

APPROVAL OF HONORS PROGRAM SENIOR PROJECT

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Project Title

In the Woods Somewhere: A Screenplay

This Senior Project is approved as acceptable

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“In the Woods Somewhere”

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

“In the Woods Somewhere” Screenplay.....	3
Artist Statement.....	95
Annotated Bibliography.....	104
Appendix.....	124

IN THE WOODS SOMEWHERE

by

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THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS, from a distance, grow louder.

FADE IN:

1 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - TIME UNKNOWN

1

We are viewing a door from an unknown man's perspective.

Two police officers, CARMi GUYETTE and GERALD PIPKIN, enter the interrogation room. When they enter, both CARMi and GERALD cringe. They see something that we don't.

The camera stays focused on them, never turning to the man they're about to encounter.

CARMi is holding a folder; it is thick with various documents. CARMi and GERALD exchange glances, unsure whether or not they should approach the man, but they know they cannot avoid this.

The two of them walk to the metal desk and sit across from the camera.

CARMi

Son? We wanted to ask you a few questions regarding the incident at the Hell's-a-Raising Outfitters. Mind if we ask you a few questions?

???

(HE WHEEZES EVERY TIME HE INHALES, HIS VOICE SOUNDING AS IF HE SWALLOWED SHARP GRAVEL)

Sure...

CARMi

Great. Let's begin, then. GERALD?

GERALD

(clears throat)

Right.

GERALD opens up the folder, and inside are photos of a gruesome scene: dead bodies of men, women, and children. They look like the victims of an animal attack, gorged and mauled.

Some of the images are close-ups of people's faces. There is one in particular that the camera lingers on.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Do you know any of these people?

The camera looks down at the photos for a moment or so. We see one of ???'s hands reaching out; his hand is heavy as he lays it down on the photos and pulls them closer to him. CARMi and GERALD look indifferent, but they can feel weird energy emanating from the individual.

???

(heavily taps on one of the photo, his breathing and voice have not changed)

Him.

The camera focuses on the image of a man. The photo shows the man lying on the ground in a pool of blood. There are holes from where he was stabbed by something. His eyes are wide as he blankly stares at nothing. Blood has run out of his mouth.

CARMi and GERALD exchange glances before they look back at ???.

CARMi

Mind telling us who that is?

???

PHILLIP. PHILLIP JONES.

The camera focuses on the image of the man, and the sound of a strumming guitar can be heard off-frame. It's low at first but grows louder as the frame zooms in on the photo.

GERALD (O.S.)

Any relation to you?

??? (O.S.)

Friend of my family.

GERALD (O.S.)

Alright then... Tell us how you know PHILLIP.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

Unlike in the photo, PHILLIP is smiling and looking very much alive. He stands in front of the lodge, looking out towards the road. He begins waving over a few trucks that are pulling up.

We now see PHILLIP from inside one of the trucks, the radio is playing. The Big DAWG plays. RALPH and LENNY are the show hosts for the popular country radio station.

RALPH (V.O.)

Good morning, you party people out there. You're listening to 91.4 The Big DAWG on this snowy Thursday morning with Ralph and Lenny. Hunting season is just around the corner for big-game hunters in the county!

3 INT. THE BIG DAWG RADIO STUDIO - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

3

The camera is focused on LENNY and RALPH

LENNY

That's right, Ralph! Hope you lot are ready to bag some big bucks and bring mama home some venison for some good ole' fashion deer stew.

Man, it reminds me of when I was a younging—

A gentle knock at the door interrupts LENNY. Both he and RALPH look back at the door, LINDA standing in the doorway with a few sheets of paper in hand.

RALPH

(turning in his chair slightly)

What? Yea?

LINDA

Ralph, check this out.

RALPH

What is it? Guys, we just got this from Linda, our production assistant. Hold on for a sec.

LENNY

Hold on, folks.

CUT TO:

4 EX. HELL'S-A-RAISING OUTFITTERS - MORNING

4

JAMES (O.S.)
 (turning off the radio)
 Alright, that's enough of that.

ANDREW (O.S.)
 Shouldn't we wait to hear what they have to say? It sounded important,
 DAD-

JAMES (O.S.)
 I'm sure it's nothing that deals with us. C'mon, let's go meet with
 PHILLIP.

From the trucks emerge three middle-aged men, JAMES MCLEOD, GORDON THOMPSON, NED SMITH, & ANDREW, JAMES'S son. ANDREW appears to be about 19 years old. ANDREW is trans (FTM), early in his transition. His clothing and hair suggest masculinity. However, no one in the immediate group is aware of his transition other than JAMES, who is struggling with it. NED, GORDON, and PHILLIP just see ANDREW as being the tomboy ABIGAIL.

We can still hear the radio show hosts even though the radio is off.

RALPH (V.O)
 Okay, folks, I was just told that for those who'll be hunting this season, be aware of any deer exhibiting Chronic Wasting Disease or whatever trips your trigger. Got a little notice from the game warden warning about an increase in infected deer in the southernmost part of the state, especially around Yellowstone. Says here that if you find any malnourished-looking deer with strange behavior, like being lethargic and not fearful of humans, kill it immediately and take it down to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries so those folks can confirm. And wear gloves! Don't touch the carcass with your bare hands.

5 INT. THE BIG DAWG RADIO STUDIO - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

5

LENNY
 Sounds to me like it's some kind of zombie virus. The Walking Dead --
 but with deer.

Both LENNY and RALPH are belly laughing.

RALPH

Now, that would be scary. Zombies with antlers. I wouldn't be able to outrun the bastards due to my gut, but thankfully, they're not real, so I can still stay fat and happy.

There is more laughing from both RALPH and LENNY.

6 EX. HELL'S-A-RAISING OUTFITTERS - MORNING

6

RALPH (V.O)

Though I find it rather odd that they're requesting this since you can't hunt in or even around the national park. Oh well, I'm just a humble messenger in all of this. Don't shoot me for it.

LENNY (V.O)

Unless you're one of those deer.

RALPH (V.O)

Well said. Anyway, folks, cross your "t"s and dot your "i"s, enjoy your Saturday morning, and thanks for sticking around on 91.4 The Big DAWG with Ralph and Lenny. Let's get this morning started with some tunes!

The four of them meet PHILLIP halfway. JAMES and PHILLIP shake hands and give each other a half hug.

PHILLIP

James! How the hell are ya?

JAMES

Couldn't be any better, PHILLIP. Ready to get the party started early tomorrow morning.

PHILLIP

Perfect. You brought the whole crew with ya. I see we brought Mr. Game Warden to lay down the law while we're out hunting?

GORDON

Figured I'd take a break from laying down the law and actually do a little hunting myself.

PHILIP

I can't argue with that, my good sir. NED, it's good to see ya as well.

NED gives a nod to PHILLIP and smiles.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

And—

PHILLIP turns his attention to ANDREW; he offers him a smile as he places his hands on his hips.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

Who do we have here, James? Is this little Abby?

ANDREW seems to be bothered by the name. He offers PHILLIP a slight smile but doesn't make a fuss; he's rubbing his arm a little.

JAMES

Sure is.

ANDREW

Hi, Mr. Jones.

PHILLIP

Man, she grew like a weed. I haven't seen you since you were this big.
(leans down slightly, putting his hand to the height of his hip.)

JAMES

I thought this season would be her first season.

PHILLIP

Man, I remember my first season. Pop said it was the day of becoming a grownup. Never have a day like that for the rest of my life.

JAMES

What I told her on the way here. It would be our little daddy-daughter hunting journey! But of course, she didn't want to hear my lame story.

ANDREW seems uncomfortable by this; he starts fidgeting with his hands.

ANDREW

Dad...

The group of men laugh thinking none of it, and JAMES pats ANDREW on the back.

We are now seeing the group from an UNKNOWN POV from afar. It stays there for a moment or so, showing them as they carry on their conversation. We are unsure what the group is talking about, but it seems they're enjoying themselves. The shot is very still.

CUT TO:

The camera focuses on the reflection of the group inside the eye of a cervid, and the camera stays focused on the eye for a moment.

CUT TO:

We now see a buck; he's watching the group. Off camera, we hear a strange screech, and the deer turns his head to look behind him. The camera is now behind him as he has turned his head. Then he takes off and exits the frame. All we see now is the group in the distance.

PHILLIP (O.S.)

Alright, alright. Let's get you lot inside and settled.

JAMES (O.S.)

That would be great. Was actually going to go out and do some gun practice with kiddo for a bit.

PHILLIP (O.S.)

Sounds good to me! I'll see y'all in a bit then.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. HELL'S-A-RAISING OUTFITTERS - MID DAY - SHOOTING RANGE

7

JAMES, ANDREW, GORDON, and NED are outside at the shooting range. JAMES is teaching ANDREW how to shoot a rifle. They have been there for hours

JAMES

Alright, make sure your left hand is on the fore-stock.

ANDREW places his left hand on the fore-stock.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Good, now your right on the grip.

ANDREW does so, placing his right hand on the grip.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Good. Now look through the scope at your target. Do you see it?

From ANDREW'S POV, we see the deer-shaped target.

ANDREW

Yes, sir.

JAMES

Good. Now listen carefully. I want you to take in a breath and hold it.

ANDREW nods. He looks through the scope and holds his breath.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Good, now steady your hold on the rifle so it's not shaky.

ANDREW tries steadying it but has a hard time.

ANDREW

I can't-

JAMES

Hold on; I'll help you.

JAMES helps him, making it easier for ANDREW to get accustomed to it before pulling his hand away when he's sure ANDREW has it.

JAMES (CONT'D)

There. Now relax... and fire.

ANDREW fires the gun. The bullet flies through the air and hits the target, but it's not a bullseye; it hits right at the edge of the target. ANDREW pulls away and frowns. JAMES notices and pats him on the shoulder.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's okay, son. We'll get it. Just take a break for a moment, okay?

ANDREW nods and walks to the cooler to get a water bottle. NED and GORDON walk over to JAMES. JAMES is watching ANDREW.

GORDON

Hey, JIMBO.

JAMES
(turns his attention to NED and GORDON)
Hm? Yea? What's up?

GORDON
Why do you keep calling her ANDREW?

NED
Yea... her name is clearly ABIGAIL.

JAMES
Oh. Right. Well.

NED already has a look of discomfort on his face, fearing what JAMES is going to tell them.

GORDON
What?

JAMES
ABIGAIL actually goes by ANDREW now. He's trans.

NED
Oh, dear god, no.

GORDON
That's uh... Wow. I didn't know that.

JAMES
Yea. So just... play it cool, okay? He's still trying to navigate all of this.

NED
I can't believe this. You're allowing HER to do this? God made no mistake in making HER a girl.

JAMES
Hey. Keep your voice down, NED. There is nothing wrong with him being trans. He is fine.

NED
I'll say. She is being delusional.

GORDON

Alright, NED. Take it easy.

JAMES

Exactly. I don't need HIM overhearing this. Can we just have a peaceful hunting trip for once?

PHILLIP (O.S.)

Hey guys! Mind taking a break for a bit? I got something you may be interested in.

PHILLIP stands on the back porch of the hunting lodge; he is waving the group back inside.

JAMES

(to PHILLIP)

We'll be right there!

(To NED, quietly)

Not another word about this. You both call ANDREW and respect him, you understand that?

NED

(quietly, disgruntled)

Fine. For her-

JAMES

HIS.

NED

FINE. For HIS sake, I will respect it. But you know this shit ain't sitting right with me.

JAMES

(quietly)

I don't care. Just respect him, damnit.

(to ANDREW)

Come on, son!

JAMES, NED, GORDON, and ANDREW make their way to the porch and up the stairs to where PHILLIP is.

GORDON

Let me guess; it's Bigfoot, ain't it?

PHILLIP

Hey, I told you I saw him last year! I'm gonna get him one day and have him stuffed in the center of the lodge.

NED

He would have already walked among us if the Lord wanted his existence to be known.

GORDON

Alright, NED. Don't treat this hunting trip like some kind of Baptist retreat. Whole reason why you came with us.

NED

You can never get away from God. No matter where you are.

GORDON and JAMES groan in unison; ANDREW can't help but giggle a little at the two men's dismay. This brings a smile to JAMES'S face.

8 INT. HELL'S-A-RAISING OUTFITTERS - MORNING

8

AT THE LODGE, people are talking in various spots inside the three-story building. They are primarily men catching up, but there are some women talking and young children running around.

As the group passes to PHILLIP'S office, people greet PHILLIP, JAMES, and ANDREW. NED and GORDON have spotted old friends and stay behind from the group.

9 INT. PHILLIP'S OFFICE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

9

We follow PHILLIP as he opens the door, allowing himself and the father/son duo into his office. It is a spacious, rustic-looking office with various decorative pieces ranging from paintings to mounted animal heads.

On PHILLIP'S computer desk sits a set of shedded antlers. They are atypical white antlers.

PHILLIP approaches his desk and goes to sit down; he picks up one of the antlers. He touches them, admiring the unusual spikes from the base bone.

PHILLIP

You recognize these, JAMES?

JAMES

Well, I'll be goddamned, is that RONAN's?

ANDREW

RONAN? Who's RONAN?

JAMES picks up the other antler, looking shocked and amazed. PHILLIP smiles at ANDREW's query.

PHILLIP

RONAN is a buck that's been roaming these woods for quite a few years now. He was considered an urban legend, but he seems to have made a return.

(to JAMES)

But to answer your question, JAMES, it sure is. Those were from when he shed in March. I've seen him on the trail cams, and boy, his antlers are bigger and better than last year.

PHILLIP types on his computer before turning the monitor towards JAMES and ANDREW. On the screen is a black and white video, the footage of a trail cam not too far from the lodge.

We see a buck and a couple of does grazing. The buck is RONAN; he's a very large stag with antlers similar to the ones JAMES is holding. However, his antlers appear much larger and more robust now.

JAMES

Wow, you weren't kidding.

ANDREW

How did he get his name?

PHILLIP

Well, when he was a younger buck, we always called him TINY. Well, Seán, an old friend of ours—you remember him, right, JAMES? Well, he started calling him RONAN because it means small, so... it just stuck.

JAMES

Doesn't look like he's tiny now. He has turned into a damn monster since last year.

PHILLIP

We last saw him directly three years ago, remember?

JAMES

It's been that long? I could have sworn that was last year. Are you sure it's the same stag?

PHILLIP

I know, I know. Thought the wolves or a cougar got hold of him... However, he's got that same scar from when we first saw him in the brush. And the antlers? Nearly the same structure as before. They're just—

ANDREW

Huge. Do you think someone will be able to get him?

PHILLIP

Well, you're just in luck, Abby. I haven't told anyone else about this buck's grand return yet. Figured you and your old man would be the first to hear about him.

JAMES

That's mighty kind of you, PHILLIP.

PHILLIP

Say, since this is ABIGAIL's first hunt, why not see if she can bring him back while you and the other two knuckleheads are out with her?

ANDREW

What? Really?

PHILLIP

Sure! That would make a great hunting story, and it'll definitely make your dad proud; ain't that right, JAMES?

JAMES

It sure would, but anything you bring in during your first hunting season will make me proud, Abby.

JAMES and ANDREW exchange a smile. However, ANDREW'S smile does not seem genuine; PHILLIP is smiling at both of them.

PHILLIP

Ain't that sweet. Well, I'll let you two get settled and relax. I know you two got a big day planned tomorrow super early so—

JAMES

Thanks, PHILLIP. We appreciate it.

JAMES and PHILLIP shake hands before ANDREW and JAMES leave the office from PHILLIP'S POV.

Up-close shot on the computer screen shows PHILLIP starting to work and browse the web. There is an alert on the computer from the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

PHILLIP (O.S.)
Huh? What's this?

We see PHILLIP open the tab to his email; there is an email labeled as "URGENT, VIEW ASAP."

PHILLIP (O.S., CONT'D)
(yawning, unfazed)
Aw... I'm sure it's just another warning about those cougars. I'll look at it later.

Extreme close-up on the X-button on the browser window; the cursor hovers over it and clicks it closed.

CUT TO:

10 EXT. HELL'S-A-RAISING OUTFITTERS DECK - EVENING

10

The shot is focused on JAMES, GORDON, and NED sitting around a fire pit on the lodge's deck. They're all laughing, drinking beer, and conversing.

GORDON
And you sure that's the same deer PHILLIP's been after for so damn long? To be sure, it had to be some buck that looked similar. You know how those bucks are.

JAMES
I dunno, man; it looked like him. Had the same scar on his neck from last year.

NED
GORDON, have some faith. For all we know, it may have been God's plan to have the buck come back.

GORDON

All I'm saying is it's rather fishy that buck is STILL around. The buck is probably what? Four? Five years old? And from what you've told us, he looks rather spry for his age. The old bastard has to be on his last leg.

JAMES

You always got a stick up your ass or something, GORDON? Like, seriously, I know what I saw. PHILLIP's antlers and the trail cam tell the same story. It's definitely him.

JAMES gets up from his chair and then walks over to the railing of the balcony. He is looking out into the valley below. The valley comprises the hunting reserve, and beyond that is Yellowstone National Park.

GORDON

So what's the plan for tomorrow, then?

JAMES half turns to look at GORDON; he's giving him a look as if to say, "you dumbass."

JAMES

We're going to get up at the ass-crack of dawn and go hunting; what the hell do you mean, "what's the plan for tomorrow?"

NED

Easy, JIMBO.

GORDON

I'm talking as far as it goes with RONAN, you dick. Are we going to try and go after this som'bitch or what?

JAMES

I'm planning on ABIGAIL bagging him.

GORDON looks at JAMES like he's got three heads. He doesn't believe what he's hearing.

GORDON

You're kidding. This is her first hunt, and you want her going after some damn ghost? Get her hopes up for nothing?

JAMES

That buck isn't a ghost. I know what I saw.

GORDON

Hell, you say. I'm telling you, something ain't right here. No buck lives this long.

