

DEAD OF WINTER

Written by

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CLOSE ON - A WOMAN'S FACE, BETH

exhausted, lids heavy - she has no lashes. Her skin is so pale and bloodless, it's almost translucent. The SOUND of her breaths in staggered, wheezing draws. She's dying.

JO (V.O.)

She said she'd always be there.

Beth swallows. Her lips part. She wants to speak.

But the breath that leaves her now is her last.

All intention abandons her face.

She's dead.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY (FROM ABOVE)

Beth lies in bed below us, bald and emaciated. Her night stand is topped by a pharmacy of MEDS. An IV is threaded into her arm. This is not a hospital room, but a large upstairs bedroom with floor-to-ceiling picture windows looking out on SNOW.

An 11 year-old GIRL sits beside Beth. They've been holding hands, but the girl lets go now.

JO (V.O.)

I guess it's just something mothers say.

A MAN enters the room. He checks for Beth's pulse - and then slumps to the bed, turns to the girl, reaches for her hand - but the girl just gets up and LEAVES the room. We float to the window and OUTSIDE...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - DAY (FROM ABOVE)

The girl emerges from the house into the endless white of NEW SNOW, her footprints trailing her into the yard. She stops here. Sinks to her knees. Lies back in the snow.

And we see her face for the first time --

JOSEPHINE ASH

Sorrow and disappointment tinge the beginnings of an accessible, homegrown beauty. She's already wearing her letdown like a mask.

JO (V.O.)

She lied to me.

Jo fans her arms and legs in slow, wide sweeps until A SNOW ANGEL emerges beneath her.

She rolls off and lies beside it. Turns to face it. Draws her knees up like a small child. And places her hand where the angel's hand might be.

JO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They all do.

WHITE SCREEN

EXT. SKY - DAY

Gradual fissures in the WHITENESS reveal a winter cloudy sky as we BREAK THROUGH the clouds to --

EXT. ALPINE WILDERNESS (AERIAL SHOT) - DAY

A fairy-tale perfection to this winter wonderland studded with snow-capped evergreens and unmarred fields of white. SKIMMING above the treetops, the only trace of civilization below is a winding, TWO-LANE HIGHWAY snaking its way through the snow-covered peaks and valleys.

Following the curves of the road, we FIND A LONE SUV.

PUSH IN on the SUV until we come upon A BACK WINDOW --

JO'S FACE

14 now - braces gone, too much black eyeliner and black nail polish - leaning against the glass, listening to an IPOD and TEXTING on her cell phone. A yellow LAB beside her - RUFUS.

INT. SUV - DAY

DIANE - 30s, everyday pretty and happy in love - is craned around from the front passenger seat, LIPS MOVING, tongue wagging at Jo - but all we HEAR is Jo's MUSIC.

CLOSE ON PHONE SCREEN: "help stepmonster wnts 2 tlk"

REPLY: "cn u ditch?"

Jo punches the keys.

CLOSE ON PHONE SCREEN: "trapd - drvN"

REPLY: "u poor thng"

Jo reluctantly tugs out her earbuds. Looks at Diane.

JO

What?

DIANE

I was just saying, I'm so glad I finally get to see this place I've heard so much about.

The man we saw at Beth's side - DR. CAM ASH, late 40s - drives. A man of practicality and determination, he goes to great lengths not to show the cracks in the foundation.

DIANE (CONT'D)

When we get there, I'm hoping you'll show me the ropes?

JO

Sure. No problem.

(deadpan)

And after that, I'll show you the bed my mom died in.

Awkward.

Jo pets Rufus.

CAM'S EYES IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR meet Jo's. Reprimand.

Diane faces front and ignores the slight. Her hand finds Cam's knee - it's okay, let her be.

DIANE

This trip will be good for us.

Jo rolls her eyes. Earbuds back in. Thumbs punch, texting.

CLOSE ON PHONE SCREEN: "It's oficial. I'm n hell."

Jo sends the message. A beat later: "No Signal"

In THE REFLECTION of her window, Jo sees the GLINT off Diane's WEDDING RING, and her heart breaks a little bit more.

She looks OUT THE WINDOW, anywhere but at that ring.

JO'S POV - A "FOR SALE" SIGN ALONG THE ROAD

an abandoned vacation home. And another... The recession has hit this place hard.

And then - a glimpse of SOMETHING THRASHING in the snow.

JO

Dad! Stop!

CAM
What's wrong?

JO
Just pull over!

Cam pulls the SUV to the shoulder. Even before the tires stop moving, Jo is out and running back down the highway.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jo stops at the DITCH where a DOE is struggling to get up, hind-legs crushed and useless. BLOOD rivers from her snout staining the white snow red.

Cam and Diane rush up beside Jo. Rufus BARKS from the SUV.

CAM
What the hell are you doing?

Then he sees. Softens.

CAM (CONT'D)
Jo listen, they jump out in the road all the time up here.

Snow tumbles down the hillside, making them all look up.

THE DOE'S FAWN

darts back and forth in panicked bursts above them, distressed, bleating out a PLAINTIVE CALL.

JO
We have to do something.
(off Cam's reluctance)
You're a doctor. Dad - please!

Cam relents, goes to the car, pops open the hatch, rifles through the bags and groceries and Christmas packages, tugs out his MEDICAL BAG - and returns to the ditch.

He approaches the doe cautiously, sliding down the embankment as she flails in fear. Jo follows, hopeful.

CAM
Go back to the car, Jo.

JO
But, I want to help.

