neon. It looks trashy.

Junior steps out of his car and walks to the front door. As

he opens it, two big Native men walk out: DONNY and KURTY.
They are twin mountains.

DONNY
Junior! Haven't seen you around!

JUNIOR
(slapping their hands)
Donny. Hey Kurty. You guys out of
here?

KURTY
Nah, we just going to burn one. You
want to come?

JUNIOR
I wish Grizzly boys, but I just
started workin at the mine. I gotta
piss for 'em.

KURTY
Suit yourself chief!

The mountain men walk out and Junior steps --

INSIDE THE ROADHOUSE -

It's busy, but not packed. The only thing louder than the
jukebox is the tacky decor. Out of date posters and neon
lamps on the walls. A POOL TABLE in use in the back.

Junior strolls to the bar, is greeted by the BARTENDER.

JUNIOR
Stevie! PBR me.

The bartender brings him a beer. Junior is finally a relaxed
man. There is ANOTHER SIDE to him.

BARTENDER
I thought you been kidnapped. Where
ya been?

JUNIOR
Ahh, Kim's been ridin' my ass!
(imitating her)

"Why you gotta spend every night at the Roadhouse? What kind of example you setting for Mitchell?" Blah, blah, blah. Makes a man thirsty!

They both laugh.

JUNIOR

Came here to drink and shoot pool!

AT THE POOL TABLE -

MARK, a bearded white man, is shooting pool with two buddies, HANK and TOM. All three look like loggers.

Mark lines up a shot and BANKS in the 8-BALL for the win.

His buddies grumble and one of them pulls out some MONEY.

MARK

Ha, pay up dickhead! That's five for five tonight.

JUNIOR -

doesn't look impressed.

AT THE POOL TABLE -

MARK

I can't be beat tonight!

He is rubbing it in to his friends when --

Junior walks INTO FRAME and SLAPS \$10 on the table.

JUNIOR

Ten bucks says you can.

Mark and company eye-up Jr, give him a funny look.

MARK

Alright. Rack 'em up.

Junior racks the balls and Mark sets up to break.

HANK

Fuck him up Mark.

Mark SLAMS the break and balls drop in. He quickly makes a few easy shots.

TOM
That's right.

Junior coolly sips his beer. Mark finally misses one.

JUNIOR
Looks like I got big ones! Alright.

Junior gets to work shooting. He runs a few then misses.

JUNIOR
Rats!

Mark takes over and runs the table TO WIN. He grabs the \$10.

TOM
Nice job Mark!

JUNIOR
. . . Double or nothing?

MARK
It's your money.

JUNIOR
(smiling)
I'll buy you a drink.

A FEW HOURS LATER -

Mark and Junior are still shooting pool. Everyone is drunker--slower to shoot, quicker to anger.

HANK
Come on Mark! You gunna let this red take all your money?!

MARK
(slurring)
Just shut up. I got this handled.

JUNIOR

You really want another game?

Junior looks like he's been winning. Mark looks pissed.

MARK

One more. \$50.

Mark racks the balls. He is a little sloppy.

Junior breaks and gets to work. He starts making balls quickly.

TOM

This guy's a fucking hustle Mark!

Junior runs the table with ease, making every ball. As the 8 sinks into a pocket . . .

JUNIOR

Woah! Looks like I win again pal!

He holds out his hand, either to shake or take payment.

HANK

Fuck that. Don't pay him Mark.

There is a TENSE MOMENT . . .

MARK

(slurring)

No! The man won fair and square.

I'll pay him.

Mark fumbles to get his wallet out of his pants.

HANK

This wagon burner's been cheatin'
you all night, Mark! He got you
drunk up and hustled you . . .

(to Junior)

just like the snake he is.

JUNIOR

Hey!

(jabbing a finger at Hank)

You watch what you call me asshole!

At this, Hank gets up and PUSHES Junior.

SHOUTING. A scuffle starts between Hank, Tom, and Junior.

AT THE BAR - KURTY AND DONNY

get up quickly, move like ANGRY BEARS. They are headed --

STRAIGHT TO THE POOL TABLE -

TOM

Fuck! Hank!

But it's too late--Kurdy SMASHES Hank in the side of the head. He goes down.

Tom throws a punch at CHARGING Donny. It connects but barely slows down the huge Indian.

Donny THROWS Tom hard.

Junior stands up and is face to face with Mark. The two stare at each other for a hard second, BUT NO PUNCHES.

Suddenly, Kurty SLAMS Mark from the side, putting him down.

OUTSIDE THE ROADHOUSE -

The doors burst open and Mark, Hank, and Tom are THROWN OUT by Kurty and Donny.

It is SNOWING.

KURTY

And stay out, you racist fuckers!
This is an Indian bar!

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S TRUCK (DRIVING) - NIGHT

Mark is driving home from the bar, definitely too drunk.

SAD COUNTRY MUSIC on the radio. SNOW blowing outside.

MARK

(groaning; talking to self)

Ahg, my head. Sarah ain't gunna
like this one Mark.

He looks down, rubs his forehead. Looks up . . .

A DARK SHAPE IN THE ROAD -

MARK (O.S.)

Shit!

He slams the breaks, swerves his truck, narrowly MISSES it.

BUT -- HITS a DEER!

The impact is intense, and Mark's head SMACKS the steering
wheel. Somehow, he manages to keep control of his truck.

Pulling over, he puts it in park.

After checking his mouth and face, he lets out a deep sigh.

He's sobered up.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Mark steps out of the truck, examines it for damage. One
headlight and the grill are smashed in.

A large WHITETAIL DEER in the road, dead on impact.

MARK

. . . Fuck!

He kicks one of the truck tires.

Snow is falling hard, already covering the deer.

UNKNOWN P.O.V. - Something is watching Mark.

CLOSE-UP - Mark is examining the deer.

UNKNOWN P.O.V. - Watches Mark drag the deer to the back of
his pickup. He struggles to hoist it into the truck's bed.

MARK

(mumbling)
Got venison . . .

Whatever is watching Mark takes a STEP CLOSER to him.

He is oblivious, still working to get the deer in the back.

ANOTHER STEP closer. Mark's breath is thick in the cold air. Finishing his work, he turns to leave, but STOPS and STARES.

He is standing exposed on the snowy highway -- staring into the thick dark. Looking right at something, but seeing only inky black shadows and snow.

He shivers and gets back in his truck.

UNKNOWN P.O.V. - watches Mark drive away.

EXT./INT. MARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Mark's truck pulls into the driveway of a modest house. It is lit up by a few porch lights. The snow falls lightly.

He steps out of the truck, adjusts his jacket and takes a moment to compose himself. He walks inside the house.

INSIDE MARK'S HOUSE - It is very dark. A single light shines from a room in the back. He walks towards the light and

INTO THE KITCHEN -

Mark's 9 year old daughter MOLLY is asleep at the table. Long blonde hair covers her face.

Mark takes a minute to look at his daughter.

She slowly opens her eyes.

MOLLY
(groggy)
Daddy. You're home.

MARK
Yeah, honey. Daddy's home. What are you doing out here sweetie?

MOLLY

Mom says no more waiting up for
you, but I still waited . . .

MARK

Ahh . . . sweetie.

He goes over to the table and gives her a BIG HUG.

MARK (CONT'D)

You didn't have to do that.

He lifts her up.

MOLLY

I didn't want a monster to get you
Daddy.

MARK

Ohhh, baby. There's no monsters.

He cradles her head and walks her towards bed.

MOLLY

But I saw one in the backyard
tonight. It looked icky.

Still in the dark, Mark walks

INTO MOLLY'S ROOM -

and sets her on her bed.

MARK

(whispering)

It sounds like too much
imagination. . . Even if there was
a monster, Mommy and Daddy are here
to keep you safe, and your brother
Jack. And Rocky too. You've got the
best guard dog in the whole world.

OUTSIDE MOLLY'S WINDOW -

A small DOG HOUSE is barely illuminated in the wooded yard.

INSIDE MOLLY'S ROOM -

She smiles a little smile. Mark brushes her hair back.

MARK
Goodnight sweetie.

He kisses her forehead.

MOLLY
Goodnight Daddy.

UPSTAIRS, IN MARK'S BEDROOM -

His wife Sarah is asleep in bed.

A DARK SHAPE sneaks through the door.

It is Mark.

He sits down softly on the bed, starts to undress.

Sarah wakes up, annoyed.

SARAH
Ugh, Mark. You're home.

MARK
Hey honey. Ran into Tom and Hank.
You know how the boys get.

