

BLACKBURN WOODS

Pilot

BY

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TEASER

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PLANT GATE - DAY

Hordes of people, young and old, scream in protest. They wave signs that read 'No Pipeline!' and 'Water over oil!'

Teenage protesters get out of their parents' minivans with homemade signs then wave their parents off.

VANCE Davenport, late 30s, a good-looking man in a suit with a megaphone and a cocky smirk approaches the inside of the gate. The crowd surges against the gate, furious.

He stops a few feet from the gate. He holds up the megaphone.

VANCE

Everyone! Everyone. We hear you.

The crowd begins to quiet.

VANCE (CONT'D)

But there's nothing we can do about-

The crowd erupts again.

2

EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - DAY

2

A **BEAST** ROARS, same pitch as the crowd.

From the point of view of the Beast: a large tapir-like rodent, a tapirid, skitters fearfully over roots in the shadows of huge, ancient trees. End POV.

The huge, unseen Beast stalks the rodent as it squeaks and squeals in terror. The rodent takes a sharp right turn.

The rodent tries to hide itself against a tree. Slowly, a huge, black, scorpion stinger brushes across its back.

The forest is still. The trees are huge and many. The ground is mossy and dotted with brush. Anguished SQUEAL.

The voice of a little boy comes through the trees.

ANDREW (V.O.)

I used to be afraid of the forest.

3

EXT. IN THE WOODS - DAY

3

Multiple locations in quick succession.

Sunlight streams through younger, smaller trees and spatters against a gentle slope. Deer rush through the trees.

ANDREW (V.O.)
But after you spend a lot of time
here, it's not so bad.

A large grizzly bear, sabertooth tiger hybrid roars in the mouth of a cave. She has boney spikes from her neck down her spine, and long curled claws. A cute baby bear ambles out of the cave behind her and gives a smaller roar.

ANDREW (V.O.)
Animals can be your friend.

Water nymphs play in a stream in the dark shade of willow trees. They're almost human, but their pale blue skin, long white hair, and gills give them away.

ANDREW (V.O.)
As long as you're nice to them.

The water nymphs look directly at the viewer in unison, menacingly. Orange eyes aglow, gills flared.

Along a different stream, small animals pick through garbage.

ANDREW (V.O.)
But if you're not...

A big, dark shadow rises over the small animals and they scatter. One huge, black, scorpion leg lands like a skewer directly in the middle of the garbage pile.

4

EXT. SCENIC HIGHWAY ON THE EDGE OF THE FOREST - DAY

4

An old, red, Subaru station wagon cruises along a scenic highway, reminiscent of the Blue Ridge Highway.

ANDREW (V.O.)
...you better say you're sorry.

To one side of the highway, rural American South. To the other, the forest stretches from here to the horizon.

5

EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - DAY

5

Silhouettes of seven men hike in the forest at sunset.

ANDREW (V.O.)
Because they know who isn't nice.
And they will remember.

As trees pass in front of the men, the trees dissolve into...

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

6

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

6

Bookshelves. At a table among the bookshelves sits JANE Ingram, age 16. She works with laser focus on her laptop. Her wavy, brown hair in a mess on her shoulders. A notebook, agenda, cellphone, and eco-friendly book bag sit nearby.

BENNY Encarnación, age 16, walks behind her, bends to look over her shoulder. He has a pretty round face, he's mostly fit, and his smile could light a football field at midnight.

On her screen is a flyer for 'Community clean up day, hosted by East Wood High School's Environmental Awareness Club.'

BENNY

Looks dope.

JANE

Thanks, I'm just nit-picking. I'll print them tomorrow and we can distribute them Monday at lunch.

BENNY

Great. Need me to do anything else?

She turns around to look at him.

JANE

Can you just make sure everyone knows to pick up their stack outside the art room before lunch?

Benny takes out his phone and types a note.

BENNY

No problem. Hey I was going to grab food on the way home, wanna come?

JANE

Thanks, but Spencer's picking me up. His fall break just started.

Benny's face fights disappointment.

BENNY

Cool, cool. See you Monday then?

JANE

Mhm! I'm going to figure out which parks are the most in need this weekend. I'm gonna try to hit one tonight, and three tomorrow. I hear Boswell Park is absolutely trashed.

BENNY

Can I join you tomorrow?

JANE

Sure, if you want.

Benny, cool, tries not to look too excited.

BENNY

See you tomorrow then.

Jane's phone buzzes. She checks it. She starts to pack up.

JANE

Spencer's here. I'll text you tonight about tomorrow, cool?

BENNY

Cool, cool.

Benny watches Jane leave. He stands alone. He moves his shoulders in a dorky dance to hype himself up.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Tomorrow. Tomorrow, alright, okay.

He turns back to his table.

7

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

7

SPENCER Ingram, 21, sturdy and baby faced, sits in the drivers seat on his phone, Jane approaches the car. Spencer glances up as she passes the front. She climbs in shotgun.

JANE

Welcome back.

SPENCER

Thank.

JANE

You're not cool enough for 'thank.'

He shoots her a finger gun.

SPENCER

I've never been cool a day in my life.

JANE

Okay, go home.

Spencer puts the car in drive and pulls away from the school.

SPENCER

Nope, Mom's still at work, I figured we'd meet her there.

JANE

Cool, after that though can you take me to Maxwell Park real quick?

SPENCER

Why?

JANE

Prep for community clean up day next weekend.

SPENCER

Pass.

JANE

Okay, but please?

The car speeds off down a main road.

8 **EXT. DIXIE'S DINER - DAY**

8

Spencer's red station wagon pulls into the gravel parking lot of a small, well-worn diner in a cloud of dust. The vaguely 1950s themed diner is adorned with peeling paint and dented fake chrome. A red, white, and blue neon sign above the door reads 'Dixie's Diner - Since 1953.'

9 **INT. DIXIE'S DINER - DAY**

9

Jane, with backpack on, leads Spencer into the diner. A handful of patrons sit at tables and the counter. GUS, 50s, a large, gritty man behind the counter, nods at them.

Spencer nods back, Jane pleasantly waves.

They take a seat at a booth.

LORI Ingram, late 40s, mature kind of pretty, delivers food to a table nearby.

She sees them, and as soon as her tray is cleared, she rushes over. Hands on hips, sour face. She has a slight southern lilt in her voice.

LORI
I'm sorry, we don't serve your kind here.

SPENCER
That's reasonable.

JANE
Yeah? What kind are we?

Lori raises her eye brows at Spencer.

LORI
The kind that go a whole month without callin' their mother. Scoot over!

Lori scoots Spencer over and takes the seat next to him. She gives him a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

SPENCER
Sorry Mom.

LORI
Mhmm. Welcome back baby, how was the drive?

SPENCER
Fine. Long.

LORI
Did you eat?

SPENCER
I figured we were here for dinner.

LORI
Fine by me, I don't get off 'till close. Club sandwich and a bacon cheeseburger?

They both nod.

LORI (CONT') (CONT'D)
I'll put it in.

Lori gets up and walks into the kitchen.

JANE
Okay, now. Please please please
take me to Maxwell! It's not that
far!

SPENCER
You don't have that much daylight
left anyway, just go tomorrow.

JANE
I have like four other parks to
check tomorrow.

SPENCER
With whose car?

Jane stammers for an answer, Spencer looks amused.

JANE
... Yours!

SPENCER
I thought so. Did you think to ask
if I had plans tomorrow?

JANE
Do you have plans tomorrow?

Spencer stammers for an answer, Jane looks amused.

SPENCER
...No.

JANE
Wonderful, then you can take your
sister- whom you love so very much-
to check some parks to help her
organize the third annual community
clean up day, truly an act of
service by one Spencer Ingram.

Lori returns, she puts their food down and sits next to Jane.