CAM
Go. Please.

JO
What are you going to do?

CAM
She won't make it.

Cam removes A SCALPEL from his bag. It registers.

JO
You're going to kill her?

CAM
Jo, go back to the car.

Jo hesitates - then reluctantly climbs back up to the road. Diane extends her arms in sympathy, but Jo steps around her - Don't touch me! - and turns to stare daggers at her dad.

JO
I should've known I couldn't trust
you to save her.

Cam feels the weight of his daughter's words.

Jo gets back in the SUV and slams the door.

THE FAWN bleats another frightened cry...

EXT. MOUNTAIN DRIVEWAY - EARLY EVENING

The SUV chugs up a rutted, snow-packed driveway until it meets with a huge FALLEN TREE blocking the way and stops. Jo gets out of the car with her backpack and marches away INTO THE WOODS. No looking back. Rufus follows.

Diane climbs out, CALLS after her.

DIANE
Jo, wait!

Cam collects the bags. No patience for the long-suffering.

CAM
Let her go. She knows the way.

DIANE
This is hard for her, Cam.

CAM
She's making it harder than it has
to be.

Diane watches Jo and the dog disappear through the trees.

EXT. WOODS - EARLY EVENING

Jo's IPOD is BLASTING. She marches beneath winter-bare branches, fighting the snow tugging at her boots. Fighting everything.

UP AHEAD - THE GLIMPSE OF A LARGE CHALET-STYLE HOUSE

barely discernible through the trees.

Jo turns the other way. Won't look at it. She just can't. She hikes UP THE MOUNTAIN SIDE. Stumbles. Picks herself up and keeps climbing until the house is far behind her.

A SPLIT RAIL FENCE

Jo rips out her earbuds, leans into the rail, tears imminent. Stillness.

A ROBIN chortles and tuts on a branch overhead.

Nothing else makes a sound. Until --

A THUNDERING, a pounding and rumble as something large and powerful CAREENS into the fence right where Jo stands. Stops there. Looms. Blowing STEAM...

A HORSE.

Jo reaches up and grips the halter with both hands, pressing her lips to the big black Percheron's muzzle. An old friend.

JO

Missed you too, Gunther. How 'bout you and me run away together?

WOMAN'S VOICE (OS)

Josephine Ash? Is that you?

Jo peers around Gunther's enormous head, but hides there too. LOIS, 70s - stout and bull-headed with a heart of gold - slogs her way down from the stable.

LOIS

My God look at you. The spitting image of your ma.

(this poor kid --)

How you gettin' along, darlin'?

JO

I'm, you know, fine I guess.

Rufus wags and jumps up and smothers Lois with kisses.

LOIS

Lord, it's nice to see a familiar face. Been so quiet on this mountain the past couple years. No one comes up anymore, everyone's selling. Even my grand-daughter Maya moved out. You remember Maya - she used to watch you when your folks were building the house?

Jo remembers.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Just me and Gunther now. And the occasional check-in from our neighborly park ranger.

Jo nuzzles Gunther, avoids Lois's penetrating gaze. Beat.

LOIS (CONT'D)

This is your first trip back since your ma died, ain't it?
(a nod from Jo)
Your dad just remarried I heard.
You like her?

A sneer. Oh what Jo would say if she dared.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Gotta be something worthwhile about her if your dad picked her out of all the other fish?

JO

She's a school counselor. I think he's hoping she'll fix me.

LOIS

Who says you're broke?

Jo just strokes Gunther's muzzle. Lois smiles sympathetic.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Been down that road. Maya's always been a magnet for trouble. Finds that girl wherever she is, never once had to go looking for it.

Lois's hand moves to Jo's - a pat, a squeeze.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Listen, I know what it feels like to lose someone.

(MORE)

LOIS (CONT'D)

Your heart just doesn't wanna go there ever again, I know. But in the end, the honest to God truth? People need people. It's just the way we're made.

Jo suddenly wants out of this conversation.

JO

Well, I should probably go now, so.

Jo and Rufus turn back down the mountain. Lois CALLS out --

LOIS

Give it time, Jo.

Jo's eyes well... but no, damn it! She won't cry.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - EVENING

All timber beams and stone and picture windows with snow spread like frosting on the sharp peak of the roof. It sits nestled between the woods and an endless white valley with a view of forever. Idyllic.

JO'S POV - FROM THE WOODS

shadowing CAM AND DIANE as they trudge up the driveway on foot - weighed down by bags and supplies. Cam backtracks to help Diane with her load.

Diane stops, breathless - looks up at the impressive house.

DIANE

This is no little cabin in the woods, Cam.

Cam steps up on the porch - takes in the position of a bench, a padlocked storage box... Something's off.

DIANE (CONT'D)

What is it?

CAM

(covering)

Nothing. Just been a long time.

Jo watches them go inside. She looks up at the --

UPSTAIRS PICTURE WINDOWS

-- where a FLOCK of passing BIRDS is reflected in the glass.

THE CLOUDS are threatening.

Jo holds out her hand. A SNOWFLAKE lands in her palm...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - FOYER - EVENING

High beam ceilings, open spaces and WALLS OF WINDOWS inviting the trees inside. OPEN STRING STAIRS from the foyer rise above the kitchen, leading to A CATWALK framing the floor below. This is a tree-house all grown up and showing off.

KITCHEN

Diane sets down a bag of groceries. DUST plumes up from the counter. Cam swipes at a cobweb.

CAM

I'm sorry, I should have come up first and taken care of all this.