SARAH
Did you see Molly?

MARK
Yeah, I put her to bed. She was
complaining about nightmares again.

SARAH
I'm worried about her. She's too
sweet to be so anxious.

MARK
(laying down)
It's probably just a phase. She'll
grow out of it.

CUT TO:

EXT. LILY'S DREAM - WOODS - NIGHT (LONG AGO)

*NOTE - Through a series of Lily's dreams, we will get some back-story on the Shrike's origins.

WOODS -- It is a LONG AGO TIME. We are with a SMALL TRIBE of Native Americans. They are AROUND A FIRE, celebrating.

In particular, we notice -

THE ALPHA COUPLE -

Strong and beautiful. She is OBVIOUSLY PREGNANT, looks sort of like Lily. He wears HAWK FEATHERS in his hair.

ACROSS THE FIRE - ANOTHER MAN "making eyes" at ALPHA WOMAN.

She looks at him. Looks away. Looks again.

ALPHA MAN - notices them both.

It happens a FEW MORE TIMES.

A DANCER twirls by, as --

Alpha Man QUICKLY CROSSES the EDGE of the FIRE,

GRABS the other man's THROAT, and --

ALPHA WOMAN is CLOSE BEHIND --

GRABBING Alpha Man, but --

He SHAKES HER OFF, and INTO THE FIRE SHE FALLS.

BOTH MEN -- RUSH to GRAB HER.

When they ALL TOUCH HANDS --

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - LILY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Lily WAKES ABRUPTLY.

THROUGH HER DREAM CATCHER -

we see her in bed below. DAWN LIGHT on the drapes.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Nana's bathroom is small and cluttered.

LILY -

stands up from the toilet. Waiting . . .

She is examining -- a PREGNANCY TEST.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - EVENING

It is a BASKETBALL GAME between local high schools.

It looks like the whole town showed up.

AMONG THE CROWD -

Mark, Sarah, Molly, Hank and Tom (Mark's pool buddies).

Hank has a BLACK EYE. Tom looks a little roughed up too.

They are all cheering on -

JACK - 17, athletic point guard. He is Mark and Sarah's SON,
Molly's BROTHER. Currently --

HE'S DRIVING THE LANE - MAKES a DIFFICULT BASKET in traffic.

Home crowd CHEERS and CLAPPING.

LUCY -

Jack's pretty cheerleader girlfriend, 17, leads a CHEER.

IN THE STANDS -

MOLLY

Go Jack!

HANK

Way to get em Jack!

BEHIND THEM - A NATIVE AMERICAN COUPLE, 40's.

NATIVE WOMAN

Didn't even see Bryant wide open in
the corner. Look to pass sometimes!

HANK - TURNS AROUND.

HANK

(sarcastically)

Why pass the ball when he's the
only one making baskets?

Hank TURNS back; SNICKERS to Tom.

NATIVE WOMAN

(to husband)

You hear that lip he gave me?

(to Hank)

You giving me attitude?

HANK -

is about to turn around again, when --

GAME BUZZER sounds, a SHOT SWISHES, and THE CROWD ERUPTS.

ON THE FLOOR -

Jack is being MOBBED by his teammates. FANS rush the floor.

Lucy finds Jack; KISSES him.

IN THE STANDS -

SARAH

All right!!

MARK

Yeah!

MOLLY

YEAH!!

And Hank's argument is forgotten among celebration . . .

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

In a crowd outside of the gym, Jack and Lucy are walking with his family, as well as Tom and Hank. They are headed to the PARKING LOT.

LUCY
(hugging Jack)
Mmmm! I'm so proud of you tonight.

TOM
Somebody's getting some.

Hank LAUGHS, but -

SARAH
Tom! Not with little ears around.

Molly looks up, now interested.

HANK
Seriously though, we should celebrate a little. Who wants to grab a drink?

MARK
I shouldn't . . . I'm going hunting in the morning.

HANK
Come on, Mark. The ball team's headed to state. One beer . . .

SARAH
(finishing his sentence)
. . .will probably turn into ten, and then maybe a black eye, so he better not.

AWKWARD MOMENT -

JACK
I was actually hoping to go out with Lucy tonight . . . there's a

bonfire down on the point.

Lucy SMILES big.

SARAH

Well . . .

MARK

(interrupting)

Don't be out too late.

SARAH

Mark?

MARK

Let 'em go have some fun. They're teenagers.

JACK

Thanks!

He TAKES OFF with Lucy.

CUT TO:

EXT. - POINT BONFIRE - NIGHT

It is a PARTY in the woods - high school kids mostly. Big bonfire; somewhere secluded by a RIVER.

Jack and Lucy show up.

ACROSS THE FIRE -

Jer and Lily sit talking - arguing. She PUSHES his arm away.

JACK AND LUCY -

greet a FEW FRIENDS. Jack looks --

ACROSS THE FIRE -

Lily is STANDING and WALKING AWAY from Jer.

ON LILY -

she is annoyed, walking quickly towards the woods.

She hits a TRAIL. Here the FIRELIGHT is dim.

Cooling off her temper, when --

A GUY AND GIRL, 17 - startle Lily.

They're walking into the woods.

GUY

Oh, hey Lily. What's up?

LILY

Not much. Just chillin. You two?

GUY

We're headed to the waterfalls!

LILY

Neat. Have fun.

GIRL

Thanks.

And the couple walk away. He wears RED. She wears YELLOW.

WHOOPS and PARTY NOISES in the background.

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

IN THE DARK -

Lucy and Jack are struggling to walk up the STAIRS without making noise. They are home LATE from the party.

LUCY

Shhh! We'll wake up your dad.

Stumbling, they go upstairs and into -

JACK'S BEDROOM -

which is DARK. A few moments, and a DESK LAMP lights up.

The lamp shines on a few basketball trophies, a pile of

clothes, a twin bed, and a WINDOW facing the back yard.
Lucy GRABS Jack; pushes him onto the bed.

JACK

Uh, oh. Naughty cheerleader time.

Laughing, she starts to UNDRRESS. So does he.
She gets on top of him, and they start to KISS.
After a few moments, they are interrupted by --
A LOUD BARK.

From the back yard, Mark and Sarah's DOG is BARKING AGAIN.

JACK and LUCY - sit up to look --

THROUGH THE WINDOW - INTO THE BACK YARD -

The dog is outside of its house, barking INTO THE WOODS.
It is going crazy.

JACK

Woah, Rocky.

And SOMEONE is AWAKE in MARK'S BEDROOM - making noise.

LUCY - jumps under the bed sheets, just as --

MARK WALKS PAST THE DOOR -

dressed in his underwear. He looks in, SEES Lucy

MARK

(sleepy; covering up)

Whoa, Lucy.

JACK

Dad, what's wrong with Rocky?

MARK

I dunno. Maybe there's wolves. I'll
bring him in.

And Mark WALKS AWAY, downstairs.

We HEAR HIM -

WHISTLE and CALL for ROCKY.

THROUGH JACK'S BEDROOM WINDOW -

We see Rocky, still barking. He doesn't want to stop.

A LIGHT SNOW has started to fall.

MARK WHISTLES LOUDER and Rocky finally RUNS to the HOUSE.

MARK (O.S.)

Get in here!

IN JACK'S BEDROOM -

Lucy snuggles Jack tighter.

LUCY

Weird.

JACK

Yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

We are in the middle of the woods, all large Oak trees.
Everything is frosted by WHITE SNOW from the night before.

A SPLASH OF BLAZE ORANGE -

It is Mark, deer hunting. He WALKS SLOWLY, carrying a rifle.

IN THE SNOW -

a set of large deer tracks. Mark is following them closely.

He creeps through the trees, careful to be quiet.

Songbirds CHIRP and SING from above. Everything is peaceful.

IN THE SNOW -

the deer tracks weave sharply, like the animal was running.

MARK -

follows closely. He pauses and looks around.

FROM MARK'S P.O.V -

The desolate trees stretch as far as the eye can see. There is a subtle beauty to the black branches against white snow.

Looking down, Mark continues to follow the tracks.

IN THE SNOW -

the tracks jag and veer again. All of a sudden, they COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR.

He is flabbergasted. Where could the tracks have gone?

FROM MARK'S P.O.V. -

He follows the line of tracks with his eyes until they disappear into clean snow . . . looks farther ahead, and

SCREAMS!

RAVENS scatter from a DEAD MASS hanging in a tree.

Impaled on a branch --

the shredded CARCASS OF A DEER. Blood drips.

It is still fresh . . .

