Beasts of the Earth

by Bo Ransdell

Bo Ransdell 311 Cedar Pointe Parkway Antioch, TN 37013 (615) 400-0462

FADE IN:

EXT. THICKET OF TREES - MORNING

A pigeon rests on a branch, cooing.

Another bird, a HAWK, descends on it, creating a brief flap as its talons trap and twist the bird beneath it, the larger hawk coming to rest with the dead pigeon's neck in its sharp beak.

A HORN blares.

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

The thicket of trees is nestled along the perimeter of a broad city park.

The sun is just now burning the dew off the grass. The broad green strips of the park, bordered by a small pond, are dotted with picnic tables and charcoal grills.

A MOTHER, early 30s, and CHILD, 10, bubbling with energy, take a seat on one of the benches beside the winding sidewalk that circles the park.

In the distance, the tall cityscape glimmers with the rising sun, reflecting the light onto the busy sidewalks below.

PIGEONS bob along the wide green, plucking at the ground. The Child's eyes never leave them.

Mother pulls from an eco-friendly cloth grocery bag half a loaf of bread that has begun to mold, the Child taking it eagerly and already beginning to ball up several slices to toss to the birds.

MOTHER Stay away from the edge of the pond, okay?

She tightens his coat against the cool-not-cold air and brushes his hair back.

CHILD

I will.

Both are distracted by a V of birds flapping across the sky.

MOTHER See that? They're flying north again for the spring. CHILD Why do they do that?

MOTHER Just instinct. Or nature. They go where nature tells them to. Now, go have fun. And stay where I can see you.

CHILD (exasperated) Can I go, now?

MOTHER Say, 'I will stay where you can say me.'

CHILD I will stay where you can see me.

A MESSENGER whooshes by on his ten-speed behind them. More patrons of the park are gathering, some cutting through the park to reach work, others, especially the older ones, strolling to kill another day.

MOTHER Good, then. Now fly away.

The Child makes wings with his arms, zooming back and forth as he runs to the flock of pigeons strutting on the ground. He's done this before, chased the birds up into the air, watching the flock fold on itself in midair before lighting again on the ground.

Something's different today. The pigeons are jittery, hopping off the ground in brief flight before returning again.

The Child looks back to his Mother, who watches with a smile. He stomps on the ground, moving towards the middle of the flock, who dodge his footsteps but refuse to fly. He looks at his Mother and shrugs. Over her shoulder, the tress are slowly filling with more of the large predatory hawks, scores of them.

Mother's smile begins to fade a bit. Doesn't seem normal for birds to ignore the child moving amongst them. Doesn't seem right. She stands and calls to him across the green grass.

> MOTHER (cont'd) Why don't you come back, okay? Maybe they're sick.

The child begins to tromp back to the bench, tossing a few balls of dough ahead of him.

Then, one of the pigeons takes wing, followed by another and another until the whole flock is in the air, low to the ground but flapping madly, swirling around each other like a tornado of feathers.

> MOTHER (cont'd) (louder) Come back!

The Child is fascinated as the birds whirl around him, keeping him at the eye of this storm of beaks and flapping wings.

The hawks see the cloud of pigeons lift int the air and take flight. Soon they are in the mix, too, snagging pigeons out of midair and crippling them, feeding off them. Their large black bodies float and dive amidst the pigeons, until the hawks' attention turn elsewhere.

The kid gets it first.

The hawks close the eye of the feathery tornado and attack the intruder in their midst with abandon. Claws tear, beaks, insistent, pull away at the flesh. One manages to burrow through one cheek.

The Mother looks on in horror, rushing towards her son, who has collapsed to the ground. The hawks are by no means done.

They fly towards her, obscuring her with their torrent of feather and flesh.

The flock divides and redivides like a virus, some attacking the park's denizens, others hurtling themselves against the mirrored windows reflecting the sun. The sky is filled with flapping kamikazes, and it's not just hawks, it's everything with wings, all the birds on wires, on building ledges, on the street, have taken wing and are turning the city streets into a bloodbath. Some of the folks make it indoors, leaving behind those that have fallen.

INT. OFFICE BULDING - CONTINUOUS

A BUSINESSMAN, 50-ish, round and balding, stares out from behind one of the mirrored windows, looking down at the park, seeing it slowly become a mass of small, dark shapes against the green grass and bodies lying prone below.

BUSINESSMAN What the hell?

He moves to his phone, calling someone at home, or maybe someone who can explain why the birds of the city have simultaneously lost their minds.

The phone to his ear, he sees one of the hawks beeline for his window, flapping madly, no attempts to slow or veer away as it smashes into the glass, sending a spiderweb of cracks through the glass.

BUSINESSMAN (cont'd)

Hello?

The next bird finishes the job, the glass flying inward, along with several beaked compadres behind it. The glass continues to fly-

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - DAY

-sending a lamp onto the floor, the ceramic base shattering, as the baseball plunk-plunks to a stop on the rug.

ANDREW CLAY, better known as ANDY to the guys at the corner pub, lowers his copy of the trashy lawyer-on-the-lam novel he was reading to appraise the damage. Andy is non-plussed, as he is by most things. Too much drinking, too much smoking (legal and otherwise) leaves him more jaded than his 38 years should allow. His sandy-blonde hair is just beginning to recede, his body surprisingly lean.

ANDY

Damn.

PAULA (O.S.) What was that?

PAULA CLAY turns the corner. She is mid 30s, pretty in a domestic sort of way, hair getting streaks of gray already, thanks to the two kids she bore. She dries her hands with a dish towel as she enters.

Andy rolls off the bed and plucks the baseball from the floor.

ANDY A home run. PAULA An entire wilderness out there, and they still manage to break a window.

ANDY Talented boys.

PAULA You need anything before I string them up?

ANDY

Bloody Mary?

PAULA Very funny. Do you mind getting up that glass?

ANDY

I got it.

PAULA

Thanks. Boys!

Paula exits towards the cabin's front door.

Andy tosses the baseball into the air and catches it with a quick snap. Repeats. Tries again, and simply bats the ball back to the ground.

ANDY Two outta three ain't bad.

He raises a hand to his face, watching the subtle tremors do their work.

ANDY (cont'd) Easy does it, killer.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Paula steps onto the broad front porch, the porch swing to her right swayed by the breeze. Her sons, JJ, 14, and KEITH, 9, are marching towards her, their hangdog faces already professing their guilt.

She looks down at them from on high, the floor of the cabin raised three feet off the ground by stilts, allowing for the frequent and sudden rain water to flow harmlessly beneath. PAULA What did I tell you two?

JJ To play away from the cabin.

PAULA And what did you not do?

KEITH Play away from the cabin.

PAULA So, what do you have to say for yourselves?

JJ We're sorry, Mom.

PAULA You could have hurt your Uncle Andy.

KEITH We said we were sorry.

PAULA You will be once your Dad gets back.

JJ Do you have to tell him?

PAULA

JJ, there is a big hole where a window used to be. I don't think we're going to have too long to wait before he asks why. Now go inside and help Uncle Andy clean up the glass.

KEITH

Yes, Ma'am.

They enter the cabin like their tennis shoes have lead soles. JJ in front, lean and strong, clearly a successful athlete, Keith behind, smaller, frailer, wearing glasses that are forever being repaired. His clumsiness is charming to family, disappointing to others in the wake of JJ's successes.

Paula claps them both on their heads, mussing their hair.

PAULA

You two...

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Andy has managed to get up most of the large pieces without incident, tossing them in a metal waste can. He looks up as the boys enter.

ANDY (to Keith) Pedro. (to JJ) Frankenstein. What's up?

JJ Mom said we had to help you clean up.

ANDY I've just about got it, but you can keep me company for a sec, if you want.

KEITH

Sure.

He hops onto the bed and thumbs through the novel Andy is reading. JJ stands in the doorway, looking down at his uncle.

ANDY Who hit that ball, anyway?

JJ

I did.

ANDY Course you did. How's the team?

JJ We went to state last year. Hopefully, we'll be back this year.

ANDY I'm sure. Hell of an arm you got, kid.

KEITH That's a bad word. ANDY

Which one?

KEITH The H-word.

ANDY What? Where did you get that?

KEITH Dad said that curse words are the sign of a lazy mind.

ANDY He may be onto something there. They are fun, though.

Keith grins. JJ's eyes drift to the small diamonds of glass on the rug.

JJ You should probably take it out and beat it.

ANDY You are almost certainly correct, JJ, but that would require me moving the bed and two end tables. I prefer to wear socks, at the moment.

Keith flips through the book randomly.

KEITH

The people in here use a lot of swears.

ANDY

And that, Keith, is why I like that book so much. Now, why don't you two scram. I need to toss out that glass and take a piss.

JJ Mom's about to take a shower.

ANDY

I didn't say I needed the bathroom, I said I need to take a piss. That's the beauty of roughing it, guys, the whole outdoors is one great big toilet. JJ You're gross.

Keith giggles.

ANDY

Go.

He shoos the two boys out, following behind with the trash can.

EXT. WOODS AROUND CABIN - LATER

Andy closes his eyes, letting the stream flow from him as he relieves himself in a cluster of bushes. The long sigh that slips from him is almost orgasmic.

JACK Enjoying yourself?

Andy snaps his neck up to see his brother approaching. JACK CLAY looks more of the rugged outdoorsman than his brother ever will. He is tall and thick, muscular. His voice is deeper, more commanding. His arms are filled with loose branches and kindling.

> ANDY Trying. I don't usually work with an audience. Just a heads-up. JJ knocked a baseball through a window.

JACK Shit. There goes the deposit.

ANDY It happens. I remember when you set the kitchen curtains on fire.

JACK I was 12.

ANDY Still funny.

Andy zips up.

ANDY (cont'd) You want a hand with all that?

JACK I got it. You doing okay today? ANDY

So far, so good. I mean besides being shelled by baseballs.

JACK I'm really glad you came up.

ANDY Better than the alternative.

JACK Would that have really been so bad?

Andy follows behind his younger brother as they head back to the cabin.

ANDY You ever been to one of those places?

JACK Not yet. Kids keep breaking windows, I just might.

ANDY

They're just so fucking depressing, you know? Bunch of sad sacks whining about wives who left them, people that did them wrong. Or, worse, the ultra-religious ones who get all high and mighty now that they're walking in the light. Imagine that, times 50 people, times 30 days. It's un-fuckingbearable.

JACK No wonder it didn't work for you.

ANDY Yeah, no wonder. Anyway, I'm glad I came up, too. I hope I don't mess up your quality family time.

JACK Cut that shit out. You're my brother.

ANDY Keith says profanity comes from a lazy mind, Jack. JACK

Really? I can't believe that took... I am really awesome at this dad thing.

ANDY

Yeah, you are.

Andy slaps the wood in Jack's arms, sending it to the ground. Jack stops in his tracks.

JACK That is so fucked up.

ANDY I can't believe you didn't see it coming. See you back at the cabin.

Andy hoofs it ahead.

JACK Son of a bitch. Every time.

EXT. YELLOWSTONE CLEARING - DAY

Near the borders of Yellowstone National Park, cabins line the less-travelled roads, hundreds of yards apart to allow for privacy.

Within the park, trails meander around the wild, thrusting deep into the heart at times, fading back towards civilization at others.

Near one of the arteries deep in the heart of Yellowstone, an ancillary path often overlooked, a RESEARCH STATION sits in a small clearing.