Diane brushes a string of cobweb from his hair. Smiles.

DIANE

Four months ago I made a promise - it includes cobwebs. We're in this together now, remember?

Cam remembers. They hold each other, kiss - and mean it.

ABOVE THEM - JO is visible through the slats between the stairs, stealing her way up. They hear her, look up.

CAM

We could use some help down here.

JO

I'll be down in a minute.

But, she won't. She knows it. They know it. She takes the remaining steps up in two's.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - CATWALK - EVENING

Jo walks down the corridor, slows - approaching A BEDROOM DOOR midway down. Stops. We notice her GNAWED PAINTED BLACK NAILS tugging at the seam on her jeans. Nervous.

JO'S POV - MASTER BEDROOM

The picture windows. The bed. The night stand. This is the room where her mother died. Jo can't look long. Walks on.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BATHROOM - EVENING

Jo draws a BATH. The water runs RUSTY at first, then clears.

Waiting for the tub to fill, she's drawn to THE HUTCH. Her fingers pass over the dusty jars of bath-salts and bottles of perfume, an old silver hair clip - her mother's things.

INSIDE THE HUTCH - jars of old nail polish, lipstick - and OLD BOTTLES OF PILLS. Dozens of them - sedatives, pain-killers, sleep-aids - all prescribed to "ELIZABETH ASH".

BETH (OS)
You're my angel.

JO'S VISION - BETH

now sitting in the tub, wan, smiling at Jo through the pain.

BETH (CONT'D)
I remember when it was me taking care of you. How I loved washing your hair when you were little.

Jo looks at her mother with a heavy heart.

BETH (CONT'D)
You'd lay your head back in my hand - do you remember? But you were always so afraid I'd let go. Did I ever let go, Josey? Ever once?

Jo reaches for the faucet and turns off the water. The tub is full now -- and empty.

THE LIGHTS FLICKER. SNOW flurries against the glass.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - A HANDPRINT IN DUST

not immediately recent, but more so than the dust around it.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - NIGHT

Cam stares at the shelf, at the handprint - looks at the floor - clods of old DRIED MUD off someone's boots...

JO (OS)
So what did you want help with?

Cam turns and walks out of the pantry past her.

CAM
It's all been done.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

A FIRE pops in the commanding stone fireplace, dancing shadows across a collection of ANTIQUE STEEL JAW ANIMAL TRAPS adorning the walls. Jo and Cam eat at the big table. Jo reacts to the impossibly high WINDOWS shuddering in the WIND.

JO

Did you bother to check the weather reports before we left home?

CAM

Sometimes life throws curve balls, Jo - and all we can do is take our best swing.

JO

So that would be a no.

CAM

Tell you what - tomorrow, we'll go out and cut down our Christmas tree like we used to, okay?

Jo shrugs.

CAM (CONT'D)

I remember when you loved coming here. You never wanted to leave.

JO

That was a long time ago.

Cam knows it was.

Jo glances at the unattended place-setting across the table.

JO (CONT'D)

Where is she, anyway?

CAM

She has a name.

Jo rakes a fork through her meal.

CAM (CONT'D)

I wanna hear you say it. Diane.

Jo takes a bite. Chews. Won't be bossed.

Cam stares right through her.

CAM (CONT'D)

Shame on you.

Jo feels this. To the core.

Cam looks down at his plate, eats.

CAM (CONT'D)

Diane was tired and went up to bed.

You need to start helping out more.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo sits on the edge of her bed. A PHOTO OF BETH on the nightstand when she was beautiful, holding baby Jo. Jo reaches out - and LAYS IT FACE DOWN. Doesn't want to look at it.

The WIND HOWLS outside. The storm is in full swing.

The LIGHTS SPATTER.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Cam sits alone at the table with a near-empty bottle of wine. The fire is dying. As he drinks, his eyes are riveted on a shelf in the kitchen...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cam approaches the shelf and pulls down the object he's been fixated on - A BLUE MUG. He turns it in his hand - "World's Greatest Mom". Stares at it a beat longer, affected.

And then tucks it way in the back, out of sight.

The BACK DOOR rattles in the wind.

Cam checks THE LOCK twice - uneasy about something...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - THE ROBIN

tittering from its morning post on a snow-heavy branch. WIND whips. The branch sways. ICICLES clatter...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MORNING

SNOW DRIFTS that weren't here yesterday reach up the exterior walls of the house, swallowing up lower windows and the front door where a path has recently been shoveled.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BATHROOM - MORNING

Jo stands at the mirror in her underwear, applying her trademark black eyeliner. She needs more light. FLIPS the SWITCH - the bulb only pulses a buzzing low light.

JO

Great.

The OS WHINE of a CHAIN SAW...

Jo moves to THE WINDOW. Peers out.

JO'S POV - ROAD UP TO HOUSE

Through the BLOWING SNOW, CAM slices into the fallen tree.

Something in the distance CATCHES JO'S EYE.

JO'S POV - VALLEY

A SMALL, DARK SPECK moves through the storm, through the otherwise BOUNDLESS WHITE a mile out.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - STAIRCASE LANDING - MORNING

Jo grabs up the BINOCULARS from the window ledge and sits on the stairs, watching out the window - still in her underwear.

BINOCULARS POV - VALLEY

The small dark speck is SOMEONE APPROACHING on foot - hooded in a dark coat - flinging each snowshoe ahead with exhaustion, not walking as much as throwing himself forward.

JO

Someone's out there.