SPENCER
That was fast.

LORI
Gus put the order in as soon as
y'all walked in.

Gus looks up from wiping down the counter and gives them a
smile-less thumbs up. Jane shouts to him.

JANE

Thank you!

Gus wordlessly resumes his task.

LORI

So! How are your classes?

SPENCER

Fine.

He takes a big bite of his burger.

LORI

Just fine? Senior year? The big last stretch and it's just fine?

Spencer does not meet her gaze, he nods.

JANE

Mom, tell Spencer to take me to Maxwell park. For clean up day prep.

LORI

Now?

JANE

After this.

SPENCER

I'll take her, I'll take her.

JANE

Thank you! Knew you missed me.

LORI

Just ditch your mama as soon as you get home, she won't mind. Why would you wanna hangout with her, anyway?

JANE

We hang out all the time!

LORI

(Jokingly)

Not you, I'm tired of you, I was talking to the one that doesn't call!

SPENCER

I'm sorry!

JANE
Thanks, love you too.

LORI
Love you. If you gotta go today,
you better go now. Days are gettin'
shorter, and I do not want you two
out in Maxwell past dark. I'll see
you at home. Let me get you boxes.

Lori gets up and walks to the counter, out of earshot.

JANE
So whats up with classes?

Spencer shoots her a warning look as Lori returns with boxes
and a plastic bag. Jane quickly packages her food, Spencer
takes one more bite before he boxes it.

LORI
Thanks for stopping in for a bite.
One single bite.

JANE
We'll see you after work! We'll
watch Gilmore Girls and make cheesy
popcorn or something.

Jane shoves the boxes in the bag and gets up with her things.

SPENCER
(Sarcastic)
Girls night, my favorite!

LORI
(To Jane)
Mhm. Text me when you get home.
Don't get distracted identifying
plant types or whatever it is you
do.

JANE
Never.

She kisses her mom near the cheek and starts out the door.

SPENCER
How have you been?

LORI
Tired, but what else is new. Don't
you worry about me, sweet boy. It's
my job to worry about you.

SPENCER
Whatever you say.

Spencer raises his eyebrows at her. Lori gives him a soft, sympathetic smile.

LORI
I know baby. Thanks for asking, I'm alright. Go on, before Jane explodes.

Spencer gets up, gives Lori a big hug, and hustles out.

10

EXT. MAXWELL PARK - DAY

10

Spencer's Subaru pulls into the gravel parking lot and stops.

The park is a field with some patches of dead grass. On one side, there's a pavilion over picnic tables with overflowing trash cans. To the other side, there's a small, worn play structure. Ahead of them, the edge of the forest.

A sign on the edge reads, 'Maxwell Park. Park Closes at Dark. No ranger on duty. Hike at your own risk.'

Jane, backpack on, takes pictures of the garbage trapped in the brush on the edge of the forest.

Spencer sits on a rusty swing on the sad play structure.

JANE
Spence, would you grab me the plastic bag from the car?

Spencer groans, but gets up.

A BUCK watches Jane from out of sight in the woods.

11

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

11

Benny sits in a cozy corner on his laptop. The wall above him is covered in educational posters and a large world map.

It shows no oceans. There are dense forests where the oceans would be. There are wide rivers where the strongest ocean currents would've been. Every continent has many large lakes.

Benny works on his laptop on a many page report. He starts a new paragraph and types, 'The'. He stops.

He stares at the ceiling. He key smashes.

The librarian walks over, he doesn't notice. MS. BAXTER, late 60s, is frail with small glasses and cheaply dyed hair.

MS. BAXTER
Benny, finish up.

Benny jolts up straight, deletes his key smash.

BENNY
Thanks, I'm wrapping up.

MS. BAXTER
Thank you! It's so nice having someone else in the library, I always hate kicking you out.

BENNY
Don't worry about it, I'll be back.

Benny packs up his book bag.

MS. BAXTER
Not to be a busybody, but how are things with Jane?

Benny turns tomato red and stammers. He hurries past her.

BENNY
Fine. We're fine. Just friends.
Fine.

MS. BAXTER
Right, of course. You better get home for dinner. See you tomorrow.

BENNY
See you tomorrow, bye!

He power walks out the door. She shakes her head and smiles.

12

EXT. MAXWELL PARK - DAY

12

Spencer presents Jane with the takeout bag, boxes still inside. She's unamused, but takes it anyway.

JANE
Just the bag!

She moves the leftovers into her backpack and collects garbage in the plastic bag.

SPENCER
Isn't the clean up next weekend?

JANE
Yeah, but I can't just leave this
here. I'll just get the plastics.

A small child's SCREAM comes from the forest. Jane and
Spencer stand up straight and look for the source.

ANDREW (O.S.)
Help!

They look at each other. Spencer takes off in the direction
of the sound. Jane slings her backpack on and follows close
behind, death grip on her bag straps.

13

EXT. IN THE WOODS - DAY

13

1 mile from the park. **ANDREW**, age 5, stands, sobs, and
screams. His 90s-style striped shirt is streaked with dirt.

Jane and Spencer run into view. They stop when they see him.

ANDREW
(Through sniffles)
Hello?

Jane steps closer to him, Spencer looks around for a threat.
She crouches a little to look him in the face. He backs away.

JANE
(Softly)
It's okay, I'm Jane, this is
Spencer. Can we help you?

ANDREW
I can't find my mom!

JANE
Okay, we'll help you find your mom.

His sobs subside. He wipes his nose with his hand.

JANE (CONT'D)
What's your moms name?

ANDREW
Mom.

JANE
Oh-kay, what's your name?

ANDREW
Andrew.

JANE
When did you last see your mom?

ANDREW
I don't know!

He bursts into tears again.

Spencer steps past Jane, he crouches, level with Andrew.

SPENCER
Hey, hey, it's okay, shh, shh
you're not lost anymore, you're
okay.

Andrew snuffles, tears subside once more.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Nice to meet you Andrew. It's okay
now, we're going to find your mom.
You'll be home safe soon, okay?

ANDREW
Okay.

SPENCER
Can you show me where you lost her?

He points vaguely back into to forest.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Okay, do you wanna be the leader?

Andrew gives a little nod. He turns and walks. Spencer discreetly gives Jane a thumbs-up, they follow him. He turns around every few paces to be sure they're behind him.

14 **EXT. IN THE WOODS - DAY**

14

5 miles from the park.

Andrew leads them through the trees. The sun is low, end of golden hour. They yell into silence.

SPENCER
Andrew's mom!

ANDREW
Mom!

JANE
We found your son!

SPENCER

Jane-

JANE

Hello!?

SPENCER

Jane, I think we should head back.

JANE

Maybe you're right. My feet hurt.

SPENCER

If she were here, we would've found her.

Andrew takes a small step away from them.

JANE

Should we bring him to the police?

SPENCER

Yeah, I think that's the best thing. C'mon Andrew, let's see if your mom left the forest trying to find you.

ANDREW

No! I have to find my mom!

Andrew takes off in a sprint, deeper into the forest. They look at each other, panicked. They chase him and call to him.

JANE

Your mom isn't in there!

SPENCER

C'mon bud, we'll still find her!

JANE

Come back! Stop!

Andrew keeps running. He takes a hard left turn.

Jane and Spencer take a hard left. They call after him.

Andrew rushes down a slope. They stumble down the hill.

Andrew runs right, they run right. They nearly catch him, Spencer stumbles.

He runs, they follow. The forest turns to dusk around them.

15

EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

15

8 miles from the park.

Andrew collapses, and lets his tiny out of breath body slide down a slope. He pants as Jane and Spencer catch up with him.

Jane, exhausted, sits on one side, Spencer, more exhausted, sits on the other. They speak, trying to catch their breath.