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S HOUSE - JACK'S ROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Jack and Lucy are still asleep in bed.

THROUGH JACK'S BEDROOM WINDOW -

We see Mark SPRINTING out of the woods, into the yard.

He is running towards the house --

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sarah is at the table, eating breakfast, when --

MARK BURSTS IN -

frantic. He's shaken from the gruesome sight in the woods.

SARAH

Honey! What happened?

MARK

Get the phone. I need to call the
DNR.

She hands him a PHONE; looks worried, but --

Mark is dialing . . . reaches the DNR office.

MARK

Hello, I'd like to report a
suspicious deer kill . . . yes,
Mark Simms. Yes . . .

AS JACK AND LUCY WALK DOWNSTAIRS -

looking worried; still dressed for bed.

MARK (CONT'D)

Yeah, it was ripped up really bad.
Just hangin in a tree, about ten
feet up. I never seen anything like
it . . . near Rock River. What?

SARAH

(mouthing whisper)

What happened?

But Mark shushes her; finishes his phone conversation.

MARK

Ok, huh. Yes . . . stuck in the
tree. No, I didn't see any tracks.
. . . No, I got out of there as

fast I could . . . Really, A
related incident? . . . Huh. Yeah
ok, I will. Yeah, thanks warden.

He HANGS UP. Everyone is waiting for an explanation.

JACK

What's up?

MARK

He says to call the police.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCENIC WATERFALL TRAIL - MORNING

SUPERIMPOSE - "2 HOURS EARLIER"

A brand new sedan pulls over on a wooded road, stopping in a
small parking lot for "Scenic Falls." Light SNOW, but SUNNY.

Out steps a TOURIST FAMILY: DORKY PARENTS with spoiled brat
kids, RICKY AND TRINITY, 15 and 13.

They aren't dressed for the woods.

RICKY

Ouch! Goddamn flies eatin me alive!

MOM

Ricky! Watch your language. This is
God's country.

TRINITY

Yea, jerk! Have some respect for
nature.

(gets bit by fly)

Ouch! That bitch!

MOM

Trinity Jane!

RICKY

There's bugs and snow at the same
time?! This place sucks.

DAD

(pointing)
Hey what's that?! A bear?!

The rest of the family REACTS.

DAD
GOTCHA! Ha!

But they are not amused.

DAD
Beat you losers to the falls!

He FAKES A RUN.

TRINITY
Dad! You are soo lame.

They start down the trail to the waterfall.

RICKY
Worst road trip ever.

CUT TO:

EXT. - SCENIC WATERFALL - CONTINUOUS

The family is now getting DEEPER IN THE WOODS.

MOM
Quite a ways back here . . .

TRINITY
Yeah, I'm cold.

DAD
I can hear the falls! We're almost there.

Dad PICKS UP the PACE.

DAD
Come on Ricky! You're lagging!

20 YARDS BEHIND -

Ricky is dawdling. He PULLS OUT HIS PHONE and hits RECORD.

RICKY
(to phone)
Travel log day 5. We are currently
somewhere near God's buttohole.
Observe.

He SWIPES THE FOREST with his phone, RECORDING.

DAD
Oh, WOW!

He has FINALLY REACHED THE FALLS.

Mom and Trinity get there next, gasp.

MOM
Check it out Ricky! It's beautiful!
Reluctantly, Ricky JOGS up, and when he does -
FROM RICKY'S P.O.V. - THE WATERFALL
is breathtaking. It is 40 feet tall.

RICKY
Woah.

The walk was worth it. Mom and Dad embrace. Trinity shivers.
Ricky RECORDS the waterfall.

RICKY
(to phone)
Day 5. It seems that even in . . .
WOAH! What the fuck was that!?

BECAUSE -

SOMETHING just flew away from the far side of the falls. It
was TOO BIG to be a bird.

DAD
Woah. Was that a bird?

MOM
Hell of a bird!

TRINITY
What was that?!

DAD
I think it was an owl. Barn owl.

But he is NERVOUS as well.

MOM
That wasn't an owl Dave.

TRINITY
Let's get out of here!

MOM
Yeah, I didn't like the look of
that thing . . .

RICKY
I have it on video!

He is holding his phone, REPLAYING THE VIDEO.

TRINITY
Look at it in the car!

MOM
Yeah, I'm with Trinity on this one.
Let's go.

DAD
Just a big owl probably . . .

but he is already FOLLOWING AFTER his wife and daughter, who
have already started to go.

DAD
Come on Ricky.

He GRABS his son, who is still looking down at his phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCENIC WATERFALL TRAIL - NOT MUCH LATER

The entire family half walks, half jogs out of the woods.

Ricky is out of breath.

Dad remotely UNLOCKS THE CAR and they all get in quickly.

The car starts and they SPEED AWAY.

CUT TO:

INT. TOURIST FAMILY CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Dad is driving the slick road just a little quicker than normal. Everyone is on edge.

MOM

(to Dad)

Well it just got me worked up a little bit. Let me react to the situation.

DAD

I am letting you react.

IN THE BACKSEAT -

Ricky and Trinity are ON THEIR PHONES.

TRINITY

Let me see that video again Ricky.

RICKY

Just a second. I'm putting it up on Facebook. Crappy service out here.

(pause)

Ok, here.

He QUEUES UP THE VIDEO -

It is a scene of the falls. As his camera PANS UP, a LARGE BROWN SHAPE comes into frame and FLIES AWAY QUICKLY.

It is barely there, but it's there.

TRINITY (O.S.)

You can't really see it.

RICKY (O.S.)

Here, let me pause it.

He PAUSES FRAME on the shape . . .

TRINITY (O.S.)
Hey, what are those?

RICKY (O.S.)
This?

TRINITY (O.S.)
No. Those.

She points out TWO COLORFUL DOTS in the freeze-frame.

There is a bit of RED and a bit of YELLOW - STUCK IN A TREE.

RICKY (O.S.)
I dunno . . .

He ZOOMS IN to reveal -

TRINITY (O.S.)
They look like . . .

RICKY (O.S.)
Bodies.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCENIC WATERFALL - LATE MORNING

THREE COP CARS parked at the trail head to "Scenic Falls."

Lights on; no sirens.

POLICE TAPE ACROSS THE TRAIL HEAD -

like it could stop anyone from just walking around.

CHIEF ALBERT HAYNER -

60's, hard-nosed, head of the local "CITY POLICE."

He is talking to a DEPUTY.

CHIEF HAYNER
Just ahead, Joe?

DEPUTY JOE

Yeah.

Chief Hayner starts down the trail, stops and looks back -

CHIEF HAYNER

Hey Joe! Is it really that bad?

DEPUTY JOE

Yeah Chief, it is.

Hayner continues down the trail. He looks ANNOYED.

CUT TO:

EXT. - SCENIC WATERFALL - MOMENTS LATER

At the waterfall, Chief Hayner walks up to A SECOND DEPUTY.

More POLICE TAPE haphazardly strewn through the woods.

CHIEF HAYNER

Which tree, Bill?

Deputy Bill just POINTS -

and we SLOWLY PAN UP/OVER to -

A TALL WICKED OAK TREE, on the opposite side of the river.

IMPALED IN THE BRANCHES -- TWO TEENAGERS.

One is wearing a YELLOW coat; the other RED.

CHIEF HAYNER (O.S.)

Jesus Christ.

The bodies look like odd Christmas ornaments; strange fruit.

CHIEF HAYNER'S FACE -

is in shock. He's never seen anything like this.

CHIEF HAYNER

That's fucked up.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCENIC WATERFALL TRAIL - NOT LONG AFTER

Hayner is leaving the trailhead, back to his car, when --

A TRIBAL POLICE CRUISER pulls in, parking him in.

ANOTHER TRIBAL CRUISER.

Out of the second car steps - CHIEF OF POLICE, MIKE GESHICK.

Late 50's, he is head of the local TRIBAL POLICE FORCE.

He's a stern man - every part Hayner's equal.

CHIEF HAYNER

What are you doing here Mike? Can't
you see we got it handled?

CHIEF GESHICK

We got jurisdiction here. You
should have forwarded the call, Al.
This is our investigation.

CHIEF HAYNER

Ha! Well good luck gettin 'em down
prick.

And he walks to his car. As he's getting in --

CHIEF GESHICK

Was it a mountain lion?!

But Hayner has SHUT the DOOR. His siren BLIPS.

CHIEF GESHICK

(to deputy parking in Hayner)
Move it.

Deputy moves his cruiser. Hayner pulls out; drives away.