Fifty yards away, a communications tower rises above the tree line, topped by a solar-paneled power source.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - DAY

Sneakers kicked up on the desk, coffee within easy reach is SATOMI IACHI, early 20s, face buried in a field guide. He is distinctly Japanese, but raised in California where he quickly assimilated. His internship could have led him to Silicon Valley, but his heart called him to the wild.

LESLIE BARNETT gathers gear beside him, her twenties almost behind her, but clean living and a natural demeanor would get her carded at bars, if she ever went to one. A flower child a generation too late, Leslie communes with the animals to an unsettling degree.

> SATOMI Where you going?

LESLIE

Rain samples. I never got around to grabbing those yesterday.

SATOMI

Ah.

LESLIE What are you doing?

SATOMI Reading about the wolves of Yellowstone. Very humbling.

LESLIE

How so?

SATOMI

They were gone... Driven to the point of extinction. Then, we say, "Yellowstone needs wolves." Everybody says this won't work. But it does.

LESLIE

And how does that humble you? People, for once, actually made something better.

SATOMI

Ah, not true. We showed the wolves a place where they had been hunted to death, almost. We say, 'Go back, we won't hunt you anymore.' Now, they are too many to count. We just bring them home, they did all the hard work.

LESLIE

That reminds me... There's a new pack, Dan says.

SATOMI

Already?

LESLIE

He said it looks like some split off from the others, now they're on the Wyoming side here. Keep an eye out and log 'em if you see 'em.

Satomi gives a thumbs-up.

LESLIE (cont'd) What are you gonna do while I'm gone?

Satomi shrugs.

LESLIE (cont'd) I thought all you Japanese kids were supposed to be industrious.

SATOMI

That's a cruel stereotype. And I grew up in Palo Alto, so I have as much right to laziness as anyone else.

LESLIE That explains so much about you.

SATOMI Bye-bye, now. See you when the rain is sampled.

Leslie rolls her eyes and heads out.

EXT. TRAIL - AFTERNOON

Leslie stops and adjusts her backpack, grabbing the water bottle tucked in the side. The trail is little more than a semi-worn footpath, the flora trying tenaciously to reclaim it.

Up above, a hawk circles lazily. Leslie regards the bird, tucks away the water and moves on.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - CONTINUOUS

SATOMI reads aloud from the field guide.

SATOMI ... The grizzly is the most feared predator of the park. Seldom seen... EXT. TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Leslie shoulders the pack and heads deeper.

There is a CRACK, a branch breaking hard.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - CONTINUOUS

SATOMI ...it is a monster. Two tons of predator. Satisfied by the salmon of the crystal streams...

EXT. TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Leslie jerks her head. Something is following. Slow. The forest crackles beneath its feet, though, and it's big.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - CONTINUOUS

SATOMI ...the bear most associated with the visage that terrifies us is a gentle giant...

EXT. TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Leslie picks up her pace on the trail. The accompaniment follows, louder now. The pace is a jaunt, not a walk.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - CONTINUOUS

SATOMI ...only violent in defense of her young...

EXT. TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Leslie is booking. Her boots kick up dust behind her.

Whatever behind her runs, too, crashing, sending branches in motion.

Leslie see a tree with low-hanging branches. Time to go up.

The crashes are louder. She can almost feel its breath.

Leslie climbs. One branch. The second is a reach, but she makes it.

The claws find her fast, hind legs of the grizzly kicking up the tree, maws closing on the hip of the animal.

Leslie screams, and, boy, does she. It echoes.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - CONTINUOUS

The scream echoes shallowly here, in the valley. Satomi glances up from the Field Guide and grabs his coffee.

SATOMI Nice guy. Bad PR.

EXT. TRAIL TO CABIN - DAY

RACHEL What was that?

RACHEL GRAVES, 20, tilts her head to the distant echo. It fades too quickly to label.

NEIL

What was what?

RACHEL

I thought I heard someone.

NEIL, 22, pauses by his girlfriend, wrapping an arm around her waist. They are All-Americans, Rachel with her promqueen looks and overpriced camping gear, Neil in matching accoutrement, standing tall beside her like the game-winning quarterback.

> NEIL It was probably Carol and Dan.

> > RACHEL

I don't think so. They should be ahead of us. This sounded like it came from behind.

NEIL Sound does funny stuff in the woods. Come on, we are going to lose the good bedroom if we don't catch up. NEIL The one we're in.

Neil paws lasciviously at Rachel, who, under normal circumstances, would gladly accept his advances. The hair standing on the back of her neck and the generous case of the creeps leads her to simply smack his hands away.

RACHEL Later. Let's go.

She takes off up the trail, leaving Neil standing slack-jawed and blue-balled.

NEIL

Fine.

EXT. TRAIL TO CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Further up the trail, CAROL WRIGHT and DAN HOLMES trudge up the path ahead of Neil and Rachel. They are similarly aged, in their early 20s, but they are not the high school homecoming couple. In fact, they are no couple at all, anymore, if Dan has anything to say about it.

Their gear is more practical, their features more plain than their companions, but Carol's fire and Dan's caustic nature always brew below the surface and erupt at times.

> CAROL We're, what, a mile away?

> > DAN

Not sure.

CAROL Why don't you check the map?

DAN Don't need to.

CAROL How do you know we're going the right way, then?

DAN I looked at the map earlier. We're going the right way.

CAROL Well, look at the map anyway.

Dan stops, quietly pulling the map from his pack. He makes a show of unfolding it, looking at nothing in particular, refolding and replacing it.

CAROL (cont'd) You're an asshole, you know that?

DAN

I do.

Fast footsteps come from behind them, and their heads turn down the trail.

Rachel pops into view, with Neil in tow.

DAN (cont'd) Wonder what she's in such a hurry about.

He doesn't have to wonder long. They cover the distance fast, stopping, out of breath, once they reach the other couple.

CAROL What got into you two?

NEIL I think Rach just needed more company.

RACHEL You guys didn't hear that? It sounded like someone yelling.

DAN Didn't hear a thing. Carol was yapping for a good stretch there, though.

CAROL

Fuck you.

DAN See what I mean.

RACHEL No, this was loud... Maybe I'm just hearing things.

NEIL

Like I said, sound does funny things out here. If you listen close, and the wind is just right, Dan sounds smart.

RACHEL

I know what I heard. You didn't hear it, Carol?

CAROL

Nope.

RACHEL I guess I am crazy.

NEIL

But you're hot, and that goes a long way to make up for crazy.

DAN

And that's how he gets the ladies.

RACHEL

Neil is quite the charmer. He forgets I remember all of this and will bring it back up again at a time of my choosing, probably in front of his mother.

CAROL The old mom routine...

NEIL You two are evil.

DAN Okay, okay, can the chatter... Let's get to the cabin. My nipples are chafing like a beast under these straps.

NEIL And that's how *he* gets the ladies.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - AFTERNOON

Satomi jerks awake, the field guide resting on his chest slipping to the floor with a bang. He cranes his head around for signs of Leslie and sighs at her absence. Falling asleep on the job is not generally condoned. Satomi's relief crosses the line into concern as the time on the clock creeps towards evening.

SATOMI

Leslie?

He makes a quick inspection of the station, but there are no signs Leslie has returned. He double-checks his watch, confirming the late hour.

Shouldering a pack, including the rifle he always keeps handy, Satomi heads out.

INT. CABIN DINING ROOM - LATER

Andy stares out the window at nothing as the family gathers around for a dinner of canned ham and instant potatoes. It's not bad, but not the Four Seasons.

JACK

You okay?

Andy jerks back into the real world.

ANDY

Good.

JACK

Okay.

JJ Dad, I think it's time we start talking abut cars.

JACK

Is that so?

PAULA I don't know where this is coming from, Jack, I swear.

JACK What are you bringing to the table?

JJ What do you mean?

JACK Well, a car is expensive. Not just the car, but there's gas, insurance, the cost of you license...

KEITH He's broke. ANDY As a joke. KEITH In a poke. ANDY After a toke. PAULA Andy! ANDY What? KEITH What's a toke? JACK It's a thing uncles do when they're not around nosy nephews. And, JJ, I think we are still a ways away from the car talk. JJ But I can get my permit next year! JACK Then, we'll talk about it next year. JJ That's just not fair. ANDY It's a great big, dirty world, JJ,

It's a great big, dirty world, JJ, and if they say it ain't, they're lying. How about you pass me those mashed potatoes?

JJ passes them down, and Keith still barely contains a fit of the giggles, assisted by Andy's frequent strange stares at the boy, designed to keep him on the verge of laughter.

Paula notices the interaction and gives Jack's arm a squeeze as she finally stops fussing over the table and sits to eat.

JACK You keep making faces, Andy, and your face is gonna get stuck like that. ANDY Might be an improvement. What do you think, Keith? Andy gives him a particularly twisted face. KEITH Definitely an improvement. You look like a big butt! Keith can't take it. He explodes laughing, and Andy joins in. Jack grins. PAULA That is an awful thing to call someone! ANDY Hold on, Paula, the boy may be on to something. PAULA Apologize. KEITH (giggling helplessly) I'm sorry I said your face looks like a butt. ANDY Apology accepted. And I'm sorry your face looks like an old sock. It's too much. Keith is way gone. Even Paula and JJ get a grin out of this. JACK You spoil these kids, Andy. ANDY What can I say? I'm a nice guy! Keith pulls it together to respond.

> KEITH A nice guy who looks like a butt!

EXT. TRAIL - NIGHT

Satomi hurries along the trail, the flashlight from his pack swinging left to right.

SATOMI Leslie! You out here?

No answer.

Satomi moves fast, trying to dig through his memory of the location of the rain gauges. This should be the right way.

SATOMI (cont'd)

Leslie!

Satomi pauses, catching his breath, taking a quick look around. There are the ambient sounds of the park, the random scratches in the underbrush, the calls of birds. No sounds of humanity.

Satomi keeps going, pausing as he hears the sound of a heavy mass moving behind him. It stops and starts with him.

He spins, casting the flashlight into the trees behind him. Nothing to be seen here, keep moving. The gauges should be close.

The sound behind him is getting steadily closer. Satomi stops again, and the sound stops with him.

SATOMI (cont'd) Hello? Anyone there?

Again, silence. The flashlight scans up. The gauges. Full.

SATOMI (cont'd)

Leslie?

He pans the light around, and halts at the dark splotches on the ground. It's dark and wet. The light follows the pool of dark liquid up, and there are matching splotches on the tree. Back down, further away from the tree. Leslie's hat.

Satomi bends to retrieve it, and finds it, too, is covered by the liquid. He rubs his fingers together and brings them up to the light. They shine bright red.

SATOMI (cont'd)

Oh no...

He moves the light again, following the line between tree and pool and hat. At the edge of the trail, Satomi finds the proof of Leslie's fate. Her hand, the nub jagged from hungry jaws, disembodied, fingers curled.

EXT. CABIN #2 - NIGHT

Around the campfire, the couples sit. Dan and Carol sit close, not touching, while Neil and Rachel huddle tight together. A bottle makes its way around the fire, something brown and soothing and capable of loosening tongues.

Music plays from a portable stereo, and the ambient noise of the fire creates a bit of isolation between the two pairs.

> NEIL What are we doing tomorrow, again?

> > RACHEL

Hiking in the morning, and tomorrow afternoon we're supposed to go rock climbing with one of the guides. I'll call him tomorrow.

NEIL Miracle of cell phones.

RACHEL You're never out of touch.

Neil's hands move beneath the blanket.

NEIL Nope, plenty of touching.