NED

If it's meant to be, it's meant to be. We can't change that.

JAMES comes back and stands at the fire pit with the men, both of them looking at JAMES through the flames.

JAMES

Seriously, GORDON. Don't have a stick up your ass about this hunting trip. Remember what you told NED earlier this afternoon?

GORDON

Yea, yea, whatever. That's a lot different. You remember what that anger management group said to you?

NED laughs at GORDON and JAMES'S exchange but clears his throat when JAMES and GORDON glare at him.

NED

Sorry.

JAMES

The point is, we're going to bring that damn deer back tomorrow.

GORDON

Ten dollars say you don't.

JAMES

Fifty, and you're on.

GORDON

Deal.

NED groans, pinching the bridge of his nose and looking irritated by JAMES and GORDON's childish games as the two men clink beer bottles and laugh.

The camera focuses on the flames of the fire pit as the scene fades into the next.

FADE IN:

11 INT. JAMES & ANDREW'S ROOM - PRE-DAWN

11

JAMES and ANDREW are getting their gear ready for the upcoming hunt. JAMES packs various hunting and hiking supplies, such as a first-aid kit, snacks, and bullets in their hunting bags.

ANDREW sits on the bed, tying his boots. He seems to be a mix of sad and worried; he seems like he is a little in pain. JAMES hears him sigh, and he looks over at ANDREW with concern.

JAMES
You alright?

ANDREW
No.

JAMES
Is it your... y'know? Did you pack everything with you?

ANDREW
Dad.

JAMES
Okay, okay, sorry.

JAMES goes over and sits down beside Andrew. He places a hand on ANDREW'S upper arm, but ANDREW scoots away looking uncomfortable by the gesture. JAMES'S concern for his child does not falter; it is probably heightened by this action. JAMES wonders if he has done something.

JAMES
Then what is it?

ANDREW
This hunting trip.

JAMES
What about it? I thought you were excited. You told me back at the house that—

ANDREW
Dad, I lied; this is a stupid idea.

JAMES

What do you mean?

ANDREW

Mom said this would be good for us, y'know. For me to spend time with you since the divorce...

JAMES

Well, I agree with her. Why don't you?

ANDREW

It's not that I don't, Dad, but you said something that killed the mood. For me at least.

JAMES looks at ANDREW with a confused look. He is completely lost..
JAMES folds his hands.

JAMES

I'm sorry...? What was it that I said?

ANDREW

Yesterday evening when we first got here. You called this a "daddy-daughter" hunter trip. Dad, you know I'm not a girl.

ANDREW looks away from JAMES, gazing at his lap.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Not anymore, at least...

JAMES looks uncomfortable, more ashamed than anything. He has been aware of ANDREW'S transition. He wants to call himself supportive of his son's transition, but he knows he hasn't been great at actually respecting it.

JAMES

ANDREW, I didn't know how to talk about it... I'm sorry. I didn't know you would take it like that.

ANDREW

It's not just you, either. It was the rest of your friends, too... All the way up here, during our stops and even ear, Mr. SMITH and Mr. THOMPSON kept calling me ABBY and made it out like I'm still some little girl. Even Mr. Phillip!

ANDREW then looks at JAMES, his brows knit together in frustration. He looks like he wants to cry, too.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I heard that conversation at the range, Dad. You said they would understand!

JAMES

(caught off guard)

I-I-I was! Really, I was going to talk to them before the trip but, ANDREW. Believe me that I was, but... I didn't mean for you to hear that.

ANDREW

Of course... you forgot... You had another episode.

JAMES

ANDREW...

ANDREW

(sighs)

I'm sorry, Dad... I shouldn't have said that.

JAMES

I know you're frustrated. I get it, really... You know I'm trying my best.

JAMES puts his hand on Andrew's shoulder, letting out a sigh. He's trying to figure out how to say what he has to say next. He wants this to work and have a good relationship with his son. This hunting trip is supposed to cure their estrangement after JAMES'S divorce from ANDREW'S mother.

JAMES

Look. I know I haven't been the best father, especially after my last tour. Your mother was there for you when I needed to be there..

ANDREW

(under his breath)

Ain't that the truth..

JAMES

Your mother was right; this hunting trip will bring us closer. You know why? Today is the day you become a man.

ANDREW groans a little at that phrase. JAMES can't help but chuckle at ANDREW'S reaction.

Outside the lodge, we see the lodge from an unknown POV. We can see neither JAMES nor ANDREW from where we stand.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Point is: I want to make it up to you. I want to make this work.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Really?

The frame is set further back, and we see the back of deer heads. It is a small group of what appear to be healthy-looking bucks. They are observing the cabin.

JAMES (O.S.)

We're going to go out there and bring back RONAN. Just you wait.

The frame is now set so that we can see the faces of the deer. They are indeed healthy, but they have an eerie glow in their eyes. It's not a normal reflection; they have a glowing white film over their eyes. All of them look as if they were blinded.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I love you, son.

ANDREW

I love you too, Dad.

We hear the by-now familiar screech of an unknown creature off-frame. The deer look behind them at where the screech came from before they quickly leave the frame. All we see now is the lodge.

JAMES (O.S.)

C'mon. Let's finish getting ready and head out. NED and GORDON must be waiting.

CUT TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE:

12 EXT. HUNTING RESERVE - DAWN

12

A heavily wooded area.

13 EXT. HUNTING RESERVE - DAWN **13**

Open meadow with deer.

14 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - DAWN **14**

Geysers erupting.

15 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - DAWN **15**

Herd of bison.

16 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - DAWN **16**

A bull elk bugling.

END MONTAGE.

17 EXT. HUNTING RESERVE OUTSIDE OF YELLOWSTONE - DAWN **17**

An aerial shot of the hunting range. It has begun to snow lightly, and the day is foggy.

CUT TO:

The frame is focused on a mammoth mule, a few dead bucks strapped to its back from that morning's earlier hunt.

CUT TO:

We now see JAMES and ANDREW in the frame. They carry camouflage gear and wear camouflage face paint. ANDREW is holding a rifle with a scope. We then see a buck and a couple of does through the scope from ANDREW'S POV; they are grazing in a meadow a few yards away from the group.

JAMES (O.S.)

(whispering)

Alright, you got a clear shot on him?

ANDREW (O.S.)

(whispering)

Yes.

ANDREW'S grip on the rifle is somewhat shaky; JAMES helps him stabilize the rifle.

JAMES

Remember what I taught you. Steady your breath.

JAMES steadies his breath; ANDREW mimics him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Alright. Now hold it.

ANDREW holds his breath.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And fire.

We return to ANDREW'S POV through the scope - BLAM! - the rifle is fired, and we see the deer scatter; the buck scrambles for a couple of feet before finally falling. The frame returns to ANDREW and JAMES; ANDREW looks excited.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Nice one, son!

CUT TO:

The shot is now focused on the deceased deer's head; there is subtle movement of the animal while it is being gutted and dressed.

GORDON (O.S.)

Careful with gutting that deer. We got enough issues with chronic wasting as it is.

JAMES (O.S.)

Relax, this deer seems healthy.

GORDON (O.S.)

Or so it seems. That shit is near invisible.

The camera then gets a closeup shot of the animal's white-glazed eye as we hear the sound of cutting into the carcass to rid it of its entrails.

GORDON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(to NED)

So how many does that leave us?

CUT TO:

Wide shot then focuses on the group, NED and GORDON are standing by the mammoth mule and the horses. A couple of their hunting dogs sit by them, hassling. They're watching JAMES teach ANDREW how to properly gut and clean the deer without puncturing the stomach and intestines.

We can hear JAMES speaking to ANDREW but, while it's incoherent, whatever he is saying, ANDREW pays full attention. The shot then cuts to focus on GORDON and NED.

NED

Looks to be about four. Could probably get another couple of bucks on each of the horses, but then we're gonna head back. Can't hold much more.

GORDON

And what about that buck? RONAN? We've been out here for a good while, and we've yet to see that bastard.

JAMES (O.S.)

We're going to find that buck, damnit.

GORDON looks disgruntled by JAMES'S response. NED looks over to JAMES, his eyes slightly wide, grimacing and shaking his head as if to say "don't start." The camera then provides reaction shots from JAMES, NED, ANDREW, and GORDON.

JAMES

We're not going to leave until we find that deer, and ANDREW kills it.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Dad?

GORDON

Is that the plan, JIMBO? Are we really going to stay out here until we find that damned buck?

NED

Gordon, don't start.

JAMES

Yes. That's the plan, and we're sticking to it. We already talked about it.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Dad.

GORDON

You can't be serious. You're actually going to listen to that old geezer back at the lodge and let him get ABIGAIL'S hopes up? That buck could be hundreds of miles away from this place.

NED

GORDON, that's enough now-

JAMES

It's ANDREW. We've already been over this! And yes. Don't back out of the fucking deal now.

GORDON

I'm with NED on this, that shit isn't-

NED

GORDON!

ANDREW

DAD!

GORDON & JAMES

WHAT?

GORDON turns his attention to NED, while JAMES turns to ANDREW to see what his issue is. The camera cuts to ANDREW; it then tilts down from his face to his hands, and his knife and hands are covered in blood and other colorful fluids. The camera focuses on the deer beside him; he accidentally cut the stomach.

JAMES

Aw, nah-

NED and GORDON look over to JAMES and ANDREW. GORDON is disgruntled; NED looks disgusted and gags at the smell of the deer's stomach contents. He steps away and doubles over, vomiting.

GORDON

Great. Now we're going to have fucking coyotes on our ass.

ANDREW

I'm sorry..

NED

(coughing)

Easy GORDON. Let's not get excited.

JAMES

Exactly, GORDON, it was just an accident. Don't act like you've never done that shit before.

JAMES and GORDON exchange scowls before JAMES turns to ANDREW, patting him on the back.

CUT TO:

We are now watching the group of men from an unknown point of view. It is somewhat shaky. The shot then focuses on JAMES and ANDREW. We can hear the sound of an animal's ragged breathing. It is clear that whoever's POV we are looking from, they are the one breathing raggedly.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Don't worry about it. The deer is still gonna be edible; we just need to clean it real good before we get it back onto the mule, okay? It's gonna take time to master this stuff.

The sound of a buck grunting is heard in the distance. It is a loud grunt, the sound causing JAMES, NED, GORDON, and ANDREW as well as the POV to look off into the direction from which it came.

NED (O.S.)

Sounds like a big buck.

GORDON (O.S.)

No shit.

The grunt happens again; the animal with which we are sharing the POV lets out a grunt in response, and the camera rapidly dollies into the snowy woods; the camera's movement is shaky, following the movement of the deer.

CUT TO:

The camera then cuts back to NED and GORDON; they look in the direction in which they hear the second grunt. We're looking over their shoulders. The dogs begin to growl, something unusual for the dogs to do. Their hackles are raised.

GORDON
What was that?

NED
No clue.

They look at each other and shrug. The dogs continue to growl and bark.

NED (CONT'D)
Whatever it was, it got the dogs startled.

GORDON
You two quit it-

JAMES and ANDREW continue to clean the deer before they hear another loud grunt.

The camera pans over to an opening in the woods; RONAN jumps into view. He grunts loudly again, the group turning to look at the buck.

He is the exact same buck as seen on the hunting cam. He has a large set of white antlers covered in moss. There is no doubt that this is the buck they are searching for.

GORDON
(whispering)
Holy shit.

JAMES
(whispering)
ANDREW... Get the rifle...

ANDREW slowly nods, quietly reaching down to the rifle and aiming. We now see RONAN through the scope from Andrew's POV. His grip on the rifle is shaky. He then takes a deep breath and - BLAM! - the rifle goes off.

The bullet appears to have missed its target. We cut to see a reaction shot of ANDREW. He looks confused as to why he missed when his sights were directly on RONAN.

RONAN does not flinch; he and the group make eye contact. It is a quiet exchange. RONAN's ears are forward. He stomps several times and blows before turning and bounding into the woods.

ANDREW
Shit-

JAMES
Language.

GORDON
Son of a bitch! Why didn't you shoot the damn thing, JAMES?!

NED
GORDON, easy, man-

ANDREW
I could have sworn I hit him. The bullet, it-

GORDON
Apparently not, kid. You and your amateur-ass shooting just cost us.

JAMES
I suggest you quit talking to ABI- ANDREW that way.

NED
Just let it go, GORDON. Mistakes happen; it's not the end of the world. I'm sure we can track him down.

JAMES
Exactly. Don't get your damn panties in a twist just yet, GORDON. Come on, before we lose him.

GORDON
The sooner we get that damn thing, the better off we'll be. I'm tired of hearing you all bitch about it.

GORDON and NED prepare the horses and the mule; JAMES glares as he watches GORDON before looking at ANDREW who's still looking off in the direction in which RONAN had run.

JAMES softly sighs and places his hand on ANDREW's shoulder; ANDREW turns to look at him.

JAMES

Don't worry about it; we're going to get him.

ANDREW

But Dad, I could have sworn I hit him-

JAMES

Sometimes our minds play tricks on us.

ANDREW

But I'm serious, dad.

JAMES softly sighs. He's about to say something before we can hear GORDON loudly clear his throat off-camera. He's doing this to hurry along the father-son duo. GORDON is obviously agitated by ANDREW'S misfire, and JAMES is getting irritated by GORDON's behavior. He's starting to think bringing GORDON along was a bad idea.

GORDON (O.S.)

You two done over there with your talk? Burning daylight out here.

JAMES

Yea, yea, we're coming.

CUT TO:

18 EXT. RIGHT OUTSIDE OF YELLOWSTONE - DAWN - CONTINUOUS

18

The camera dollies, focused on the ground. It is still snowing; the ground now has a thin blanket of white snow. It is enough to show the hoof prints of RONAN whom they are tracking.

As the group continues to follow the tracks, they come across a barbed wire fence. They have reached Yellowstone National Park.

NED

Oh no...

GORDON

Goddamnit. I should have known. We've come out all this way for nothing.

GORDON turns to ANDREW and points.

GORDON (CONT'D.)

If it wasn't for you, we would have already gotten that damn buck and would have been back at the lodge by now.

NED places a hand on GORDON'S shoulder as JAMES stands in front of ANDREW, blocking GORDON from the boy.

NED

It's okay; we didn't know he would be coming this way.

JAMES

Exactly, but who said this fence was going to stop us?

GORDON

Excuse me?

JAMES

You heard me.

JAMES walks over to the large mammoth mule and rummages around in the saddle bag. He produces a pair of wire cutters before going over to the fence.

GORDON

JAMES, don't you fucking dare.

JAMES

What are you going to do? Arrest me?

GORDON

I just might. You know damn well you can't follow that buck into Yellowstone. He's protected now.

JAMES

That's why we're going to go in and lure him out.

GORDON

You can't be serious.

ANDREW

Dad, maybe he's right. There's something off about this.

NED

I agree with ANDREW on this... I'm starting to get a strange feeling about this buck.

JAMES

Nonsense. It's going to be fine. Trust me. This isn't the first time I've had to lure something out.

NED

No, JIMBO, I'm serious. That fence should have kept the buck from jumping in.

GORDON

He's right. He would have gotten stuck in the wires if he jumped that. The fence is designed to keep the animals protected.

ANDREW

Maybe he's just a big jumper?

JAMES

That's what I'm thinking. Did you guys not see the size of that monster?

GORDON

JAMES...

JAMES brushes GORDON off before turning to the barbed wire fence. He then begins to cut the barbed wire. SNIP. SNIP. SNIP.

Once the wire is cut, he curls the wires back towards the fence posts, allowing the men and their animals to pass without being harmed by the sharp wire ends.

When JAMES is done, he looks back to the group. NED and ANDREW seem to be unsure, while GORDON seems as disgruntled as ever.

JAMES

What are you all staring at? We got a buck to track. ANDREW, get the mule and lead us out.

ANDREW

Yes, sir...

ANDREW doesn't seem to trust this but doesn't want to argue about it. He, NED, and GORDON go to the mule and horses. JAMES steps aside, allowing them to get the animals through.

GORDON is the last to come through, but he stops before going and grips JAMES by the arm firmly. He leans in slightly.

GORDON

(whispering)

I swear, if this costs me my job, you're dead.

JAMES

Relax. This won't going to cost you your job.

GORDON lets go of JAMES in a not-so-gentle manner, scowling as he leads the horse through the opened fence.

CUT TO:

We are now watching JAMES from a distance and an unknown POV. We see JAMES about to walk through the fence and stop. He stands there for a minute. He feels like he is being watched as he turns around to scan the perimeter. He doesn't see anything, but we are still focused on him.

JAMES stands there for a moment; the unknown entity is still focused on him before he turns, hearing what seems to be ANDREW calling him, and he follows the rest of the group and animals through the fence into Yellowstone. The camera stays fixed on the old spot.

CUT TO:

The camera is fixed on the skeleton of a large elk curled up against a tree. The skeleton has no traces of any flesh or sinew left on the bones. The skeleton is immaculate.

NED

Damn, what happened to him?

JAMES

Not sure.

The deer is covered in a strange vine-like material. Some vines appear normal, but others seemed made of keratin instead of foliage.

NED

What the hell is that stuff?

GORDON

No clue. Hey college kid, what the hell is that?

ANDREW

(looks at GORDON with a grimace)

I don't know.

(looks back at the skeleton)

It's—something I've never read up on.

GORDON

That just tells me you need to keep studying if you don't know jack shit.

JAMES

Well, GORDON, do you know what it is, since you are the game warden? Thought you had some kind of bachelor's degree or something.

GORDON

(in shock at being called out)

What? I-I-I don't fucking know!

JAMES

Alright then, I suggest you keep your trap shut.

JAMES and GORDON sneer at each other before JAMES turns his attention to the skeleton. He takes a few steps towards it and kneels in front of it. The camera cuts to look at JAMES'S foot; it is very close to the deer's hoof. There are vines wrapped around the hoof.