GREAT ROOM

Diane sits on the floor with a TRUNK OF DECORATIONS, unsnarling garlands from a mix of all things Christmas - frees an ornament from the tangle, and looks up.

DIANE

Who?

JO

A man, I guess. Hard to tell.

Diane walks up to Jo on the landing. Peers out.

DIANE

Anyone you know?

JO

Not likely.

DIANE

Can I see?

Jo passes Diane the binoculars.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Looks like he's headed this way.

Diane SHIVERS. Returns the binoculars to Jo.

DIANE (CONT'D)
(off Jo's scant attire)
Maybe you should get dressed?

Jo ignores Diane, re-affixing herself to the binoculars.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - MORNING

Cam shuts off the chain saw and stops for a break. A sip from his thermos. Gazes out over the vast white valley.

CAM'S POV - VALLEY

The MAN is nearer, maybe half a mile now, movement more staggered.

EXT. VALLEY - MORNING

The man's SNOWSHOES trudge through the deep, new snow. He's fatigued, working hard, head down, face concealed beneath his hood. He COUGHS, pushing on with everything he's got.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - MORNING

A beat as Cam observes the man's approach. Then Cam sets the saw down and heads back up to the house, fighting the wind, sinking knee deep in the snow with each step forward.

EXT. VALLEY - MORNING

-- the man keeps treading onward. At intervals, sprayed amidst his snowshoe tracks - BLOOD.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - STAIRCASE LANDING

Jo's fingers shift on the binoculars...

BINOCULARS POV - VALLEY

The man plows up and over the rise from the valley. Stumbles, struggles, hauls himself up, determined to keep moving. His face never lifting. Just driving forward.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MORNING

Cam and the man intersect in front of the house. Cam stops. The man doesn't.

CAM
Hello?

THE EMBLEM ON THE MAN'S COAT: U.S. PARK SERVICE.

The ranger lumbers past Cam as if he hasn't even seen him.

CAM (CONT'D)
Hey - you all right?

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - STAIRCASE LANDING - SAME TIME

Jo dashes up the stairs. The SOUND of her door shutting.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MORNING

Diane opens the front door. The ranger moves onto the porch and falls at her feet - not a single step more.

Cam rushes to his side, holds him upright.

CAM
(to Diane)
Help me get him inside.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - MORNING

Cam and Diane usher the ranger to a chair near the fire. He's wiped out, SHUDDERING. Diane quickly grabs a blanket from the sofa and drapes it over him.

Cam notices the spray of BLOOD on the ranger's pants.

CAM
Where are you hurt?

The ranger looks up, haunted, as if he inexplicably thought he was here all alone. Gradually, he takes in the room, the blood on his pants, Cam and Diane...

Cam pushes back the ranger's hood. Surprisingly, he's young - 20s, distressed, traumatized, with a BLOODY NOSE - and handsome. Arrestingly so.

CAM (CONT'D)
(to Diane)
Could you get me my bag? It's in the closet.

Cam moves in to get a better look at the bloody nose. The ranger JOLTS back.

CAM (CONT'D)
I'm a doctor. I just wanna take a
look.

The ranger eases down enough for Cam to peer at the CAKED BLOOD around his nostrils. Diane delivers the MEDICAL BAG and Cam tugs on surgical gloves, reaches to the ranger's face, sees him struggling to stay alert.

CAM (CONT'D)
What's your name?

RANGER/ANDY
(barely audible)
Andy.

CAM
You were pushing yourself pretty
hard out there, Andy.

Cam prepares a swath of gauze with an antiseptic wash and dabs it to ANDY's nose.

ANDY
It's bad...

CAM
What's bad - the pain?

ANDY
The station...

CAM
The ranger station? What happened?

ANDY
Dug myself out. I left them...

Andy's eyes close, he's fading.

CAM
Andy?

His eyes open. He looks at Cam.

CAM (CONT'D)
What happened at the station? You
left who? Were there others up
there with you?

But, Andy is too weak now. His eyes close again, his head lolls, so much more than just fatigued - depleted. He's out.

Cam looks at Diane, at the RATTLING WINDOWS, at the STORM...

Jo stands on the stairs now, dressed, made up.

JO

What's wrong with him?

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BASEMENT DEN - MORNING

A big room with a sofa, wet bar, books, games, storage...

Cam and Diane lower a torpid Andy to the sofa. Cam peels off Andy's damp shirt - and A CELL-PHONE tumbles to the floor. Diane picks it up and slips it into the breast pocket of Andy's coat. Bundles him in a blanket, pillow under his head.

He MUMBLES something senseless in his stupor.

Cam leans close, tries again.

CAM

Andy? Can you hear me? Are there others up there who need help?

Nothing.

Jo watches from a distance. Nothing more Cam can find out right now. He leaves Andy to sleep and ushers Jo upstairs.

Before Diane follows them up, she tucks a second blanket around Andy, it's cold. Sets his boots neat and tidy at the foot of the sofa - and looks up to find his eyes on her.

Then his lids fall again and he sinks back into a deep sleep.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - MORNING

Diane comes up from the basement and pulls the door partly closed, Andy just visible at the base of the stairs.

Cam is in THE PANTRY, Jo still watching him.

JO

What are you doing?

Cam emerges a beat later with A SHOTGUN - checking to see if it's loaded. Looks at Diane.

CAM

Ever use one of these?

DIANE

You're kidding... right?

The look on Cam's face - there's her answer.

JO

What do we need that for?

CAM

Someone's been here. Don't know how long ago and probably nothing to worry about, but just in case, I want you to keep this on hand.