RACHEL I could call for help.

NEIL

Who? Carol? She doesn't care. And Dan would just stare like a goon.

RACHEL (laughing) Maybe I'll just have to defend myself.

She reaches down under the blanket.

NEIL Mmmm... Not much of a threat... Ow!!

RACHEL No threat, huh?

NEIL Be careful with that. It's been good to both of us.

RACHEL

Well, I don't know how good it's been to you, but it's been very good to me.

NEIL We should sneak off.

RACHEL

I'd rather just sit here and squeeze for a little while. Isn't waiting fun?

NEIL You are a beautiful, cruel woman.

RACHEL

I know.

Dan leans over to pass the bottle their way, then curls back against the log Carol sits upon.

CAROL Drunk enough?

DAN

For what?

CAROL To tell me what the hell is going on.

DAN I don't know what you're talking about.

CAROL Dan, you have not said one word to me this weekend that wasn't a jab or the shortest way out of the conversation. DAN We came here to relax, right? I just don't want to spend the whole time yapping.

CAROL And you can't just talk to me?

DAN

What do you want me to say, Carol? I told you I didn't think this trip was a good idea. You said it was. I said I didn't feel like talking. You say I should. You see where I'm going with this?

CAROL I see. And you can go fuck yourself.

Carol stands and marches into the cabin.

DAN Maybe I will!

Dan looks over the fire at Rachel and Neil.

NEIL That looked like it went well.

RACHEL Should I go talk to her?

DAN You want to pull at that thread?

RACHEL

Nope.

She takes a long pull from the bottle.

RACHEL (cont'd) How about we just listen to some music and get drunk?

NEIL

I agree wholeheartedly.

She gives Neil another squeeze under the blanket.

DAN Motion carried. Bottle please. EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Andy sits on the porch swing, rocking slowly, smoking a cigarette.

Jack screeches open the screen door and joins him.

JACK Have one of those?

ANDY

Nope.

JACK I haven't had one in four years.

ANDY That's why I'm not giving you one, now.

JACK Fair enough. Keith's crazy about you.

ANDY He's a good kid.

JACK Yeah. JJ's going to be trouble.

ANDY Yeah, he is. He doesn't seem to care for me too much.

JACK He's like his mom, you know? Very serious, very organized.

ANDY I don't think she likes me either.

JACK Not much. Enough, but not much.

Andy nods.

ANDY Beautiful out here, huh?

Andy tosses the smoke and fishes in his pack for another.

Yep.

ANDY And this is my way of saying thank you.

Andy holds up a thick joint.

JACK Is that weed?

ANDY Yes, sir, it is.

JACK I thought you came up here to be sober.

ANDY I came up here to help get off the sauce. I said nothing about sobriety. Besides, they used to use pot to treat alcoholism.

JACK Is that true?

ANDY Sounds true, anyway.

Andy lights the joint and inhales deeply.

ANDY (cont'd) Besides, there is nothing better than being stoned in the wilderness. Very natural.

JACK Don't let Paula see you, okay?

ANDY Wouldn't dream of it. You want some?

JACK Nah, better not.

They are interrupted by the sound of wolves howling in the distance.

JACK (cont'd) Did that sound close to you? ANDY

(grinning) Ah, the children of the night... What beautiful music they make.

EXT. CABIN #2 - CONTINUOUS

The howls echo to the campfire.

DAN Are those wolves?

NEIL

Gotta be.

He stands up, unconscious of the erection that tents his pants.

DAN

Oh.

NEIL

What?

RACHEL Baby, you might want to sit down.

Neil looks down and laughs.

NEIL What for? Does it frighten you?

RACHEL

Not me.

DAN I'm a little scared.

NEIL Don't be, Daniel! It's here to protect us all!

Rachel gets the giggles.

DAN Able to stop a speeding bullet?

NEIL If you talk nice to it, yes. Or, launch one.

Dan catches the giggles and Neil follows suit.

The howls come again, closer.

NEIL (cont'd) Shit, that's close. Maybe we ought to pack it up for the night. Rach wants to do hiking or some shit tomorrow.

DAN I'll go, if it's cool.

RACHEL

Sure.

The howls return, real close, sending them all to their feet.

DAN Goddamn, that is close.

Rachel slips into Neil's arms.

NEIL

Come on.

He leads her towards the cabin.

DAN I'll kill the fire. Be right there.

Dan begins to kick dirt on the fire, a little faster than he would normally.

NEIL

Okay. Hurry up, man.

Rachel tugs Neil closer to the door.

NEIL (cont'd) I think there's some water-

Mid-sentence, the shadows move. There are four, no, five of them, and they hit fast. One of the wolves has taken Dan's arm, two sink their maws into the fleshy side, one has the back of Dan's jeans in its mouth, tugging down. The other makes a leap and a body slams into Dan's back, sending him to the ground even as the wolf snaps its jaws on his neck.

> DAN Jesus Christ! Get these things off me!

Rachel screams. Neil grabs her, almost throwing her on the porch.

NEIL

Get inside!

DAN Neil! Get these fucking things off me!

Neil takes a step forward, the wolves digging, clawing their way into Dan's flesh. His side is open, now, and the feeding has begun. His screams reach a new pitch, and, finally, mercifully, the wolf that brought the game down gives the throat another yank and Dan is nothing more than Wolf Chow.

Neil stares down at his friend's body, even as the furry, angular heads rise. Brown, feral eyes meet his.

NEIL

Shit.

He makes a run for it. Pushing hard, legs and fists pumping for the door. The wolves do not chase, but stand, staring.

Then, one howls. Soon, the remains of the campfire echoes with the sound of the pack.

EXT. TRAIL - NIGHT

Satomi's feet are flying. Behind him, the grizzly is giving chase. At times, it's hidden behind the brush, others it bursts through.

He's running downhill, his only chance. He takes large, leaping bounds down the slope, encouraged by the distance that separates them, Satomi heads for home, such as it is.

The bear is far behind, but still chasing. In the distance, he can make out the solar-panelled com tower. He can get help.

One last look over his shoulder. No bear. Satomi never stops running.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - NIGHT

Satomi crashes in, kicking the door closed quickly and bolting it. Leaning hard against it, he takes in big lungfuls of air. Eyes shut tight, he collects himself. Radio. Satomi flips the toggle to bring the radio to life, greeted by squelching and static. He rolls along the band and begins broadcasting.

> SATOMI Yellowstone Observatory #31, emergency! Over!

Hiss of static.

SATOMI (cont'd) Observatory #31, in distress! Over!

RANGER VOICE (O.S.) Who is this? Over.

SATOMI Satomi Iachi. Leslie Barnes has been killed by rogue grizzly. Bear's still in the area. Over.

RANGER VOICE (0.S.) Sit tight, son. We have multiple incidents. You see anyone walking around, you tell them to get inside and stay there. You do the same. Understand? Over.

SATOMI I understand. Over.

RANGER VOICE (O.S.) Good. We got all kinds of hell breaking loose tonight. You stay put until you hear something more from us. Take care, son. Over and out.

SATOMI

Over and out.

Satomi returns the transmitter to the radio. In the distance, the wolves howl.

EXT. CABIN #2 - NIGHT

Flickering lights illuminate the ground around the cabin, windows locked tight against the night.

The shapes of several wolves circle the cabin. Their movements are slinky and predatory, occasionally raising a snout to sniff at the air and the prey within.

INT. CABIN #2 - CONTINUOUS

Neil peers through a window, Rachel behind him, leaning over his shoulder.

Carol sits blank-faced in the center of the room.

CAROL They just ate him?

NEIL (to Rachel) Maybe you should talk to her.

RACHEL

What am I going to say? Yes, he was eaten.

NEIL Say whatever keeps her quiet.

Rachel crosses to Carol and drapes an arm around her shoulders, pulling up the blanket that covers her.

RACHEL

How you doing?

CAROL

Besides my boyfriend being devoured by wolves, I'd say it's been a pretty good trip.

See laughs humorlessly.

CAROL (cont'd) I just keep thinking that I'm going to wake up and that all of this will be a dream. Things like this don't happen.

RACHEL

I know, honey.

CAROL You know fuck-all. Your boyfriend's right over there. Defending you. Mine is about four hours away from being wolf shit. RACHEL

Oh, come on...

CAROL Fuck you and your 'come on.' I want to get the fuck out of here, now.

Her voice is rising, getting shriller. The breakdown is coming.

RACHEL

We will, Carol, but we need to wait-

CAROL Wait for what? For Ranger Bob to come get us? We need to get back to the car and drive the fuck out of here.

RACHEL

I'm sure-

NEIL That's exactly what we are going to do, Carol, but you are going to have to shut up.

Carol opens her mouth, rethinks, keeps her yap shut.

NEIL (cont'd) Those wolves are still out there. They're all over this cabin. I would like to think that we can keep quiet and wait them out. When they go off looking for another meal, we are going to haul ass back to the car and get back to civilization. You understand all that?

Carol nods.

NEIL (cont'd)

Rach?

Rachel nods.

NEIL (cont'd) Good. Now, Rachel, can you take a peek out of the other window. NEIL(cont'd) Let's make sure that we know where all of them are. You okay with that?

Rachel nods again, rising. She moves slowly across the cabin, ears attuned to the slightest noise from outside.

This way, across the kitchen, near the back door, the windows reflect only her face as she draws near.

NEIL (cont'd) Careful, Rach.

Rachel nods again, offering a weak grin.

From outside, she can hear scratching. She presses her ear against the wall.

RACHEL I hear something.

NEIL

What?

RACHEL Scratching, kind of...

She reseats her ear against the wall.

RACHEL (cont'd) Sounds like they're just on the other side of this wall.

NEIL Why don't you switch places with me?

RACHEL

What for?

NEIL I want to see what they're doing.

RACHEL You can't see anything out the window, it's just the sound.

NEIL I want to hear, then.

RACHEL For Chrissakes. Rachel moves away, and Neil takes her position, pressing his ear to the wall.

Rachel backs up, holding herself, watching Neil as he slides up and down the wall, trying to find the origin of the sound. She reaches the opposite wall with a little thump, looking over her shoulder out the window to see shapes moving outside.

> RACHEL (cont'd) Do you hear it?

> > NEIL

Shhhhh...

Neil pauses.

NEIL (cont'd)

Right here.

Rachel steps forward as one of the wolves slams against the window behind her, the glass splintering, but holding.

Rachel screams, taking a step away from the window, towards the door. Another wolf hurtles against the front door, ripping the mesh screen away and wedging the door open. Its front haunches claw to scramble inside, jaws snapping.

Rachel grabs the door and slams it hard, the wolf yelping in pain. It scrambles backwards, but Rachel is slamming the door again, furiously. The wolf continues its attempts to drag itself out of harm's way, but the door keeps slamming, slamming.

Neil joins in, putting his shoulder against the door. There is a crack and the wolf's body goes limp. With a hard shove of his leg, Neil pushes the wolf's body through the ruined screen and onto the porch.

They shut the door hard, eyes scanning the room for other points of entry. Outside, howling begins anew, more mournful this time.

Carol sobs.

RACHEL Look, Carol... We just need to make this place a little more secure.

Carol looks up at Rachel through her tears.
CAROL Are you insane? We're all going to die here.

INT. YNP RESEARCH STATION - DAWN

Satomi flips a deck of cards at a ranger hat, missing horribly. Though he's been at it all night, practice has only made the misses that much more painful to see.