JANE

Look. Don't you. Do that again. We are trying. To help you.

ANDREW

Mom.

SPENCER

I don't think your mom is in here buddy. Let's take a breath, then head-

He looks in the direction they came. The forest is unfamiliar. Bigger, darker, further removed from Maxwell.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

- back out.

JANE

You kept track of where we turned, right?

SPENCER

I wasn't thinking about it. Left at a thin tree?

JANE

Great.

She pulls out her phone.

JANE (CONT'D)

No signal. 20 percent.

Spencer pulls out his phone.

SPENCER

34 percent, no signal.

Jane takes a deep, meditative breath.

JANE

Okay Hawk Scout, what do we do?

SPENCER

Seriously? It's been like- I could
ask you the same, Nature Scout!

JANE

Whatever, between the two of us we
can handle this, we know things.
We're not actually lost are we?

Spencer is silent. The shadows of the trees grow longer.

JANE (CONT'D)

Are we?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO16 **INT. DIXIE'S DINER - NIGHT**

16

Lori closes out the register. She's out of her uniform, her apron and purse sit on the counter. The diner is empty.

She fishes her phone from her bag.

Message window, 'Jane.' She types, 'Hello? R U home?'

17 **EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT**

17

9 miles from the park.

Spencer leads Jane and Andrew through the trees in the moonlight. Andrew watches Spencer closely. Jane and Spencer look exhausted, Andrew is wide awake.

Jane stops. She looks in a different direction.

JANE

This doesn't feel right.

SPENCER

I think it's right.

JANE

I don't think it is. Look, that way kind of slopes up, we should go that way.

Spencer stops, turns around to face her.

SPENCER

There's slopes this way too.

JANE

I think were going deeper.

SPENCER

No, look at the tree roots.

JANE

That only works on some trees, and I can't tell which are which in the dark.

SPENCER

Would you just trust me?

JANE
Not if I think we're wrong!

Andrew wanders away from them, distracted.

SPENCER
We're not going the wrong way!

JANE
Yes we are!

SPENCER
You don't know that!

JANE
Neither do you!

SPENCER
I'm trying!

JANE
And I'm not!?

SPENCER
No, you-! Ugh! Fine, fine, you
always have to be right! We'll go
your way.

JANE
You always have to be right!

SPENCER
I just want to get you home, okay!?

JANE
Oh right, because this is all my-

SPENCER
Shut! Up! Where's Andrew?

Jane turns to the empty space behind her.

JANE
Oh you've gotta be sh-

Andrew appears behind Spencer.

ANDREW
It's okay! Don't fight!

They jolt, Andrew holds out a handful of dandelions.

SPENCER
I'm sorry, I-

JANE
It's fine. You-

Andrew hands each of them some dandelions.

ANDREW
C'mon!

Andrew walks the same direction they were going. Spencer follows. Jane glances in the opposite direction and hesitantly follows.

18 **INT. INGRAM HOUSE - NIGHT**

18

The entryway of the small house is dark. The front door opens, Lori is silhouetted by the moonlight. She flips the light on. She calls into the house.

LORI
Hello?

She enters the messy, outdated kitchen. It's undisturbed. She flips the light on as she passes through.

LORI (CONT'D)
Guys?

Lori opens the door to Jane's room, flips her light on. The undisturbed room hosts an eclectic mix of girlish things, studious young adult things, and progressive politics.

Lori's brow furrows in concerned confusion.

19 **EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT**

19

11 miles from the park.

They look exhausted. They trudge onward. Andrew dodges twigs and branches that Spencer pushes away, Jane dodges some and pushes others.

Spencer makes a misstep into a ditch. He twists his ankle and loses his balance. He tries to catch himself on a tree but misses. He hits the ground hip first.

SPENCER
F-!

Andrew stares at him with concern. Spencer looks at the kid.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Ffffffffff-- frick that hurt.

Andrew is scandalized. Jane's eyes widen.

ANDREW
Oooh, that's a bad word!

The ground on the edges of Spencers body starts to glow blue.

SPENCER
That's a bad w-

JANE
Spencer don't move.

SPENCER
What?

JANE
You fell in Tagore moss.

Spencer immediately takes his hands off the ground and raises them above his head.

SPENCER
Shit!

Andrew's mouth drops open and his eyes light up. Spencer points at him.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
No!

JANE
Can you stand?

Spencer tries to put pressure on his twisted ankle. He grimaces, bites his lip. The glow spreads to a one-foot radius around him, it gets brighter.

SPENCER
Yeah. Yeah I can stand on it.

Jane carefully steps to the edge of the moss, she reaches out her hands.

JANE
Wrists.

Spencer gives her his wrists, she struggles to pull him up.

Spencer gets back to his feet. He steps off the moss and takes a seat on the ground. Jane kneels next to him.

She takes out her cellphone from her bag.

JANE (CONT'D)
Let me see your hands.

She turns her phone flashlight on Spencer's hands. The moss glows brighter in front of them. They do not notice.

Spencers hands are beginning to blister.

JANE (CONT'D)
Does it hurt?

SPENCER
Getting worse.

Jane shines her light into her bag as she rifles through it.

JANE
I think I have something I can-

SPENCER
Woah. Turn your light off. Look.

Jane looks up.

JANE
Woah.

The moss spread. It expands out like bronchi of a lung, it has a primary direction, but it fans out. It keeps expanding away from them. It illuminates the darkness.

ANDREW
Let's follow it!

JANE
Hang on.

Jane fishes in her bag, she pulls out a water bottle and a tin of vaseline.

JANE (CONT'D)
Hold them out.

Spencer holds his hands out. She pours a little water on his hands. He gingerly rubs his hands together, shakes them off, then wipes them on his shirt.

SPENCER
I've never seen this much of it.

JANE
Me either.

Jane uses two fingers to scrape a glob of vaseline into his hands, careful not to touch them. Andrew watches carefully.

JANE (CONT'D)

(To Andrew)

Tagore moss draws water like a sponge-

SPENCER

A thirsty, mean sponge.

JANE

That'll put moisture back in his skin so it doesn't burn, and heals faster.

ANDREW

Oh.

SPENCER

Our fearless leader is right though, we should follow it. It'll lead us to water, water can lead us out.

JANE

Thank God.

Andrew leads them along the edges of the moss. Jane helps Spencer to his feet. She helps him walk off his injury.

A buck, illuminated by the blue glow, passes where they sat.

20 **INT. INGRAM HOUSE - NIGHT**

20

Lori, in her night clothes, locks the front door. She stares at the lock. She unlocks the door.

21 **EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT**

21

13 miles from the park.

Jane leads the charge. Spencer looks tired, Andrew doesn't.

JANE

It can't possibly be much further.

SPENCER

You said that twenty minutes ago.

JANE

Tagore moss doesn't grow this far from water.

SPENCER

Maybe we went the wrong way. Again.

Jane stops. Eyes fixed on something ahead of her. She veers slightly to the left and picks up her pace. Andrew and Spencer hurry after her.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Slow down!

Jane stops on the edge of a clearing that seems to divide the forest. Grass and shrubbery, no trees. A river with no water, dried so long nature has already reclaimed it.

Spencer and Andrew appear next to Jane.

ANDREW

River?

JANE

Yes and no.

SPENCER

That might explain the moss though.

JANE

Sure, river dried up, it had to leech off the roots.

ANDREW

Can we follow it?

JANE

May as well try.

Jane jumps down from the bank into the grass. She takes a few steps 'upstream.'

SPENCER

Jane. We need to make a camp.

JANE

But we have a way out now.

SPENCER

We have a direction. We would still have to walk for hours to get out. It must be three AM by now. This is a good spot to camp. Let's sleep, we'll go when the sun comes up.

Jane looks 'upstream'. She reluctantly returns to Spencer.