The camera zooms in closer on the skeleton; the keratin-looking vines snaked over the skeleton appear to be moving. Smaller vein-like vines that sprout from random spots are moving like tentacles, trying to grasp the bone and grow further.

The camera focuses back on JAMES'S foot and the deer's hoof. The keratin is starting to grow towards JAMES'S foot, reaching out onto his boot, and begins to grow upward underneath his jeans' leg.

JAMES reaches out and places his hand on the antler where the vines have not covered the antler. However, as soon as this happens, the vines creep along the antler toward his hand. Before the vine can touch his skin, JAMES pulls his hand back.

The camera cuts down to JAMES'S foot where the vine had grown up his pant leg, the keratin already making contact with his skin. JAMES does not notice this when he backs away from the deer.

GORDON

What the hell was that all about, JIMBO?

JAMES

Did you not see that?

ANDREW

See what, Dad?

JAMES

Those vine-like things they were moving around like tentacles and crawling toward my hand!

NED

I'm sure it's nothing.

JAMES

I'm being serious!

GORDON

JIMBO, it's your mind playing tricks on you.

ANDREW

It's probably just the breeze, Dad.

JAMES lets out a frustrated huff, looking at ANDREW and GORDON before looking back down at the skeleton and then standing up. He dusts himself off.

GORDON

C'mon, we got that buck to find. I don't want to be out here longer than we have to.

NED

We may not want to be out here that long but if the Lord demands it, who are we to deny him?

GORDON

Shut up, Ned.

GORDON and NED start to head off down the path with the horses. ANDREW looks at JAMES for a moment, offering his dad a slight reassuring smile before following after NED and GORDON with the mule.

JAMES watches them for a moment before looking back down at the skeleton. He stares at it, observing the little tendrils of the keratin vines moving just ever so slightly over the bones. He has a shiver go through his body, and the fungus is now in his system.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

BEGIN MONTAGE:

19 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - MIDDAY **19**

Aerial shot of the group walking through the snow.

20 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - MIDDAY **20**

Close-up shot of NED and GORDON. NED is worried, and GORDON is disgruntled.

21 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - MIDDAY **21**

Closeup shot of ANDREW; he is worried.

22 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - MIDDAY **22**

A close-up shot of a grizzly bear walking towards the group from the direction they're going. The horses start to spook and the dogs bark at the bear.

JAMES

(puts his hand out in front of ANDREW to protect him)

Don't move.

NED and GORDON aim their rifles at the grizzly. The grizzly roars at them but makes no attempt to come after them. He continues to walk past them.

JAMES, ANDREW, GORDON, and NED all watch him in confusion.

ANDREW

What was that all about?

JAMES

(running his hand through his hair)

I don't know...

23 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - MIDDAY

23

Wide shot of the group and horses walking through the snow.

24 EXT. YELLOWSTONE - MIDDAY

24

Close-up shot of JAMES. He is showing signs of strain. There is despair on his face.

END MONTAGE.

25 EXT. CLEARING FOREST- MIDDAY - LATER

25

JAMES, ANDREW, NED, and GORDON are deep within the forests of Yellowstone National Park. It has continued snowing since the beginning of the hunt. The group has been walking for hours.

The group has not seen any deer since entering Yellowstone. RONAN is out of the question as well. RONAN's tracks are nearly gone due to the fresh snow. The group has made it to a clearing within the forest.

GORDON

We're losing his tracks, JAMES!

JAMES

Nonsense, We... we just need to keep going! I can see the tracks!

NED

We've been walking for hours now, JIMBO. We need to take a breather!
There are no tracks here.

NED, GORDON, and ANDREW have stopped walking by this point; JAMES is still walking through the snow.

JAMES

(swallowing thickly)
No, we need to keep going!

ANDREW

Maybe it's a good idea to stop and let the horses rest.

JAMES finally stops. He is feeling more strained than ever. He fidgets a little, running his hand through his hair as he thinks for a second. He nods, swallowing before he responds to ANDREW. NED and GORDON both notice this change.

JAMES

Right... right, yea, let's stop here for a moment.

ANDREW

Are you alright, Dad?

JAMES

Yea, yea, I'm fine.

JAMES walks a few paces away from the group. ANDREW is silently watching, worried about his dad. NED places a hand on ANDREW'S shoulder as if to say, "he'll be fine."

JAMES stands at the edge of the woods, looking into the forest beyond. He is trying to piece together everything and keep himself upright, but this hunt is getting to him pretty badly. This is unexpected for him since he thought he had everything about this routine trip under control. James doesn't know what happened within the last few hours to cause this change in his demeanor.

There is sweat beading on his forehead. This hunting trip is starting to remind him of the time back in the war, walking for hours and being on edge the entire time. He's been on edge for the past four hours now. He wants it to stop. He can start to feel himself going into an episode.

GORDON notices this and approaches him, grabbing JAMES by the shoulder and pulling him around so they can face each other. This pulls JAMES out of his trance.

GORDON

What's your problem, man? You starting to give up on us?

JAMES

(running his hands through his hair)
What? No. No, I just—
(looking away, a wild look in his eyes)
I just need a minute.

GORDON

(noticing JAMES'S strain, pulling him back around by the shoulder)
So, you are giving up, huh? I knew you couldn't take this shit.

JAMES

GORDON, I am fine—

GORDON

If you're fine, why the hell are you all fidgety and shit? You've
wasted all fucking day having us walk circles in the goddamn forest
for nothing.
(pushing JAMES'S shoulder)

NED

Hey, guys, knock it out!

JAMES

(pushing GORDON back)
I'm not taking your shit right now.

GORDON

You're acting like a fucking pansy! What happened to that tough
soldier, huh? A lot of bullshit if you ask me.

JAMES

GORDON, I swear I'm not above—

ANDREW

Guys!

JAMES and GORDON look at ANDREW, who is pointing into the distance.
The both of them look and see a buck. It looks like RONAN from afar.
JAMES quickly pulls his rifle from over his shoulder; his grip on the
rifle is shaky. We see the buck through the scope from JAMES'S POV;
the camera follows James's movement.

GORDON quickly snatches the rifle from JAMES as the buck appears to
try and run. In a split second — BLAM! — the rifle goes off, and the

buck goes down. We can hear the buck flail around and cry out before death.

GORDON

(handing the rifle back to JAMES)
And that's how you fucking do it.

GORDON and JAMES exchange scowls before walking over to the buck where NED and ANDREW already kneel. The camera focuses on the buck; it is definitely not RONAN, but it looks very similar. However, unlike RONAN, this buck is frail and malnourished.

JAMES

It's not him.

GORDON(punching at the nearest tree)
Fuck! This is fucking bullshit!

JAMES

Calm down man. It ain't no big deal.

GORDON

No big deal!?! You just shot a damn deer with chronic wasting. This is a big damn problem! That shit is going to spread like a fucking wild fire and infect the whole population.

GORDON storms away from the group, cueing NED to follow behind so he can try to calm GORDON down. We can't hear what they're saying, but it's apparent that GORDON is livid. The camera is focused on ANDREW and JAMES who are looking down at the buck. JAMES looks more strained than ever; ANDREW looks worried for JAMES.

JAMES is focusing on the buck, his brows knit together, when he notices something off about the deer. ANDREW notices this and looks confused.

ANDREW

What's wrong, Dad?

JAMES kneels down, not answering. He takes his bowie knife out and lifts the upper lip of the deer. Instead of a toothless upper jaw, like in a regular deer, there are rows of sharp wolf teeth.

JAMES

This deer doesn't have chronic wasting disease.

ANDREW
What is it?

JAMES takes the knife and swipes it along the upper lip of the deer. There are wolf teeth in the entire mouth of the buck. JAMES notices that the eyes of the deer are glazed over like he has cataracts.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Is that normal?

JAMES
No... no, it's not. Deer are not supposed to have teeth in the upper dental pad..
(opening the jaws of the dead deer to look inside)
... or any sharp teeth for that matter.
(turning to look over at NED and GORDON)
Hey guys! Come check this—

Before JAMES can get out the rest of his sentence, a loud, monstrous screech rings through the woods. It is loud enough to startle their two horses, and they run off. The mule spooks but is not as startled as the horses. The dogs begin to growl, looking off into the woods.

GORDON
What the hell was that?!

NED
I don't know—

ANDREW
The horses! Come back!!

GORDON
Forget the fucking horses

NED
Not if they have our supplies, GORDON—

GORDON
I said forget them! JAMES?!

JAMES
(nervous laughing and tittering)
Must be that damn Bigfoot Phillip kept going on about.

GORDON

Shut up, JIMBO. This isn't the fucking time to joke around.

There's another loud screech; it's near-deafening. The group has to cover their ears. JAMES grabs hold of ANDREW, keeping him close. JAMES is clutching the rifle tightly.

The dogs bark and bay loudly; they, too, know something is wrong.

NED

I don't think that's Bigfoot-

GORDON

Fuck- We need to get those horses back.

Another scream can be heard through the woods. It is the sound of a woman in distress in the distance. JAMES'S demeanor suddenly shifts.

The camera quickly zooms in on JAMES in an extreme closeup shot; we only see his eyes as his pupils dilate.

BEGIN FLASHBACK MONTAGE:

26 EXT. WAR IN THE DESERT - DAY 26

POV shot from James running and ducking sniper fire in a ravaged city.

27 EXT. WAR IN THE DESERT - DAY 27

POV shot from James: he sees a grenade being thrown into a group of cars, and a large explosion follows.

28 EXT. WAR IN THE DESERT - DAY 28

POV shot from James, shooting at the enemy.

29 INT. WAR IN THE DESERT - DAY 29

POV shot from JAMES, there is a screaming local woman being held down by two young enemy soldiers.

END FLASHBACK MONTAGE.

JAMES drops the rifle from his grip. He stares out into the woods. He is as still as a statue for the most part, but his fingers are slightly twitching, as well as his eyelid.

ANDREW looks at JAMES, and he knows this is the start of one of his father's episodes, but he wasn't expecting it to happen during the hunt.

GORDON
JAMES?

JAMES does not respond, instead, he begins to twitch, his eyes rolling back into his head and he falls to the ground. He begins to convulse as seizures take over his body.

ANDREW
Dad!

NED
JAMES??

GORDON is quick to attempt to stabilize JAMES, ensuring that he doesn't hit his head while convulsing.

GORDON
(trying to hold JAMES still)
JAMES! JAMES can you hear me!? You're gonna be right. We're gonna-

Without warning, JAMES yells and quickly grabs hold of GORDON and puts him in a sleeper hold. GORDON and JAMES wrestle with each other on the ground, GORDON trying to free himself from JAMES'S grip.

JAMES is experiencing a full-blown PTSD episode. NED quickly sprints to JAMES to free GORDON from their friend.

GORDON
(choking, fighting off JAMES)
JAMES! LET... GO!

ANDREW
Dad! Dad let him go! He's not one of those men!

NED
 JIMBO!
 (trying to pull JAMES off of GORDON)
 Snap out of it, man!

JAMES quickly lets go of GORDON and bolts into the forest ahead of them. The camera follows JAMES as he disappears into the woods. GORDON, NED, and ANDREW are yelling for him off-screen.

30 EXT. YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK FOREST- MIDDAY - CONTINUOUS 30

Through JAMES'S POV, the camera dollies further into the woods. The movement is shaky, following his erratic footsteps. For a moment, we are running through the snowy woods, but suddenly, we are in a desert town that has been turned into a warzone.

We can hear yelling and gunfire; soldiers and civilians are dead in the streets. The camera tilts down and focuses on the face of a deceased local girl staring blindly into the sky. The camera then quickly pans to the side and dollies into an alleyway. The movement is still shaky but not as confused as before. JAMES runs down a few feet before turning abruptly to the sound of a woman screaming in a building.

He kicks down the door, where he pulls a soldier away from a frightened woman and shoots him. JAMES stands there for a moment; he's panting. He turns to look at the woman and slowly reaches out to her to make sure she is okay. She screams again, even louder, and half-turns to run before swinging back, pointing at something behind JAMES.

JAMES turns his head when he feels someone grab his shoulder; he abruptly turns around fully, and a young man stands behind him. It's an enemy soldier. JAMES pushes him back onto the ground. He pulls out his bowie knife and is about to stab the young soldier.

YOUNG SOLDIER
 (with ANDREW'S voice)
 Wait! Dad! Stop! It's me!

Suddenly, instead of being in the warzone and looking at a young soldier, JAMES is back in the woods at Yellowstone. ANDREW is on the ground in the snow, holding his hands out. He is terrified.

JAMES looks at the bowie knife and quickly throws it to the ground beside him. He, too, is terrified.

JAMES

(panting)

ANDREW? Shit—son, I'm sorry!

JAMES moves to help ANDREW up, but ANDREW quickly pulls away, pushing himself off the ground. The two of them stare at each other for a moment in silence before they hear the whimpering of a fox. They both look to see a fox lying in red snow on the ground, the animal shaking in fear and pain. It appears to be lame in the hind legs.

The dogs had followed ANDREW out with him, the both of them now sniffing at the animal which was trying to get away but couldn't. JAMES calls off the dogs from the fox, the two of them heeling at his and ANDREW'S feet.

The woman whose screams they heard must have been the fox wailing in pain.

ANDREW

Dad... it's wounded. Should we?

JAMES silently nods and picks up his bowie knife again. He goes over and kneels before the fox. He places a hand on the fox, keeping it still despite it thrashing in fear. JAMES pierces the fox's neck with the bowie knife, instantly killing it. The fox dies with a whine.

ANDREW grimaces at the sound and kneels beside JAMES, looking down at the fox.

Upon further inspection, we realize something with sharp teeth caused the fox's wounds. The bone of the animal is visible to both ANDREW and JAMES.

ANDREW

What caused the wound? It's so strange-

JAMES

I don't know...

ANDREW

Did you find the woman?

JAMES
What?

ANDREW
The woman—the one that was screaming?

JAMES
Wait, you heard her too?

Suddenly, they both hear the snort of a buck. They slowly look up. From the shadow of the woods, there are two glowing white eyes. Out steps RONAN.

The dogs bark and growl as the deer reveals itself.

Like the buck they killed before this chase, RONAN also has dull eyes as if he is blind. His head is fully covered by keratin-like moss, originating from the space between his antlers. He lifts his head and roars, and his mouth opens enough for the two to see that he, too, has sharp wolf teeth.

As soon as RONAN roars, both of the dogs quickly run off in the direction they came with their tails between their legs.

From either side of the large buck step out four more deer, two on each side. Two of them automatically bound off after the dogs, snarling, leaving RONAN and two other deer behind. They stare at ANDREW and JAMES hungrily, saliva running down the sides of their mouths. Both of the deer beside RONAN are snarling, showing sharp, shiny white teeth.

ANDREW
Dad...

JAMES doesn't respond; he is too focused on the bucks inching closer. He shields ANDREW with his hand, backing up with him.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
(backing up)
Dad?

JAMES
(backing up)
Son, I need you to run-

ANDREW
(backing up)
What?

RONAN roars again; it sounds like a woman screaming.

JAMES
Go!

JAMES pushes ANDREW away, and ANDREW runs back towards the group. JAMES looks back at the bucks; he picks up a rock and chucks it at the deer. It lands on one of them, making the creature scream in pain and fury. JAMES then turns and runs after ANDREW, ensuring he has positioned himself in between ANDREW and the bucks.

RONAN lets out another roar, and a couple of the bucks bound off after ANDREW and JAMES.

We see JAMES and ANDREW through the POV of one the bucks chasing after them. The camera is shaky as the POV buck chases after them. As they run, they pass the two bucks who had ran off before. They have caught up with the dogs and are ripping into them.

ANDREW (O.S.)
Holy shit!

The camera focuses on the bucks after ANDREW, JAMES, and the other two bucks pass by where they eat. One of the bucks lifts its head and snarls, blood dripping from its mouth.

JAMES (O.S.)
Keep going!

The camera cuts back to JAMES and ANDREW in a tracking shot, where we see them both vault over a fallen stump, the camera focused on the bucks who leap over it.

ANDREW
They're gaining on us!

JAMES
Just keep running! Don't look back!

CUT TO:

NED and GORDON are back with the mule, waiting for ANDREW and JAMES to return. They are both talking frantically, unsure of what is going on.

NED

What the hell was that all about?

GORDON

I don't know, but the fucking bastard nearly killed my ass!

NED and GORDON hear a noise coming from the woods behind them. It is yelling from both ANDREW and JAMES, as well as snarls and screeches from the bucks chasing after them. They look over quickly. It then gets quiet suddenly, the silence startling them both.

GORDON

(whispers)

What the-

Suddenly, JAMES and ANDREW leap from the woods. They lose their footing and trip, and the bucks come in right after them. One of the bucks pins JAMES on his back, and JAMES tries to fight off the buck.

The other grabs ANDREW by the back of the hunting jacket with its sharp teeth and starts to shake ANDREW violently.

NED (O.S.)

Holy shit! What are those things?!

The buck attacking JAMES snaps at him repeatedly, trying to bite his face. JAMES raises his hands, holding the buck's antlers and trying to push him back. The buck's mouth is inches from JAMES's face. ANDREW is screaming, terrified, as the buck attacking him begins pulling at his jacket with his teeth, trying to get through to the skin.

ANDREW

(crying, voice shaking)

Dad!!

JAMES

Hold on, Andrew!

GORDON (O.S.)

Hold on!

JAMES yells about the same time as the buck attacking him roars, then suddenly – KA-BLAM! – the buck has a large bullet hole in the side of his head, the blood pouring out and onto JAMES, some getting into his mouth. JAMES coughs and gags, throwing the deer to the ground beside him; he quickly turns over and begins to vomit and cough.

He looks over to the side where ANDREW is still being attacked by the buck. JAMES starts to get up despite his stomach turning from the blood getting in his mouth, he starts towards ANDREW and the buck.

JAMES
ANDREW!