The radio hisses above his head, back against the single door, ass on the ground. He pauses to look up at it, then tosses another card. There have been no more voices since last night.

Satomi bends the cards in one hand, letting them fly out of his palm in a solitary game of 52 Pick-up. He stands, pulling the transmitter's mic from its cradle.

> SATOMI Observatory #31, does anyone read me? Over.

Static.

SATOMI (cont'd) This is Observatory #31, is there anyone out there? We've been attacked. Over.

Nothing.

SATOMI (cont'd) Can anybody hear me?! Damnit!

Satomi slams the transmitter down. He leaves the volume up, but there's only white noise.

He sighs, resolving himself to journey outside. He shoulders his pack, then takes the time to check if the rifle is loaded. Check. He slips one box of bullets into his pack, another, half-empty, is distributed into pockets and the pack.

He gives the room a last look, lingering on a picture of Leslie with some hippie dude, both giving peace signs, before cracking the door and stepping into the first gray light of morning. Satomi swings the rifle ahead of him, cautiously stepping into the open. No sign of either the grizzly or any other threat.

Loosening his grip on the gun, he gets moving towards the closest Ranger Station.

INT. CABIN DINING ROOM - MORNING

Jack and Paula lean against the kitchen counters, nibbling on fruit pulled out for breakfast. The kids are eating pancakes, gobbling them up with gusto.

Andy isn't seen, but the sound of his snoring is loud through the paper-thin bedroom walls.

PAULA Imagine what he sounded like hungover.

KEITH What's a hangover?

JACK

A hangover is when you drink way too much of an adult beverage, which can feel pretty great at the time, but the next day you're sick, and your head hurts, and your tongue feels like it needs to be shaved...

JJ Who shaves their tongue?

KEITH People with hangovers.

JJ

That doesn't make any sense. Why would you drink something if you knew it was going to want to make you shave your tongue?

JACK

That's a good question. But, I guess, some people think the part that feels good is worth the bad part.

PAULA Or maybe they just can't control themselves.

JACK Or maybe they have a lot of issues that they haven't dealt with, yet.

PAULA Which is strange, because other people in the exact same situation turn out just fine.

JACK But everyone is different.

KEITH (to JJ) They're not talking to us, anymore, are they?

JJ shakes his head 'no.'

PAULA Sorry, guys, just trying to make a point.

They notice the snoring has stopped.

JACK Sounds like someone is up.

PAULA Or passed away peacefully in his sleep.

JACK Not funny. I'll check on him.

Jack winds past the kids, mussing their hair as he passes, a gesture that they are all-too-quickly outgrowing.

He leans against the bedroom door and gives it a soft rap.

JACK (cont'd) Andy? You up?

The response may have begun as a word, but quickly lapses into coughing and what can only be described as a growl.

JACK (cont'd) Breakfast is ready when you want it. ANDY (O.S.)

Thanks...

The door opens, Andy emerging in true glory, hair a mess, boxers a little worse for the wear, and a tee shirt that is a size too small.

> ANDY (cont'd) Do I smell pancakes?

PAULA You do. Maybe you want to get a shower before you eat.

Andy takes a seat at the table.

ANDY

Aw, no, Paula, I'm fine. My eyes may not be open all the way, but I'll manage to pry my mouth open to force some of those delicious pancakes in.

KEITH

Are you hungover?

Andy is taken aback.

ANDY

Ordinarily, kid, I would be. But, not at the moment. At this very moment, I'm just hungry. And I have trouble seeing sometimes in the morning.

Andy stands.

ANDY (cont'd) In fact, I usually just pick my food by smell in the morning.

Andy's hair deliberately droops in front of his eyes. He bends by the corner of the table, sniffing loud.

ANDY (cont'd) There is definitely something tasty at this table.

He sniffs more, drawing closer and close to Keith, who is grinning already. Andy stops.

ANDY (cont'd) It's close...

He takes another step towards Keith and stops again, sniffing.

ANDY (cont'd)

That's it.

Andy springs into motion, snatching Keith from his seat and giving him play bites all over his stomach. Keith laughs uncontrollably.

PAULA

All right, all right. You two knock it off, food's getting cold. JJ, why don't you take your brother to get some more wood for tonight. We're going to do hot dogs and hamburgers.

KEITH

Okay, Mom.

JJ drags Keith a little too harshly towards the door, but Keith takes it the way all little brothers do... without complaint and with love.

The screen door slams shut behind them.

PAULA

You get them too worked up, you know that?

ANDY We were just playing.

PAULA Keith isn't a toy, Andy. He's a young boy who looks up to you.

JACK Andy loves Keith.

PAULA

I know he does. And that's why it's going to hurt him even more when you don't show up to another Thanksgiving dinner because you are too drunk to call, much less drive.

JACK

Paula...

PAULA

No. If he wants to play uncle, it has to be all the time, not just when he's pretending that he's all done drinking.

JACK Wait a second...

ANDY Let her go, Jack.

PAULA

I am tired of Keith's birthdays and holidays ruined because you can't keep your shit together long enough to make an appearance. I hate you for that, and the only way I know to protect Keith is for him to hate you for it, too. But I won't do that to him. Not yet. He'll find out soon enough that his uncle is a drunk.

Paula stops, steadying herself against the counter after the outburst.

ANDY You finished?

Paula nods.

ANDY (cont'd) Good. Cause you're right about everything.

JACK You don't have to do this.

ANDY

I know I don't. But your wife has been kind enough to me over the years that the least I can do is to let her know when she's right. (to Paula)

I love your boys, both of them, like I love your husband. I know you don't think much of me, and that's fair. I don't think much of myself, truth be told. But I can promise you that I am trying like hell to be a better man. It's up to you to believe it or not.

ANDY(cont'd)

You should know that I respect you, how you raise those boys, and if you told me to leave right now, I would.

PAULA I don't want that.

ANDY Good. I just want you to give me a shot, if that's okay.

PAULA

I can do that.

ANDY Awesome possum.

Jack grins, despite himself.

JACK That is the dumbest expression...

ANDY

Thank you, Paula. Thank you, Jack. Now, I am off to christen the woods with my own morning dew.

Paula rolls her eyes and turns her back to Andy, grabbing plate from the table.

JACK You just can't let a moment be nice, can you?

ANDY Not while there's air in the lungs and piss in the vinegar.

EXT. RANGER STATION - MID-MORNING

Satomi's initial cautiousness has given way to guarded optimism. The trail is wide and accommodating, and there are no signs of danger, bear or otherwise. Not at first glance, anyway.

The Ranger Station looks like a mini-lodge, with its natural brown and beige coloring, peaked roof and windows stretching from floor to ceiling. One of the front doors is partially open, the other closed. There are no signs of movement.

> SATOMI Hello? Anyone inside?

Even as he waits for a response, a flutter rustles behind him. The sight causes him to instinctively raise the rifle to eye level.

To the right of the station, near where the wood is stacked for fires, a BALD EAGLE sits majestically atop its prey, a RANGER. His face is obscured, even as the eagle drops its head to pull away another stringy piece of flesh and gobble it up.

> SATOMI (cont'd) Get away! Go on!

Satomi approaches, but the bird extends its impressive wingspan and hops angrily atop its food, defending it.

Satomi drops the rifle lower. The animal, content with its meal, pays little heed.

INT. RANGER STATION - CONTINUOUS

Satomi swings the rifle left and right as he enters, more in mimicry of movies he's seen than any real training.

SATOMI If anyone is here, come out slowly. My name is Satomi Iachi. I have a weapon.

The interior is a mess. Tables turned over, the front counter completely bare, the previous contents scattered about the floor, including the radio.

Satomi creeps to his left, towards the body of the building, hair bristling at the slightest sound. Approaching in a wide arc, he moves around the counter, where he finds the DEPUTY.

The Deputy stares blank-eyed at Satomi, his mouth frozen in a scream, face pale, hands at the remains of his throat. He is a grotesque mannequin, sitting in a pool of his own drying blood. Flies buzz lazily around the corpse.

SATOMI (cont'd) What is happening?

He whips the rifle around again, looking for any signs of danger. He is terribly alone in this building.

Looking back to the Deputy, Satomi pulls his shirt up, covering his mouth and nose, approaching warily.

He leans towards the corpse, dragging his fingers down over the Deputy's eyes to close them, but they will not close, and he finds his fingers instead sliding over dry, unseeing orbs.

Waving his hand in disgust, he bends, pulling from the Deputy's holster a 9mm pistol.

Standing, Satomi shoulders the rifle and flips the pistol over in his hands, finally finding the release for the clip. It's full. He locks it back in position, casts one last look at the charnel house that once was a ranger's station, and heads outdoors.

INT. CABIN #2 - DAY

Neil wakes up with a start, back still against the front door. Across from him Carol and Rachel lean against each other, asleep.

Rubbing his face, he stands, the interior looking for more Spartan with every movable piece of furniture wedged against a door or window. As the floor creaks under his feet, Rachel's eyes slowly open.

NEIL

Hey.

RACHEL Hey, yourself.

Carol begins to stir.

NEIL If you're up, I think I need a hand.

RACHEL Yeah. Yeah, I'm up.

EXT. CABIN #2 - MOMENTS LATER

The front door cracks, then opens on the bright clearing. In one hand, Neil holds a wooden baseball bat, the other clutches the door.

NEIL Just gonna have a look around, okay?

Rachel nods from behind him, her face appearing in the crack of the door.

NEIL (cont'd) Just wait here. If anything happens, shut the door.

RACHEL You don't have to do this because I'll think your macho or something.

NEIL

That's not why I'm doing it. We have to get out of here, but we can't drag Carol along if there's something waiting for us out here. She any better?

RACHEL

Not much.

NEIL Okay. Yell if you see anything.

Neil steps off the porch, holding the bat in both hands, now, slowly circling the cabin.

NEIL (cont'd) Notice anything weird?

RACHEL Everything looks normal.

NEIL The wolf's gone. They must have taken the body.

Rachel has no response.

Neil is out of sight, now, the front door more than just a quick dash. He watches the treeline for any signs of movement.

The circle almost complete, Neil kicks some dirt over the last glowing embers of what was last night's fire. A few feet away, Dan's body has been ravaged by the wolves. Now, BEETLES crawl over the remaining flesh picking it clean. In most places, Dan has been reduced to skeletal remains.

NEIL (cont'd)

Rach?

RACHEL

Yeah?

NEIL If I ask you to look at something, can you do it without screaming?

RACHEL I don't think so.

NEIL Come here, anyway.

Rachel leaves the security of the door begrudgingly, her fingertips clinging to it until her feet take her too far away. Now, she's in the open with Neil. Closer to the pile of nothing that was once her friend.

> RACHEL Jesus, Neil, what is it?

NEIL Look at Dan.

RACHEL

I saw it.

Her line of sight is up, up and away. No more looking down.

NEIL Did you see the bugs?

RACHEL

I saw them.

NEIL

I mean, I'm not some CSI guy or anything, but isn't that supposed to happen after a few days?

RACHEL I don't know, Neil.

NEIL That just doesn't seem right.

RACHEL What about this does?

NEIL Do we leave him?

RACHEL I think we have to. For now. NEIL Okay. Let's get everything together. We need to get moving before they come back.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Armed with sticks, Keith and JJ wander around the perimeter of the cabin's clearing, venturing into the woods, dragging their sticks, banging them against a downed tree, etc.

Jack and Andy sip coffee on the porch, watching over them. Andy finishes his cup and grimaces.

> ANDY This stuff is awful.

JACK It's gourmet.