22

INT. BENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

22

Pop MUSIC plays. The room is sparsely decorated. Sports icons here, garbage there. A warm atmosphere despite the mess.

Benny lays in the fetal position in his bed and stares at the wall. He checks his phone, then lays it flat in front of him. Pause. Check. Lay flat. Pause. Check. Lay flat. Check.

He rolls over and stares at the ceiling.

BENNY

Don't be desperate.

He rolls to the other side. He types in Jane's chat window.

'Hey,' he deletes it.

'Hello?' Deletes it. 'What's up?' Deletes it.

'Are you okay?'

He looks at the wall.

He deletes 'Are' and hits send.

He flips himself onto his stomach and groans.

23

INT. INGRAM HOUSE, LORI'S ROOM - NIGHT

23

Lori sits on the edge of her bed with her phone to her ear. It rings. It goes to voicemail.

JANE

(As a voicemail recording)

Hi, you've reached Jane Ingram, I'm not-

Lori ends the call.

Her call log reads 'Jane (35)' followed by 'Spencer (37).'

She taps Spencer's name. It rings.

SPENCER

(As a voicemail recording)

Hello, this is Spencer Ingram, sorry I missed-

Lori ends the call. She taps Jane's name again.

24

EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

24

13 miles from the park.

On the edge of the riverbank, they've constructed a lean-to of branches and twigs. They sleep under it.

Andrew rolls over into the open. Then, like a sleep walker, he stands. He stands very still.

Big, BLACK BLUR.

Andrew is gone.

A SCREAM.

Spencer and Jane wake up, startled. Jump to their feet, lean-to falls in a heap. They turn, back to back.

Spencer scans the clearing, then the forest. It's still.

Silence.

JANE
(Whisper)
Andrew?

Silence.

JANE (CONT'D)
Where did he-

SPENCER
Shh.

A loud CRUNCH from the darkness of the forest.

ANDREW (O.S.)
(As though he gets further
away by the second)
Help me! Help me!

Jane lurches in the direction of his voice, Spencer throws his arm out to stop her.

A LOW-GROWL from the same direction.

Jane stands, wide eyed, frozen. Rapid, shallow BREATHS. Spencer, without pulling his wide eyes away from the darkness, very slowly bends down, picks up Jane's bag. He carefully slips his hand into Jane's hand.

SPENCER
(Whispers)
Run.

JANE
Hm?

SPENCER
RUN!

Spencer pulls Jane into a sprint.

They sprint across the grass to the trees on the other side.

The GROWL becomes a HISS.

The brush CRUNCHES behind them, matching their pace.

They run blindly through the trees in darkness, can't see more than 10 feet in front of their faces.

SQUELCH. Their shoes hit the mud of the river bank. This one with water. Only the smallest amount of moonlight reflects off the stagnant water.

The brush CRUNCHES in some distance behind them.

On the other side of the water, a cabin not too far off the bank. A single lantern burns dimly in the window.

Spencer looks at the lantern then back at the woods. He charges into the water.

JANE
What the hell?

SPENCER
Do you see a bridge? Shortest distance, straight line!

Jane looks up at the lantern. She pulls her shoes off and rushes after Spencer.

JANE
Which way is it moving?

SPENCER
Doesn't feel like it's moving at all!

They struggle to keep their speed as they trudge through the shallow water.

JANE
It's a river, how can it not move?

SPENCER
I don't know, science later!

Spencer trudges out of the mud, soaked, covered in algae. He turns around and reaches for Jane's hand. He pulls her out. They move as fast as they can to the cabin.

On the opposite side of the water, a BLACK BLUR moves back through the trees. GROWL.

25 **INT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - NIGHT**

25

The cabin is abandoned. It looks like a hybrid makeshift laboratory and Everest camp. Whoever was here last left in a hurry. The battery-powered lantern lays on its side, mens clothes lay on chairs, and supplies litter the floor.

Spencer bursts through the door, practically dragging Jane.

He slams the door, locks it. He runs to Jane, in the middle of the room. They stand and stare at the door in fear.

Moments pass. No sounds come. They catch their breath. They sink to the floor and cling to each other.

JANE
(Whispering)
It ate him.

SPENCER
Shh.

JANE
It ate him!

SPENCER
But it didn't eat you, so shut up!

Spencer hugs Jane as she starts to shake, breath uneven.

JANE
We're gonna die.

SPENCER
I think it left.

JANE
Why would it leave?

SPENCER

I don't know, but I don't hear it.

Quiet. Jane starts to breathe normally again. Spencer slowly releases her. He fixes his eyes on the window near the door.

Spencer stays low, moves slowly to the window. The floor CREAKS. He peers out.

Jane shakes her head and scoots back.

Spencer stands and looks at her, framed by the dark window.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Nothing. All clear.

He walks back and sits across from her.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I don't know what to say.

JANE

What could you say, what could either of us say? It killed him!

SPENCER

I know.

They look down, shaken.

26 **INT. INGRAM HOUSE, LORI'S ROOM - NIGHT**

26

Lori lies down in her bed. She flips from her side onto her back. Eyes wide open.

27 **INT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - NIGHT**

27

Jane and Spencer sit on the floor of the cabin. Calm. Quiet. Jane cautiously stands.

JANE

I do think I know where we are.
Sorta.

She looks around the room.

JANE (CONT'D)

Looks like a sci-camp. Dunno which one, there's a bunch of them. This one's in pretty bad shape, I thought they'd be nicer.

She looks through the supplies laying on the floor.

SPENCER
Should we check if someone's here?

JANE
I feel like if there was someone
here, they would've woken up after
all that.

She picks up a mens polo shirt off a chair. She sniffs it
then extends it to him.

JANE (CONT'D)
Does this smell clean to you?

Spencer sniffs it and passes it back.

SPENCER
Cleaner than we are.

JANE
Dibs. Can you see what's down that
hallway?

She gestures to a dark, narrow hallway off the main room.

SPENCER
So anything living down there can
eat me first? Pass.

Jane rolls her eyes. She finds a book and a flashlight on the
floor. She hurls the book down the hallway. THUD-THUNK. It
hits the wall then floor. Spencer is incredulous.

JANE
All clear.

SPENCER
What if it weren't though? What if
you just beaned a wolf in the head
with a textbook? What then?

JANE
But I didn't.

She clicks the flashlight, it comes on dimly. She walks down
the hallway cautiously. Spencer watches.

JANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Looks like a kitchen and some
equipment. There's a sink.

The sound of WATER from a faucet.

A faint, blue light shines in from the window and shimmers across Spencer's cheek. Spencer turns to look.

JANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It works, we can rinse off!

Spencer cautiously approaches the window and peers out.

Nothing but darkness.

Jane walks back into the room behind him. She wears the polo shirt as a dress.

JANE (CONT'D)
Wanna rinse yours too?

Spencer turns away from the window, takes a breath, and rubs his eyes.

SPENCER
Yeah.

JANE
See anything?

SPENCER
No. I think I'm seeing things.

JANE
We should sleep.

She walks to a small pile of sleeping bags and inspects them.

As she lays out the sleeping bags, Spencer peels his shirt off as he walks down the hallway.

Jane unpacks her bag. Water runs in the background. She pulls out the leftovers from the diner, a pack of breath mints, and a stick of deodorant. She pops a mint in her mouth and applies the deodorant awkwardly under the shirt.

Spencer returns in only his boxers. They're clearly very old, baby blue with mittens on them. Jane doesn't look up.

JANE (CONT'D)
Are you hungry?

SPENCER
Not even a little. I had abject
terror for dinner.

JANE
Same. They can be breakfast.

She picks up the leftover boxes and holds them up to him.
When she sees his dumb boxers, she smiles.

JANE (CONT'D)
Haven't you had those since like,
the 8th grade?