CHIEF GESHICK

(to deputy)
Richie, I want a public address put
out -- possible big cat in the
area. Warn people to stay out of

the woods until we figure this out.

TRIBAL DEPUTY

Will do.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Outside of the elementary school, 50 or 60 CHILDREN play during RECESS - jump rope, tag, and a game of football.

JIMMER AND MITCHELL -

playing football with a few boys, and --

ONE GIRL - Mark's daughter Molly. She has the FOOTBALL, running faster than any of the boys.

She jukes past Mitchell, who tries to tag her but can't, and then runs past Jimmer, who barely misses her. Touchdown!

MITCHELL - he's upset with Jimmer.

MITCHELL

What! You let her score!

JIMMER

She's fast!

MITCHELL

You're in loooove.

MOLLY JOGS BY -

Bumps into Jimmer, looks back and giggles. He blushes.

FROM THE WOODS SURROUNDING THE PLAYGROUND -

Something is watching from a tree.

We see TWO CLAWED, SCARRED FEET flexing on a branch.

The children continue to play, carefree, until --

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

JIMMER, MITCHELL, AND MOLLY -

still playing football. Other kids are a little confused,
but some line up to leave the playground.

MITCHELL

WHAT?! Recess just started!!

MOLLY

Yeah!

VOICE (O.S)

(through P.A. system)

Attention children, the remainder
of recess will be held indoors.
Please line up quietly and head to
the gymnasium . . .

JIMMER

What?

MITCHELL

That's bunk! I don't want to go
inside.

MOLLY

Yeah, we were winning!

JIMMER

Was not -

MITCHELL

(interrupting)

Hey, we should hide!

JIMMER

What?

MOLLY

Where?

Mitchell looks around . . . sees

THE WOODS -

MITCHELL

In there!

JIMMER

No.

MOLLY

What're you afraid?

And she's already on the move; Mitchell too.

MITCHELL

Come on Jimmer! It'll be fun.

And amid the confusion of recess, all three SLIP AWAY.

FROM THE WOODS -

Something watches the children; they're coming right at it.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. NANA'S HOUSE - DAY

Junior's camero pulls into the driveway. He gets out, walks towards the door. HUMMING, he's in a good mood.

He opens the door, and --

INSIDE NANA'S HOUSE -

Kim is on the phone. VERY UPSET. Nana and Lily by her side.

KIM

What do you mean they're missing?

(pause)

How did this happen? Wasn't there somebody watching them?

JUNIOR

(to Nana and Lily)

What's going on?!

LILY

(upset)

Jimmer and Mitchell went missing from school today . . .

JUNIOR

What?!

Nana seems the most distraught.

HER HANDS - fidgeting and anxious.

KIM (O.S.)

Well, what are you doing about it?
City police? Did anyone call Mike?

KIM - she's getting more upset.

KIM

Well you better get a hold of them.
I'm coming down there.

Junior points to himself; hand signals a steering wheel.

KIM (CONT'D)

My husband too. Yes. We want all of
the police involved. Yes. Goodbye.

And she SLAMS down the receiver; starts to CRY.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ON THE OTHER END OF THE PHONE LINE -

PRINCIPAL HARV, City Police Chief Hayner, and a SECRETARY
sit in the principal's office.

Principal Harv, 50's, holds the phone - now a dead line.

SECRETARY

Well, that didn't sound so good.

PRINCIPAL HARV

(stressed)

Well, it's not so good, Grace.

CHIEF HAYNER

You're goddamn right it's not good!
We got three kids missing, probably

in these woods, and it wasn't 4
hours ago this morning that Tribal
was pickin' bodies out of a tree.

Principal Harv and his secretary absorb the stress . . .

CHIEF HAYNER

Now, you got buses runnin? These
kids need to get out of here. About
to be a massive manhunt.

PRINCIPAL HARV

Buses running in . . .
(checks watch)
fifteen minutes. Still gotta make
one more phone call. Grace, what
was the name?

SECRETARY

Mark and Sarah Simms.

CUT TO:

INT. ROADHOUSE BAR - EARLY AFTERNOON

The place is pretty quiet this time of day, except --

AT THE BAR -

Mark is talking excitedly with Hank and Tom.

TOM

Now, you sure it wasn't no mountain
lion?

MARK

Tom! I'm tellin you, this thing was
flayed, like clawed apart.
(gestures claws)
Like nothing I ever seen.

HANK

No shit. And still drippin?

MARK

Drippin.
(pauses to finish beer)

And then, I call up the police and
hear that they found two hikers
same way down by Rock Falls!

He gestures for another beer, but

BARTENDER ON THE PHONE -

MARK (CONT'D)
I'm telling you, there's something
terrible out in those woods.

His cell phone RINGS - WOLF HOWLS.

MARK
That'll be Sarah . . . Says I'm
traumatized.

He checks the phone number; answers the call.

MARK (CONT'D)
Hey hun. Don't worry, I'm . . .
what?! Missing from school?! What?

Mark stands up.

HANK AND TOM -

worried now too. They exchange glances, when --

THE DOOR OPENS - TWIN SHADOWS BLOCK THE LIGHT.

Kurty and Donny step in . . .

Look RIGHT at Hank, Tom, and Mark.

KURTY
(pointing)
I thought we told you . . .

And only Mark is oblivious, until he hangs up his phone -

Sees Donny and Kurty.

MARK
(to the whole bar)
My daughter just went missing from

school an hour and a half ago. I
have to find her.

Just then, the bartender gets off the phone.

BARTENDER

(to Kurty and Donny)

That was Nana Williams. Jimmer and
Mitchell with those kids that went
missing. They're startin a search.

HANK

Well grab your guns because there's
something out there.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - AFTERNOON

FIRE TRUCKS, POLICE CRUISERS, AMBULANCE, CIVILIAN VEHICLES -
parked around the school, LIGHTS on. Officers everywhere.
The afternoon sun has melted away the snow. DOGS BARK.

CHIEF HAYNER - directing his men. RADIOS buzz and call.

CHIEF GESHICK - he's there too, directing tribal officers.

CHIEF GESHICK

(to deputy)

Hey, tell those county reserves
that we still need to secure the
east end of the property . . .
We've only got a few more hours of
daylight.

JIMMER, KIM, NANA, and LILY -

come INTO FRAME, moving towards Chief Geshick.

JUNIOR

Mike! Mike!

CHIEF GESHICK

Junior! Kim.

(nods to Nana)

Nana, Lily.

JUNIOR

Where can we start?!

CHIEF GESHICK

Well, we still need men down on the east side . . .

(looking at the women)

and, somebody's got to be at home if the boys turn up. We need neighborhood searches too. Door to door.

(pause)

Frankly, I don't think that the woods are the safest place right now. We may have a cougar around.

KIM

All the more reason to have us out there!

CHIEF GESHICK

Now, like I said . . .

But he is interrupted by --

KURTY, DONNY, JER, RJ, BOBO, DERRICK, and a FEW OTHER MEN.

Kurty has a shotgun; Donny a machete. Another has a handgun.

KURTY

We came to help!

CHIEF GESHICK

Woah, whoa, whoa. You can't have those weapons around here boys. This is still a school.

DONNY

Bullshit! I heard there's a fucking huge mountain lion out there taking people down. I ain't walkin into the woods unarmed.

He brandishes his machete. The rest of the posse agrees.

CHIEF GESHICK

(hesitant)
Well ok, but get the hell out of
here. Reporters are already showing
up. Don't want to look like a wild
mob. Go east. We're short that way.

IN THE BACKGROUND - ANOTHER CIVILIAN POSSE.

MARK, HANK, TOM, JACK and several other WHITE MEN -
most are armed with guns. Mark and Hank are in the lead,
striding for Chief Hayner.

HANK
Hayner! We're here to find those
kids and make sure no friggin
animal gets 'em.

CHIEF HAYNER
Jesus Christ.

MARK
Where'd she go missing?

CHIEF HAYNER
Well, last seen out here about one
o' clock. We know they're in the
woods. Got three sets of prints and
they split up about thirty yards in
(hesitates)
then disappear . . .
(pointing)
Work your way west. Tribal's taking
the east side, and PLFD up the
middle.

Mark's posse heads for the woods.

CHIEF HAYNER (CONT'D)
Hey! We'll get her back, Mark.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

INSIDE THE WEST WOODS -

it's quieter, shadowier, and creepier. Tall oak trees CREAK in the breeze. Because of the shadows, SNOW still remains.

MARK'S POSSE -

works into the woods. They shout "MOLLY!" as they go.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

A FIREFIGHTER -

also searching for the children. She works thoroughly.