ANDY Tastes like ass.

JACK Most of the gourmet stuff does.

The trees rustle above the boys, distantly. But something is moving in them and it's coming closer. Too far away for the men to hear or see, but the boys have gotten curious.

> ANDY All in all, I thought the conversation with Paula went well.

JACK It did. I appreciate what you said.

ANDY Ironically, after that little talk I wanted bourbon in the worst way.

JACK You think that sticks with you your whole life?

ANDY That's what I hear.

JACK That sucks.

ANDY

Yep.

INTO THE WOODS

The boys are moving deeper in the trees, barely visible, now. Their heads crane up to see what's shaking the branches above them.

> KEITH Do you think it's a bear? JJ Bears don't live in trees stupid. KEITH What is it? JJ

I don't know.

JJ hurls his stick into the branches that have only stopped rustling. There is a flurry of movement, a flash of golden fur hopping from branch to branch above them.

> KEITH What is it? JJ

I don't know!

A low growl floats down to them.

JJ (cont'd) Just back up, Keith.

They do, Keith clinging to JJ's arm, the growl rising and falling with the breath of the animal hidden above them.

KEITH

I wanna go back.

JJ That's where we're going. Just be quiet.

As they back up, the branches over their heads rustle again. It's following.

Keith is growing upset, fear squeezing tears from his eyes.

KEITH

Stop it!

JJ

Quiet.

KEITH

Go away!

Keith hurls his own branch into the air, falling backwards with the force of his throw. Equal and opposite reactions, and the kid is on his ass.

JJ turns to his brother, reaching for him and the golden fur is moving again, down, to the ground behind Keith. It's a MOUNTAIN LION, a big one, hunkered close to the ground between the boys and the cabin.

The growl explodes into a full snarl, the cat circling around the boys, its mouth open exposing the humbling fangs.

KEITH (cont'd)

Go away!!

This one carries, down to the porch where the men are quiet, looking out over the beautiful landscape. The sound of the child in trouble is an alarm that sends them into motion before the thought can creep from ear to brain, Jack going over the porch railing in a hop, Andy following behind, lumbering down the steps and towards the treeline.

They find them quickly, the big cat between them and the boys. The cougar turns its back to the boys hearing the men behind it.

ANDY

Holy shit!

They stop dead in their tracks, mere feet away from the animal.

JACK Boys, I want you to very slowly move away from it... come around in a big circle, behind us.

The cougar looks from Andy to Jack and back again, baring its teeth.

ANDY I didn't know cats got that big.

JACK This one does. Slow, boys, nice and easy. ANDY

Woah!

Andy waves his arms to distract the cougar from the children.

JACK Not sure that's a great plan.

ANDY All I got. Hey! Come on, kitty!

Jack can see the boys have moved a distance away and are making their way to the cabin.

JACK We just need to back away really slowly. It's more scared of us than we are of it.

ANDY Not the vibe I'm getting.

JACK Me, neither.

They begin to back away, hands outstretched, attempting to show no sign of threat. Cat don't care. It's back legs begin to rock up and down.

> ANDY What's it doing?

The cougar answers by lunging, graceful and deadly, towards Jack. Before he can react, he's on his back, the arm raised in defense clamped by the jaws of the cougar. Blood's already flowing. Then, the claws come out.

Meant for elk or deer, the ragged claws sink into Jack's shoulders, pulling down, tearing flesh. His screams are Olympic.

Andy is powerless, scanning the ground for anything like a weapon. There's nothing. He can only watch as the mountain lion releases his brother's shoulder and grips his sides, claws puncturing cloth and flesh.

ANDY (cont'd) I don't know what to do, Jack! The CRACK! Of the rifle echoes a second after the cougar's head is turned into a canoe. Its body twitches atop Jack's, claws still buried in his skin.

Andy drops to his knees beside his brother, yanking the cougar up, then releasing as the pitch of Jack's scream rises.

The stranger with the rifle bounds down the path, Chinese or Japanese, near as Andy can tell.

SATOMI Let me help. Like this.

Satomi takes a claw in each hand and lifts it, pulling the claws free from Jack's side. Andy apes the motion and kicks the cougar off. Jack has stopped screaming.

ANDY Oh my god, he's dead.

SATOMI He's not dead, he's in shock. We have to get him inside now. The blood will bring more.

ANDY More of those?

He points down at the dead cougar.

SATOMI

Worse. Hurry.

They carefully lift Jack from the ground and make towards the cabin. Andy can't stop looking behind them, into the trees.

EXT. CABIN #2 - DAY

Neil is packed and ready to go, the baseball bat in his hand, head on a swivel as he scans for danger Behind him, Rachel is soothing Carol into her gear.

> CAROL What if they come back?

RACHEL We won't be here, will we? Just be an old empty cabin for them to sniff around. CAROL We have to take Dan.

RACHEL

We can't.

CAROL We can't leave him like that.

Neil has managed to cover the body with a blue tarp. The lines of insects coming and going in dark tendrils from beneath the plastic is an unnecessary reminder of the horror beneath it.

> RACHEL We don't have a choice just now. We'll come back for him when we can.

CAROL What if they find us?

RACHEL Then we'll run.

CAROL But they're faster.

Rachel has reached the end of her rope and gives Carol a good shake.

RACHEL Honestly, Carol, if they do catch up with us, Neil and I are going to run as fast as we can, then turn and fight if we have to. We can't do that if you're blubbering like this the whole time. If it comes down to it, we will leave you behind to fend for yourself. You understand me?

Carol nods shallowly.

RACHEL (cont'd) Good. We are not going to go around and around like this. If you want to survive, you're going to toughen the fuck up.

Neil pauses in his sentry duty to look at his girlfriend with wonder.

RACHEL (cont'd) You ready to do that?

Carol nods again.

RACHEL (cont'd) Then say it.

CAROL

I'm ready.

RACHEL Good. Get your pack on and let's move.

She leaves Carol on the porch to collect the rest of her gear, walking determinedly past Neil.

NEIL

Shit.

RACHEL Having a bad morning, hon. Let's get going.

Neil looks back to Carol, now ready, beginning to follow behind Rachel.

NEIL

You okay?

Rachel interrupts.

RACHEL We'll all be fine when we get back to the car.

Carol offers Neil a nod and a smile.

NEIL All right ramblers...

RACHEL ...let's get rambling.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The boys burst through the door ahead of Andy and Satomi, who carry the prone form of Jack between them. Paula rushes to the men, attempting to divine what's happened.

SATOMI Set him down easy. Try not to bend him.

ANDY I got him. Easy.

They lay Jack on the ground. Paula sees her husband's condition and grabs her boys to her.

PAULA What happened to Jack?

JJ It was a giant cat.

SATOMI A mountain lion.

PAULA (to Andy) Who is this?!

ANDY Not sure yet. Can you grab some towels?

PAULA What happened to my husband?

Andy rises and stands before her.

ANDY Paula, I need you to focus. Will you get some towels and get some water boiling?

PAULA What happened to him?

ANDY (to Satomi) You okay alone with him?

SATOMI

I think so.

Andy disappears into the bathroom, reappearing with several white towels. He tosses these to Satomi and enters the kitchen.

ANDY (O.S.) Paula, where are the pots? PAULA Will someone please tell me what happened?

SATOMI Your husband was attacked by a mountain lion. I shot it. He's hurt very badly and needs your help, Miss.

ANDY (O.S.) Paula, where are the goddamn pots?

PAULA Under the sink.

A metallic rattling comes from the kitchen. The sound of water comes quickly on the heels.

PAULA (cont'd) Why did it attack him?

SATOMI There's something going on with the animals. Not sure what.

Andy reenters.

ANDY Water's on. We need to get that shirt off of him.

PAULA Why did it attack him?

ANDY JJ, get your mother something to drink and keep an eye on that pot. Let me know when it boils.

JJ Come on, Mom.

JJ takes his mother by the hand, but she jerks violently away from him.

PAULA I want to be with Jack.

ANDY He's unconscious Paula. You really don't want to see this. Keith, JJ, get her out of here. Keith takes his mother's hand, JJ taking the other, dragging her away as her face drains of color. They finally lead her into the kitchen where Andy and Satomi can hear her begin to cry.

> ANDY (cont'd) You said something was happening. What is it?

Andy begins to cut through Jack's shirt. He peels it away, revealing deep gouges from his shoulders down his chest.

SATOMI Not sure. I was working at one of the observation stations and - oh my god he's bleeding.

ANDY

He is. Press that towel down on his shoulder, now. Just breathe. Tell me what happened. You were working at one of the observation stations.

SATOMI Right. And the girl I was working with went to check some of the gauges we have under the tent.

ANDY Under the tent?

SATOMI The cover created by all the leaves.

ANDY Gotcha. Press hard.

SATOMI She didn't come back for a long time, so I went to check on her.

ANDY One sec. How's that water coming?

JJ (0.S.) Not boiling yet!

ANDY Hurry. Keith, get me the needle and thread out of your mom's bag. There is another scramble of feet and movement from the kitchen.

ANDY (cont'd) (to Satomi) Keep going.

SATOMI When I went to find her, I just found blood and her hand.

ANDY Just her hand, huh?

SATOMI

Yes, sir.

ANDY No sir, just call me Andy. That sounds like one fucked up day.

SATOMI Today I went to the main ranger station.

ANDY

Oh, yeah?

Jack's other shoulder is exposed now, even more ragged and torn than the first.

SATOMI Yes. I found two dead there.

ANDY All from animals?

SATOMI

Yes.

ANDY What's your name?

SATOMI Satomi Iachi.

ANDY

Well, Satomi, this here is Jack. He's my brother. I'm very concerned about him right now. Just keep pressing on that towel and I'm going to do the same.

ANDY(cont'd)

In a minute, we're going to wash these wounds out and stitch some of these wounds up. You ever done that before?

SATOMI

No. Never.

ANDY First time for everything, my friend. Keith, I need that water and needle!

Keith enters, carrying a mish-mash of sewing utensils. JJ comes behind him with a pot of steaming water.

ANDY (cont'd) Set them down beside me.

Jack moans softly.

ANDY (cont'd)

Shit.

SATOMI

He's coming to.

ANDY

I want you to be ready to sit right on top of him if you have to, understand?

Satomi looks into Andy's eyes and nods.

INT. CABIN MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paula sits stunned on the bed. From beyond the closed door of the bedroom, Jack screams, loud and long. She weeps.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Neil is at the head of his party, bat in hand, eye relentlessly sweeping back and forth into the woods.

Rachel pulls Carol along behind her, keeping Carol's fumbling footsteps from sending them both to the ground.

NEIL Keep up, Rach. We have to be getting close. Carol fumbles more, breathing hard.

CAROL I can't do this.

RACHEL You're going to have to.

CAROL No. Just leave me here.

RACHEL You want to end up like Dan?

Carol stops.

CAROL

So what if I do? I made the last night of his life miserable! I did that!

NEIL Can we keep this breakdown a little quieter?

CAROL And fuck you, Neil! It was your dumbass idea to come out here in the first place!

RACHEL

Carol...

CAROL I don't want to hear it anymore. I just want to go home.

RACHEL

That's what we're trying to do, but you are going to have to keep quiet and keep moving. Please.

CAROL Rachel, you are very sweet. You're also an unbelievably gullible

bitch.

Rachel reacts as if slapped.

NEIL

That's it. Rachel, come on. Carol, best of luck. I'm sure you'll be fine.