SPENCER
Yeah, ish, and?

JANE
Truly a prize to women everywhere,
Spencer Ingram.

SPENCER
Ha, ha.

He takes the food from her and walks down the hallway, at the
end of the hall he opens a fridge and puts them inside.
Inside the fridge, labeled sample vials with dirt and water.

JANE
I'm just saying, they look like
they belong to a child. And they're
gross.

Spencer talks from down the hall.

SPENCER
They're still pond wet!

JANE
(Sarcastic)
Someone call GQ.

Jane gets into her sleeping bag and gets cozy as Spencer
comes back down the hall.

SPENCER
Oh you're so funny, accepting her
Golden Globe for comedian of the
year, Jane Ingram.

Spencer climbs into his sleeping bag.

JANE
The superlative title bit is mine,
thanks, and that's not a category
at the-

Spencer's wet boxers land on Jane's face.

JANE (CONT'D)
Ewwwww!!!!

Jane rips them off and sits up straight. She balls them up and throws them back at him.

JANE (CONT'D)
That was the grossest fucking thing! What the fuck Spencer! You are the grossest fucking person!

Spencer, cozy in his sleeping bag, has the most pleased grin.

JANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You're so damn gross, here.

Jane's deodorant hits him on the cheek.

SPENCER
Ow!

He sits up. Now she looks pleased with herself and lays back down. He tosses it back to her.

JANE
You don't want to smell like 'everlasting summer'?

SPENCER
You are so lucky it's cold out and I am the mature one here.

JANE
Uh huh. Night.

SPENCER
Night.

Spencer lays back down. The SOUND of the forest at night permeates the silence. Jane opens her eyes, uneasy.

She scoots her sleeping bag much closer to Spencer.

28 **EXT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - NIGHT**

28

The forest is still. The lantern is still lit in the window.

JANE (O.S.)
Okay really though, please take some deodorant.

A buck, lit by a faint blue glow, stands at a distance and watches the cabin. It runs off.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE29 **INT. INGRAM HOUSE, LORI'S ROOM - DAY**

29

Sunlight streams through the window, and across Lori's face. Same position. Eyes wide open. No sleep. She gets up.

30 **EXT. INDUSTRIAL PLANT GATE - DAY**

30

Lori walks quickly up to a group of protesters.

The protesters picket amid a call and response led by MARSHA, 60s, gray hair, dark skin, hippie vibes. She stands on a crate with a megaphone. Lori scans the crowd from the edge.

MARSHA

Clean water!

PROTESTERS

No oil!

MARSHA

Clean water, no oil!

PROTESTERS

Clean water, no oil!

Marsha sees Lori at the back. She hops down from the crate, delighted. Protesters continue the chant. She walks to Lori.

MARSHA

Hey Lori! Where's Jane and the gang?

LORI

I thought she might be here. She's not answering her phone, she and Spencer didn't come home last night. I called all their friends' houses, nothing.

MARSHA

Hmm. I'll tell everyone to keep an eye out. If she's not home by the end of the day, call me. We'll mobilize.

LORI

Thank you, Marsha.

Lori smiles weakly. Marsha takes her hand and squeezes it. She pushes back through the crowd and rejoins the chant.

Lori turns away from the crowd, walks alone down the road.

31 **INT. INDUSTRIAL PLANT - DAY**

31

Vance strides down the hallway, megaphone in hand. Men in blue jumpsuits walk past. Fluorescent lights buzz overhead.

Behind him, an OFFICE MAN in khakis leans out an office door.

OFFICE MAN

Mr. Davenport! Your father's on the phone.

Vance's smirk drops. He rolls his eyes and sighs.

VANCE

Thanks, I'll call him back.

OFFICE MAN

He said it was urgent.

Vance mutters to himself as he turns and walks to the office.

VANCE

If I don't pick up my cell there's a reason. Do 10 ignored phone calls mean nothing? No, sure, get the office staff involved, dignity means nothing. Not like I had anything to do here.

He pushes past the man. The man closes the door behind them.

32 **INT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY**

32

The sun is high in the sky and light pours into the room, dust hangs on the rays.

Jane sits in the middle of the room. She eats her leftovers and organizes supplies. They have their clothes back on.

JANE

With any luck, we'll be home by tonight.

She shoves supplies into her bag.

SPENCER

We haven't been swimming in luck so far.

JANE

We'll follow the riverbed, it'll be fine.

She tries to shove a tightly rolled sleeping bag in her bag.

SPENCER

You sound confident for someone packing a sleeping bag.

JANE

I'm trying to be optimistic, not dumb.

She gets the zipper to close and looks very pleased with herself. She pulls it on her shoulders and walks to the door.

JANE (CONT'D)

Ready?

Spencer looks around the room.

SPENCER

Did you happen to find a map?

JANE

Nope. That was the first thing I looked for.

SPENCER

Damn. Really not swimming in luck. Drowning in bad luck, actually.

JANE

Could be worse. Could be raining.

She walks out. He follows her out and KNOCKS on the wooden door frame as he does. The door shuts behind him.

33

EXT. BOSWELL PARK - DAY

33

A shitty park. Dead grass, graffiti on a concrete outhouse, rotting wooden picnic table, litter everywhere.

Benny rides his bike into the grass. He jumps off at the picnic table and pulls out his phone.

Message window, 'Jane.'

'I'm at Boswell, whenever you're ready! :)'

He makes a sour face, then deletes the smiley.

He sits on the table, and waits.

34

EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - DAY

34

They walk in the riverbed. Nice day, sunshine and SONGBIRDS.

JANE

Ya know, this is nice in the daylight.

SPENCER

Sure, lovely to visit but I wouldn't wanna live here.

JANE

You're not supposed to, if people lived out here it wouldn't look like this. They'd fuck it up.

SPENCER

Probably true.

They walk in silence.

JANE

Tell me if I'm crazy-

SPENCER

Yes, next question.

JANE

Ha ha. For real. I don't understand how we lived through last night. I mean, we're not runners. I'm fast but anything with four legs could out run me. And you, well, you don't sport. So how did we not get eaten?

SPENCER

I dunno. I'm not gonna question it.

JANE

Seems like the kind of thing we should be questioning here.

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

My thoughts are A) it hunted us for sport, like a cat with a toy, but didn't eat us because- because it just ate, B) it was guarding its territory, and as soon as we were out of its bubble it stopped caring, or C) whatever it was absolutely cannot swim. Which leads me to my next question, what even was it?

SPENCER

I wouldn't know. Seems like something you'd know.

JANE

I mean. Thanks. But I couldn't see it, I didn't recognize its sound, and I can't make sense of its behavior.

SPENCER

What do I keep you around for?

JANE

Seriously, if we could answer any of those questions we might be able to keep not dying in the future.

SPENCER

I do enjoy not dying.

JANE

Me too.

A SQUEAL comes from the trees. They freeze.

A few meters ahead of them, a small family of tapirids scurry into the clearing. A few baby ones happily run in circles in front of their parents. Jane stops.

JANE (CONT'D)

Aww! See, that's why we keep humans out of here. For these guys!

Spencer walks. The rodents see him and scurry into the trees.

JANE (CONT'D)

You scared them!

SPENCER

I'm sure they'll get over it.

Jane scowls, annoyed. She pauses, then catches up.

JANE
So what was up with classes?

SPENCER
What?

JANE
Yesterday. Whatever you didn't want
mom to know.

Spencer avoids eye contact.

SPENCER
It's nothing, I'm gonna graduate,
don't worry about it.

JANE
Hmm, sounds fake but okay.

SPENCER
What about you, huh?

JANE
What about me?

SPENCER
Mom called me about your adventure
in civil disobedience.

Jane smiles.

JANE
And?

SPENCER
You're lucky all dad's friends are
cops.