SHOUTS of "MOLLY" from afar.

The firefighter goes deeper into the woods; SPOTS something.

FIREFIGHTER

(shouts)

I've got blood!

(into walkie talkie)

Hey, this is Jeanie with the PLFD,

I've got spots of blood about a quarter of a mile in, due north.

I'm going to pursue; send dogs.

She MOVES QUICKLY, following the blood.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

JUNIOR'S POSSE -

is searching the east woods with a FEW TRIBAL DEPUTIES.

They shout, "MITCHELL" . . . "JIMMER" . . .

BOBO

(to Jer)

Pretty quiet out here . . .

JER

Just shut up and look Bobo.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Firefighter Jeanie is hot on the blood trail. She moves quickly, avoiding the thick branches.

BLOOD SPOTS -

every few feet on the ground. HUMAN PRINTS in the snow.

She LOOKS UP every few feet to avoid trees, LOOKS DOWN to follow the trail.

In a rush, she looks up, then down. Does a DOUBLE TAKE -

HANGING FROM A TREE -

the LIMP BODY of a MALE FIREFIGHTER. His neck is wedged in the crook of a branch.

Jeanie FUMBLES with her radio, terrified . . . when --

A LONG WAIL pierces the forest. It is CLOSE.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Mark's crew is searching when they hear the WAIL.

Everyone STOPS.

TOM

What the hell was that?

JACK

Sounded like a hawk or something.

HANK

That'd be a hell of a hawk . . .

Nobody moves.

MARK

Come on, that thing could have Molly!

Mark PUSHES ON toward the noise; others follow closely.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Junior and his posse heard the noise too.

They are motionless.

JUNIOR

You guys ever hear anything like
that before?

RJ

Hell no!

DONNY

And I don't want to again!

Eerie silence . . . no one wants to move.

JUNIOR

Well, I'm not afraid. I'm getting
those kids back.

JER

I'm not afraid either.

DERRICK

Me neither.

KURTY

Me neither.

A few people shift uncomfortably.

DONNY

(brandishing machete)
Me neither!

A few deputies MUMBLE half-heartedly agreement.

RJ

Me neither . . .
(looks to Bobo)

Bobo?

BOBO

I'm just afraid . . . that I might
have shit my pants when that thing
called out.

The posse REACTS.

JER

Come on Bobo!

JUNIOR

Hey guys! We need to keep moving!
Our boys are out there somewhere.

And . . . they reluctantly head towards the noise.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SEARCH BASE - CONTINUOUS

The search base is a CIRCUS of activity.

NEWS REPORTERS EVERYWHERE -

One in particular is trying to get to Chief Hayner.

CHIEF HAYNER

(to deputy Joe)

Joe, give me an update on that
firefighter. Has she radioed again?

DEPUTY JOE

No sir.

CHIEF HAYNER

Well are the dogs on blood yet?

DEPUTY JOE

Not quite . . .

At this, the REPORTER butts in -

REPORTER

Chief Hayner! Did you say that
blood was found?

Hayner tries to ignore the question.

CHIEF HAYNER

(gesturing to the reporter)
Joe! Can you get them out of here?
And re-contact the state troopers?
We need thermal imaging out here.
This is going into the night.

IN THE DISTANCE - THE SUN GETTING LOW

HAYNER - he's stressed.

REPORTER

Chief Hayner! Excuse me . . .

But Hayner is walking away. Over his shoulder -

CHIEF HAYNER

(to reporter)
I can assure you that we're doing
everything we can.

Deputy Joe STEPS in front of the reporter, redirecting.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Mark and his friends are CLOSE TOGETHER, moving carefully.

TOM

You guys hear that?

HANK

What?

They STOP. Nothing.

MARK

Come on. Nothing.

JACK

Hey, Dad. What if that thing, you
know, already got Molly . . .

This SETS OFF Mark.

MARK

Don't even talk like that! We're getting her back. I don't care what's out here; I'll tear it apart!

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Junior and his posse are moving in a TIGHT GROUP.

RJ

Man, where are we going?

BOBO

Yeah, I'm getting kind of tired.

JUNIOR

Shh! Did anyone hear that?!

They stop to listen . . . sure enough --

A BRANCH SNAPS. Farther ahead.

JUNIOR'S P.O.V - Nothing but the trees. It is almost DUSK.

THE POSSE - scared and tense.

ANOTHER NOISE - the sound of movement, coming from --

OVER THE RIDGE - HIDDEN behind a HILL.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Mark's posse is also in a TIGHT GROUP; guns ready.

They move slowly. Someone steps on a BRANCH; CRACKING IT.

TOM

(hushed)

Shit.

MARK
(whispering)
Shh! Listen.

A NOISE - CRUNCHING.

Movement? An animal? It is coming from
THE OTHER SIDE of a RIDGE.

HANK
(mouthing)
Guns.

He readies his RIFLE.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Junior's posse is advancing slowly towards the hill.
Cautiously, they climb towards the PEAK. No noise.
TENSE MOMENT.

They are almost to the top -- when
ANOTHER BRANCH CRACKS - MUFFLED NOISE.
They freeze.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Mark's posse is WAITING, GUNS RAISED.
No movement; no noises.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Junior finally gets brave, moves to the peak, and --
LOOKS OVER TO SEE . . . MARK'S POSSE!

JUNIOR
Ahh! Don't Shoot!

Junior throws his hands up; looks relieved.

MARK'S POSSE -

Relieved! Woah. Everyone relaxes. LAUGHS a little.

JUNIOR'S POSSE -

steps over the hill. Laughs and relief. Both groups RELAX.

DERRICK -

steps forward and laughs.

DERRICK
Holy shit! I thought you were . . .

SUDDENLY -

He is SNATCHED AWAY by a large FLYING SHAPE.

THE SHRIKE - a big nasty MESS of FEATHERS and talons, too dark and quick to be seen well. It DOUBLES BACK --

DROPS DERRICK'S LIMP BODY -

SWOOPS again for a tribal deputy, when --

EVERYONE STARTS SHOOTING --

Mark and his men are firing SHOTGUNS, RIFLES, and PISTOLS -

TRIBAL DEPUTIES - unload their pistols - BANG, BANG, BANG!

DONNY -

ducks the Shrike and swipes with his MACHETE - missing.

Someone SHOOTs Donny's SHOULDER with BIRDSHOT from a shotgun. He screams, but keeps fighting.

The Shrike is like a bat caught in a house - swooping wildly in and out of the men --

CLAWING A DEPUTY TO PIECES -

BULLETS hit the Shrike, but it QUICKLY DISAPPEARS in SMOKE -
REAPPEARS in front of KURTY -

KURTY
(aiming shotgun)
Fuck!

And as Kurty FIRES --

The Shrike DISAPPEARS AGAIN - LEAVING --

TOM -

who gets BLASTED in the chest by KURTY'S SHOTGUN.

JACK -

he's unarmed, trying not to get hit. He RUNS from the fight.

OTHERS - fleeing as well; A DEPUTY gets away. SUN SETTING.

RJ - trying to run, when --

The Shrike GRABS him; SLICES his belly; disappears. Pistol
shots hit RJ accidentally.

MARK and HANK -

firing RIFLES from behind a tree, but hitting the Shrike is
nearly impossible.

HANK
Fuck you!

And he FIRES another SHOT, hitting a deputy.

BOBO - he's terrified. Turns tail and RUNS, but --

SWOOPED UP by the Shrike, DROPPED 20 FEET onto a ROCK.

JUNIOR
Run! Run!

And more do -- Kurty takes off; Junior runs; Mark and Hank.

DONNY - he's hurt but alive; SWIPES at the Shrike.

LESS GUNSHOTS as more people have RUN AWAY.

DEPUTY BILL - aims his pistol.

FIRES and HITS the Shrike - it TURNS on HIM.

DEPUTY BILL
Shit, shit, shit.

His RADIO is BUZZING -

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SEARCH BASE - CONTINUOUS

CHIEF HAYNER -

he's on the radio, going CRAZY, LISTENING to the fight through a walkie talkie.

CITY DEPUTIES - around Chief Hayner.

CHIEF HAYNER
Bill! Bill! What the hell's going on in there?!

OVER THE RADIO -

a FEW SHOTS, a SCREAM, STATIC . . .

CHIEF HAYNER
Bill!
(to Deputy Joe)
Joe, I want backup! Call the state, the feds, S.W.A.T team, I want everybody down here. We need copters and floodlights, thermals, assault rifles, body armor!