Neil tugs Rachel further down the trail, leaving Carol to stand alone, looking down at them as they descend the path.

CAROL

Shit.

Carol gets it in gear, rushing to catch up.

CAROL (cont'd) Wait! Wait, you guys!

Neil pauses, turning to face Carol and shielding Rachel behind him.

NEIL You going to be civil?

CAROL

Yes. I'm sorry. Rachel, really I'm-

NEIL Don't talk to her. You talk to me, now.

CAROL I was trying to-

NEIL

I don't give a shit what you were trying to do. You insulted me, you insulted Rachel, all because you feel like this is unfair. It is. It is grandly, over-the-fucking-top unfair that Dan is dead. It's ridiculous that a bunch of fucking wolves ate him and tried to eat us. I want to get out of here just as much as you. But if you pop off like that again, don't think for a second that I will hesitate to leave you behind. Do you understand what I just said to you?

CAROL

Yes.

NEIL

Good, because that is the last time I will say them. Your next warning is fucking abandonment.

CAROL

I'm sorry.

NEIL

I don't need your apology. I just want your agreement. Do you agree that insulting me or Rachel is noargument the end of the road for you?

CAROL

Yes.

NEIL Good enough.

Neil stretches out his hand.

NEIL (cont'd)

Shake it.

Carol takes his measure and nods, shaking his hand.

NEIL (cont'd) Good. Let's get going then.

He turns, pressing Rachel ahead of him, giving Carol a look at his back. She sticks out her tongue, unseen by Neil and Rachel, but it brings a smile to her face as she trudges behind.

INT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Satomi sits in the kitchen with the boys while Andy props a pillow beneath Jack's head on the couch. Jack has been stitched up, but the wounds are red and angry on his skin.

Paula kneels down by her husband's side.

PAULA Everything's all right now, Jack. We're going to get you out of here in just a minute, okay?

He does not respond.

ANDY

Did you try the phone again?

PAULA It's weird. I get a signal, but every number just rings. Voicemails, answering machines, recordings, but no people.

Satomi perks up at the words.

ANDY Keep trying.

PAULA How is he?

ANDY

He's alive.

PAULA

I see that.

ANDY

I'm not a doctor, Paula. I did a little EMT training, but that's it. I can dress his wounds, tell you he needs plenty of rest and water, but I don't know how bad it is.

PAULA It's a good thing you're here then.

Andy ignores the venom in her voice.

PAULA (cont'd) God forbid Andy doesn't save the day. Some hero you are.

ANDY Never said I was.

PAULA This wouldn't have happened if you weren't here!

ANDY Really? You really believe that? And this seems like the best time to argue about it?

PAULA No, I suppose not.

Okay, then. Keep trying the phone.

Andy brushes hair out of his brother's face and moves to Satomi.

ANDY (cont'd) You said there was worse out here. What's going on?

SATOMI

Not sure exactly. It's like every animal decided all at once to attack us. These animals are predators, sure, but they're attacking way outside their normal niche.

ANDY

So, people aren't usually on the menu?

SATOMI

Not even close. Sure, random bear attacks, but so few and far between that it's barely worth mentioning.

KEITH Maybe they're just mad.

JJ Maybe it's rabies.

ANDY

And maybe it just doesn't matter. What we have to do is figure out how to get out fast. Our car is down the mountain a little. Thought it would be fun to hike up to the cabin. Who knew?

SATOMI

Do you have any other weapons?

ANDY

Besides what you have? No.

PAULA

That's not true. Jack keeps one in the car when we travel.

JJ He does? PAULA

You forget I ever said that.

ANDY Still doesn't do us much good til we get down to it.

SATOMI

We have to go during the day. Most of the predators are nocturnal. Or, at least, less active during the day.

ANDY Comforting. Okay, so we hole up here tonight, then head for the car in the morning.

PAULA What about Jack?

ANDY What about him?

PAULA Can we take him with us?

ANDY I won't leave him here like this.

SATOMI

He may be a liability.

PAULA My husband is not a liability.

SATOMI I only mean that if he's still bleeding, he'll attract attention.

PAULA We're not leaving him.

ANDY No. We're not. We're just going to have to take our chances.

Satomi looks from Paula to Andy and nods.

SATOMI

Whatever is best for your family.

Andy stands and sighs, clapping Satomi on the back.

ANDY

I like your agreeability. In the meantime, let's pull the shutters on these windows and hole up as best we can. If anyone sees a beer it's mine.

PAULA That's not funny.

ANDY I wasn't joking.

EXT. FORK IN THE TRAIL - AFTERNOON

Carol trails Neil and Rachel a little, mostly to keep from engaging in conversation.

RACHEL We should be close, huh?

NEIL Should be.

RACHEL Is this the right trail?

NEIL

Should be.

RACHEL Wanna make out?

NEIL Most definitely.

Rachel grins.

RACHEL This doesn't seem real.

NEIL

I know.

RACHEL You're quite the chatterbox all of a sudden.

NEIL I'm listening. RACHEL

For what?

NEIL For something moving in the woods.

RACHEL I haven't heard anything.

NEIL You haven't been listening. Something's been following along for fifteen minutes or so.

RACHEL Oh my god, Neil, why didn't you tell me?

NEIL

I don't want you or Carol freaking out. Just keep moving. If you slow down, you keep ahead of Carol, okay?

RACHEL Why would you say that?

NEIL Because I love you.

RACHEL

That's almost sweet, if you weren't implying we toss our friend to the wolves. Literally.

NEIL You keep your conscience. I just want to survive.

Carol draws nearer.

CAROL You don't have to slow down for me.

NEIL

Just catching our breath. You doing okay?

CAROL All things considered, not even close. Rachel takes a step down the path, looking at the split to the right.

RACHEL Do you remember this split?

NEIL (to Carol) Are you sure you don't want me to take some of that?

CAROL

No. I appreciate it. Really.

NEIL

No worries.

RACHEL Seriously, guys. Do you remember-

The blow comes fast. Large, furry bodies moving quickly from the underbrush to Rachel, five of them. Hard to tell if these wolves are the same from last night. Hard to think with all the screaming.

CAROL

Rachel!

NEIL Run, Carol, now!

Neil has her by the arm, but she's slow, heavy with the pack she wears, and he's pulling her hard.

Rachel's cries are loud, but there's no hope. The wolves are tearing at the jacket she wears, at the jeans, at her exposed throat. The cries rise in pitch, then are silent.

Neil isn't hearing, even as the screams fade. He's taken the fork and drags Carol behind him, really hoofing it. Not sure where he's going, only that it's away.

CAROL

Neil, wait!

Neil lets her go. He is bounding ahead of her now.

Carol casts a look over her shoulder. No wolves, but Neil is moving far ahead of her. She puts her head down and gives chase to him, not gaining much ground, but keeping him in sight.

From behind them, they hear the wolves howl.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Andy jerks to attention from his place beside Jack. Paula notices.

PAULA What is it?

ANDY Did you hear that? Sounded like wolves. Seems weird.

Satomi looks behind him from his place at a window.

SATOMI It is weird. Wolves are primarily nocturnal hunters. And the howling is close.

PAULA What does that mean?

SATOMI Howling is their way of keeping in touch with the rest of their own pack and warning other packs off.

Keith and JJ wander over, curious.

KEITH

Like peeing on the rug?

SATOMI Kind of. Except they're telling other packs that this is their hunting ground.

JJ And you said they were close.

SATOMI

I did.

JJ Are we in their hunting ground then?

SATOMI It would be foolish to assume we weren't. PAULA Nothing. I don't know if it's my phone, or-

ANDY Or the rest of the world.

PAULA That's impossible.

SATOMI

Why?

PAULA

Why what?

SATOMI Why is it impossible?

PAULA

I just can't believe that every animal just decided they were going to start eating people.

SATOMI

It may not be as simple as that. Or as complex. Much of nature is a mystery to us. We have guesses. Like why birds fly south for the winter. How and why they do that is sort of understood, but not with any certainty. What's so strange about nature deciding that we are not so good for it? Zeitgeist.

KEITH

What's that? Like a ghost?

SATOMI

No. Zeitgeist is when many people get the same idea at once. An idea whose time has come. Maybe nature had an idea. The animals picked it up.

PAULA

That's just a story, Keith. Like in a book.

ANDY

As good an explanation as any, I guess. Still, there would have to be people left.

SATOMI

Why?

ANDY

There just would be. People in bomb shelters, or in a high rise. Someone would be left.

SATOMI Surely. Like us. Trapped. Alone. Scared.

PAULA I think that's enough.

ANDY She's right. There are kids here.

SATOMI Then they should be given every opportunity to listen. What I've seen is not a random attack. It's

several species suddenly deciding man is a suitable prey.

PAULA I said that's enough!

Satomi stops and stares at Paula.

SATOMI

Yes, ma'am.

JJ I don't believe any of it, Mom. Sounds like he made it up.

SATOMI

I did. I mean, the part about why. As far as animals killing people for no apparent reason...

Satomi motions outside.

There's a commotion outside the cabin. Andy gets to his feet fast, moving to Satomi.

ANDY Give me one of the weapons.

SATOMI

Which one?

ANDY Who gives a shit? One that fires bullets.

Satomi hands over the pistol.

ANDY (cont'd) Thanks. Keep an eye on the back door. Whatever's coming sounds like it's coming in the front, but we're not taking chances.

Satomi nods, raising the rifle and aiming it down the hall to the back door.

Andy creeps to the front. He can hear the sound of movement, of feet hitting dirt. He pulls the hammer on the pistol back.

NEIL (O.S.) Help us!

Andy snaps his head back to Satomi.

ANDY Was that a person?

Satomi nods tersely.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Andy opens the front door, stepping onto the porch, the pistol still tight in his grip.

From the trail leading deeper into the park, he sees a young man running towards him.

ANDY

Easy, now! Who are you?

Neil doesn't let up on the gas. He is barreling for Andy. Andy raises his pistol.

> ANDY (cont'd) Just tell me who you are!
Before Andy can make another idle threat, Neil is past him, hurdling onto the porch.

NEIL (cont'd) We gotta get inside.

CAROL (O.C.) Neil! Wait!

Carol emerges from the woods, arms and legs pumping. She has abandoned her pack.

Behind her, three of the wolves are on her heels, nipping and yipping at her feet.

ANDY Don't stop! Don't look back! Just run!

Carol doesn't look back. She runs.

A CRACK of a rifle report comes, and one of the wolves goes into somersaults.

Andy levels his own pistol at the space just behind Carol. She weaves back and forth as she runs, making a shot impossible.

> ANDY (cont'd) (to Neil) Get inside.

Neil doesn't wait for a second invitation.

ANDY (cont'd) Run! Hurry!

The two remaining wolves do not break chase. Their prey is at the tip of their jaws.

Carol hits the porch with Andy holding the door open for her.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

As soon as she is in, he slams the door, but not before one of the wolves can get its body wedged in. Behind him, the kids and Carol are all screaming. Satomi is making for the front, rifle in hand, butt still tucked in his shoulder.

Before he can draw a bead, Andy has placed the pistol in front of the snapping wolf's snout and the hammer finally falls with a deafening bang. Andy pushes the body onto the porch.

ANDY Is everyone okay?

The rifle fires again. Andy looks over his shoulder to the twitching body of the remaining wolf, at the porch streaked with gore.

SATOMI

We need to clean that up and get rid of the carcasses. It'll draw attention.

ANDY Then that's what we do. (to Neil) What's your name?

NEIL I'm Neil. That's Carol.