Her face drops.

JANE
I could not disagree more. What
does it say about dad that all his
friends are cops?

SPENCER
I mean that's the only reason you
still have no record. Also not all
cops are bad.

Jane's face sours.

JANE

Even if that's technically true,
enough of them have shown
themselves to be corrupt and/or
racist that the entire system of
law enforcement needs to be
reexamined and modified
accordingly.

SPENCER

You sound like a conspiracy
theorist.

JANE

Yeah, you know conspiracy theorists
and their desire for research and
rational solutions.

SPENCER

Whatever, viv la revolution, don't
piss off cops.

JANE

How's that boot taste, Spence?

SPENCER

I am not a bootlicker.

JANE

I've heard you and dad talk.

SPENCER

Fucking when did you hear me and
dad talk?

JANE

Last time he was home, before he
got deployed again.

SPENCER

Four years ago! Your data has
expired.

Jane pauses.

JANE

I thought it was five years.

SPENCER

Four.

JANE

Felt like five, I guess.

Their anger subsides and they look at each other with sympathy. Spencer takes a breath and starts to say something.

LARS (O.S.)
What the hell are you doing out
here?

They jump. They look around.

Ranger LARS Richter, 40, storms out of the trees on the other side of the clearing. Mustached, in uniform, gangly but with a beer gut. He's not intimidating, but he's angry.

LARS (CONT'D)
I said, how in the hell did you get
clear out here?

Spencer and Jane look at each other in surprise. Lars looks over these startled kids and takes a breath.

LARS (CONT'D)
One more time. I'm Blackburn Ranger
Lars Richter, I'm not gonna hurt
you, but how in the hell did you
get here?

JANE
Uhhh...

Lars raises his eyebrows.

35 **INT. POLICE STATION - DAY**

35

Lori walks up to a reception window.

LORI
Hi, I'm Lori Ingram, I called this
morning, I was trying to file a
missing persons re-

Police Chief John CASSIDY, mid 50s, throws open a door into the lobby. He's fit, a distinguished, mature attractive.

CASSIDY
Lori.

LORI
Hi John.

CASSIDY
Come on back.

He steps to the side of the door frame and ushers her back.

36 **EXT. GINGER PARK - DAY**

36

Clearly the park of an upperclass area. New play structure, a few full garbage cans, a fence around the edge of the forest.

Happy kids play surrounded by their soccer moms. One mom has her kid on a leash. Moms SHOUT and kids LAUGH.

Unhappy, Benny awkwardly leans on his bike in the midst.

37 **EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - DAY**

37

Lars leads them through the woods.

JANE

So we thought following the riverbed would be the best bet.

LARS

Not a bad idea, and further inland you'd be right, but that river used to run straight down the coast. You would've been walking for a year before you hit anything.

Jane thinks for a moment.

JANE

North to south?

LARS

Mhm. Some' like thirty years back the dams went up and diverted the course.

JANE

Was that the Anatoly River?

LARS

Sure was.

JANE

We walked from Maxwell park to the Anatoly?

LARS

Sounds like it.

Jane nods, impressed. They pass a tree with a red ribbon tied to it. Lars unties the ribbon and shoves it in his pocket.

SPENCER

I didn't realize rangers were on duty this deep in the forest.

LARS

Where else would we be?

SPENCER

I thought your whole job was to patrol the edge and tell people not to go any deeper.

LARS

Some do, sure. We got the whole coast divided into sections, more than a hundred of 'em. More area than manpower, so patrols move from one section to another every week. Most of the time, there isn't a ranger back here. It's just your lucky day.

SPENCER

I dunno about that one.

LARS

Y'all oughta consider becoming rangers yourselves, if you're not all traumatized. Must be pretty capable, to camp out here unprepared. We always need hands.

SPENCER

Appreciated, but I think I'm gonna stay inside for the rest of my life, actually.

Another tree with a red ribbon. Lars shoves it in his pocket.

JANE

How close are we to the outpost?

LARS

Hour or so.

SPENCER

And how far is the outpost from civilization?

LARS

Driving? Hour or so.

JANE

How is a car getting down here?

LARS

Oh there's a trail. It's pretty overgrown, like I said, doesn't get used much, but if you got an ATV or a horse or some', no problem. Hey you guys wanna see some' real neat?

JANE

What?

LARS

Slight detour but absolutely worth it. Still have ya home before sundown.

SPENCER

The last thing we want right now is a detour.

LARS

Whatever ya like, but this ain't a chance you're gonna get again soon. Not unless you plan on coming back down in here.

JANE

What is it?

LARS

My favorite spot in the whole region! I never get to show anyone. Not far from here either, it's really a treat.

Jane thinks about it, then raises her eyebrows at Spencer.

SPENCER

Are you serious?

JANE

Well, he's got a point. When are we going to be able to get this perspective of the forest again?

SPENCER

We're so close.

JANE

Exactly, we'll be home before sundown regardless.

SPENCER

Ugh. How long will this take?

LARS
Hour or so.

SPENCER
Hour or so. Ain't this place a
geographical oddity.

LARS
Up to y'all, but you won't regret
it. Highlight of Blackburn, I
swear.

Jane grins and looks to Spencer. He's resistant.

SPENCER
Haven't showered, almost died
twice, and mom's gonna be beside
herself, but sure, what's another
hour?

LARS
Great! C'mon then!

Lars leads them in a new direction. He quickly ties a ribbon
to a tree. Jane happily follows, Spencer follows hesitantly.

38

INT. INDUSTRIAL PLANT - DAY

38

Vance sits on a desk inside a small, boring, undecorated
office with no windows. He holds a landline to his ear and
fiddles with the nameplate on the desk, notably not his name.

Through the phone comes the elderly voice of Mr. DAVENPORT.

DAVENPORT (V.O.)
This isn't news. It's just
business, so I don't want to see it
on the news anymore, and it is your
job to get it off the news. This is
the sort of thing you swore you
could take care of, Vance, and I
don't see it being taken care of!

As his father talks, Vance tosses the name plate haphazardly
on the desk. He picks up wrapped candies from a dish on the
desk and shoves them in his pocket.

VANCE
I was on my way to speak with them
when you called.

DAVENPORT (V.O.)

As you said last week. If you can't handle this one task I will have to rethink my staffing choices, am I clear? Get police involved, pay them off if you have to, but get the media as far from the new plant as possible. I don't want a single person thinking badly about our company, am I clear? I want you to walk out there right now, and solve this headache. Call me when it's fixed.

Vance opens his mouth to respond, but the phone clicks, a dial tone. He slams the phone down and storms out.

39

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PLANT GATE - DAY

39

Protesters and local news crews crowd the front of the gate. A few police officers hang around the perimeter.

The only thing audible is the SOUNDS OF THE FOREST.

LARS (V.O.)

The thing about the forest is, and it may be my favorite thing about it, it's huge right? From here to Africa to Asia to Australia to the Arctic.

Vance saunters up to the other side of the gate with his megaphone. He shouts into it and the police start moving toward the protesters.

LARS (V.O.)

Like, we drew some imaginary lines through it, 'cause here we got Blackburn, Asia got Jukai, and so on.

The protesters turn their backs on the gate and they come together, linked arm and arm, to face the police.

LARS (V.O.)

But the trees don't know that. There're no barriers or nothin'. The forest is just one big place.

An officer moves to the news crew and demands the camera go down. He ushers the reporter and crew back into their van.

LARS (V.O.)

And I think a lot about how, if
there's some fella walkin' 'round
in Jukai all by his lonesome, we're
sorta walkin' together, ya know?
Same forest, same day, maybe same
job.

The news van drives down the road in a cloud of dust.

Vance, pleased, says something into the megaphone with that
cocky smirk. He turns and walks away from the gate.