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

It is ALMOST DARK.

MARK -

he's running, scared for his life; gets caught up in trees.

MARK

Ahh!

He GRABS his EYE.

JUNIOR (O.S.)

Hey!

Mark looks to see --

JUNIOR HIDING UNDER A FALLEN TREE.

JUNIOR

Hey, get under here.

Mark takes his advice.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

JER -

running deep in the woods. He looks back, keeps running.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

JACK -

running as well. He must be getting close to the SEARCH BASE because we can see --

FLASHING POLICE LIGHTS - from the edge of the woods.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SEARCH BASE - CONTINUOUS

ILLUMINATED BY POLICE LIGHTS -

Chief Geshick and Chief Hayner, talking heatedly:

CHIEF GESHICK

It's not safe!

CHIEF HAYNER

We need to get those guys out of there!

CHIEF GESHICK

And send more of 'em into dark?!

IN THE DISTANCE - A HELICOPTER WITH SPOTLIGHTS
working its way over the forest.

CHIEF HAYNER

Listen, Mike . . .

DEPUTY JOE (O.S.)

Chief!

Both police chiefs look over to see --

DEPUTY JOE with JACK - ragged and in shock.

DEPUTY JOE

Got a kid here who says he saw what happened.

Jack is really shook up. Can barely speak . . .

CHIEF HAYNER

Well?! What the hell's going on in there?

JACK

(stuttering)

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

CHIEF HAYNER

Spit it out.

JACK

It's like a bird or something, but huge . . .

(tearing up)
. . . ripping people apart.

CHIEF GESHICK
What?!

CHIEF HAYNER
We've got to get in there now!

JACK
No! You can't send anyone else in
there! It'll murder you.
(breaking down again)
My dad . . . my sister . . .

CHIEF GESHICK
Wait til morning, Al. We'll have
more resources and we'll be able to
see the thing . . .

CHIEF HAYNER
(to the woods)
We're gunna get this motherfucker.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lily and Kim watch the NEWS on T.V. Coverage of the search.

REPORTER
(through television)
. . . three children missing and
the search continues into the
night. Sources say that a dangerous
animal may be in the area . . .

Nana is ASLEEP in a chair.

KIM
Ahh! I can't take this! I just wish
he'd come home with the boys!

Lily is quiet.

KIM (CONT'D)
I should call again. It's been dark

for hours. Where is Junior?

She is SO STRESSED.

LILY

I bet he's got the boys right now,
auntie . . .

NANA -

something's wrong. She's SHAKING . . . SEIZURE.

KIM

Oh, Nana!

She rushes over, GRABS NANA'S HAND.

KIM (CONT'D)

Lily! Get the neighbor! She's an
EMT! I'm calling 911.

Kim rushes to get a phone; Lily is about to leave when --

NANA

(seizing)

The . . . Shrike is coming.

LILY -

she's freaked out, but LEAVES for help.

CUT TO:

EXT. NANA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

The backyard of Nana's house is very dark. The only
illumination comes from a weak light on the garage.

Lily rushes outside through a back door.

As she steps into the dark yard, she instinctively stops and
LISTENS, as many of us would. Nothing.

She takes a step; hears a NOISE by the garage trash cans!

She JUMPS, but the noise is MUKWA, her big shaggy house cat.

LILY
(relieved)
Mukwa! Bad kitty.

She looks back -

THE SHRIKE. It is standing not ten feet away from her, motionless in the yard. The monster is tall and dark.

Covered in dirty filth, the Shrike looks like a greasy feather duster with sick, thin claws. There is a BROKEN BRANCH sticking through its middle.

It COCKS its head, looking at her as an owl would.

The monster's eyes are small black beads, oil drops. Its face, disfigured and crooked, is locked in pain. Protruding from its mouth is a LONG HOOKED BEAK, stained with blood.

It CLICKS.

LILY -

is terrified, her muscles locked up. She cannot move. She cannot scream. Her hands start to SHAKE.

The Shrike does not move either. It cocks its head again, lets out an inquisitive CHIRP.

Lily starts to break down. She is CRYING but can't run.

The Shrike steps towards her slowly. It moves disjointedly, like a puppet suspended on invisible strings.

LILY
(blabbering)
No, no, no, no, no.

The Shrike does not pause. Its eyes are emotionless.

FROM THE GARBAGE CAN -

Mukwa HISSES loudly and CHARGES the Shrike from behind.

Lily's big house cat RUNS straight UP the monster's BACK, ripping at its head.

The Shrike WAILS and DISAPPEARS into SMOKE.

Mukwa is suspended mid-air. The cat falls to the ground in surprise and dashes off into the dark.

Lily starts to SOB uncontrollably.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lily walks back into Nana's house, into the living room.

She's in shock. Kim is next to Nana, who isn't moving.

LILY

Auntie . . .

But Kim is focused on Nana.

KIM

She's breathing OK, Lily. I think she's getting better.

LILY

Auntie . . .

Kim finally notices Lily.

KIM

What's wrong?

Lily starts to CRY. Kim rushes to COMFORT her.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

TWO PARAMEDICS -

are in Nana's house. A MALE PARAMEDIC is examining her, and a FEMALE PARAMEDIC is talking to Kim and Lily.

FEMALE PARAMEDIC

(to Kim)

I think your mother is going to be OK. We're taking her into the

hospital overnight for monitoring,
just to make sure she's stable and
there isn't any signs of stroke.

(to Lily)

As far as what you saw in the yard,
. . . it isn't uncommon to have
hallucinations during moments of
great stress. I recommend that you
get a good night's rest.

The male paramedic stands up.

MALE PARAMEDIC

Jen, you ready to move her?

And they transfer Nana to a STRETCHER. Move her out.

Kim holds Lily.

KIM

I'm following Nana down to the
hospital. Are you ok staying here
in case Junior and the boys come
back?

LILY

. . . yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. LILY'S DREAM - WOODS - DAY (LONG AGO)

Another dream of Lily's . . . we are in the woods. Sunny.

A GROUP OF NATIVE AMERICANS -

huddled around the base of a LARGE OAK. At their feet -

A SMALL FRESH GRAVE -

beside it are flowers and a pair of BABY'S MOCCASINS.

ALPHA MAN - somber and stern.

ALPHA WOMAN - no longer pregnant.

She turns her pretty face, showing - TERRIBLE BURNS/SCARS.

Someone is SINGING LIGHTLY, and --

ALPHA WOMAN - can't stand the moment. She TAKES OFF crying.

ALPHA MAN - follows her closely until they are ALONE.

ALPHA MAN

(Anishinabe; subtitled)

Alawa! Alawa!

She STOPS and TURNS on him, FURIOUS.

ALPHA WOMAN

(Anishinabe; subtitled)

I curse you! I curse you forever!
May the mother spit you out when
you die!

ALPHA MAN -

is crushed by this. Alpha Woman just WALKS AWAY. He is
FRANTIC, distraught.

Looking around, he sees --

AN OLD WICKED OAK TREE - SHARP BRANCH STICKING OUT.

In a gruesome act, Alpha Man walks to the branch, places it
against his STOMACH - hesitates, then RAMS it into his GUTS.

The pain is terrible, but Alpha Man does not scream.

BLOOD -

drips down his stomach, FALLS to the ground.

EACH DROP -

hisses and SMOKES as it HITS.

ZOOM INTO A SMOKING BLOOD DROP -

and everything is dark. Inky blackness. Far below, a
TERRIBLE OAK TREE with a LARGE NEST on top.

SOMETHING INSIDE THE NEST - LITTLE CHIRPS

Chicks?

NO. It is JIMMER, MITCHELL, and MOLLY.

They are chirping, "HELP, HELP, HELP."

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - LILY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Lily WAKES ABRUPTLY.

THROUGH HER DREAM CATCHER -

we see her in bed below. DAWN LIGHT on the drapes.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Lily is dressed, moving with purpose.

She quickly scrawls a note on the kitchen table -

NOTE - "Joining the search. Be home before dark. -Lily"

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SEARCH BASE - MORNING

The search base is a CIRCUS of ACTIVITY.

DOGS, EXTRA OFFICERS, STATE POLICE, HELICOPTERS.

Chief Hayner and Chief Geshick are busy coordinating the search. It looks as if neither has slept.

CHIEF HAYNER

(to Chief Geshick)

We've got the dogs out there.
Should make contact with the search parties soon.

CHIEF GESHICK

Let's hope so.

IN THE BACKGROUND - LILY

She is walking alone into the woods . . .