JAMES takes a hold of the buck by the antlers, pulling the animal away and throwing him to the side. It wasn't a big throw, but it was enough to get ANDREW up and away from the buck.

The buck screeches, slightly crouching and baring its teeth at the two.

JAMES
Stay back, ANDREW-

ANDREW does not respond; he is holding onto JAMES, crying.

The buck charges them, and – KA-BLAM! – the buck is shot in the neck, causing it to fall to its side, convulse, and flail its legs on the ground as if trying to get back up but losing its balance, screeching in agony. The buck dies, and blood pools around the animal.

JAMES is holding ANDREW close to him, and ANDREW still cries into JAMES'S chest as JAMES tries to console him.

GORDON gets a closer look at the buck, his eyes widening when he sees the teeth inside the mouth of the deer.

GORDON
What the hell are those things?!

JAMES
I don't know, but there's more where that came from.

GORDON
What?!

NED

What do you mean there's more? How can you be so sure!?

ANDREW

(in between sobs and sniffles)

We-We saw them... RONAN... RONAN was one of them!

NED

What?!

GORDON

You can't be serious.

JAMES

We ain't shitting you, man. That deer that we shot earlier? He had those teeth as well.

NED

Dear god- Is this some cruel, sick test bestowed to us by God?

GORDON

You gotta be fucking-

GORDON is cut off by the sound of several screeches from the woods. The group follows the sound with their heads. They can hear rustling from far inside the woods.

CUT TO:

The camera dollying through the woods toward the group is very shaky, mimicking the movement of a buck. The camera is focused on JAMES who is staring off into the woods. He is motionless.

A conversation begins, and as the conversation progresses, the voices get softer, a ringing overlaying the voices.

GORDON (O.S.)

We gotta go-

NED (O.S.)

What?

ANDREW (O.S.)

We can't outrun them.

NED (O.S.)

ANDREW's right; we can't outrun them-

GORDON (O.S.)

Well, we can't stay here. We gotta go- ANDREW, JAMES, let's go.

NED (O.S.)

JAMES? JAMES?

GORDON (O.S.)

(shaking JAMES)

JAMES!

JAMES shakes his head when he comes to, looking at GORDON. JAMES is in a full-on sweat. ANDREW looks concerned.

JAMES

What??

GORDON

Jesus Christ, JAMES.

(Pushing on JAMES's shoulder)

Get your head out of your ass, and c'mon!

NED

Dear god, please shield us from whatever has attacked our brothers in Christ-

GORDON

Knock the fucking praying off and c'mon!

CUT TO:

The camera is focused on the spot in the forest where ANDREW and JAMES exited from; we see the group run from one side of the frame to the other. The camera slowly zooms in, lingering on the shot of the woods for a moment before another series of screeches can be heard.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - BEFORE EVENING

31

Wide aerial shot of the forest below; the camera zooms in and puts the group into focus as they run through the forest, looking for safety.

The camera is now peering over JAMES'S shoulder; it is unsteady, following his movement.

NED

See anything coming up?!

JAMES

No!

As the group continues to run, the camera zooms in over JAMES'S shoulder, focusing on a cabin that is in a clearing.

ANDREW

(pointing)

Look! Up there!

The camera tilts down and pans from the top of the cabin down to the group as it runs to the front porch. ANDREW stays behind with the mule while the three men run up the porch steps. JAMES looks back, a fearful expression on his face as he tracks his son.

JAMES

ANDREW? ANDREW, come on!

ANDREW

What about Jack-? We already lost the horses.

NED and GORDON are fighting with the door; we can hear them beating on the door behind JAMES. They are trying to pry the door open.

GORDON

JAMES! Give us a hand with the door, goddamn it!

NED

Dear god, please open this door! We as your humble servants, beg of you!

JAMES looks from ANDREW back to GORDON. He then whips his head around, blankly staring off into the woods behind them; he can hear rustling and roaring far within the woods.

ANDREW

Dad?

GORDON and NED finally get the door open with a yell.

GORDON
 (grunting)
 Finally! Everyone inside!

JAMES shakes his head, looking back at the sound of the door breaking open. He looks back at ANDREW and curses, approaching ANDREW and the mule. JAMES begins to pull the dead deer off the mule.

NED (O.S.)
 JAMES! ANDREW! Hurry!

ANDREW
 Dad?? What are you doing?!

JAMES
 If he gets chased, he's not going to have extra weight on him-
 JAMES firmly grabs ANDREW'S arm to drag him into the cabin.

ANDREW
 Jack!

JAMES
 Forget him, son! We've got to get inside!

32 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - BEFORE EVENING - CONTINUOUS

32

As soon as JAMES and ANDREW run into the cabin, GORDON slams the door shut behind them.

GORDON
 Quick! Get something to barricade the door and windows!

JAMES
 Come on, Andrew-

The group scurries around the cabin, looking for anything useful to barricade and block the door and windows so the deer cannot get in. It is a loud process. The men are beating and banging around to ensure they are safe.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - BEFORE EVENING - CONTINUOUS

33

Outside the cabin, the mule stands close to the porch, untied. The camera focuses on the animal listening to the loud banging and yelling noises from inside the cabin. The mule looks off towards the woods, hearing something getting closer.

We now see the mule from the foggy POV of one of the deer that had been chasing the group. The camera is slightly shaky, and the sound of snarling and wheezing can be heard.

Suddenly, the camera dollies forward, following the movement of the deer as it bounds towards the mule which begins to rear.

CUT TO:

34 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - BEFORE EVENING - CONTINUOUS

34

The men continue to work on the barricades when they suddenly stop. They hear the sound of a distressed mule outside.

GORDON

What was that?

ANDREW

Jack!

ANDREW drops what he is holding, maybe a tool or piece of wood, and runs to the window. A slight crack in between the boards of wood allows him to see outside. We see an extreme closeup shot of ANDREW'S eye as he looks outside, the light from outside brightening his eye.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - BEFORE EVENING - CONTINUOUS

35

From ANDREW'S POV, looking out from the crack in the wood slabs, we see the mule fighting off a few deer. The mule rears, and the deer circle around him and snarl.

As one of the deer charges, the mule kicks the deer in the skull, sending it onto its side, where it begins to convulse. One of the other deer pounces-

CUT TO:

36 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - BEFORE EVENING - CONTINUOUS

36

JAMES quickly pulls ANDREW away from the window before he is able to see the rest of the fight.

ANDREW
Dad!!

JAMES
ANDREW! Don't look!

ANDREW
But he needs our help!

JAMES
But we can't, son-

NED
Your old man is right, kid; we can't help him now. We must pray that the lord gives him the strength to fight them off.

ANDREW, JAMES, NED, and GORDON stay still for a moment as they listen to the fight continue outside for another moment. The fighting grows quiet suddenly.

ANDREW
(whispering)
What's happening?

GORDON steps quietly to the window. We see Gordon's eye in an extreme closeup; the camera stays fixed on his eye looking out. It is quiet.

The camera then cuts back to NED, JAMES, and ANDREW. They all look confused and worried.

JAMES
What's happening out there, GORDON?

GORDON pulls away from the door, looking over at the group.

JAMES
Well?

GORDON

He's fine... Got some bites and scratches on him, but he seems to be fine. There are more dead deer around him than he started with.

NED

Dear lord-

ANDREW

What does that mean? Is he going to turn into one of those things?

GORDON

(leaning against the wall, arms crossed)

Let's fucking hope not. We don't need a damn man-eating mule on our hands. We've already got enough as it is with these- these-

NED

Demonic creatures.

GORDON

Exactly.

JAMES runs his hands through his hair before holding the back of his neck with both hands, softly huffing a little as he tries to think. He closes his eyes, brows knit together.

ANDREW

(look of concern)

Dad?

JAMES does not respond; he simply sits there. Something is off. He can't think straight; his brain is foggy.

NED

JIMBO? You alright?

JAMES

(forming a line with his mouth)

Alright, look-

(opening his eyes, clasping his hands a little)

There's no need in trying to get out here any time soon. We're going to need to wait it out a little until we can get back to the lodge for help.

GORDON

And how long are we supposed to wait exactly?

JAMES

As long as it takes, GORDON.

GORDON

Perfect. We could be here for hours. Days. Weeks even, JIMBO!

JAMES

So, you're telling me you'd rather go out there with those things while they're still around?

GORDON

And how do you know they're going to leave?

NED

GORDON, we've got to have faith that they'll leave eventually.

GORDON

Don't start with that shit, NED.

JAMES

Hey, come on now, GORDON. NED here is right. We've got to have a little faith that those deer... or things... whatever the fuck they are... leave.

GORDON

(sneering)

Fine.

NED

Might be the best time to rest anyway.

JAMES

Exactly.

The men find a place to sit and rest for the time being. ANDREW has gone over to the couch during JAMES and GORDON'S talk. He looks uncomfortable, and he's holding himself as he leans back on the couch.

JAMES approaches ANDREW and sits beside him. He looks concerned.

JAMES

(whispers)

Hey, you alright?

ANDREW
(whispers)
No.

JAMES
(whispers)
Everything is gonna be alright, son. Don't worry.

GORDON (O.S.)
There ain't no damn need to whisper in here. Ain't like we're keeping secrets from each other.

JAMES glares at GORDON before he rolls his eyes. He then looks at ANDREW, and ANDREW shakes his head.

ANDREW
(whispering)
It's not that.

JAMES
(whispering)
What is it then?

ANDREW
(whispering)
I need to find a bathroom.

ANDREW looks up at JAMES. There is discomfort in his eyes, the grip around himself slightly tightening as if trying to ease the pain he is currently feeling. It doesn't take long for JAMES to realize that ANDREW has started menstruating.

JAMES
(whispering)
Shit.

ANDREW
(whispering)
I'm sorry.

JAMES
(whispering)
No. No, it's fine, don't worry about it. It's out of your control-

JAMES gets up from the couch and walks to one of the doors leading into a hallway, and he looks down it, trying to see if there is a bathroom.

NED (O.S.)
Everything alright?

JAMES
(sitting back down)
Yea, yea- everything's fine.
(whispering to ANDREW)
Go down the hallway and see if there is a bathroom. There are a few doors we haven't tried yet.

ANDREW
(whispering)
Okay.

JAMES
(whispering)
Do you need anything?

ANDREW
(whispering)
I brought some pads with me.

ANDREW gets up and leaves the room with his backpack in hand, and the camera stays focused on JAMES as he watches him leave.

NED and GORDON watch ANDREW leave, both of them showing signs of confusion.

GORDON
What's wrong with him?

JAMES
(quietly)
Quiet down-

GORDON gives JAMES a disgruntled look in response.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(quietly)
There's nothing wrong.

GORDON

(quietly)

Then why is he acting strange all of a sudden?

JAMES

(quietly)

Drop it, GORDON.

NED

(places a hand on GORDON'S shoulder, speaks quietly)

GORDON, we don't need to know everything.

GORDON

(jerks himself away, speaks quietly)

No, but I got the right to know what's going on with someone in this damn group.

JAMES

(quietly)

When it comes to my kid, that is none of your business.

GORDON

(sneers, speaking quietly.)

Whatever. But if it's something serious, I don't want to fucking hear it later.

GORDON gets up and walks over to the window to peer out. NED sighs and looks over at JAMES offering him an apologetic look.

NED

(quietly)

Don't worry about him, JIMBO. I know you're protecting your child. You're a good father.

JAMES offers NED a smile back in return. It makes him feel good to hear being called a "good father." The shot lingers on JAMES'S face as the frame shifts—

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

BEGIN MONTAGE:

37 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - BEFORE EVENING

37

NED, JAMES, and GORDON are checking out the cabin. Andrew is on the couch, curled up in a fetal position.

38 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - BEFORE EVENING

38

NED and JAMES are checking ammunition and food. GORDON is peering through the window. ANDREW is still laying on the couch.

NED
(quietly)
Is this enough?

JAMES
(quietly)
No. But it's going to have to be enough.

NED
(quietly)
How long will this last us?

JAMES
(quietly)
If we ration it? Maybe a day

NED
(quietly)
Shit...

39 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING

39

GORDON is eating on some beef jerky from his backpack. NED is praying. JAMES is over on the couch with ANDREW as his son sleeps, JAMES'S arm around him.

40 INT. ABANDONED CABIN BATHROOM - EVENING

40

Closeup shot of JAMES peering into the bathroom mirror. His eyes look different than before. They are slightly clouded as if he has cataracts.

This causes JAMES to put on his sunglasses to keep from people seeing his eyes.

We can hear NED and GORDON talk in the main room as JAMES returns. ANDREW is looking through the cracks in the window's barricade.

GORDON

What's with the glasses?

JAMES

(heading to the couch to lay down)
Got a headache. Gonna sleep it off.

NED and GORDON share a confused look but decide not to question it and return to their conversation.

END MONTAGE.

CUT TO:

41 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING

41

A shot of the moon. It is full, but there are no stars in the sky. It is quiet. The night is so black that the darkness hums.

Wide shot of the cabin. The snow has stopped falling, leaving a thick white blanket on the ground across the landscape.

INSERT: Off-frame argument between NED and GORDON.

CUT TO:

42 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

42

JAMES is asleep on the couch, and he is in a damp sweat, unaware of the arguing that is going on. ANDREW is shaking JAMES, trying to wake him up.

ANDREW

Dad! DAD!

JAMES suddenly wakes up and cries out, startled. He is still wearing the sunglasses. He's sweating still. He looks at ANDREW before looking over at NED and GORDON.

NED

You can't be serious, GORDON!

GORDON

We can't sit and wait around all night! We have to go now!

JAMES

(groggy, running his hand through his sweaty hair)
What are you on about now, GORDON-

GORDON

Oh, sleeping beauty is finally awake. So glad you could join us.

NED

GORDON-

GORDON

Shut up, NED. I've had it with you.

JAMES

(getting up from couch)
What's the fucking issue now?

GORDON

I'm going out and looking for help. Now.

JAMES

You can't be serious. We don't know if it's safe out there!

GORDON

Oh? So you're telling me you're scared now? What happened to waiting until later when it was safe?

JAMES

How do you know it's safe now? Did you fucking check?

GORDON

No, but-

PHILLIP (O.S.)

(from outside the cabin)
Hello? Is anyone out here?

GORDON

Shit. Finally, some help. We're in here, PHILLIP!

GORDON starts over to the door to open it. ANDREW grabs hold of JAMES'S wrist, and there is a fearful look in his eyes. JAMES looks

confused at first but remembers RONAN'S screaming turning from animalistic to mimicking the scream of a woman. He can practically hear it in his ears.

INSERT: The sound of RONAN's cries turning from animalistic to the sound of a screaming woman.

JAMES remembers that those animals can mimic human voices.

JAMES
GORDON, don't! They can-

JAMES goes toward GORDON, grabbing him by the shoulder before GORDON whips around and pushes him back, nearly knocking JAMES over.

PHILLIP (O.S.)
(from outside the cabin)
JAMES? ANDREW? Where are you guys?!

JAMES (CONT'D)
Hey! The fuck is your problem!

GORDON
What's the big deal, man!? PHILLIP is out there looking for us!

ANDREW
You don't understand, they can-

Before ANDREW can get the rest of his sentence out, GORDON has already opened the door and walked outside, slamming the door shut.

43 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

43

GORDON walks down the stairs, and we can hear JAMES from inside the cabin yelling. It is barely coherent.

JAMES (O.S.)
They can mimic people! GORDON!!

GORDON
Shut up in there! You don't know what you're talking about!

GORDON looks around. There is no sign of PHILLIP anywhere.

GORDON

Phillip? Where the hell are you?

POV shot of an unknown animal watching GORDON. The camera quickly pans, following the movement of its stalking.

The camera then returns to GORDON who turns around suddenly.

GORDON

PHILLIP? Don't be playing with me right now. The hell are you, man?

POV shot of the unknown animal returns, and it is slightly unsteady as it watches GORDON before suddenly charging out. GORDON yells as soon as the animal charges him.

CUT TO:

44 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

44

GORDON'S screaming and crying for help can be heard from outside the cabin. NED runs to the window to peer outside.

NED

Shit! A couple of those deer are on him!

JAMES runs and kicks the door open. From his POV, we see a couple of bucks on GORDON, biting and tearing his clothes. One of them has grabbed hold of his arm and is pulling at it. GORDON is crying and screaming in pain.

JAMES

(running towards the deer and GORDON)

Hey! Get back!

ANDREW

Dad!!

NED

Shit, JIMBO!

(to ANDREW)

Stay here.

(follows after JAMES)

CUT TO:

45 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS**45**

As JAMES gets to the deer, the deer leave their prey and charge at JAMES but quickly stop short as JAMES gets closer. The both of them snarl and roar at JAMES before they run off, leaving JAMES with a bloody, unconscious GORDON.

JAMES is taken aback by the deer's reaction. JAMES does not question why the deer didn't attack him. He is unaware that they could smell the infection.

JAMES

Shit-

(crouching down to pick GORDON up)

NED! Help me get him inside, damnit! ANDREW! Get the first-aid kit ready!

From an unknown POV in the woods, we see ANDREW run out of the frame into the cabin to grab the first-aid kit while NED runs outside, picking up GORDON'S legs and helping JAMES carry him inside.

NED

That deer-it didn't attack you? I wonder why?

JAMES

I know, that was strange.

NED

I wonder why?

JAMES

I'm not worried about it right now. We need to focus on GORDON.

CUT TO:

46 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS**46**

NED and JAMES place GORDON on the couch. GORDON is still unconscious. ANDREW runs over to JAMES and NED, handing them the first-aid kit.

ANDREW

Here, dad-

JAMES
(taking the first aid kit)
Thanks, son-

JAMES opens it up, and he and NED begin to work on GORDON's wounds.

NED
Holy shit, those are fucking bite marks. Is he alive?

JAMES
(checking GORDON's pulse)
His pulse is there, but it's weak.