LARS (V.O.)

So when I'm doin' my rounds.
Sometimes some' catches my eye that
makes me feel like I'm a part of
it. Part of somethin' bigger, ya
know?

The police start peeling protesters off the line and putting
them in handcuffs. Some cry, some yell, some remain calm.

Marsha, in the middle of the chain, remains calm. Eyes
closed, she takes a deep breath.

40

EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - DAY

40

Lars pushes through a thicket onto a wide, rocky ledge. He
steps down to clear the way for Jane. As soon as she can see
through the thicket, her jaw drops.

JANE

Woah.

There's a sharp drop off from where they stand. The view from
the cliff is pure wonderment, a vibrant painting.

The forest below spreads to the horizon with a gentle
downward slope. Reds, oranges, and purples speckle the green
expanse of fall treetops. Clouds hang high and low, the sun
floats above the horizon as the world starts to turn gold.

Birds SING. Bigger birds CAW.

Jane is transfixed. Spencer pushes his head past her, but she
doesn't react. Her eyes are full of love and wonder.

She takes a deep breath. She smiles.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR41 **EXT. SANDERS RUN PARK - DAY**

41

A small dirt baseball field and a basketball court on the edge of the forest. All the garbage cans spill over, lots of litter. Scattered plastic picnic tables.

As the sun starts to sink below the trees, Benny lays on the concrete on the basketball court.

His phone BUZZES. He bolts upright and checks the screen.

'Mom.' Bummer. He answers.

BENNY

Hello... Sanders Run Park... My bike... Well, you keep telling me to go out more, I took a long ride... Yes, I'll come home now.

He gets on his bike and clumsily keeps the phone to his ear.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Chicken should be thawing on the counter... I told Michelle to do it... That's not my fault!

He rides away.

42 **EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - DAY**

42

Spencer, Jane, and Lars sit on the ledge and watch the sun set. As the light changes, big and unfriendly storm clouds roll into view a significant distance away.

LARS

There's a storm comin'. Best be getting back.

Lars stands, Spencer follows. Jane stays on her rock.

SPENCER

Coming?

Jane nods and stands. She follows Spencer back into the thicket. She turns around to take in one last look.

The sunset paints the sky and the treetops. The trees start to blow and the storm clouds thunder in the distance.

43

EXT. SCI-CAMP 29, DEEP IN THE WOODS - DAY

43

The sign outside the cabin reads 'Office of Scientific Advancement Number 29. No trespassing. Property of the United States Government.'

Big rain drops DRIP on to the sign and surrounding leaves.

There is visible humidity, the fauna looks nearly Jurassic. Golden hour draws to a close.

SCIENTIST (O.S.)

Gita, you done for the day?

GITA (O.S.)

Not yet. I want to check the gauges again.

SCIENTIST (O.S.)

Again?

GITA (O.S.)

They're off.

SCIENTIST (O.S.)

Should I put in a service request?

GITA (O.S.)

No, they work, the readings are just- well, I don't believe them. You all can wrap up, I'll be back in a minute.

GITA Singh, mid-50s, tall, muscular, and sturdy, steps out the door. She pulls a worn leather jacket over a clean sci-camp polo. Her face is rough with sun damage, age, and scars. A thick scar runs from her earlobe to the side of her nose.

She sharply inhales through one nostril, then spits phlegm.

44

INT. CHIEF CASSIDY'S OFFICE - DAY

44

The sun sets outside the window of Cassidy's office. Cassidy sits at his desk, Lori sits across from him in one of two comfortable chairs and clutches a styrofoam cup of coffee.

Lori stares silently into her coffee. Cassidy silently taps away on his computer.

The desk phone rings. Cassidy answers it.

CASSIDY
Chief Cassidy... Thank you for your
help... Good night.

He hangs up the phone.

LORI
Anything?

CASSIDY
That was Carrol County, their boys
haven't seen anything either.

Lori exhales. She takes a sip of her coffee and her face
twists. It's gone cold.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Want another?

LORI
I guess, not like I'm gonna sleep
tonight anyway.

Cassidy walks to the corner of the room with a small coffee
machine and starts to make her coffee.

CASSIDY
We'll find them.

LORI
I know, I keep telling myself that.

CASSIDY
Teenagers run off all the time, I'm
sure they're just-

LORI
Spencer isn't a teenager. And you
know Jane.

CASSIDY
We'll find them.

Lori looks away.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Any more ideas where they'd go
after they left the diner?

Lori gets up, avoids eye contact, and throws her cup away.

LORI
Jane mentioned Maxwell park.

CASSIDY
Okay, did you check there?

LORI
No.

She sinks back into her seat. He hands her the fresh coffee.

CASSIDY
Why not?

He leans back on his desk. She stares at her shoes.

LORI
The best thing I could find in
Maxwell is nothing. If I don't
look, I see nothing. Make sense?

Cassidy takes the comfortable chair next to her. He takes a
breath, as though he's going to say something kind.

CASSIDY
Schrödinger's cat is dead.

LORI
Excuse me?

CASSIDY
You know, Schrödinger's cat. The
cat is both dead and alive until
you open the box and find out which
it is but the whole thing is
bullshit because the longer we
stand around philosophically
debating the status of the cat, the
less air the cat gets, then bam,
now the cat is definitely dead.
Even if it's bad news, keeping the
lid on doesn't save the cat.

LORI
And Maxwell is the box?

CASSIDY
Yeah.

LORI
And the dead cat is, Spencer and
Jane?

Lori cries. He frantically finds her a napkin on the table.

CASSIDY

Well, yes, but I'm not saying
they're dead! Jesus, no, no,
they're fine! I'm sure of it! But
if something happened in Maxwell,
we need to know as soon as possible
to bring them home safely.

She blows her nose on the napkin and pulls herself together.

LORI

Okay. I'll check.

CASSIDY

Want me to send an officer with
you?

LORI

Yes, actually, I think I would.

CASSIDY

No problem.

THUNDER RUMBLES faintly in the distance.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

I thought they were calling for
rain tonight. You better go quick.

She nods and gets up. He sits back down behind his desk.

LORI

Thank you, John.

CASSIDY

No problem, you're all family.

LORI

You too.

Lori holds back tears, and walks out the door.

45

EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

45

Twilight in the woods. Lars and Jane walk side by side,
Spencer trails behind. Spencer repeatedly snaps a dry twig.
THUNDER rumbles faintly in the distance.

JANE

What about violet-crested grebes?

LARS

Goofy lookin' dudes. I love 'em.

JANE

Do you see them a lot?

LARS

I saw two of 'em once, I'd say
that's a lot for a rare bird. Saw
'em on a pond in South Carolina.
Goofy as the pictures said.
Feathers all flipped around, little
beaks, big eyes.

Lars demonstrates the bird's appearance with hand gestures
around his face.

JANE

They're the Carolina's only native
bird that's nearing endangered
status. It's so cool you've seen
one in person!

LARS

I thought that was the Carolina
Parakeet.

JANE

No, they've been extinct for years.

LARS

Huh. Learn some' new everyday.

JANE

What's your take on the endangered
species protection act the state
passed like two years ago?

LARS

Uh. Can't say I'm familiar. Sounds
like a good thing?

JANE

Right but there was a whole debate
about what the act was actually
protecting. I, for one, don't feel
it went far enough. Like, it was
clearly trying to meet in the
middle, but the middle between
'Fuck the animals' and 'Protect the
animals' is still 'Okay, you may
fuck Some of the animals.' Ya know?

LARS

I guess. I just don't keep up. When
I was your age I didn't give a damn
'bout anything, but y'all know your
- SHH!

Lars stands up straight and throws his arm out to stop Jane.
His eyes are fixed dead ahead. Spencer catches up, then looks
up. He drops the stick and takes a step in front of Jane.