JO

Dad, you're scaring me.

CAM

Which is why I didn't say anything earlier.

DIANE

Cam, I'll let you know right now I won't be shooting anybody.

CAM

Some things can't be talked through, Diane.

Cam puts the shotgun in Diane's hands and pulls on his coat.

DIANE

Where are you going?

CAM

He said he left them. We both heard it.

DIANE

Who knows what he meant. He was out of it.

CAM

Look, if there are others up there, they probably need help. I have to check it out.

JO

Why can't we just call somebody? Why do you have to go?

CAM

We have no cell reception.

JO

But what about Lois' radio? Why can't we just have her call out?

CAM

I wouldn't know what to tell them yet, Jo. I'm not gonna ask anyone to come 40 miles from town in this weather without good reason.

DIANE

How far is the station?

CAM

Only about two miles. I'll take the old Ski-Doo in the shed. Won't take me long.

Cam pulls two WALKIE-TALKIES from a drawer behind him, depresses the buttons on both - charged.

CAM (CONT'D)

These only have a short range, but should be enough to keep us connected.

He hands one to Jo.

CAM (CONT'D)

I'll let you know what I find up there and if need be, you can hike up to Lois' place and radio out.

Cam tugs on his hat. His scarf. Gloves.

DIANE

I don't think this is a good idea.

CAM

And I don't think I have a choice.

Cam collects his MEDICAL BAG.

CAM (CONT'D)

Generator's running, but use power sparingly. We're low on propane.

A kiss to Diane.

CAM (CONT'D)

I'll be back in an hour at the most.

(to Jo)

Curve balls, remember?

And he exits.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

ICICLES tremble like fangs on bare swaying branches...

A JACK RABBIT twitches in the wind and snow - listening, the
pounding of its little heart making its whole body tremble...

The OS SOUND of a SNOWMOBILE ENGINE roaring past...

EXT. VALLEY - MORNING

The moving SPECK that is Cam on his snowmobile coasts across the wide expanse of valley and slips into the white.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - MORNING

Diane fumbles with the shotgun like it might bite her at any second. She manages to open the chamber and pop out the TWO SHELLS, placing them and the shotgun on a high shelf, wanting nothing to do with it.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - MORNING

Jo shuffles around the room, bored, blowing dust off this, repositioning that - drawn closer with each diversion to THE BASEMENT DOOR. She sneaks a glance inside.

JO'S POV - ANDY

asleep on the sofa, blanket down around his waist now, bare skin. Body like fine art.

The fire POPS. Jo jumps.

Diane is standing there behind her, holding an OLD PHOTO ALBUM - watching Jo watch Andy... Jo moves to the hearth and pokes the fire. Something to do. Diane approaches with the album.

DIANE

I found this in the Christmas trunk. I was thinking we could go through it together.

JO

What for?

DIANE

I'd like to know more about your time with your mom.

Jo jabs at the logs. Sparks fly.

DIANE (CONT'D)
You're angry. I can see that.

Jo stills the poker - not one to be so obvious.

DIANE (CONT'D)
It's okay, you know. You can be
angry at me, at your dad. You can
even be angry at your mom.
Feelings are never wrong, Jo.

JO
Tell me you're not doing that.

DIANE
What am I doing?

JO
Talking to me like I'm some psycho
the principal sent to your office.

DIANE
Jo, this family means everything to
me now. You must know that?

Jo gets up and takes the photo album from Diane.

JO
What I know is that this has
nothing to do with you.

She sets the album on the coffee table and heads upstairs,
leaving Diane to wonder how the hell she's going to connect.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jo sinks onto the bed with her cell phone. Tries texting.

ON PHONE SCREEN: "RU there??"

REPLY: "No signal."

Jo stares at the ceiling. Slips in her earbuds. MUSIC
BLARES.

Her breath PLUMES in the cold.

A COBWEB billows from the head of an old toy horse...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MORNING

A CLOUD SHADOW pulls up and over the chalet like a shroud...

EXT. MOUNTAIN - MORNING

Cam hikes up a steep incline. Snow TUMBLES in his wake to the base of the mountain. He stops to catch his breath, looks back.

CAM'S POV - THE SNOWMOBILE parked beneath a crooked tree.

Cam looks ahead. A hard climb, but he's close. Sees it --

THE STATION

above him, built of logs and shingles, suffocated under a deep layer of snow and perched on the ridge like a dare.

There's been A SLIDE.

Trees pierce through the snow nearly parallel to the shifted hillside above it, some were taken out in the slide and are clustered now against the backstop of the station. THE ROOF sinks where it should peak.

Cam resumes his climb. Fifty more yards to go.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - CATWALK - DAY

Jo pulls a sweater around herself. Pads down the hallway in her slippers. Stops at the BATHROOM - but it's occupied.

The OS SOUND of Diane RETCHING from inside. The toilet FLUSH. Jo hesitates - then heads downstairs...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BASEMENT DEN - DAY

Andy twitches in his sleep. Rolls over...

EXT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Snow and broken trees and logs and bits of shingled roof - none of it makes much structural sense. Like a child's set of Tinker Toys shoved aside for another game.

THE STATION DOOR is blocked open by an accumulation of snow. Cam pushes his way inside...

INT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Toppled chairs, overturned tables, books and cooking utensils and all manner of things strewn from one end to the other in the dim light - all beneath a ceiling folded in on itself like a house of cards. The place is in ruins.

OVERHEAD - the storm-dark SKY through a hole in the roof.