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - MORNING

MARK AND JUNIOR -

walking slowly together in the forest. Mark has a rifle.

His RIGHT EYE is SWOLLEN SHUT.

MARK

Both those boys yours?

JUNIOR

Nah . . . Well, sort of I guess.
Mitchell's my boy. Jimmer my
nephew.

MARK

That thing last night . . .

The men walk with NEW ALERTNESS.

JUNIOR

I don't even want to think about it
. . . We need help.

MARK

. . . We'll get 'em back.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - MORNING

KURTY -

walking alone. He's dirty, scratched, and UNARMED.

Looking lost, he stumbles on . . .

KURTY

Hey!

He see's something --

HANK -

sitting on a rock; looking defensive, but UNARMED.

HANK

You . . .

KURTY

Get over it, cowboy. You see
anybody else out here?

Hank spits.

HANK

Nobody.

KURTY

We should travel together. Two is
safer than one.

HANK

Is it now?

Hank stands up. The two men eye each other. Hank smiles.

HANK

Alright.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SEARCH BASE - CONTINUOUS

Chief Hayner and Chief Geshick are surrounded by STATE
TROOPERS and OTHER INVESTIGATORS.

CHIEF HAYNER

The dogs are on to something. I've
got radio contact.

(through radio)

K-9, do you read?

K-9 UNIT (O.S.)

(through Hayner's radio)

Hey chief. We're following a scent
. . . dogs are moving quick . . .

Hey now! What's that . . . static

CHIEF HAYNER
(through radio)
K-9! What are you seeing? Over.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

K-9 UNIT - THREE OFFICERS with DOGS -

moving towards the scene of the FIGHT the NIGHT BEFORE.
They stumble into the clearing . . .

K-9 UNIT
(through radio)
Chief . . .

P.O.V. - K-9 UNIT -

the scene is a massacre. BLOOD, BULLET CASINGS, and BODIES.

A TRIBAL DEPUTY - STUCK IN A TREE.

RJ - DEAD ON THE GROUND, GUTS SPILLED. RAVENS EATING HIM.

TOM - CHEST BLOWN APART BY SHOTGUN.

BOBO - SPLATTERED ON A ROCK.

DONNY - STILL HOLDING MACHETE, IMPALED ON STICK.

ANOTHER MAN - DERRICK? - SHREDDED AND UNIDENTIFIABLE.

CHIEF HAYNER (O.S.)
(through K-9 radio)
K-9, copy . . . static

K-9 UNIT
(through radio)
Chief, it looks like . . .
something out of a horror movie.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP WOODS - MORNING

LILY -

moving alone through the woods. She's on a MISSION.

The trees are getting BIGGER here; the forest is older.

She starts to SING in Aanishinabe.

INTERRUPTED BY -

LITTLE VOICE

Psst! Lily!

She looks to see --

MITCHELL - HIDING IN A TREE.

LILY

Mitchell!

MITCHELL

Shh!

He looks like a SCARED KITTEN in the tree.

MITCHELL

It might be close . . .

She RUSHES OVER - STANDS AT THE BASE

IN THE TREE - MITCHELL.

Traumatized, but alive. Face is dirty, but he's UNHARMED.

He DROPS DOWN into Lily's arms.

MITCHELL

Ouch! Think I broke my leg.

She HOLDS him.

LILY

Where are the others?

MITCHELL

Still in the nest . . . I jumped

out in the middle of the night.

LILY
Take me to them.

Mitchell QUIVERS. He's reluctant to return . . .

LILY (CONT'D)
I'll carry you.

MITCHELL
. . . I can walk. Just give me a
walking stick.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - DAY

KURTY and HANK -

walking together, SILENTLY.

HANK
Seems to me that we're headed in
the wrong direction . . .

They STOP.

KURTY
No . . . we need to go South. Just
look at the sun.

FROM KURTY'S P.O.V. - The SUN is bright above the trees.

KURTY (O.S.)
(tracing an arc)
See it rises from the east; moves
west. We want it on our . . . AHH!

HANK -

he's STABBING KURTY in the BACK with a BUCK KNIFE.

HANK
(into Kurty's ear)
That's right . . . feel it.

KURTY - paralyzed by the blade.

HANK
You shot Tom on purpose, you
motherfucker!

Hank TWISTS the blade.

KURTY
(gasping)
ah, ahhh . . .

HANK
Now you're headed where you belong.

Hank GOUGES the blade DEEPER . . . while KURTY slowly DIES.

Satisfied, Hank PULLS the blade and Kurty slumps.

HANK
See you in hell.

And he turns to see -

THE SHRIKE.

Tall and alarming, the Shrike is six feet away, WATCHING.

HANK
(hands up)
Now, listen here . . .

WHEN SUDDENLY -

The Shrike's TONGUE SHOOTS OUT - STABBING Hank in the EYE -

HANK
Ahhh!

The tongue RETRACTS - taking Hank's eye with it.

The Shrike SWALLOWS. CHIRPS.

Hank is FUCKED.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE WOODS - LATER

JUNIOR AND MARK -

taking their time through rough terrain. Mark climbs a SMALL LEDGE . . . offers his HAND to Junior, who takes his help.

MARK

We need water . . .

But Junior SPOTS SOMETHING -

JUNIOR

Shhh.

(mouthing)

Look.

And he POINTS -

IN THE DISTANCE - SITTING IN A TREE -

Mark looks, can't see well. He lifts his rifle; tries to use the SCOPE with his GOOD EYE. Struggling, so he --

HANDS the RIFLE to JUNIOR -

Mark motions for Junior to use it.

Junior lifts the rifle . . . AIMS -

P.O.V. - THROUGH THE SCOPE - THE SHRIKE.

SITTING ATOP A BROKEN TREE -

PECKING AT HANK'S BLOODIED BODY.

JUNIOR -

switches the SAFETY off the rifle. Takes a DEEP BREATH.

P.O.V. - THROUGH THE SCOPE - THE SHRIKE

is oblivious, busy eating Hank's corpse. Junior --

LINES UP THE CROSSHAIRS, when --

The Shrike turns, LOOKS at JUNIOR, and --

BAM! Junior FIRES the RIFLE, HITTING the MONSTER -
Knocking it off of the tree, and it's slow to get up . . .
MARK AND JUNIOR -

MARK
Did you get it?!

JUNIOR
I don't know, I think so!

Junior RAISES the GUN again.

THROUGH THE SCOPE - THE SHRIKE

is getting up. It SCREECHES, and FLIES OFF, AWAY from us.

MARK AND JUNIOR -

JUNIOR
I think it's running away!

MARK
Come on! Let's finish it off!

And they GIVE CHASE.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP WOODS - SHRIKE'S NEST - AFTERNOON

LILY and MITCHELL -

moving slowly. Mitchell's HOBBLING ALONG, supported by Lily.

MITCHELL
Just a little farther . . .

And then, through a gap in the trees, they see --

THE SHRIKE'S NEST -

Large and made of old branches, it's ON TOP of an HUGE
TERRIBLE OAK, the same one from Lily's dream . . .

SPECKLED IN THE TREE - ANIMAL CARCASSES.

BONES ON THE GROUND -

MITCHELL

Ahggg. I'm not going any closer.

LILY -

AFRAID, but DETERMINED. A deep breath. She moves FORWARD.

No sign of the Shrike . . .

Cautiously, she steps over BONES and DEBRIS . . .

MOLLY (O.S.)

Jimmer, look.

And Lily LOOKS UP to see --

JIMMER AND MOLLY -

dirty and exhausted, they sit in the nest like LITTLE BIRDS.

LILY

Jimmer!

JIMMER

Lily! Watch out, it's probably
coming back soon.

MOLLY

Help us!

And Lily SCANS the tree, bottom to top. She could try
climbing it . . . but --

A LONG WAIL! Then, Molly SCREAMS.

JIMMER

Hide!

But it is too late . . .

THE SHRIKE -

lands in the oak tree, body language of an angry wasp.

LILY -

terrified, but hiding it. This is her second encounter, so she's more prepared . . .

THE SHRIKE -

Wounded? Hard to tell. It looks even uglier in the daylight. Feathers are ruffled and greasy. It DROPS to the GROUND.

Stares at Lily with . . . familiarity? Yes, it recognizes.

FROM AFAR - MARK and JUNIOR -

almost to the nest. Junior stops and points. Looks --

P.O.V. - THROUGH THE RIFLE SCOPE - LILY

staring down the Shrike. They are close to each other. Junior maybe has a shot, but he could hit Lily.

MARK and JUNIOR -

JUNIOR

That's my niece! Lily.