A gray WOLF stands ahead of them, alert but not aggressive.
Tail lowered, ears pricked up, head high, legs straight.

Jane's eyes light up.

JANE

(Whispers)

Is that a red wolf?

LARS

(Whispers)

No ma'am, that is a gray wolf.

Jane's smile drops as fear comes over her face.

LARS (CONT'D)

(Whispers)

We're gonna back away slowly. Don't
make eye contact. We're gonna do a
lil loop and let the wolf stay
where he is.

They start to back away from the wolf. It doesn't react.

SPENCER

(Whispers)

Why is there only one of them?

LARS

(Whispers)

I don't know, could be a lone wolf.

JANE

(Whispers)

Could be an alpha.

LARS

(Whispers)

I'm gonna hope it's a-lone.

Spencer stumbles over a tree root. He falls in front of Jane.

SPENCER

Shit!

The wolf takes a few steps closer, interested.

From the ground, Spencer spots another wolf off to the right.

The other wolf's head is lowered, hunting mode.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Guys.

As he clumsily stands, he nods to it and picks up a rock.

Jane looks around and notes three other wolves around them in the trees, all coming closer.

THUNDER rumbles faintly.

LARS

Alright, stay calm, the outpost is
dead ahead, if you look real hard
you can almost make out the ladder.

SPENCER

Ladder?

LARS

If we can get our backs against a
big tree they might get bored with
us and move on.

He locates a thick tree out of his periphery and guides them
back against it. The wolves keep getting closer.

JANE

I've got an idea. Keep inching to
the side, don't look away from
them, until all the wolves are on
this side. Then we'll have a clear
path to back all the way to the
outpost.

SPENCER

Would that work?

LARS

Uhh. Never heard of it, but I don't
got a better idea.

The trio inches slowly around the tree. Just as slowly, the
wolves circle them until they're out of the path to the
outpost. Jane's plan worked, but the wolves are much closer.

LARS (CONT'D)

Well I'll be darned, it worked.

JANE
Now slowly step toward me, and
we'll start backing away.

They follow her instructions. The wolves start to SNARL as they back away. The most aggressive wolf's eyes are on Jane.

Lars looks from that wolf to Jane and back again.

LARS
Okay, straight behind us, silver
metal ladder, can't miss it.

The wolf with its eye on Jane starts to crouch.

Spencer sees it. He gets in front of her.

Lars steps away from them.

SPENCER
Watch it!

LARS
(Yells)
Yah!

The wolves turn their aggressive attention to Lars.

LARS (CONT'D)
Yah! Run! Yah!

Lars takes off in a different direction. Most of the wolves chase him immediately, others follow.

JANE
No!

Spencer turns, grabs her elbow, and pulls her into a sprint.

One wolf chases them.

Spencer is slower, the wolf gains. It jumps at him. He whips around and nails it in the side of the head with the rock.

The wolf WHINES, disoriented, and runs after its pack.

Lars SCREAMS in agony in the distance, Jane turns to look.

JANE (CONT'D)
No!

Darkness falls around them. Jane spots the ladder ahead. She puts her head down and runs. Spencer does the same.

46

EXT. OUTPOST IN THE TREETOPS - NIGHT

46

The ladder is in front of a thick metal column. The whole structure looks like the World's Fair Observatory Tower.

They reach the ladder and start up it. Jane starts to climb quickly, Spencer right behind her.

The SOUND of many paws rushing closer through foliage comes from the direction of the pack.

They get about 15 feet up when the wolves surround the base of the ladder. They BARK and GROWL, clamor and jump.

Spencer looks down at them. A wolf jumps too close for comfort, and Spencer climbs as close to Jane as possible.

Jane looks up the ladder. Above them, 80 feet off the ground, at the top of the metal column, is a small cylindrical cabin.

30 feet up the ladder, the cage around it starts. Spencer looks down, then immediately looks up, dizzy by the height.

As they get higher into the trees, the wind starts to get more intense. Jane's hair is whipped around her face, they both cling for dear life.

It starts to RAIN as they clear the treetops.

They step off the ladder onto the deck that wraps around the cabin. The rain picks up. They walk around it and find the door labeled 'Authorized Personnel Only.'

Jane turns the knob, it's locked. The rain picks up.

JANE

Why!? We're a hundred feet up!

SPENCER

Move.

Spencer leans back against the railing and kicks the handle with all his might. It flies off with a CRACK.

Jane pushes the door open and they rush inside.

47

INT. OUTPOST IN THE TREETOPS - NIGHT

47

Jane shuts the door and hits the light switch. Old-ass florescent light bulbs BUZZ on.

The whole building is one room. About a third of the wall is taken up by huge window panels.

Around the walls there are some tables with books, large 90s style computer looking things with unclear functions, a desk with a clunky old desktop. On the other side, there's a couch and refrigerator.

They both rush toward the 90s tech along the windows.

SPENCER

One of these has to be the radio!

JANE

None of this looks like a radio!

SPENCER

I'll look here, you look for anything else radio-ish!

Jane nods and starts looking near the desk.

Lightning CRACKS outside the window, close but not on top of them. Thunder BOOMS. The lights flicker.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Don't like that.

JANE

There's nothing over here!

She rejoins him by the window. They both search frantically.

SPENCER

I don't see anything that looks like a radio talk part, or a walkie, or anything. I see this?

He gestures to a panel on one of the machines that looks like an old intercom. It has a small light above it, which is off.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

But there isn't a button near it, I don't know what to press!

She presses a button, nothing happens.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Just press everything, I don't know!

They start pressing every button. The light flashes.

JANE

Something did it!

SPENCER
Press those again!

They press the buttons until Spencer isolates the one that makes it light up. He holds it down.

The light comes on, radio STATIC HISSES through the speaker.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Hello?

More STATIC.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Can anyone hear me?

JANE
Maybe you have to release it like a
walkie-talkie?

He lets the button go, the light goes out.

Lightning paints the room white and the whole cabin shakes in the thunder BOOM.

All the lights go out.

Spencer pushes the button. No light. No static. He pushes it again, and again, repeatedly, desperately, furiously.

Jane sinks to the floor, and leans against the machine.

48 **EXT. MAXWELL PARK - NIGHT**

48

Rain pours. Lori's silver CAR ROARS into the gravel parking lot. Spencer's red Subaru sits alone in the lot. Lori is out of her car the second it stops.

She rushes to the side of Spencer's car with horror in her eyes, she looks in the passenger window. No one. She bangs her fist on the glass.

A police cruiser pulls in behind her, lights on, no sirens.

She looks up at the dark trees, police lights color her face.

She runs toward the edge of the forest. Rain pelts her face. She yells with all her might, in pain. The lights of the cruiser reflect off the water.

LORI
Jane! Spencer! Jane!

She reaches the brush. She puts one foot in the brush. She pulls it back.

LORI (CONT'D)

Jane! Spencer! Jane! Spencer!

She drops to her knees, exhausted, in pain. Tears run down her face, torrential as the rain. She looks up and releases the heart-wrenched SCREAM of a mother whose children have been stolen from her.

49 **EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - NIGHT**

49

The storm rages in the forest. Treetops billow, leaves fly.

A tapirid ushers her young to safety under a thick, black, steel pipe that is only partially underground.

The pipe goes on and on for miles, above ground, under trees, along streams, across small valleys, through the old dried river bed.

Among tall thick trees, the pipe is covered in moss like the ground. A joint in the pipe CREAKS as if it's about to burst.

50 **EXT. OUTPOST IN THE TREETOPS - NIGHT**

50

Lighting CRACKS across the sky, directly over the cabin. The wind whips, the rain swirls, and the cabin GROANS.

JANE (V.O.)

I think we're fucked.

THUNDER.

END OF ACT FOUR