As JAMES works on waking GORDON, ANDREW and NED talk. Again as before, their voices get lower as they continue, a soft ringing overlaying their voices.

ANDREW
What do we do?

NED
We might have to leave him while we look for help.

ANDREW
What? We can't do that!

NED
The lord will not abandon him while we are gone.

ANDREW
But those things could get in here!

NED
ANDREW, if must have faith that He will protect GORDON and the rest of us. JAMES, please tell-

JAMES
(shaking his head, running his hands through his sweaty hair as he pants, snapping)
Enough! Enough, just let me think!

NED and ANDREW look at JAMES in shock at the sudden snap. JAMES sits there for a moment. He stares at GORDON's unconscious body as he thinks of what to do. It is several seconds before he finally speaks.

JAMES

We use him as bait.

ANDREW

What?

NED

You can't be serious.

JAMES

I am. Those things—earlier they baited me with a fox... they mimicked the sound of a woman to lure me in.

NED

What? So, that woman wasn't real?

ANDREW

It's true.

JAMES

It's what they did to us just now when they got GORDON. If we use him as bait... Then we can escape.

NED

We can't do that; he's still alive.

JAMES

(shrugs)

Barely.

ANDREW

Dad, we can't do that to him! What if he wakes up?

JAMES

If we bring him outside, the hypothermia is going to slow down his dying.

ANDREW

Dad, that's cruel!

JAMES

It's our only way out, ANDREW... NED, help me get him back outside, will ya?

NED is hesitant to help JAMES. He knows it's wrong, but he also knows that they need to get out. He and ANDREW share a look of concern before NED sighs and nods. Then he helps JAMES carry GORDON back outside into the snow.

CUT TO:

47 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

47

JAMES and NED carry GORDON outside into the snow, laying him down far from the cabin. GORDON does not move. He's breathing, but barely.

JAMES and NED peer down at GORDON for a moment or so.

JAMES
(clears his throat)
Alright, let's get back inside.

JAMES turns and walks back to the cabin. NED watches him walk back before looking back down at GORDON. He is hesitant to leave him.

JAMES (O.S.)
NED! Come on!

NED looks back at JAMES before peering down at GORDON again. The camera then focuses on GORDON.

NED (O.S.)
I'm sorry.. May the lord deliver you, GORDON.

JAMES (O.S.)
NED!

The sound of crunching snow can be heard as NED walks away from GORDON and back to the cabin, following JAMES.

CUT TO:

48 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

48

JAMES and NED enter the cabin, NED securing the door behind them. ANDREW sits on the couch, a worried look on his face as he watches them. He doesn't agree with his father's plan. He is confused.

JAMES and NED go to the window, peering out. A close-up shot of the slits from the other side of the window where we see both NED'S and JAMES'S eyes through the gaps.

The camera cuts to view GORDON lying in the snow in the distance.

NED (O.S.)

You sure you want to do this?

JAMES (O.S.)

NED. You know we ain't got no other choice.

NED pulls away from the window for a moment. He looks at JAMES with confusion and shock.

NED

What's going on with you?

JAMES

(glancing over at NED)

Nothing's going on.

NED

No, something's going on. You've been acting strange since we've gotten here. Don't act like you haven't noticed it yourself.

JAMES

I'm fine.

NED

Your mind ain't right. This ain't like you, man.

JAMES

I'm only doing what's right.

NED

What's right? You'd never sacrifice your own like this.

JAMES

(pulling away from the window)

In a situation like this? To keep my child safe? Yes. I would.

CUT TO:

The camera focuses on GORDON from an aerial shot, the camera slightly zooming in before it cuts to ground level. It focuses on him for a moment longer before we can see movement from behind GORDON's body.

NED (O.S.)

So, you're telling me if I was in GORDON'S situation, you'd do the same thing?

The camera then focuses on a wolverine who is sniffing the air nearby GORDON.

JAMES (O.S.)

NED, don't go there with me.

NED (O.S.)

For god's sake, man. You can't be serious!

The wolverine inches closer towards GORDON in a crouched position, stalking the unresponsive man.

CUT TO:

50 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

50

JAMES

You know damn well if you were in MY shoes, you'd do the same fucking thing, NED.

NED

I wouldn't leave my own to be eaten alive by Satan's vermin!

JAMES and NED are then cut off by screaming coming from outside. They both peer back outside to see the wolverine mauling GORDON, who now is very much awake.

NED

Holy shit-

ANDREW gets up from the couch and starts approaching them. JAMES meets ANDREW halfway, gently taking hold of his son to keep him from coming closer.

ANDREW

What's going on?

JAMES

Nothing—nothing. Just don't look—

GORDON (O.S.)

(outside, muffled)

Someone help me!

ANDREW

Is that—

JAMES brings ANDREW in for a hug, placing his hands over ANDREW'S ears to muffle the sound of the screaming outside.

JAMES

Shhh, don't—don't worry about it. It's all going to be okay.

NED continues to watch GORDON being mauled by the wolverine, and he's unable to peel his eyes from the grotesque scene unfolding before him.

CUT TO:

51 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

51

GORDON tries to fight off the wolverine, yelling and screaming as the animal claws and bites at him.

GORDON

JAMES! Help me!

The wolverine stops abruptly as it hears a roar off in the distance. It is a familiar roar to JAMES, NED, and ANDREW. RONAN has returned.

By now, the tendril-like fungus on RONAN'S antlers have traveled down the animals' head, creating a pseudo skull over the animal's top jaw.

NED (O.S.)

Is that?

JAMES (O.S.)

Yep...

NED (O.S.)

Holy spirit!

The wolverine turns as it is approached by RONAN, a herd of deer following closely behind the lead stag. Does and bucks alike stare at the wolverine and its prey.

The wolverine growls, raising its hackles at the deer to defend its prey. It's too busy defending itself to realize that GORDON is trying to escape. He crawls away with a blood trail behind him.

NED (O.S.)

Shit—he's still alive.

JAMES (O.S.)

Fuck—

NED (O.S.)

We gotta go out there and save him!

JAMES (O.S.)

NED, you know we can't.

The wolverine lunges at RONAN, and RONAN bows his head as he, too, charges, catching the wolverine in its sharp antlers and throwing him. The wolverine lands with a yelp, is quick to get up, but is soon fighting with a couple of the deer joining the fight upon hearing RONAN's snarl. It's a loud fight, both animals snarling and growling at each other.

GORDON

(coughing, weak)

Please... NED... J-JAMES... Someone...!

GORDON continues crawl away, the sound of crunching snow coming up behind him as RONAN follows. He looks back over his shoulder at the sound of the wolverine being into by the other deer. He is then startled when he notices RONAN standing about a foot away from him.

RONAN stares, ears pinned back as he shows his sharp teeth. Drool drips from his jaws.

GORDON

O-oh s-shit—

GORDON yells out as RONAN snarls and lunges, driving its hooves into GORDON'S back and breaking his spine on impact. GORDON screams in pain

but it is cut off as RONAN grabs him by the neck, instantly killing him as his teeth pierce GORDON'S jugular vein.

NED (O.S.)
No!! GORDON!

RONAN begins shaking him, and blood pours out of the large wound.

CUT TO:

52 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

52

NED
Oh fuck-

NED pulls away from the window to vomit on the wooden floor, unable to handle the gory display of the deer tearing into GORDON.

NED (O.S.)
Goddamnit! We could have saved him!

JAMES (O.S.)
NED, you know there was no saving him after that.

JAMES closes his eyes, continuing to hold ANDREW close.

CUT TO:

53 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

53

Blood pools around RONAN and GORDON'S body, the white snow around them turning a bright red color. RONAN lifts his head from GORDON, blood dripping from his mouth as he roars in triumph over his freshly made kill.

Close-up shot of another deer's head, the animal sniffing as the scene of blood fills the air.

This draws a few of the other deer among those that are not eating the wolverine. The deer join RONAN in tearing into GORDON'S body.

CUT TO:

54 INT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

54

Long shot from JAMES'S POV. We see RONAN and the rest of the deer eating GORDON and the wolverine.

JAMES pulls away from the window to look at NED and ANDREW. ANDREW looks worried, and NED looks disgruntled.

JAMES
Alright... Now's our chance.

JAMES walks over to the couch, picking up his backpack and rifle. ANDREW follows him to help but NED stays, watching the two of them.

ANDREW
Is it going to work?

JAMES
It should.

NED
(crosses arms over chest)
And if it doesn't?

JAMES
(flattens lips into a line, holding up his rifle)
We got these remember?

ANDREW
Do we have enough ammo?

NED
No.

JAMES
We have enough to fight them off as best we can.

ANDREW
What happens when we run out?

JAMES
Just leave that to us, ANDREW. We're going to get out here, I promise.

JAMES places his hand on ANDREW'S shoulder, patting it a couple of times and giving him a hopeful smile. ANDREW smiles back, trying to be hopeful but it doesn't quite work.

JAMES looks at the door and sighs.

JAMES
Alright. Let's go.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. ABANDONED CABIN - EVENING

55

POV shot from JAMES'S perspective. The door slowly opens, and JAMES turns on a flashlight. Outside are the deer, feasting on GORDON and the wolverine. They are huddled together as they feed, a couple of them snapping at each other to fight over a piece of meat. The mule is nowhere to be seen.

ANDREW, NED, and JAMES grimace at the sight. It starts to make NED'S stomach churn again but he keeps his composure.

JAMES
(whispers)
It's now or never.

NED
(whispers)
Lead the way.

Slowly, JAMES descends the porch stairs into the snow, trying not to make too much sound as his foot sinks into the snow. After he is fully in the snow, he stills himself and waits for a reaction from the deer.

The deer do not seem to notice, too busy feeding.

JAMES quietly sighs in relief, looking over his shoulder and motioning ANDREW and NED to follow. ANDREW and NED use JAMES'S already established footprints to reduce the noise.

ANDREW
(whispering)
Where's the mule?

NED
(whispering)
Don't worry about him-

As ANDREW, NED, and JAMES pass the deer and reach the edge of the tree line, one of the deer lifts its head and sniffs the air. The smell of fresh blood coming from ANDREW is enough to cause them to pull away from their kill and roar.

ANDREW, NED, and JAMES quickly turn back when they hear the roar of the deer. JAMES'S flashlight lands on the eyes of RONAN. His eyes glow eerily, and other pairs of eyes can be seen in the darkness.

JAMES
Shit! Run!

As soon as JAMES yells run, ANDREW and NED run towards the treeline. JAMES shoots the deer. A few of the bullets hit some of the deer, taking them down, but JAMES soon runs out of bullets.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Shit!

JAMES throws down the rifle and follows after NED and ANDREW. RONAN and the rest of his herd chase after JAMES, NED, and ANDREW through the woods.

56 EXT. YELLOWSTONE FOREST - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

56

JAMES, NED, and ANDREW run through the dark forest of Yellowstone. The moonlight shines through the trees, giving them some light.

Camera shot from the POV of one of the deer bounding after them. It is getting closer and closer to the trio. ANDREW is ahead of the group, and JAMES catches up with NED. NED is slowing down.

JAMES
Don't look back! Keep running!

NED
Slow down! I can't keep up!

JAMES
Come on, Ned!

ANDREW
Dad! We need to slow down for NED!

As they run, NED trips and yells. He has twisted his ankle. As JAMES passes him, NED grabs his ankle, making JAMES trip.

NED
Help me up!

JAMES
Let go of me, you fat bastard!

ANDREW
Dad!

JAMES kicks NED'S hand off his ankle, causing the older man to yell out in pain. JAMES then gets up and runs towards ANDREW who has stopped.

As soon as JAMES gets closer to ANDREW, he grabs him by the wrist and pulls him along to make him keep running.

JAMES
Let's go, ANDREW!

ANDREW
But Dad!

NED
Hey! Where the fuck are you going!?

ANDREW
Dad!

JAMES does not respond; he simply pulls ANDREW along with him to get him to run away from the herd.

NED
JAMES, you rot in hell, you sick bastard!

NED bows his head as RONAN and some of the deer bound past him and after NED. NED has a false sense of relief before he hears a snort behind him, feeling hot breath on the back of his neck.

NED slowly turns his head around to see the snout of a doe inches from his face.

NED
Oh... shit-

JAMES and ANDREW can hear NED screaming in terror and pain as they run.

ANDREW
Dad!

JAMES
Keep running!

57 EXT. CLEARING - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

57

ANDREW and JAMES soon make it back to the clearing from earlier that day. JAMES stops abruptly. He is motionless, staring off into the distance.

ANDREW stops and looks back at him, going back to grab him by the arm and try to pull him along.

ANDREW
Dad-Dad we've got to keep going.

JAMES
I'm never going to get out here, son.

ANDREW
What are you talking about, Dad? Yes, you are! We just need to keep going!

JAMES pushes ANDREW back, tears rolling down his cheeks as he removes his sunglasses.

His eyes are revealed to be bloodshot, the irises fully clouded with cataracts. His tear ducts are starting to sprout the same white tendrils-like fungus, and the tendrils bridge over his nose.

ANDREW
Dad, what's wrong with your eyes?

JAMES
ANDREW, you need to leave. Those things, they've-

ANDREW

Dad, what's wrong? We can get you help.

JAMES

It's too late for me, ANDREW. You need to go. I'll hold them off. Just go!

ANDREW

No! Dad, I can't leave you here.

JAMES

ANDREW— Please, son. I—

Before JAMES can get the rest of his sentence out, he hears something coming up from behind them.

JAMES turns his head slightly, we can't see what it is, but he suddenly jumps in front of ANDREW, and suddenly a pair of white antlers impale JAMES from behind, causing him to yell out in pain. ANDREW screams.

JAMES is lifted up into the air, revealing RONAN.

ANDREW

(crying)
Dad!

JAMES sputters and groans out in pain, his body sinking further onto the sharp antlers. His clothes become red with blood.

RONAN then jerks his head, flinging JAMES off of his antlers and into the snow. ANDREW goes to JAMES and turns him over onto his back.

JAMES

(weakly)
ANDREW..

ANDREW

(crying)
Dad- Dad, I'm right here!

JAMES

(weakly)
You need to go, ANDREW.

RONAN shakes his head, the blood running down his antlers and onto his head. He snarls, looking over at ANDREW and JAMES. He slowly approaches them.

ANDREW
(crying)

Dad, I can't leave you here!

JAMES
(weakly)
You'll have to-

ANDREW
(crying)
Dad...

JAMES pulls ANDREW in for a hug, burying his face into the side of his head. The fungus creeps onto ANDREW'S skin and into his ear, infecting him.

ANDREW feels the strange feeling of something crawling on him, and he pulls away. As soon as he does, JAMES coughs blood in his face as he convulses. The blood gets into ANDREW'S eyes and mouth, causing him to sputter.

JAMES then lays still in the snow, his eyes blankly staring up at the starless night sky.

ANDREW
(wiping the blood from his face)
Dad??
(shaking JAMES)
DAD!!

JAMES does not respond. He is dead.

ANDREW
(crying)
Dad...

ANDREW stills, feeling the hot breath of an animal on the back of his neck. ANDREW turns around to see RONAN standing there. The animal peers down at him, not making a move.

ANDREW

(sniffling)

Go ahead! I'm right here! Kill me!

RONAN stands there, his ears swiveling as he looks down at the young boy. He looks up, hearing something coming their way. ANDREW also looks, seeing the herd of deer bounding towards them, passing them.

ANDREW watches as the deer pass both of them, confused as to where they are going. RONAN, too, is watching them.

Once they are alone again, RONAN looks down at ANDREW. RONAN lets out a snort and turns, bounding off after the herd, leaving ANDREW alone.

ANDREW sits there for a moment or so, staring off. He feels strange, the infection of the fungus setting in.

58 INT. HELLS-A-RAISING LODGE - DAWN

58

ANDREW groggily walks through the lodge. He is lost, unsure where he is. As he walks through the frame, the camera focuses on a bloody scene around him. People are laying on the ground, some of them are half-eaten and others have been gored by antlers.

ANDREW makes no reaction to these bodies. He simply looks at them, unfazed, and continues to walk through the lodge and out the door.

59 EXT. ROAD BY HELLS-A-RAISING - DAWN

59

By now, ANDREW has been walking for hours, trudging through the snow. He seems to have been walking in circles. The snow has returned in the middle of the night. He is covered in snow, causing him to shiver as he groggily trudges along.

ANDREW gets to a road not too far from Hells-A-Raising. He steps into the middle of the road, unaware of where he is. He turns when he hears the siren of a police car approaching.

A police car stops a few feet away from ANDREW. We see from one of the police officer's POV inside the car looking at ANDREW. ANDREW stands still, his shoulders slouched.

CARMI and GERALD step out of the police car and slowly approach ANDREW.

CARMI
Son? Are you alright?

ANDREW
(groggily)
Huh?

GERALD
It's okay. We're here to help. What's your name?

ANDREW
(groggily)
ANDREW...

CARMI
Alright, Andrew. I'm officer Guyette and this is my partner, Pipkin.
Let's get you in the car where it's warm. Does that sound good to you?

ANDREW does not respond, he simply stares at them as if they were not there.

CARMI (CONT'D) (O.F)
Alright then... GERALD, you mind taking him to the patrol car so he can
warm up while we talk?

GERALD (O.F)
C'mon, kid. Let's get you in the patrol car.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

60 INT. POLICE CAR - DUSKY MORNING - CONTINUOUS

60

BLUE AND RED POLICE CAR LIGHTS FLASH APPEAR. The flashes dissolve to show ANDREW sitting in the back of the police car. He stares out the window, quiet as if in another world. It's raining now.

We can hear CARMI and GERALD talking outside, but their speech is muffled from outside the car.

GERALD (O.S.)
You find anything?

CARMI (O.S.)

No. Don't see any sign of anyone else.

GERALD (O.S.)

Did you see any missing persons reports recently with his face on?
Amber alerts?

CARMI (O.S.)