And they start to move again.

LILY -

still holding her ground. The Shrike is in front of her; the NEST behind it.

MITCHELL -

hiding behind a tree. He's at Lily's back. Terrified.

THE SHRIKE -

moving very slowly towards Lily. It reaches out a winged arm, like a person cautiously trying to pet a strange dog.

No readable emotion in its eyes . . .

LILY

Stop.

But it doesn't. Advances closer. Now only a FEW FEET away.

JIMMER and MOLLY -

start SCREAMING; throwing STICKS at the Shrike!

MOLLY

Die! Die!

JIMMER

Run Lily!

Sticks and debris RAIN DOWN from the nest, hitting the monster. It turns and HISSES back, when --

MITCHELL -

jumps out from behind his tree, wielding his WALKING STICK.

MITCHELL

Charrge!

And although he's hobbled, he gets BETWEEN Lily and the Shrike, SMACKS it in the FACE with his walking stick --

INSTANTLY --

The Shrike SLAPS him away with the back of its WING --

SENDING MITCHELL FLYING -

hard into a rock. He hits his head very hard. Out cold . . . or worse . . . BLOOD drips from his ear.

JIMMER (O.S.)

Mitchell!

and MORE STICKS thrown from the nest.

The Shrike WAILS, furious. It SHOOTs it's BARBED TONGUE up at the nest, striking the side of it.

JIMMER and MOLLY -

take cover to avoid getting stabbed.

LILY -

LILY
Hey! Stop it!

And the Shrike is back moving disjointedly towards her.
She gets ready to make a stand . . .

MARK and JUNIOR -

getting closer, and Junior raises the rifle --

P.O.V. - THROUGH THE RIFLE SCOPE - THE SHRIKE

is almost on top of Lily. It GRABS her. She screams.

BEHIND THEM - MITCHELL - still down . . .

Junior has NO SHOT.

JUNIOR (O.S.)
Come on!

THE SHRIKE -

has Lily GRIPPED TIGHTLY, almost intimately. She struggles
in vain. The Shrike pulls her close, LOOKS at her STOMACH.

It CHIRPS. She pulls away, but it pulls her closer --

pushing the BROKEN BRANCH in it's stomach into HER STOMACH.

She SCREAMS. Pulls back, tries to avoid IMPALEMENT.

JIMMER & MOLLY
Nooooo! Lily!

But the monster has her. She is fighting with all of her
strength; protecting her BELLY.

It pulls her harder; putting more pressure on the stick.

LILY -

starts to bleed a little through her shirt. The stick is
BREAKING her SKIN.

HER EYES - WIDE and TERRIFIED.

THE SHRIKE'S EYES - Oily black beads . . .

She SCREAMS. The Shrike WAILS.

LILY

Stop . . .

MARK and JUNIOR -

watching in horror. Junior has the RIFLE RAISED.

MARK

Fuck! Do something!

JUNIOR

I don't have a shot!

P.O.V. - THROUGH THE RIFLE SCOPE - THE SHRIKE and LILY -

locked in a deathly embrace. There is no way Junior could shoot without possibly hitting Lily, but SHE'S ABOUT TO DIE.

He tries to LINE UP the CROSSHAIRS; he's SHAKING . . .

MARK (O.S.)

Shoot!

BANG! The Shrike is HIT! . . . BANG! BANG! BANG!

But Junior is NOT SHOOTING.

JUNIOR (O.S.)

Huh?

JER -

he's holding a HAND GUN, shooting the Shrike from fifteen feet away. He looks crazy.

JER

Die! Die, you fucker!

CLICK, CLICK, CLICK . . . NO MORE AMMO.

THE SHRIKE -

now's it really mad. It drops Lily, RUSHES Jer.

He THROWS the PISTOL at it; gets ready for contact, and --

The Shrike TACKLES him, rolls him over, and STARTS PECKING.

LILY -

She's horrified! Can't save Jer, but --

THE STICK THROUGH THE SHRIKE'S GUTS -

sticking out like a broken bone.

LILY -

rushes up to it from behind, GRABS the STICK and YANKS!

The Shrike WAILS, tries to turn, but --

Lily has a GOOD GRIP, won't let go.

THE SHRIKE -

in obvious pain. It is THRASHING, can't escape, and --

LILY -

yanks harder, PULLING the STICK a FEW INCHES.

THE SHRIKE -

WAILS louder than ever, freaking out, and --

LILY -

pulling, working the stick out like a bad sliver, until --

IT RIPS FREE --

leaving a NASTY HOLE. The Shrike SCREAMS, holds its guts,
which are --

SPILLING OUT, SMOKING and DIRTY --

all over Lily's feet. She hold the bloody stick, amazed.

BLOOD, GUTS, and MUD - pouring out of the Shrike.

It is WAILING, but SHRIVELING; a BOIL that's been LANCED.

All of the NEGATIVE ENERGY and EMOTIONS are POURING out of the Shrike. A total catharsis of hatred, pain, and guilt.

LILY -

falls over, still in shock.

JIMMER and MOLLY -

watch from the nest, fascinated.

THE SHRIKE -

nothing more than a PILE of SMOKING MUD, GUTS, and FEATHERS.

. . . It is finally over . . .

JER -

dead. Pecked hard and bloody.

MITCHELL -

dead. Blood dripping from his ear.

JUNIOR and MARK -

making their way to the scene.

JUNIOR

Lily! Mitchell!

Rushing over, Junior kneels quickly by Lily. Mark looks up.

MARK

Baby!

MOLLY

Daddy!

JUNIOR and LILY -

JUNIOR
You ok?!

LILY
(grabs stomach)
Yeah.

JUNIOR
Good.

And he leaves her; rushes to Mitchell's body.

JUNIOR
(grabbing his boy)
Mitchell!

But the little guy is limp . . .

LILY -

hobbles over, touches Junior's back.

JUNIOR -

looks at her. He's CRYING hard.

JUNIOR
My boy!

LILY -

crying too. More than ever.

MITCHELL -

never looked so peaceful . . . his mischievous smirk is gone, now serene. He looks like he could be sleeping . . .

Lily sobs, her tears falling on his face . . .

when -- he cracks an eye open!

MITCHELL
(hurt)
Dad? . . .

JUNIOR and LILY -

Amazed and overjoyed! Still crying!

JUNIOR
Mitchell! Daddy's here!

They EMBRACE.

MARK -

he's halfway up the tree; helping Molly and Jimmer down.

MOLLY and JIMMER -

hit the ground. Jimmer rushes to Lily. BIG HUG.

MOLLY and MARK -

holding each other like they never have before.

MARK
It's gunna be ok . . .

MARK, JUNIOR, LILY -

exchange the look of a lifetime.

JUNIOR
Let's get out of here!

LILY
(laughing through tears)
Yeah!

Junior hoists Mitchell, Lily grabs Jimmer, Mark takes Molly.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SEARCH BASE - DUSK

CHIEF GESHICK and CHIEF HAYNER -

surrounded by Sarah, Jack and Lucy, Kim and a weak-looking Nana. A few deputies on hand as well.

SARAH

What do you mean they're still out there?! It's been two days!

CHIEF HAYNER

We're doing everything we can to get them out of there!

JACK

That, that thing is in there! We need the military!

CHIEF GESHICK

Now, please!

Everyone CALMS just a little . . .

CHIEF GESHICK

Me and Al are doing everything that we can right now . . . we've got our best men in there . . . dogs, helicopters . . . my own son is in those woods. If you don't think that we're doing everything we can.

WHEN - SHOUTS. CHEERING.

IN THE BACKGROUND - JUNIOR, MARK, LILY, and the KIDS walking out of the woods . . . people rush to assist.

DEPUTY JOE

(from afar)

We got 'em! All the kids!

He lets out a LAUGH of amazement.

JUNIOR, MARK, LILY, and the KIDS -

now with blankets around them, being assisted towards their families . . . and --

THEY FINALLY RECONNECT.

SARAH, MARK, and MOLLY - embracing, crying.

JACK and LUCY - kissing and hugging Molly.

KIM - sees Junior, SMILES through TEARS. She GRABS him and Mitchell. All tears.

LILY -

She's got Jimmer, holding on tight, when --

NANA - comes up. Gives him a HUGE GRANDMA KISS. Crying.

LILY - just RELIEVED to be back, alive, when --

SHE HEARS A NOISE!

IN A TREE - AN OWL! HOOT, HOOOT!

THE OWL'S EYES - FIERCE

but not the Shrike . . .

CUT TO:

CREDITS.