CAM
Hello? Anyone here?

Cam waits, listens. Nothing. He moves carefully, ducking against the low ceiling and navigating the snow mounds - until something at his feet gives him pause.

EXT. UNDER THE RANGER STATION - DAY (FROM BELOW)

The station looms ABOVE... Icicles weep from the crossbeams where several floorboards have broken free to reveal --

A GAPING HOLE IN THE FLOOR ABOVE THE CLIFF

CAM - visible inside, looking down at us...

INT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Cam eases back. Every step measured now. Sidles along the periphery of the room... SOMETHING FLAPS past him. A CROW.

Startled, he's nearly knocked off balance, dangerously close to the hole in the floor. The crow flutters out through the roof. Cam steps to the wall and pulls out his WALKIE-TALKIE.

CAM
(into radio)
Jo? It's Dad.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - CATWALK - DAY

Diane emerges from the BATHROOM and hears CAM'S VOICE.

CAM (OS)
Jo? Diane?

She hurries downstairs.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - CLOSE ON WALKIE-TALKIE
on the table, red light flashing...

CAM (OS)
You there? Diane? Jo?

Jo beats her stepmother to it, snatches up the radio.

JO
Dad. You get up there okay?

INTERCUT:

CAM

Yeah, I'm here. Place is in bad shape. Avalanche. Roof is gone.

DIANE

Oh God, Cam. Be careful!

JO

You find anybody yet?

Cam stoops down to RETRIEVE something from the rubble.

A SKELETON KEY - a pink beaded tassel hanging from it.

STATIC - the radio hisses.

JO (CONT'D)

Dad? You there?

Cam studies the key, the mess around him. Troubled.

JO (CONT'D)

Dad?

CAM

Yeah, I'm here. Nobody yet, Jo.

Diane takes over the radio. More STATIC.

DIANE

Cam, I don't like this. It's not safe for you to be up there.

Jo moves to the fire - despises the intimacy between them.

Cam looks up, concerned. WIND lashes through the open roof.

CAM

I'm starting to think you're right.

(more STATIC)

Sounds like we're about to lose reception. I'm gonna head back now. If we lose contact, don't worry. It's just the storm.

Cam stares at the skeleton key. Something about it...

CAM (CONT'D)

But, Diane --

STATIC.

DIANE

I'm here.
 (more STATIC)
 Cam?

No response.

Diane sets down the walkie-talkie, looks out the huge WINDOWS at the falling snow and waits.

Jo pulls her sweater tighter and walks slowly past the BASEMENT DOOR again. Another glance down at Andy inside. She lingers this time. Diane turns, sees this, doesn't like it...

INT. RANGER STATION - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Cam brings the radio closer, nothing now but the HISS of static. Damn.

The OS SOUND of something moving from the LOW CORNER of the room - from BEHIND A DOOR forced partly closed by the spill of snow. Something thumping.

CAM

Hello? Someone there?

Cam carefully works his way around the perimeter of the room. The station CREAKS, shifting. He moves a little faster, reaches THE DOOR, pushes - it's OBSTRUCTED by something.

CAM (CONT'D)

I'm a doctor.

No response. Just the thwap, thwap-thwap from within.

Cam SHOVES the door, putting all his weight behind it. By degrees, it shimmies open enough to reveal what's blocking it...

A MAN - in only underwear, face down on the floor, stiff and colorless. Cam kneels, rolls the man over.

A KNIFE - embedded in the man's neck.

Cam bolts to his feet. Looks around at the decimated space - all of it more sinister now. BLOOD on the wall and --

THE SATELLITE RADIO - smashed. Intentionally.

CAM (CONT'D)

What the hell happened here...?

Thwap, thwap-thwap.

The SOUND is coming from deeper inside the room.

INT. RANGER STATION - BUNK ROOM - DAY

Cam steps over the dead man. Two bunks protrude from the wall into a narrow space forced tighter by the swell of SNOW tumbled in through the open roof. One small crank window spills a bit of daylight onto the floorboards. Otherwise, it's dark as pitch.

CAM

Hello?

Something MOVES under the second bunk - thwap, thwap-thwap. Cam tugs out his FLASHLIGHT and aims.

A WOMAN'S ARM

caught in the spotlight, reaching out from beneath the bed, out into Cam's path, JERKING and TREMBLING, BATTING up against the wood - no other part of her visible.

CAM (CONT'D)

Hold on. I'm coming.

Cam navigates around the MOUNDS OF SNOW and reaches the bunk. A blanket hangs over the side of the bed. The woman SHUDDERS behind it. Why doesn't she answer?

Cam grips the blanket and pulls it back to reveal THE WOMAN'S FACE - battered and swollen, fixed gaze, eyes clouded. Clear FINGER-MARK BRUISES around her neck. DEAD.

A LOW GROWL - there's something under there with her.

Cam lifts the blanket higher, shines the light in --

CAM'S POV - UNDER THE BED

-- beady little eyes, bloody little fangs -

A WOLVERINE

- gorges possessively, TUGGING at the dead woman's carcass. Her whole body heaves with each yank of her flesh.

Cam stumbles back against the wall.

CAM (CONT'D)

Christ!

The floor QUAKES.

Boards overhead bend to the snow on the roof, one gives way... The place is heading for collapse.

Cam scrambles over the dead man's body by the door. TRIPS. The WALKIE-TALKIE jettisons from his grip --

MAIN ROOM

-- and SLIDES across the floor, catapulting over the edge --

THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE FLOOR

-- pitching end over end down the snowy ravine, flinging over the BLUFF - catching air - until it finally settles.