ANDY

Satomi, keep watch. Neil, you come with me. Your girlfriend can stay here.

NEIL

She's not my-

ANDY I couldn't care less who she is to you, son, get your ass up and help me.

Andy exits warily, followed by Satomi, and, with a glance to the strangers in the room and Carol, Neil follows.

EXT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Satomi stands at attention on the porch, cradling the rifle and overseeing the work.

Andy and Neil carry one of the wolf carcasses to the edge of the cabin's clearing and heave it into the brush.

NEIL You have any idea what's happening?

ANDY No more than you do.

NEIL I mean, it's gotta be rabies or something, right?

ANDY I honestly have no idea.

NEIL Some kind of virus or something. It's gotta be.

They move bag to the cabin to collect the other wolf.

ANDY Why does it gotta be?

NEIL

I don't know. Because.

ANDY That adds up.

They hurry the body across the clearing and toss the wolf into the brush.

ANDY (cont'd) Satomi had a different idea.

NEIL

What's that?

ANDY He thinks that Mother Nature decided we had outlived our usefulness.

NEIL That's crazy.

ANDY

Why?

NEIL

Just is.

ANDY

As good an argument as any. We're going to wash the blood off that porch, then we are going to very calmly get our gear together in case we have to leave fast.

SATOMI

I'll keep watch.

ANDY

We're all going to keep watch. Neil, why don't you run in and get some pots of water and start washing that shit off. I want to talk to Satomi.

NEIL Maybe I could help.

ANDY

Maybe you could, but I'm not asking for it. Go tend to the porch and your girl. Don't say anything you don't have to.

Neil grudgingly heads for the indoors.

SATOMI

What's wrong?

ANDY We need to talk about my brother.

SATOMI He's resting alright.

ANDY That's not what I mean. How do we move him from here to the car?

SATOMI

We'll have to put together some sort of a sled.

ANDY Any ideas how to do that?

SATOMI

Not really.

ANDY Me, neither. Look around when we get in.

SATOMI He needs a doctor.

ANDY I know that.

SATOMI I know you do.

ANDY Okay, then. And thanks.

SATOMI What for? Looks like everyone in that cabin is in it together, now.

ANDY Guess that's true.

The sound of wood popping beneath something heavy echoes across the clearing.

SATOMI

Quiet.

Andy nods.

Neil reappears on the porch, pouring water over the bloodstained wood. Pale red flows between the cracks and down the steps. He calls to Andy.

> NEIL I think some of this has soaked up pretty good!

Satomi spins to face him, holding his finger to his lips in a quieting gesture.

NEIL (cont'd) (whispering) What?

Another loud POP. This time, closer.

Satomi slowly raises the rifle as a giant BLACK BEAR lumbers into the clearing at a distance. His head swings low to the ground, then it stops, raising it's head, nostrils flaring. It grunts as it sniffs, eyes tracking from low to the ground to the cabin in the distance. ANDY

Don't shoot it unless you have the shot. No reason to just piss it off.

The bear continues to sniff, taking a few steps towards the cabin, then pauses.

ANDY (cont'd) What's it doing?

Satomi shrugs.

ANDY (cont'd) I thought you were an expert.

SATOMI I read a lot. I think we're out of the field guide's expertise.

The bear lowers it's head and ambles across the edge of the clearing back into the brush.

ANDY Let's keep it slow and quiet.

Andy and Satomi move backwards to the porch, eyes on the thick undergrowth. The bear has disappeared.

NEIL It didn't attack us.

SATOMI

No.

NEIL Maybe whatever was happening is over.

ANDY Maybe, but I'm not counting on it.

SATOMI That would be stupid.

ANDY Throw down some more water. I want to check on Jack.

Andy steps inside.

NEIL Who's Jack? SATOMI His brother.

NEIL The one who's all messed up?

SATOMI That's the one.

NEIL He doesn't look good.

SATOMI You should get more water.

Neil returns to his task as Satomi eyes the divide between the cabin's clearing and where the wild begins.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Andy sits beside his brother who lies prone on the bed. Paula is asleep in a chair on the opposite side. Andy has Jack's hand in his own when Jack's eyes flutter open.

> ANDY Hey. JACK Hey. ANDY How do you feel? JACK Felt better. ANDY Do you remember what happened? JACK Of course. Big cat. ANDY It sure was. JACK How's the family? ANDY

Holding up alright. We have a few stragglers with us, too.

JACK

Who?

ANDY Some college kids, I guess. They were at another cabin. Only two of them made it here.

JACK So the thing with the cat-?

ANDY Not just the cats. Two of them were killed by wolves.

JACK Jesus Christ. What's going on?

ANDY

Not sure. We're leaving in the morning, though. To the cars, to the city.

JACK Isn't someone coming to get us?

ANDY We can't get anybody on the phone.

JACK

Jesus.

ANDY

It's bad, Jack. Really bad. Something big is going on. To be honest with you, I don't know if we can get out of here. It's going to be a Long trip back to the car.

JACK You have to leave me here.

ANDY

Absolutely not.

JACK

Send help back, if you can. There's no way I can get there.

ANDY We're making you a sled. JACK

How?

ANDY Satomi is rigging up a sled. Pretty handy guy to have around.

JACK I need you to do me a favor.

ANDY

Anything.

JACK If something happens to me, I want you to take care of Paula and the kids.

ANDY I'm not really the father type, Jack. I'm afraid you'll have to stick around whether you want to or not.

JACK No bullshit, Andy. I need you to tell me you'll do it.

ANDY I'll do it.

JACK I love you.

ANDY I love you, too.

Jack droops his head to the other side.

JACK How long has she been asleep?

ANDY

An hour or so.

JACK I bet she's hating this.

ANDY Naw. I don't think anyone's having more fun than her. She thrives on it. Jack laughs and coughs.

JACK Go check on the boys. I'll keep an eye on her.

ANDY

Thanks.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Andy shuts the bedroom door, leaving the couple to themselves, surveying the room. Carol is withdrawn, leaning against the wall and watching the boys play the card game 'War' at the dining room table.

> ANDY (to Carol) How you holding up?

She snorts in bitter laughter.

ANDY (cont'd)

Okay, then.

Andy sits beside Keith, watching their game.

KEITH Uncle Andy, is Dad okay?

ANDY Yeah, he's doing really good. I need to talk to you boys for a second.

JJ About what?

ANDY We're going to leave in the morning.

KEITH We're going home?

ANDY

We are.

JJ What if it's like this all over? ANDY We're hoping it won't be.

JJ What if it is?

ANDY

Then we'll come up with something. First things first, though. I need you two to be strong for your dad. I want you to get all your stuff together just like when you got here and figure out what you can carry. Nothing too heavy. Understand?

KEITH

Why?

JJ In case we have to run.

ANDY That's right. Make sure you get all you need, but we have to be fast. Okay?

JJ Okay, Uncle Andy.

ANDY Your dad is very proud of you two. So's your mom.

KEITH We're proud of them, too.

Andy grins.

ANDY You guys are alright, you know that?

KEITH

We know.

Andy claps Keith on the back and drops JJ a wink.

ANDY We're going to be home tomorrow, boys. I, for one, will be very happy. Once you two are finished playing, get your stuff. EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Andy steps out on the porch with the sun beginning to slip below the horizon. Satomi emerges behind him.

> ANDY Pretty out here, huh?

SATOMI

Usually.

ANDY You're pretty good with that rifle. Where did you learn to shoot?

SATOMI Paintball. We played on the weekends back home.

ANDY Where are you from originally?

SATOMI

California.

Andy gives him an odd look.

SATOMI (cont'd) Lots of people wound tight inside.

ANDY

Yep.

SATOMI We have to keep them calm.

ANDY

Yep.

SATOMI We may lose some of them.

ANDY I know that, too. How's the sled for Jack?

SATOMI Rigged up. Not sure how long it will stay together if we start running. ANDY Let's get him on there sooner rather than later.

SATOMI

Good idea.

ANDY How are you holding up?

SATOMI Wish I was back on the beach, to be honest. How about you?

ANDY Wish I had a fridge full of beer and all the time in the world to drink it.

SATOMI Neither one of us has that.

ANDY Nope. Let's get inside.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Paula and the boys hold Jack's hand as Satomi, Neil and Andy place him carefully on the sled they have rigged. It's little more than ski poles from the cabin's decor strapped together with sleeping bags and bungee cord. Jack eyes are screwed tightly closed, the pain obvious as Andy holds him.

> NEIL He's heavy! ANDY

Hold him still for fuck's sake!

PAULA Watch your language.

SATOMI Is he on it?

NEIL

He's on!

SATOMI Okay, let him go... Neil releases Jack, who drops heavily to the floor with a cry of pain.

PAULA You're killing him!

ANDY We're not killing him. Just give us some goddamn room! Neil, get back! (to Satomi) Are his feet good?

Satomi places Jack's feet on the sled and fastens the bungee cords around him.

PAULA Why are you tying him down?

ANDY So we don't have to do it in a hurry. (to Satomi) Get back to the door, I'll take care of him from here.

PAULA Maybe I should do it.

ANDY

Why don't you see to the girl? I think she's freaked out.

CAROL

No, I'm actually good. Who knew?

JJ I think Uncle Andy just needs some time here, Mom.

PAULA Fine. Keith, come help me get some food for everyone.

KEITH I want to stay here and watch.

PAULA I wasn't asking.

JACK Go on, son, I'm fine.

The area clears some, leaving Andy and Jack temporarily isolated, Andy slumping to the floor. ANDY You're heavy as hell, you know that? You okay? JACK That hurt like a son of a bitch. ANDY I would imagine. JACK Is that how it's going to feel when I get dragged? ANDY That's probably going to be worse. JACK Why don't you just let me up? I can walk. ANDY But you can't run. JACK It's that bad? ANDY Looks like. Just relax while you can. How do the stitches feel? JACK I don't think I popped any. ANDY That's the first good news of the evening. You lost a lot of blood, Jack, and you still don't look so hot. Try to sleep. JACK You bet. Andy tussles his hair a little and stands. ANDY

Satomi, anything outside?

SATOMI

I thought I saw something a minute ago, but it was nothing.

ANDY You'd think we'd hear howling first.

SATOMI

You would.

ANDY Yell if you see anything else. And, thanks.

SATOMI No problem. We all just want to get out alive, huh?

ANDY All I ever wanted.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Slivers of light shine through the boarded windows of the cabin. The woods around the clearing are alive with motion. In particular, one patch of brush, the tips of its leaves extending seven feet or more into the air, wave as something passes through it.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The packs are by the back door, ready to be snatched up in a hurry. Satomi peers out the window, the rifle resting against the wall beside him, when the noise begins.

> JJ What's that?

CAROL Sounds like scratching.

PAULA From where? Do you see anything?

SATOMI Nothing out front.

Across the room, Andy stares into the blackness.

ANDY Must be coming from the side of the house.

CAROL What do we do?

ANDY We stay cool. If something gets into one of the bedrooms, we're going to hear it. We're pretty high off the ground, though.

The scratching is louder still.

KEITH Can we go, now?

ANDY Not yet, Keith. You just stay there by your dad.

The sound reverberates, sounds like it's coming from everywhere, now.

ANDY (cont'd) Satomi, you see anything?

Satomi turns to Andy and shakes his head 'no.'

JACK

Andy?

ANDY

I'm here.

JACK Get them out of here.

ANDY I will, soon. Just have to wait for morning.

JACK I think we should go now. It'll be morning soon.