Nope. I don't remember seeing anyone with the resemblance to him.
Hadn't even gotten a missing persons report recently.

GERALD (O.S.)

Huh, that's really strange. Could he be one of the survivors?

CARMI (O.S.)

Possibly. Let's just talk to him and see if we can connect those dots.

The police car doors are open and then shut off-frame with a loud slam. ANDREW doesn't react. The two police officers are peering into the back seat at him.

CARMI (CONT'D)

Son? You think you can talk with us now?

ANDREW does not speak for a moment. He continues to look out the window. CARMI and GERALD exchange glances before looking back at ANDREW.

GERALD

Son? Can you hear us?

ANDREW stays quiet, looking out the window. GERALD looks to CARMI before looking at ANDREW and clearing his throat.

CARMI

Son, when was the last time you ate?

ANDREW glances at GERALD at the mention of food. GERALD smiles.

CARMI (CONT'D)

That's what I thought... C'mon, let's get you something to eat.

GERALD

(whispering)

You really think we should do that?

CARMI

(whispering)

Give the kid a break man. The more we help him out, the more he'll help us out.

GERALD

(whispering)

Suppose you're right.

CARMI shrugs and turns around to the town's diner. The siren of the police car goes off as CARMI drives them back to the station.

CUT TO:

61 INT. POLICE CAR - IN MOTION - DUSKY MORNING - CONTINUOUS 61

CARMI turns on the radio, and the radio station, The Big DAWG plays. RALPH and LENNY are the show hosts for the popular country radio station.

The entire shot switches between the radio and close-up and wider-angle reaction shots of ANDREW, CARMI, and GERALD.

RALPH (V.O)

Good morning, folks!. You're listening to 91.4 The Big DAWG on this snowy Saturday morning with Ralph and Lenny. Hunting season is finally here! Hope you all have been lucky in getting those deer in!

CUT TO:

62 INT. THE BIG DAWG RADIO STUDIO - DUSKY MORNING - CONTINUOUS 62

The camera is focused on LENNY and RALPH

LENNY

That's right, Ralph! Hope you lot have been lucky. I'd go out there myself but I am not savvy with a hunting rifle. A nerf gun is more up my alley.

RALPH

Ain't that the truth. You couldn't hit a moving target if you even tried.

LENNY

That's why I'm going to leave it to the professionals.

CUT TO:

62 INT. POLICE CAR - IN MOTION - DUSKY MORNING - CONTINUOUS

62

Camera cuts back to CARMi and GERALD in the front and with ANDREW in the back. The police officers seem nonchalant.

There is laughing coming from the radio. The sharp laughter seems to bother ANDREW again.

CARMi and GERALD don't notice.

ANDREW

(to himself, in a hoarse whisper)

Make... it... stop...

RALPH (V.O.)

Alright folks, just a reminder to make sure you take any deer that seem to be showing signs of Chronic Wasting disease down to the game warden to check out.

LENNY (V.O.)

That's right; we don't need to be in the next episode of the walking dead.

Both LENNY and RALPH are belly laughing.

GERALD

Okay, that's enough of that.

GERALD switches off the radio.

CARMi

Hey, I was listening to that!

GERALD

Why do you even have that radio station on? You don't even like country music.

CARMi

I listen to it for the hunting news.

GERALD

Okay, you got your hunting fix. Focus on driving back to the station, please.

CARMI

Killjoy.

GERALD

What was that chronic wasting shit about?

CARMI

Who knows. Got something in from the Warden the other day but haven't seen deer with it.

GERALD

You sure that won't it back there?

CARMI

Don't be ridiculous.

ANDREW'S still staring out of the window as it continues to rain. He side-eyes the two police officers as he listens to them but doesn't say a word.

CUT TO:

64 INT. LUCKY'S DINER - MORNING

64

ANDREW, CARMI, and GERALD sit at a booth in the diner. ANDREW is the only one with a couple of plates of food in front of him. He is eating as if someone is going to take it away from him. CARMI and GERALD each have a cup of coffee in front of them.

CARMI

(chuckling)

Easy kid—no one is going to take it away from you.

ANDREW looks up from his food at CARMI. The look on his face makes CARMI feel uneasy.

WAITRESS

Can I get you boys anything else?

GERALD

No, we're fine for right now.

WAITRESS

You sure? No refills on your coffees, officers?

GERALD

No, I said we're fine.

WAITRESS

What about the boy here? He seems he can eat a little bit-

CARMI

(short and snappy)

He said we're fine.

The WAITRESS sneers at CARMI and proceeds to slam the ticket down on the table before storming off. CARMI rolls his eyes before his attention goes back to ANDREW who has resumed eating.

CARMI (CONT'D)

Now, ANDREW was it? Now that you've got a little bit of food on your stomach, will you talk to us?

ANDREW

(swallowing thickly)

I don't know.

GERALD

Seriously? You don't know? I don't believe that.

CARMI

GERALD, easy.

CARMI and GERALD exchange glances. GERALD is obviously not in the mood to give ANDREW a chance.

CARMI

ANDREW, we just want to ask a couple of questions. Like, where are your parents?

ANDREW stops eating and looks up at CARMI. He has a pain-filled look his eyes. CARMI frowns in response.

CARMI

Son? Did something happen out there in the woods?

GERALD

You know you're wasting our time right, kid?

CARMI

Seriously?

GERALD

What? It's the-

GERALD is cut off by a scream of a woman who is pointing outside. Others begin to scream and yell; there is yelling outside.

WOMAN

Someone help him! He's being attacked!

CARMI and GERALD stand up quickly from their booth seats to look outside. ANDREW slowly turns to look as well.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. LUCKY'S DINER - MORNING

66

Outside, a man is being attacked by a lone deer. The buck has the man by the wrist, shaking him around as the man yells for help.

MAN

Someone please! Help me!!

CUT TO:

67 EXT. LUCKY'S DINER - MORNING

67

CARMI

Holy shit-

GERALD and CARMI get up and run outside. ANDREW watches them for a moment, the camera focused on him as the screaming and yelling continues. He slowly gets up from his booth and follows.

CUT TO:

68 EXT. LUCKY'S DINER - MORNING

68

GERALD and CARMI make it outside, and they both draw their weapons and point it at the buck and the man.

MAN

Oh god! Oh god!!

CARMI

Just take it easy! We're here to help you!

MAN

Please, god, save me!

GERALD

Sir, you need to calm down!

ANDREW slowly walks up beside CARMI and GERALD. He's staring at the buck. ANDREW then takes a few steps towards the back.

CARMI

Hey kid! Get back in the diner!

ANDREW ignores them, inching closer to the buck and the man. As he gets closer, the buck drops the man and growls at ANDREW. The buck snarls, his ears pinned back against his head. ANDREW makes no response; he only stares back.

The buck snarls again, backing away from the man before he bounds off. The attacked man cries and panics.

CARMI (CONT'D)

Fuck-

CARMI pulls ANDREW back as GERALD goes to check on the man. The WAITRESS comes out of the diner, looking worried.

WAITRESS

What happened-

CARMI

Forget what happened and call paramedics out here!

The WAITRESS runs back inside to call 911.

INSERT: The sound of ambulance sirens.

LATER

An ambulance sits in the parking lot of the diner. The paramedics tend to the man, making sure he was not too badly injured.

ANDREW sits in the police car while GERALD and CARMI talk outside. CARMI looks into the car, checking on ANDREW.

GERALD

What the hell was that all about?

CARMI

I don't know, but it was strange.

GERALD

Might be best if we just take him back to the station for questioning.

CARMI

What? Question him about what?

GERALD

This. He seems to know something.

CARMI

I doubt very seriously that he knows something.

GERALD

I don't. You saw the tape.

CARMI looks at GERALD. He knows GERALD's right but he doesn't want to admit it.

CARMI looks back into the police car where ANDREW is. ANDREW is staring down at his feet. The camera focuses on ANDREW for a moment.

INSERT: The sound of people screaming in a panic off-screen.

CUT TO:

69 INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM - EVENING

69

The frame is an close-up shot of surveillance tape playing on a small TV. The video is in black and white; the camera overlooks the common living space at Hells-A-Raising.

The people in the frame are in a frenzy as a herd of deer crashes through. The screams grow louder, and people disperse as the deer

attack, some being pinned and eaten alive while others are being gorged. It is a bloodfest.

CARMI and GERALD are sitting on either side of the TV at the table. We can only see their faces; ANDREW's back is to the camera. He is sitting opposite them. All we can see are his hands on the table.

ANDREW is quiet for the most part. His breath is ragged, almost wheezing every time he inhales. His fingers on BOTH HANDS are slightly tapping on the table.

CARMI and GERALD grimace and share a side glance before CARMI clears his throat. The video plays in the background before CARMI rewinds the tape to the very beginning. He then stops on a frame with JAMES and ANDREW talking to PHILLIP.

CARMI

(exhales, thinking for a moment)

ANDREW, before we picked you up from the side of the road, we got the call to Hell's-A-Raisin' Outfitters for the animal attack. We found this tape while we were there. Shows that you were there nearly twenty-four hours before the incident occurred.

ANDREW makes no effort to say anything. His fingers start to tap faster and harder on the table.

CARMI (CONT'D)

Did you see anything suspicious around the hunting lodge that we need to take to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries? Because, from what we saw at the diner, you know something is off. If there is an outbreak—

ANDREW

(says something incoherent; it's low and hoarse. wheezing with every breath.)

CARMI

What was that?

ANDREW doesn't answer. All we can hear is the hoarse, wheezing breath.

GERALD

Kid. This is very serious. If those deer have a disease that can be transferred to people—

CARMI and GERALD look at ANDREW. They're both urgent, wanting to understand what has been captured on the tape.

ANDREW's fingers are now tapping so loudly on the table that it irritates GERALD.

GERALD

That's it. I'm getting the sergeant, and we're waterboarding him. This is ridiculous.

CARMI

GERALD, knock it off. This ain't the right time for a joke. This shit is serious.

GERALD

I'm not joking. We aren't going to get anywhere dealing with this clown. You saw what happened back there!

GERALD and CARMI bicker. As they get louder, so does the tapping of ANDREW'S fingers on the table. The sound of a strumming guitar is heard off-screen, the frame slowly zooming in on ANDREW'S back.

GERALD (CONT'D)

As soon as we get our answers, we're going to have to go back and hunt down those damn deer because if we don't, we are going to be in some serious sh-

Suddenly, the frame is on ANDREW'S left hand; the tapping is quick before he digs his nails into the wooden table and leaves deep scratches. It's a loud sound as his nails scratch the wood. It catches GERALD and CARMI off-guard; both turn their heads to look at ANDREW, almost hesitant.

We are now behind CARMI and GERALD. ANDREW is between the two of them on the other side of the table.

ANDREW has changed drastically. His eyes are clouded, with small white tendril-like fungi growing from the tear ducts. The tendrils branch off over the bridge of his nose.

His skin is pale and grayish. Moss has started growing on his skin, and a strange thick white keratin fungus-type formation is growing out of his head like antler buds. His mouth is agape, and his teeth are more jagged and fang-like.

The frame stays for about a second before we see ANDREW slowly rising and lunging at the camera, making an awful inhuman screech. The frame quickly cuts to black.

[END - ROLL CREDITS]

Artist Statement

The line between human and animal is very thin. I enjoy exploring both human and animal nature to see where humanity ends and the animal within begins—and vice versa. This is the main focus of my honors thesis. Instead of going the traditional route with a research paper, I crafted an original eco-horror movie screenplay. As much as I enjoy conducting research, I also delight in writing and creating stories. I wanted to be able to excite my audience and set a new path within the honors program by straying from the traditional format and pouring my energies into a creative project. Along with the screenplay, to fulfill the research requirement and to provide scientific and professional background regarding my artistic decision, I created an annotated bibliography of the sources that I consulted while creating my screenplay. While this is my first screenplay, this is not the first time I have tackled telling a compelling story. This screenplay was a new form for me to engage with and ultimately helped me find out what I meant to do as a working adult: I would like to become a screenwriter.

My professors have always told me I have an extremely cinematic way of thinking. Before my project matured into a screenplay, it was initially supposed to be a short story or novella. However, while writing the short story, I had issues keeping things precise and condensed because I wanted to tell everything I was envisioning. It was then suggested that I write a screenplay because of my experience writing and publishing a one-act stage play for a previous class. Switching from prose fiction to screenplay writing was new, exciting, and somewhat terrifying for a beginning screenwriter. Compared to writing short stories and stage plays, a screenplay is a different animal with regard to how it is formatted and the storytelling that it requires. In a script, it all includes the character's dialogue and their actions to be separate, as well as their movement and the stage direction (“How to Format”). This is to ensure that the

directions are easy to read and understand during the filming and production process. Studio Binder in their article, “How to Format,” also states that, “a draft in proper screenwriting format denotes professionalism, otherwise it appears amateurish and would likely get tossed before the end of page 1.” I wanted to make sure my screenplay comes off as professional as possible because once the first draft is complete, I want to be able to use it one day. While screenwriting and reading the scripts of my favorite films produced a steep learning curve, it felt more natural to me to write a screenplay, allowing my creativity to flourish freely. I still enjoy writing short stories whenever I can. Still, when I want to tell a long, fleshed-out story, I know screenwriting is the way to go because I am about to achieve the vision I have set out to write out. I hope that one of my screenplays will become an actual movie.

As I put together my annotated bibliography, I first looked at literature ranging from *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk and “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. These stories allowed me to witness what it was like looking through the eyes of an unreliable narrator, someone we thought we could trust but who slowly dwindles to a person whose motives we question for the remainder of the narrative. How can we trust someone if they cannot distinguish between reality and figments of their imagination? I was intrigued by the idea of creating someone who we do not fully trust because their mind had warped them into a pit of despair and terror. The unnamed protagonists from *Fight Club* and “The Yellow Wallpaper” serve as inspirations for James, my screenplay’s protagonist.

Within the literature I consulted, I also looked at various books to help me understand the craft of writing. I looked into Stephen’s King *On Writing: A Memoir on the Craft* and Hideo Kojima’s *The Creative Gene*. Stephen King’s memoir was helpful for understanding how to become a professional writer, and his words remain helpful even now that I have realized I want

to pursue screenwriting. In the first part of his memoir, entitled C.V., he states that the book is “not an autobiography. It is, rather, a kind of curriculum vitae—my attempt to show how one writer was formed” (King 17). He then adds that he writes about, “not how one writer was made; [he doesn’t] believe writers can be made, either by circumstances or self-will. [He believes] large numbers of people have at least some talent as writers and storytellers, and that those talents can be strengthened and sharpened” (King 18). I believe King's statement is true because there is always room for improvement. I know it will take time to hone my craft and sharpen my language as a writer. Mastering the language and finding my own style will not happen overnight, and I am happy to take on the challenge to sharpen my writing skills.

Hideo Kojima’s book was helpful as well. His book is a collection of essays about the inspirations for his two blockbuster video games: *Metal Gear Solid* and *Death Stranding*. Kojima states that his essays are “only a tiny fraction of the books and movies I’ve selected with my legs, my eyes, and mind. This selection of works — rather, the broader context they represent — formed who I am, and therefore my creations” (13). This quotation resonated with me because, while looking over my annotated bibliography and all of the items I consulted for my screenplay, I realized that my screenplay has undergone a similar formation. Everything that I read, watched and played shaped my interest in and understanding of what I wanted to write about, and I could not be happier with how everything turned out.

Next, I looked at scientific research on two zoonotic diseases: chronic wasting disease and rabies, as well as the parasitic fungus *Ophiocordyceps*. Each of these diseases contributes to the fictitious disease that I meld within the screenplay that creates the film's monster. Chronic wasting disease, also known as CWD or the zombie deer virus, is a contagious disease that affects deer physically and neurologically. CWD is a prion disease affecting cervids such as

whitetail deer and moose, leading to symptoms that can include drastic weight loss (wasting), stumbling, listlessness, and other neurologic alterations (“Chronic Wasting Disease”).

Neurologic alterations include aggression and a lack of fear towards humans. I found this to be perfect because the monster in my story must not be fearful of humans; the humans must be in fear of it.

Rabies was another disease that helped form the behavioral components of the fictitious disease I explore in my screenplay. Rabies is a viral disease that infects mammals such as dogs, cats, raccoons, and bats. When infected, rabies attacks the central nervous system of mammals, causing symptoms of excessive drooling and unusual aggressiveness or tameness (“Rabies”). I found this to be very beneficial for understanding diseased animals’ behavior. Knowing how rabies affects wolves and coyotes allowed me to include this element about how my fictional disease alters the deer’s once timid nature to being more canid-like in their behavior.

The final zoonotic disease I researched was *Ophiocordyceps*, the “true” zombie disease of the animal kingdom. *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*, described by Harry Evans et al. (2011), also known as the “zombie fungus,” is a fungal pathogen specific to carpenter ants that alters the behavior of the ant host, causing it to die in an exposed position. What I found interesting about this disease was the fungal growth that occurs when the ant is infected, forming an exo-skeleton of fungal matter. In my opinion, the growth looked like tendrils branching off over the ant’s body. In my mind, combining this fungal growth with the other aspects of the other two diseases, led me to imagine a creature like no other, a zombie deer. I would turn what we know as beautiful, timid creatures into carnivorous, zombie-like animals, taking on the tactics of wolves and coyotes and craving the taste of human flesh.

Not only did I look at how this disease would affect animals, but also how it would affect humans. After all, what would a “zombie” movie be without a person being bitten? Of the three zoonotic diseases, rabies is the only disease that can be transmitted to humans. The CDC explains that an infected person may not only experience cerebral dysfunction and confusion but may also experience delirium, abnormal behavior, and hallucinations (“Rabies”). I found this to be perfect in how this fictitious disease affects people who become infected with rabies.