Cam looks up. The walls swell...

EXT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Wind rages. Snow blows sideways. The mountainside CRUMBLES.

EXT. UNDER THE RANGER STATION - DAY (FROM BELOW)

CRACK! The floor gives and the station deflates.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

ON CAM - sliding in the flurry of plummeting debris down the ravine, toppling, grabbing at rocks, at branches, anything he can to stop the descent.

CAM'S HEAD - collides with a rock. Rolling, tossing, flailing... Until he slides to a precarious STOP on the edge of the bluff. An inch more and he would have gone over.

A thunder of LOGS pin Cam's legs. What's left of the station skids to a stop directly above him, perched there like a beast ready to strike.

Cam's head bleeds. He's groggy, disoriented, can't move. Meets eyes with THE DEAD WOMAN - hooked on a tree two feet away, staring at him. And he PASSES OUT.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - DAY

Diane stirs a pot on the stove. The SOUND of a SHOUT behind her makes her jump. She turns, moves to the basement door...

DIANE'S POV - ANDY IN BASEMENT DEN

Tossing and turning, agitated, talking in his sleep.

ANDY
 Wasn't my fault... Damn you...
 No. No. NO!

Diane is troubled.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - WOOD PILE - DAY

Jo battles the elements, tugging off logs from the stack against the side of the house and tossing them into a sling. It's hard to move out here in the blowing snow...

THE BASEMENT WINDOW

catches her eye. She crouches down, can't help being curious. Carefully digs away the mound of snow blocking it and SWIPES her glove through the snow-dust on the glass.

Peers in --

ANDY'S FACE

-- stares up at Jo from inside.

Jo YELPS and stumbles back, startled.

But wait, he's trying to tell her something. Gesturing. She peers inside again.

JO'S POV - THROUGH THE WINDOW

Andy JABS his finger toward the door behind him.

ANDY
 (muffled from inside)
 It's locked. The door is locked.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - DAY

Clodding through the kitchen in her boots, Jo marches past Diane at the stove straight for the basement door.

JO
 He got locked in by accident.

Diane moves between Jo and the door.

DIANE
 Not by accident.

A beat - and Jo looks at Diane in utter shock.

JO
You locked him in?

DIANE
 Until your dad gets back, I think
 it's a good idea.

JO
 What are you talking about?

DIANE
 He's obviously been through an
 ordeal. He's unstable right now.

BANGING from behind the basement door.

ANDY (OS)
 Can someone let me out? Please?

JO
 (to Diane)
 Are you out of your mind? He's a
 ranger! You can't just lock him in
 our basement!

Jo reaches for the knob. Diane lays her hand on the door.

DIANE
 Jo. Trust me. Please.

Diane's resolve unnerves Jo. For a beat, Jo reconsiders.

But then Jo twists the lock - and opens the door.

Andy emerges, wrapped in the blanket, SHAKING and perturbed.

ANDY
 Freezing my ass off down there.

Andy moves to the window, PEERS OUT - this way, then that -
 oddly NERVOUS. Then goes to the lapsing fire to warm up.

Jo crosses the room to haul the logs to the hearth.

ANDY (CONT'D)
 Let me do that.

And Andy takes over. Chivalry. Jo glares at Diane - see?

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - AT TABLE - DAY

Andy wears one of Cam's sweaters, shoveling food into his
 mouth like he hasn't eaten in days. He notices Diane and Jo
 watching him. Pauses mid-spoonful.

ANDY
Sorry. Been a long time since I
tasted food this good.

DIANE
Looks like you're feeling better.

ANDY
Thanks to you.

Andy catches Jo's gaze. The exchange is charged. Jo
blushes, looks away.

ANDY (CONT'D)
I didn't catch your name earlier.

JO
Me?

ANDY
Yeah. You.

JO
Jo.

ANDY
Short for?

JO
Josephine.

ANDY
That's nice. Old fashioned. And
how old are you, Josephine?

JO
Jo.

ANDY
Jo. Let me guess - 18? 19?

DIANE
She's 14.

Andy picks up on Diane's advisory tone - back off.

ANDY
Whoa. Okay, Mom. Just asking.

JO
She's not my mom.

This one, Diane feels to the bone. Jo almost regrets it.

ANDY

Ah. I see how it is, now.

Diane watches the silent exchange between Andy and Jo.

DIANE

So where are you headed, Andy?

Andy turns to THE WINDOWS - SNOW falls. WIND blows.

ANDY

Actually, I was hoping to wait out the weather here - if that's okay?

DIANE

Wait too long, you'll lose daylight.

ANDY

Maybe the doc will loan me a flashlight.

JO

My dad's not here.

Diane shakes her head at Jo - too late. Cat's out of the bag. They're alone.

ANDY

Where'd he go?

JO

Up to the ranger station.

ANDY'S FACE - the whole gamut of emotions flashes beneath the surface - settling on anger.

ANDY

Why did he do that?

JO

He thought they might need help.

ANDY

They? Who? I never said there was anybody up there.

JO

Don't you remember? You said --

ANDY

(cuts her off)

No! Do not do that! Do not take my words apart to make your point! I hate that.

Andy is struck by the look of alarm on Jo's face.

ANDY (CONT'D)
 Damn it - I'm sorry. Jo. Diane.
 I'm really sorry.
 (a breath, evens out)
 It's just not safe up there is all.
 He's gotta be careful.

Jo SHIVERS.