ANDY Not soon enough.

The scratching gives way to a groaning sound, like the pop of a pine knot on a fire.

CAROL What is that?!

The floor beneath them rises and slowly falls again.

ANDY Oh, fuck me.

NEIL What is that?

The floor has only just settled when the center rises again, barely, but the boards strain upwards, accompanied by the sound of nails releasing their grip on the supports beneath.

> JJ What's happening?

ANDY Everyone over here, now!

Andy waves them to his place by the back door.

Neil, from his place by the front door, looks across the room, Satomi's pistol in hand.

Satomi sprints across the space as the floor rises again barely, but holds there, seams between the boards now visible.

Paula hurries to Jack, kneeling by his side.

PAULA Someone help me with him!

The floor gives way, boards splintering upwards as the torso of a great BLACK BEAR, seen earlier, comes through the floor.

Jack is pushed roughly on his side as the floor heaves, sending Paula backwards on her ass.

The bear releases a fierce roar, pivoting to the screams of Paula. It's fast. The claws are making quick work of Paula, digging into her shoulders, mouth buried in her neck as the first red spray jets around its maw.

JJ

Mom!

JJ makes a move, but Andy and Satomi both have the boy by the shoulders.

ANDY (to Carol) Hold him!

NEIL That's a fucking bear!

ANDY Get the boys to the door!

Neil makes as if to sprint by the bear, but it's enormous head swivels to him, another fierce roar ripping through the room.

Carol snakes her arms around the boy and holds him tight. His struggles are weaker now, as Paula's body falls limply to the floor.

> ANDY (cont'd) (to Satomi) Get that door open!

Andy clamors over the ruined floor, snagging the rope attached to Jack's sled, curling them in his hands.

Neil makes his move. His quarterback days kick in and he lowers his head, legs pumping.

The Bear wrestles into the cabin, the rest of its massive body pulled up from the space beneath the cabin. Andy turns, finding himself face-to-face with the animal.

ANDY (cont'd)

Oh, shit.

The Bear sniffs, taking in Andy's scent. A beat.

It roars again, the sound of raw hatred, cut short by the report of Satomi's rifle, flaying skin from the Bear's skull.

The Black's head swivels to Satomi, the exposed skull glistening red.

SATOMI

Go!

Andy does. With a lurch, he pulls the sled with him, following the rest out the back door and into the night as the Bear comes at them.

Neil is bringing up the rear as the bear charges. He almost makes it.

NEIL

Carol!

Carol doesn't break stride. The bear rips at his back, its weight crushing Neil even as the claws dig through jacket, shirt, skin. His cries don't last long.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

They are on the move. Carol pulls JJ and Keith with her at the head of the pack, Satomi and Andy each with a rope tied to the sled, yanking Jack along the unsteady ground.

The Bear, turning its attention from Neil's shattered remains, slams against the door frame of the cabin, unable to snake it's way through the narrow entrance, roaring at them as they flee.

The trail narrows as they make for the cars parked down the slope, a good couple of miles of steadily descending ground.

On the sled, Jack is crying out with every bump and pitch of the trail.

CAROL Is it coming? ANDY Not now... Keep going! JJ What's that? ANDY What's what? JJ That sound? They keep moving, slightly slower, catching their breath, ears perked.

From behind them, beside them, the sound of paws treading through the underbrush. Several of them.

ANDY (to Satomi) Wolves? Satomi nods.

ANDY (cont'd) What do we do?

SATOMI No idea. Maybe just stay slow and steady, keep going forward.

ANDY Okay, then. Carol, you stay ahead with the boys. Don't run. Don't panic. Keep going.

CAROL They're going to kill us.

ANDY

Not if you stay calm. One foot in front of the other. If you have to run, you don't let go of those boys, you understand me?

CAROL

Yes.

ANDY

Good.

JACK Just leave me behind, Andy. I can buy you some time.

ANDY

Afraid not. Quit arguing with me.

Satomi rases his rifle slightly, making sure he has one in the chamber.

The sounds are behind and on either side.

CAROL They're pushing us forward.

ANDY That's crazy.

SATOMI I think she's right.

ANDY They can't think like that. Not like that.

CAROL It's not them. It's all of it. God. ANDY That's crazy. CAROL You explain it, then. ANDY I can't. SATOMI Sounds like she wins, then. ANDY Et tu? Jack takes a particularly nasty bump. JACK Christ! ANDY Sorry. JACK We have to be close, huh? ANDY Hard to tell in the dark. Definitely the right trail, though. KEITH I want to go back with Dad and Uncle Andy. CAROL Stay up here with me, sweetie. JJ Keep going, Keith! Carol stops. CAROL You two need to quit tugging at each other. KEITH JJ started it.

CAROL

I don't care who-

The shapes comes from the right, slamming into Carol and shoving her to the ground. Two other lupine bodies are in motion, jaws clamping down on throat and leg, silencing her screams quickly.

ANDY

Run!

Andy snags both ropes and shoulders them, pulling the sled abruptly.

Satomi rushes forward and grabs both boys by the hand, leading them down the trail, rifle slung over his shoulder.

It's a sprint, now, moving fast as the sounds from behind and beside match pace.

Behind them, wolves leap from side to side, a pair clearly visible giving chase behind them.

Jack is being jostled to and fro on the path, actually catching air as Andy runs as fast as he can, losing ground on the boys and Satomi.

Jack's grunts and cries of protest are lost beneath the sound of howling all around them.

KEITH

Dad!

SATOMI Keep running!

JACK I'm here, son! You're doing so great!

His words are almost cut off as one of the wolves behind, closing in, nips at Jack's head.

JACK (cont'd) Get off me!

Jack's arms are strapped in. He is defenseless as another of the pack closes in, lunging to take a bite. It finds its home, spilling open Jack's cheek.

Andy casts a glance backwards, seeing blood streaming over Jack's face.

ANDY

Jack!

JACK Keep moving!

Andy does. The wolves toy with Jack, taking nips and bites as they come close, attack and back away.

Andy gives no notice. He's sprinting to catch up with Satomi.

Ahead, he sees another thick, furry body leap from the cover of flora to slip onto the trail, teeth finding and clamping on JJ's ankle.

JJ goes down. Andy can't react in time and plows over the boy, as does the sled, sending it on its side and over, dragging Jack face first along the ground. His screams are piercing.

Satomi does not let up, clutching Keith close to him as he moves.

Andy almost pauses, but the rest of the pack is on them. JJ is invisible behind the low curtain of fur, the wrenching of jaws on human flesh and bone.

Andy rights the sled quickly and runs again. Looking over his shoulder, he sees that Jack's eyes are open, staring wide, one because the eyelid has been ripped away, the other stares blankly up at the night sky.

ANDY

Jack?!

There is no answer. Andy releases the ropes and hauls ass.

EXT. PARKING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Satomi slams against an SUV with middle and high school stickers on windows and bumper.

SATOMI

You have the keys?

Andy barrels from the trail to the flat, graveled parking lot, hands digging in his pockets.

ANDY

Here.

KEITH Where's Dad?

Andy fumbles, finally opening the passenger door and lifting Keith inside after popping the automatic locks.

ANDY (to Satomi) In the back. Keep the rifle handy.

SATOMI

Look.

Andy stops his frantic direction and follows Satomi's gaze to the edge of the trail.

The wolves sit on their hind legs, half a dozen of them, eyes staring intently at the SUV and its passengers. They do not move.

ANDY What the hell is happening?

SATOMI We're out of their hunting ground. We made it.

ANDY That doesn't make sense.

SATOMI We're something else's problem now.

ANDY

Let's get going.

They slip into the SUV and fire it up. The wolves are motionless, licking their red-stained maws.

EXT. PARK ROAD - DAWN

The SUV moves steadily, if not speedily, along the dirt road connecting Yellowstone to the outside world. Sunlight breaks over the tips of the trees, creating a dim gray light near the floor of the forest.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Keith stares blankly out the window from the passenger seat. Satomi does the same from the back while Andy points the SUV back to civilization. You should have gone back for Dad.

ANDY

I couldn't.

KEITH You didn't even try.

Satomi glances at Andy, who does not reply.

ANDY We'll be home, soon.

It's Keith's turn to be silent.

SATOMI What is that?

ANDY

What?

SATOMI

Ahead.

Andy cranes forward. They are nearing the park's exit. On either side of the road, the predators sit patiently watching as the van rolls forward.

Wolf, bear, cougar, coyote, all watch. Hawks and eagles sit motionlessly on branches overhanging the road.

The only sound is the crunch of tires on the loose dirt of the road.

SATOMI (cont'd) (quoting) I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heavens, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.

ANDY Then why let us go?

SATOMI Because there's nowhere to run. EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The SUV flies along the paved roads finally. No other cars pass. A few skeletally empty vehicles are stopped at intervals, but no sign of drivers or passengers are seen.

EXT. LOSLOW CITY LIMITS - AFTERNOON

The SUV enters the main street of town. Cars with cracked and broken windows line the street. Windows of businesses are broken out, and nothing stirs on the street or within the businesses and homes.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Andy brings the SUV to a halt.

ANDY Keep going?

SATOMI We need food.

KEITH I have to go to the bathroom.

ANDY I could use a drink.

KEITH

You quit.

ANDY

Picked a hell of a time, didn't I? I'll go with Keith, if you want to scrounge up some food. I'm going to see if that sporting place across the way has some more ammo for us.

Andy opens the glovebox and removes a pistol.

ANDY (cont'd) I'll be damned. Paula was right when it counted.

SATOMI I'll be in the store. In and out. Back here in five minutes. ANDY

No more than that.

They open up and step into the new wild.

INT. LOSLOW SPORTING GOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Keeping the pistol pointed in front of him, Andy leads Keith into the store. Quickly sweeping through the aisles, Andy is satisfied.

> ANDY The bathroom is over there. Yell if you need me.

Keith suddenly hugs Andy tight. Andy is taken aback before holding his nephew close.

ANDY (cont'd) I know, buddy. We'll be out of here and home soon, okay?

Keith sniffles and nods.

ANDY (cont'd)

Be quick.

Keith slips into the depths of the store and enters the bathroom, locking the door behind.

Andy begins hunting through the cases for ammo.

INT. CORNER STORE - CONTINUOUS

With plastic bags looped around his wrist, Satomi fills the bags quickly with canned foods, the rifle over his shoulder.

Behind him, he hears the door push open.

Spinning, he finds himself facing down a trio of lean, hungry-looking coyotes.

He eases the bags to the floor, slipping the rifle down to a shooting position as the coyotes pad slowly, steadily forward, growling.

SATOMI Good doggies.

They lunge.

INT. LOSLOW SPORTING GOODS - CONTINUOUS

Andy jerks to attention as a gunshot echoes across the empty street.

KEITH (O.S.) Uncle Andy?

ANDY Stay where you are!

Andy slowly approaches the windowed store front, pistol cocked and ready. He shoulders the door open, looking for signs of life from the store.

ANDY (cont'd) Satomi! Satomi?!

He never sees the attack coming. The coyotes have claimed this town, along with the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth.

He is knocked flat by the ragged pack, gun sent skittering across the cement.

INT. LOSLOW SPORTING GOODS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Keith huddles inside the flourescent-lit room. He draws his knees up to his chest as the screams of his uncle twist beneath the cracks of the door and fill the small space.

As the tears begin to fall, the scratching begins at the door. One set of paws ripping at the wood with a low growl. Followed by another pair. And another. And another.

FADE OUT.