Next, I explored visual media, such as TV shows, including AMC’S *The Walking Dead* and *Zoo*, and video games, including *Until Dawn* and Telltale’s *The Walking Dead*. While watching these shows and playing these video games did not serve any value when it came to scientific research or craft advice, they did serve the purpose of providing aesthetic inspiration and guidance for zombie and horror genres. These shows and video games were examples of how horror and zombies are portrayed in contemporary media, thus allowing me to decide how I want to utilize horror and zombies in my own work. However, because I was not creating a traditional zombie and wanted to put a twist on the traditional genre by making the antagonist an infected deer, I had to work on how the zombie aesthetic would work for these deer. That was a challenge I found interesting because zombie deer are rarely seen in the media, and I wanted to bring a new concept to the horror table.

Lastly, while these sources are miscellaneous, they inspired the screenplay's plot and made me think of logical ways the disease would work. Some of these articles are general newspaper articles. One of these articles included the possibility of a fungi-zombie outbreak. While the possibility is low due to our body temperature being too high to host *Ophiocordyceps*, James Gallagher, in his article “The Last of Us: Could a Fungal Pandemic Turn Us All into Zombies?”, argues that there are fungal diseases that are deadly to humans. I found this very

beneficial after reading about the symptoms of some of these fungal diseases. One fungus, called *Cryptococcus neoformans*, caused one woman to develop full-blown seizures (Gallagher). This inspired me to include this aspect in one of my scenes because I thought it would be interesting to see how the infection took over a human body.

Another resource that I used in this section was Hozier's song "In the Woods Somewhere." This is the song that inspired me to write this screenplay. While listening to this song, I could envision every scene as the song progressed. It gave me chills, the feeling that I wanted others to feel while reading my screenplay or, hopefully, watching it on the big screen.

While writing the screenplay, I relied on two screenwriting sources: studiobinder.com and Syd Field's book, *Foundations of Screenwriting*. Studiobinder was beneficial for teaching me the terminology and formatting I needed to use to apply to my screenplay, such as how to format a montage sequence correctly ("How to Format"). Studiobinder was also helpful in educating me on the vocabulary and abbreviations, such as "(O.S.)" meaning offscreen, and when to use "EXT" (exterior) or "INT" (interior) (Heckmann). Syd Field's book was beneficial by teaching me the standard of writing a film, such as breaking down the standard three-act movie structure throughout approximately 120 pages of material (21). While my screenplay does not quite reach the 120-page mark, it is still considered a full-length film. According to Syd Field, one page of a screenplay is approximately one minute of screen time, and when a movie is to be delivered, it should not be over two hours and eight minutes (22). While this may be true for during the 1970s when the book was written, many contemporary movies tend to go over two hours and thirty minutes. For a first-time film, I feel that it is good to start small and then work up to more extensive works because then, by the time I have written more significant works, I will be more

comfortable in the craft I have honed to be able to write gargantuan screenplays. My current script would clock in at about 80 minutes.

All this research, reading literature and scientific articles, and watching these films, made me realize that: humans are fearful creatures. I wanted to explore the human fear of the unknown while pondering the fact that we are unable to control it and that we often mistreat our wildlife. With how we abuse our planet, it is clear that we are not centering other species but only ourselves. In my story, the protagonists are hunters who willingly go out into the unknown to kill other living beings. They are confronted with creatures they were unprepared to face, and my story shows how frightening the unknown is. People fear what they can't control, such as the weather or outside forces that are not tangible, such as a pandemic. That is the central theme of the zombie era in modern popular culture. People fear having normalcy taken away, rendering them defenseless, and not knowing how to regain that control. Depicting a scenario in which hunters who believe they have control of a situation have that control taken away from them by animals whom they believe they have control over shows how frightened people can become of the unknown. It makes the case that humans are not all-powerful.

Not only has my research inspired me for my screenplay, but the classes I have taken in the past two years have also shaped my view and inspiration for this screenplay. I have taken classes on climate change, dystopian fiction, Victorian monsters, and literary gender and sexuality studies. Each of these classes built upon each other, fitting into my eventual screenplay like a piece of a puzzle. With climate change, as global temperature rises, our ecosystem is changing, and developing at a rate that we cannot control if we do not act now. This theme is mirrored in my screenplay, as I note above. Dystopian literature's idea that normalcy has been destroyed and new ways of survival must be achieved can be seen in my screenplay with how

James must protect his son and get him and his friends out of harm's way. Victorian monsters explored the thin line between human and monster. We see how James fights to keep his humanity while the fungus takes over his body, causing him to slowly turn into the thing that infected him and that beckons him to continue to reproduce and inflict the disease onto others. Gender and sexuality studies, the last class, is sprinkled across my screenplay to gain a sense of normalcy while keeping track of current shifts in how society makes sense of gender. Even though this movie is focused on the masculine sport of hunting, it touches on trans issues and how trans youth struggle to be true to themselves, all while trying to be accepted by their family and community. Andrew struggles within the screenplay, finding himself in limbo, trying to affirm his identity as a transgender man while struggling to maintain a functioning relationship with his estranged father. While this is not the film's central issue, I wanted to bring awareness to this issue without making it the main focus. It is present within the movie in a way that makes it seem normal. This is because a soldier, hunter, and pastor, three of our society's most traditional adult men, quickly accept Andrew. This is how I wanted to model how society can confirm trans identities and see them as usual. Trans issues should be taken seriously and not be reacted to negatively.

My intention in writing this screenplay is to one day become a screenwriter and create what I hope to be hits that emulate the screenwriters I admire and strive to be like. I want to entertain viewers with my creations and bring attention to issues around us. In the future, I hope to attend graduate school either in film studies or screenwriting to hone my craft as a screenwriter further and be able to express these issues within my future work. As a screenwriter, I hope to illuminate current social issues and have my movies adapted for the silver screen.

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Annotated Bibliography

Literature

Cameron, James. Screenplay of *Avatar*. *The Internet Movie Script Database*, 1994

<https://imsdb.com/scripts/Avatar.html>.

James Cameron's *Avatar* follows Jake Sully, a paraplegic retired marine recruited by the Resources Development Administration (RDA) to take his deceased brother's place in the Avatar Program to learn more about the native sentient beings known as the Na'vi inhabiting the exo-solar moon Pandora. While exploring Pandora, Jake meets Neytiri, the local tribe's next Tsahik, or shaman. After reporting back to the head of security for the RDA's Secops, Colonel Miles Quaritch, he is instructed to get close to the tribe, the Omatikaya, to have them move away from their Home Tree so the humans can obtain the rare metal they want. However, while learning the ways of the Omatikaya people through Neytiri, Jake falls in love with her and becomes part of the clan. Ultimately, he and the forest clans of Pandora rally together to drive the RDA off Pandora after the destruction of the Omatikaya's Home Tree, allowing Pandora to be free of the RDA's agenda of draining Pandora of its natural resources.

This screenplay was very helpful in learning the craft of writing a screenplay. While this is a science fiction screenplay, it was beneficial to read how a well-established screenwriter writes and formats his screenplays. By taking note of how Cameron formats and writes his screenplays, I learned and took examples from someone I admired.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper." Project Gutenberg, 1999,

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1952/pg1952-images.html>.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” is a short story told as diary entries of a woman staying in a summer home with her husband for three months to cure her postpartum depression. While there, her husband does not listen to her worries, and she despises the yellow wallpaper of the room she is confined in for most of the day. As the story progresses, she becomes fascinated with the wallpaper because she believes that a woman lives inside its patterns. Finally, on the last day that is narrated, the protagonist descends into madness, for she believes she is the woman in the wallpaper.

The diary entries reveal how the woman’s sanity diminishes the longer she stays inside the room cladded with the yellow wallpaper. In addition, the language used in each diary entry changes, revealing how the narrator’s mental health shifts from one extreme to another, at first being paranoid and depressed to her being manic and obsessive. The scenes also become blurred, leaving the reader unsure of where one day ends and another begins in the entries.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” provides an excellent example of how a reliable narrator in the first person POV becomes unreliable by the end. The short story also gives a perfect example of how the pace should be set when it comes to a screenplay. Reading this short story helped me understand how to write and depict a narrator’s mental state going from being someone the reader trusts to someone that cannot be trusted by the end.

Kirkman, Robert. *Days Gone Bye. The Walking Dead*, vol 1. Illustrated by Tony Moore. Image Comics, 2013.

The first volume of *The Walking Dead, Days Gone Bye*, is the opening installment of the large comic book series written by Robert Kirkman. Illustrated by Tony Moore (only for the first volume), the comic follows Rick Grimes after he awakens from an

injury-induced coma in an abandoned hospital. He learns that the hospital and the entire city of Atlanta are entirely populated by the living dead, also known as walkers. After learning what has happened during his coma through a man named Morgan, he sets off to find his family who is stationed with a group of survivors. Unfortunately, winter sets in after Grimes meets with his family, and walkers attack them one night. Some of their friends are killed, and they watch someone turn into a zombie before their very eyes. Rick's best friend, Shane, fights with him over his return to the group and "ruining" what was perfect, and Shane threatens to kill him but is killed by Rick's son, Carl, before he can strike back.

Days Gone Bye is very beneficial to my screenplay because of the art and style of storytelling Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore provide in the short volume. I used it in my screenplay by studying Tony Moore's artistry and the plot and dialogue Kirkman provides. I used their techniques in terms of how I describe certain aspects relating to the zombie genre in my screenplay as well as developing rich dialogue spoken by the characters in the screenplay.

Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club*. W. W. Norton, 1996.

Fight Club is a novel told by an unnamed male narrator in the present tense. It is revealed in the beginning chapters of the novel that the narrator has insomnia and attends self-help meetings for sick people so he can sleep better at night. At these meetings, he meets a woman named Marla, who also fakes her illnesses. He then meets Tyler Durden on a nude beach during an insomnia episode. The narrator becomes infatuated with Tyler due to his confidence and hypermasculine persona. Tyler and the narrator go on to found Fight Club, a weekly informal boxing club, and, later, the terrorist group Project

Mayhem. By the end of the novel, it is revealed that the narrator is, in fact, Tyler and was only hallucinating the image of a man he desired to be during his insomnia episodes.

The novel presents issues that revolve around social malaise and masculinity. The narrator struggles with being a “true man,” having no purpose in his humdrum life, and thus Fight Club and Project Mayhem help the narrator enact change in the world. These two organizations lure in middle-class men who, like the narrator, feel they have no purpose in life and are not achieving masculinity to its “fullest.” The narrator wants power and to leave a legacy. He wishes to exert control over his in a society that leaves them empty.

Palahniuk’s novel describes writing in the first person present tense. It exemplifies a narrator who seems to be reliable at the beginning, but as the novel progresses, the narrator’s reliability declines. This will be helpful when crafting how my fictional disease affects a human brain, causing them to descend into madness as the disease continues to impact them while the screenplay progresses.

Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Tell-Tale Heart.” *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe — Volume 2*. Gutenberg Project, 2000, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2148/pg2148-images.html>.

Poe’s short horror story is told from the first-person point of view. The unnamed narrator mostly stays inside his mind, telling the reader how he feels about his employer, an older man, and this man’s glaucoma. The employer’s eye, which the narrator sees as an “evil eye,” is the cause of the narrator’s initial mental crisis. He gets to the point where he goes to murder the employer and suffocates him. The narrator then dismembers the body and stuffs it under the floorboard. After this, his sanity declines. Police come to investigate

strange sounds, and the narrator entertains them but starts convincing himself that they can also hear the sound. He finally breaks down and confesses his crime to the officers. Poe's unnamed narrator is driven by paranoia and "moral insanity," the inability to tell right from wrong. Poe's story provides an example of first-person narration by an insane narrator unaware of his declining ability to make sense of the world. I use some of the techniques Poe applies in my own script. These techniques include repetitions of vivid sensory description, the revelation of narcissist traits to signal that the narrator's insanity is worsening, and perhaps an interior monologue/dialogue to pinpoint the source of the narrator's madness.

"Preparedness 101: Zombie Pandemic." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.), Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response, 2011, <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/6023>.

"Preparedness 101: Zombie Pandemic" is a mini-graphic novel created to teach people about the proper survival measures in a natural disaster. Part one follows a couple, Todd and Julie, and their dog as an alert of a new virus appears on TV. The alerts warn people of the virus spreading across the city, turning everyone infected into zombies. They begin to prepare their home, gathering supplies to ensure their survival as the population of zombies begins to rise in the city, leaving them locked up in their home. Part two looks at the zombie virus from the CDC's perspective before following the couple as they escape zombies and, luckily, take refuge at a health department where vaccines are being distributed. However, Todd wakes up to it only being a dream and an alert for a storm, which shows Todd following the same steps to gather supplies to ensure his, Julie's, and

their dog's safety during the storm. It also includes a checklist of certain supplies to keep on hand during these events.

While this is meant to teach people about the proper measures to prepare for a natural disaster, I found it very beneficial in writing my screenplay because my characters have to employ various strategies to survive. Knowing the proper steps and supplies to keep on hand in case of a disaster, whether fictional, like a zombie outbreak, or an actual natural disaster, such as a tornado or a hurricane, is beneficial. I consulted the "checklist" to see what can be included in the hunter's bag while they are on their hunting trip.

Thomas, Jim and John Thomas. Screenplay of *Hunter*. *The Internet Movie Script Database*, 1984, <https://imsdb.com/scripts/Predator.html>.

Jim and John Thomas's *Hunter*, now known as *Predator*, follows a military rescue group led by Major Dutch Schaefer, to Guatemala, where they believe they are to rescue soldiers who they believe have been taken hostage by guerilla fighters. While on their mission, they come in contact with a masked creature, known as the Predator, that begins to hunt down every member of Dutch's group using advanced alien technology, which includes an invisible cloaking device and plasma canons. Dutch is the last to survive, luring the extraterrestrial assassin by stealth. He soon comes face to face with his group's assassin, and the creature unmask and initiates a fight. The fight ends with the creature's demise and Dutch escaping an explosion caused by the Predator's wrist gauntlet.

This screenplay was very helpful in learning the craft of writing a screenplay. Since this is a horror science fiction screenplay, it was the perfect screenplay to have as an example for my own screenplay. *Hunter* has an amazing plotline that I believe is the perfect

screenplay to use in terms of learning as a beginner screenwriter, especially in the horror genre.

Craft Books

Field, Syd. *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. Delta. 1979.

Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting is a craft book that explains the basic foundations of writing a screenplay. In each chapter, Field breaks down the basic elements of a screenplay and how to write them. He goes into detail about the standard formatting, page length, and how each act is broken up in terms of page numbers. Each chapter is dedicated to an element such as setting up the character, the plot, and breaking down a scene. Field also provides examples of screenplay excerpts to further explain and demonstrate his teachings to the teacher. At the end, Field gives advice on what the reader should do once they are done writing their screenplay and his own personal experience as a screenwriter.

Syd Field's book was very helpful when learning more about the craft of writing a screenplay. It allowed me to understand more how to properly format the screenplay. While I have experience in writing stageplays, screenwriting is different in terms of formatting and how events are written out to be translated onto a screen instead of a stage. Syd Field's book was very easy to follow and understand as a beginning screenwriter.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. Scribner, 2000.

King's memoir is more than just a book on the craft of writing; it is about how someone becomes a good writer. He believes that writers are formed by life, not made. He breaks

up the memoir into five parts. In the first part, King describes how his early life and his exposure to writing shaped him into a writer. In parts two and three, King lays out his argument that writing is like telepathy and that the writer must transmit information about the story to the reader, which is explained using valuable tips and advice. In part four, he goes into his stylistic approach, providing readers with examples. In part 5, he tells the story of when he was hit by a car in 1999 and how he began to write the memoir, *On Writing*. At the end of the book, he includes an actual manuscript showing where he has marked it up for editing.

I found this memoir very helpful in developing my screenplay because memoirs that fall under another medium of creative writing are very helpful. It was beneficial to see that there is more to becoming a writer than just putting in the work. Life shapes you as a writer, molding your writing skills as you grow and experience life day by day.

Kojima, Hideo. *The Creative Gene: How Books, Movies, and Music Inspired the Creator of Death Stranding and Metal Gear Solid*. VIZ Media LLC, 2021.

The Creative Gene is a collection of essays written by the video game creator Hideo Kojima, providing his readers with the memes that inspired him to create his most famous games: *Metal Gear Solid* and *Death Stranding*. At the end of the book, he also includes a conversation between himself and Gen Hoshino, a Japanese actor, musician, and writer. At the end of the book, Kojima includes a list of movies and other media that inspired his creativity.

Kojima's book exemplifies the importance of taking inspiration from elements in culture and using it to create media from that outside inspiration. The book does not provide tips and tricks on crafting a compelling story like a normal craft book would. Instead, it

shows that inspiration is essential when creating something new. Kojima took the many things he enjoyed, whether film, quotes, or short stories, and, from them, built his two most famous video games.

Scientific Research

“The Lacey Act.” *United States Code Annotated, Title 16. Conservation, Chapter 53: Control of Illegally Taken Fish and Wildlife*. College of Law, 1900,
<https://www.animallaw.info/statute/us-lacey-act-chapter-53-control-illegally-taken-fish-and-wildlife>.

The Lacey Act provides legislation on wildlife and vegetation in fifty U.S. states. The Lacey Act defines wildlife as any animal, whether dead or alive, not limited to those identified as a mammal, reptile, bird, fish, or mollusk. The Act declares that it is unlawful to acquire, import or transport, purchase, or possess wildlife or vegetation in violation of any law or treaty of the United States or violation of Indian Tribal laws, domestic or foreign importing and transporting.

This project will indirectly refer to the Lacey Act. Yellowstone is a National Park that utilizes this law to protect its animals. It will be utilized to underline the illegality of the characters’ hunting exploration in Yellowstone and why hazardous deer are being protected inside Yellowstone’s territory.

“Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).” *Centers of Disease Control and Prevention*, 2021,
<https://www.cdc.gov/prions/cwd/index.html>

Chronic Wasting Disease, also known as CWD for short, is a prion disease that affects animals in the Cervidae family. These include deer, elk, and moose. This disease can be

found in deer populations in North America and Norway. CWD incubates for around a year and then attacks the deer's nervous system, the primary target of the disease. CWD causes them to be lethargic, lose coordination, excessive defecation, loss of fear in humans, and drastic loss of weight, causing the deer to waste away due to the disease-causing the deer to rot from the inside. This disease is spread through bodily fluids such as blood, saliva, and urine. Inside the infected Cervidae, proteins known as prions begin to mutate and thus cause damage to other healthy prions as well as the tissue of the infected animal. The infected prions cause damage to tissue throughout the body but cause greater damage to the brain and spinal cord. Currently, CWD has no vaccine to protect other Cervidae from the contagion, and it is hard to pinpoint animals who have been infected because it takes about a year for the disease to incubate and then show symptoms.

This CDC article provides a helpful basic rundown of CWD. Since I am creating a fungal infection based on the CWD disease, it is beneficial for me to understand what this prion does to the deer it infects. I will use the article information to craft the mutated disease featured in the screenplay.

Evans, Harry C et al. "Hidden Diversity Behind the Zombie-Ant Fungus *Ophiocordyceps*

Unilateralis: Four New Species Described from Carpenter Ants in Minas Gerais, Brazil."

PloS one vol. 6, no. 3, 2011. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0017024

Harry Evans and his co-authors' article looks into understanding *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*, commonly just known as *Ophiocordyceps* or the "zombie fungus," due to an overall lack of knowledge about the fungus. In short, *Ophiocordyceps* is a fungal pathogen that infects specifically ants where it takes control of its nervous system and

alters the ants' behavior in order to allow the fungus to reproduce. The scientists collected samples in Brazil where they were able to find four new species of the fungus, being able to learn more about these different types of fungal pathogens. The article also provided images of how the fungus infects the host and what it looks like after the fungus has fully developed.

This article was beneficial for understanding what *Ophiocordyceps* is and the different ways it could look after infecting its host. Because the disease I am crafting for my screenplay has elements of *Ophiocordyceps*, it is interesting to see the different structures it can take. This will be used to craft the structure of the fungal growth on the cervids and the possible humans infected within the screenplay.

Lippi, Giuseppe, and Gianfranco Cervellin. "Updates on Rabies Virus Disease: Is Evolution toward "Zombie Virus" a Tangible Threat?" *Acta Bio-Medica: Atenei Parmensis*, vol. 92, vol. 1, 2021. doi:10.23750/abm.v92i1.9153.

Giuseppe and Cervellin study the likelihood of the rabies virus mutating and becoming a "zombie virus." In their study, they explain how human rabies is caused, identifying the animals that can infect someone with rabies and how the virus infects the individuals.

The authors also look at the epidemiology of rabies, pinpointing that infection is greater in areas such as Africa and South-East Asia and that men are more likely to get human rabies than women. The mortality rate of this virus, when it affected humans, was found to be ~90%. Giuseppe and Cervellin conclude that the potential threat of the rabies virus to mutate into something that resembles a zombie virus is plausible but it would only be possible if it naturally mutated or mutated within a lab. However, the authors declare that

prevention is key in order to keep the virus from mutating into something that resembles a zombie virus.

This article was beneficial when understanding the likelihood of a zombie virus becoming a reality. By reading this article, I was able to understand how the transmission of rabies from an animal to a human affects the person, creating the “human rabies” that people experience when they are infected. It allowed me to think of how the disease that I crafted within my screenplay would be transmitted and how it affects the person who is inflicted with the infection.

“Rabies.” *Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2022,*

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>.

Rabies is a virus that infects mammals, primarily associated with dogs, cats, foxes, bats, and raccoons. The virus spreads through direct contact with the saliva or blood of the infected animal on broken skin, which commonly occurs from the infected animal biting or scratching the healthy animal. In addition, someone may get infected through non-bite exposures by the infected fluid contacting an open wound. After the infection enters a person's or animal's body, the virus penetrates the cells. It begins to multiply itself to cause the virus to spread over the body of the infected host. The incubation period of the virus takes days to months; symptoms of infection from the virus vary from flu-like in people and general sickness in animals. It is not until the virus reaches the brain that the host exhibits neurological issues, such as aggression and cognitive dysfunction, due to inflammation in the brain. This symptom can be exhibited in both people and animals. Other symptoms, primarily in animals, include excessive drooling and trouble moving.

Rabies vaccines exist and can be given to pets to prevent it and people, if they come in contact with an infected animal.

The article that the CDC provides on rabies is beneficial when constructing the disease that will be exhibited in my screenplay. The CDC gives excellent insight into the rabies virus, demonstrating how the virus works and the types of symptoms to be expected with the disease. In addition, the article is helpful when creatively combining this virus with another deadly virus because how it mutates and presents itself in an animal or person will be beneficial in knowing how the disease affects Cervidae and people in my eco-horror screenplay.

Zimmer, Carl. "After This Fungus Turns Ants into Zombies, Their Bodies Explode." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 24 Oct. 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/24/science/ant-zombies-fungus.html>.

Zimmer's article takes a closer look at *Ophiocordyceps*, a fungus that infects ants and causes them to be "zombies." In the article, Zimmer explains the process in which the fungus infects ants. While the fungus grows on the ant, the ant lives a normal life before the fungus finally takes over the ant's motor functions, controlling the ant and make it go to higher ground where the fungus will cause the ant to bite down into the tree and die as the fungus feeds off of the host. There, spores are produced and fly off of the ant with the wind. Zimmer further goes into showing images of how the fungus has infected other insects such as beetles and wasps, providing explanations as to how they spread differently than they do the ant in a research study conducted by Dr. Araújo and Dr. Hughes.

This article provided an excellent and simple explanation as to what *Ophiocordyceps* is and how it infects the host. What I found to be the most beneficial are the images of the fungus after it had completely infected its host. Since I am writing a screenplay that deals with a fungus-type growth, it is nice to be able to get inspiration for the fungus growth that will be caused by the disease witnessed within my screenplay.

Visual Media

Appelbaum, Josh, et. al, creators. *Zoo: Season 1*. CBS, 2015.

CBS's *Zoo* is a TV show based on James Patterson's book of the same name. The show's central plot follows a zoologist, Jackson Oz, while on an African safari. While there, he notices the animals exhibiting strange behaviors, such as coordinated, aggressive attacks on humans after non-threatening encounters. The strange behavior is first seen in a pride composed of lionesses that attack a group of tourists without warning. Reports show that the behavior is seen in other animal populations worldwide. With new reports coming in by the dozens, Jackson races against time to figure out the cause.

Zoo is very beneficial to me when developing the aggressive behaviors of the deer in the screenplay I am writing. The show gives a new twist to animal behavior in their call to an uprising against humans, which I find may help when developing new behavioral characteristics among the infected Cervidae described in the screenplay.

Blair Witch (standard edition). 2019. Playstation [Game]. Bloober Team.

Blair Witch is a psychological horror game developed by the Bloober Team. The player learns about the world through a veteran named Ellis Lynch, now a police officer looking for a lost child in the Black Hills forest. The game throws the player into a "found

footage” psychological horror story, analogous to the original 1999 *Blair Witch Project* movie. *Blair Witch* also provides the player with various puzzles and scenarios requiring stealth to survive. These many actions lead the player to achieve one of many endings in the game.

Blair Witch is beneficial in the process of writing my eco-horror screenplay. Although the game is mostly psychological horror, it has valuable elements. Since the *Blair Witch* primarily takes place in a forest that features old, abandoned buildings and homes and provides a “demonic creature” as the antagonist, these details can be used in the writing process for their similar elements.

Daradont, Frank, creator. *The Walking Dead: Season 1*. AMC, 2010.

The Walking Dead is an AMC original TV series based on the famous graphic novel by Robert Kirkman and illustrated by Tony Moore of the same name. This 6-episode season follows Rick Grimes, a former Atlanta police officer, who wakes up from a coma to find that the world he knew has fallen due to an unknown disease causing the zombie apocalypse across the globe. After seeking help and finding his family, he and the small group face friends being killed and turned into the living dead, also known as walkers, all the while searching for answers to stop the apocalypse. Unfortunately, after finding a living scientist at the CDC, Grimes concludes that everyone is infected and there is a way around becoming a walker after death. Unfortunately, the only “cure” is trauma to the brain before or after death has occurred.

The Walking Dead is beneficial for crafting my screenplay due to the elements of eco-horror and zombie-horror it provides. The show’s *mise-en-scène* is rich in displaying

a zombie in a hypothetical world. By displaying a zombie's locomotion and general behavior, I can give more dimension to the infected organisms in the screenplay.

The Quarry (standard edition). 2022. Playstation [Game]. Supermassive Games.

The Quarry is a cinematic horror video game created by award-winning indie-game developer Supermassive Games. The game is a cinematic-style horror game that tells the story of a group of camp counselors surviving a werewolf attack during a danger-filled night. The game's story develops using the butterfly effect theory to help tell the story, meaning that, as the player decides the actions and fate of each character, the player's actions determine what kind of ending they will receive.

The developers created a game that provides a nostalgic nod toward the 1980s campy horror movies. We see this in the style of gameplay and the multiple references to older horror movies such as *Friday the 13th*. Supermassive Games developers have also created a game that improves the player's hand-eye-coordination through critical moments such as quick time events and moments in which the player must not move.

These actions allow players to understand how to maneuver in severe moments that call for immediate action while critically thinking about how their actions affect others.

This game will help me to understand the horror genre through a visual medium. The game provides visuals of gore that can then be studied to help describe such horrific moments in a written medium. By learning how gore is performed visually, I can then properly describe the gore that unfolds in a fictional scene for the reader to fully understand and process what they are reading at full capacity.

Until Dawn (standard edition). 2015. Playstation [Game]. Supermassive Games.

Until Dawn is a cinematic horror game developed by award-winning indie-game developer Supermassive Games. The video game follows a group of friends who meet in honor of the death anniversary of their friends, twin sisters Beth and Hannah, who had died at the lodge a year before the game takes place. During the night, the friends split up and come in contact with evil supernatural beings known as wendigos. The player is in charge of ensuring that all the characters survive until dawn. The game's plot is based on the theory of the butterfly effect, in which one action may affect the entire plot for better or worse. As a result, there is no definite ending; instead, the game has multiple potential endings based on the player's decisions.

The game will help develop the monstrous characteristics of the infected deer in my short story. The wendigos in the video game will inspire new characteristics for the deer, such as movement and vocal patterns. The video game also provides a snowy, wooded area as a setting that is similar to the location where my short story will be taking place. This will allow me to study how the characters and the environment interact to make a compelling, vivid scene for the reader to digest.

The Walking Dead: Season 1 (standard edition). 2012. Playstation [Game]. Telltale Games.

Telltale's *The Walking Dead* is an episodic video game based on the famous graphic novel by Robert Kirkman and illustrated by Tony Moore of the same name. However, instead of using the cast of the original graphic novel, Telltale uses a set of all-new characters in the Walking Dead universe. Over the span of 5 episodes, the player controls Lee Everett, a former history professor convicted of murder at the beginning of the outbreak. After Lee escapes an attack by an infected police officer, he meets Clementine, a girl who left with a sitter who, too, was turned. Lee and Clementine then embark on a

mission to find her parents in Macon, GA, meeting survivors to fight and survive against the hundreds of undead. However, by the end of episode 5, Lee becomes infected and must give Clementine the choice of keeping him from turning or leaving him to turn so she can find the rest of their surviving group.

This episodic game provides excellent visual aid when learning new styles of art. In addition, the video game exhibits a unique art style which can be used as an example to experiment with my style when illustrating small images. These illustrations will be scattered throughout the short story to highlight critical moments or other objects present in the screenplay.

Miscellaneous

Gallagher, James. "The Last of Us: Could a Fungal Pandemic Turn Us All into Zombies?" *BBC News*, BBC, 28 Jan. 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-64402102>.

Gallagher's article dives deeper into the fear of a fungal zombie apocalypse due to the rise in popularity of HBO's adaptation of *The Last of Us*. Gallagher explains how the fungus infects its host within the show, painting a grotesque picture of a person succumbing to the virus and becoming a zombie hungry for human flesh. While *Ophiocordyceps* is an actual fungus that people use for health benefits, it cannot infect humans like ants due to a human's high body temperature. However, while the probability of *Ophiocordyceps* being able to infect humans is dismissed, the WHO has identified nineteen total fungi that are life-threatening to humans. Gallagher speaks with Dr. Neil Stone who identifies two of these fungi. *Candida auris* and *Cryptococcus neoformans* are very deadly to humans and cause devastating damage to a person's

nervous system. Dr. Stone warns that, while these fungi might turn people into zombies, people should be aware that with the rise in global temperature, the spread of these fungi can be detrimental to human life as another pandemic.

While this article was a small look into the fear of there being an actual zombie disease caused by a fungus, it was interesting to read up a little bit about the fungi harmful to humans. Reading about the symptoms that the fungi can cause humans was very beneficial in thinking about how the fungus in my screenplay affects humans once they are infected with the zoonotic disease.

Heckmann, Chris. "Screenwriting Terms and Abbreviations You Should Know." StudioBinder, 18 Apr. 2022, <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/screenwriting-terms-definitions-abbreviations/>.

Heckman's article on studiobinder is a quick guide on the different terms people use when writing a screenplay. This guide is to help users understand what these terms mean, such as "O.S." meaning "off-screen" as well as "EXT" for "exterior" and "INT" for "interior." This article also explained when to correctly use them in the crafting of a screenplay.

This article was beneficial when crafting my screenplay because I was unaware of the different terms people use and their meanings. By reading this article, I came to understand the terminology people use when writing a screenplay and thus make my screenplay richer in terms of the storytelling.

Hozier. "In the Woods Somewhere." *Hozier*, 2014, *Spotify*, <https://open.spotify.com/track/5Pkn31exSVgFbfDAH961QC?si=5e74cf930cae4263>.

“In the Woods Somewhere” is a song from Hozier’s 2014 album release, *Hozier*. The song follows an unknown man running into the woods upon hearing the call of a woman, his lover. When he reaches the sound, he pities a wounded fox and ends its pain before being confronted with a beast whom he is terrified of. The man is chased by the beast, calling the woman for help but is not answered and thus remains lost in the woods somewhere.

This song provided inspiration to the screenplay that I am writing. The lyrics and instrumentals of the song provided the perfect mood in order to convey an eerie atmosphere for the screenplay.

“How to Format a Screenplay.” StudioBinder, 5 Aug. 2021,

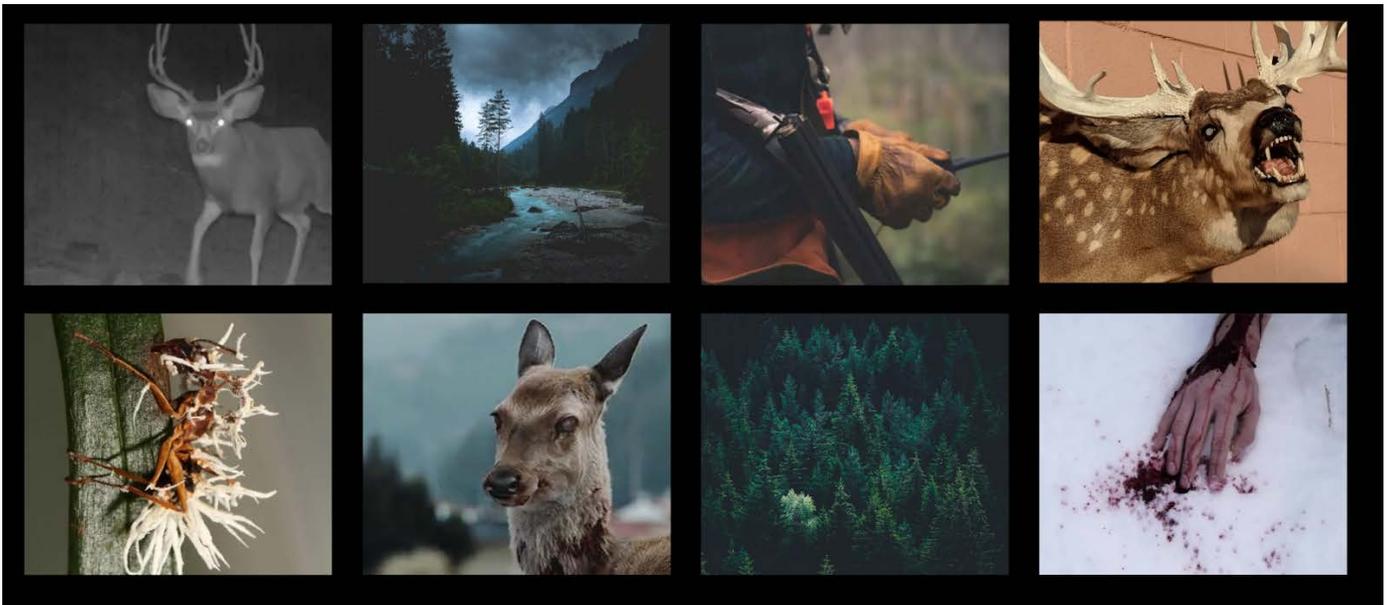
<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/brilliant-script-screenplay-format/>.

This article on StudioBinder.com is a quick and easy guide on how to correctly format a screenplay. It provides the reader with different terminology, when to capitalize words/phrases, and other devices that screenwriters use to create a proper screenplay.

As a beginner screenwriter, this website was very beneficial when wanting to learn more about screenwriting. It was very short and to the point, explaining everything easy enough to digest in a short period of time and be able to write with the knowledge of correct screenplay formatting.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Moodboard for *In The Woods Somewhere*.



Appendix 2: Cast of *In The Woods Somewhere*.



Appendix 3: Real-life Model of Ronan, created by Zhon Creations