Andy gets up and drapes HIS RANGER COAT around her shoulders.

ANDY (CONT'D)
 Friends?

Jo nods - still a little rattled.

Diane doesn't trust him and it shows.

DIANE
 He'll be back soon.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - DAY

Diane does dishes, glances at the clock: 12:15. Where is Cam?

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Jo watches Andy as he moves about the room, sometimes glancing out the window while he looks at things in the house, touches things, opens things, admires... Always one eye outside.

ANDY
 Bet Dad built this place, am I right?

JO
 We all did. My dad, my mom and me.

Andy laughs, looks at Jo sideways.

ANDY
 You? Little Jo? You helped build
 this house? I don't believe it.

Jo retrieves the PHOTO ALBUM from the coffee table. Brings it to Andy. FLIPS through. Lands on the page she's looking for and presents it to him.

JO
 Proof.

CLOSE ON PHOTO - sweet little pig-tailed Jo, no more than five, clutching a hammer and straining under the weight of her daddy's tool belt. IN THE B.G. - the unfinished house.

ANDY
This is you?

JO
Once upon a time.

ANDY
I stand corrected. Looks like you even knew how to swing that thing. You were cute.

JO
Thanks - I think?

ANDY
Sorry - are. Cute. Present tense.

Jo smiles, blushes.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - DAY

Diane watches Jo share with Andy what she wouldn't with her...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - DAY

Diane slips in with the WALKIE-TALKIE and pulls the door closed behind her. Finds a flashlight, switches it on, sets it on a shelf and tries calling Cam.

DIANE
(into radio)
Cam? Can you hear me?

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

The SOUND of DIANE'S VOICE stirs Cam. He opens his eyes. Strands of blood and saliva have FROZEN his cheek to the board beneath him. When he lifts his head, the spittle cracks and shatters.

DIANE (OS)
Are you there?

CLOSE ON - THE WALKIE TALKIE

a hundred and fifty feet too far away to reach - down the mountain, RED-LIGHT flashing in the snow - Diane's voice ECHOING up the walls of the ravine.

DIANE (OS) (CONT'D)

Cam?

Cam tries to pull himself up, but HIS LEGS ARE TRAPPED.

DIANE (OS) (CONT'D)

Cam, please hurry back.

He puts all his strength into wrenching free but to no avail. The structure above him groans. If it gives, it will tumble over the bluff and take him with it.

DIANE (OS) (CONT'D)

I think there's something off about Andy.

Cam YELLS in vain - frustrated, helpless.

The DEAD WOMAN just stares at him.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Andy looks up at the architecture. Impressed.

ANDY

I'd stay with my uncle sometimes when I was a kid, when things got bad at home. He had this old farmhouse with lots of rooms, lots of secret places to hide. This seems like the kind of house that would have those, too.

(looks at Jo)

Secret places?

Jo deliberates for some reason. And in the end - shrugs, shakes her head "no". Her response seems to make Andy tense.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - DAY

Diane tries once more --

DIANE

(into radio)

Cam?

Nothing but STATIC. She leans against the shelves, defeated.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Andy pages through the PHOTO ALBUM.

CLOSE ON PHOTO of Beth and little Jo standing in front of a small fir tree in the snow.

ANDY

This must be your mom?

Jo nods, reluctantly. Doesn't look at the photo for long.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Apple sure doesn't fall far from
the tree. She's pretty like you.

JO

Was. Pretty. Past tense. She
died three years ago.

ANDY

Sorry. That's rough.

Jo shrugs again. Doesn't want to talk about it.

ANDY (CONT'D)

This is all wrong.

Andy looks long and hard at Jo. She starts to squirm, then --

ANDY (CONT'D)

If I'm not mistaken, it's Christmas
Eve. We gotta get you a tree.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - DAY

Diane emerges from the pantry and sets down an arm load of
OIL LANTERNS. Looks into THE GREAT ROOM. No one there.

DIANE

Jo?

Peers down into the BASEMENT DEN.

Only silence.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S ROOM - DAY

Diane pushes open the door, looks inside --

DIANE

Jo?

Nobody here. Diane's dread grows.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Snow blows sideways. Jo, Andy and Rufus bend into the wind,
navigating the stands of trees. Andy leads with the axe.

ANDY

We could never afford a decent tree
when I was growing up.

JO

That's the beauty of these. No
charge.

Andy stops and looks up.

ANDY'S POV - TREES OVERHEAD

majestic as they bow against the wind.

ANDY

They really are something, aren't
they? Makes me kinda wanna leave
them be.

He's moved. Jo notices.

JO

We don't have to cut one down. We
can hang the ornaments in the
window or something.

Andy turns and looks at her. Smiles.

ANDY

Sweetest thing you did right there,
Jo. A compromise. On my behalf.

Jo blushes. Shrugs. I guess.

Andy sucks back emotion, turns away - spots a young tree.

ANDY (CONT'D)

But this is about making sure you
you get a proper Christmas - and I
think I just found your tree.

THE AXE

as it BORES into the green flesh of the sapling...

Andy swings again and again. What is it that's fueling him?
The tree FALLS. Andy and Jo stare at it for a beat.

ANDY (CONT'D)

It's okay, you know.

JO

I know. There are a lot more where
it came from.

ANDY

No, I mean - don't beat yourself up for keeping your distance from her. You're right. She's not your mom. I know all about people coming into your life and claiming they give a damn. No law says you have to give a damn back.

Hallelujah, someone finally gets it. But, the silence that follows - and the way Andy looks at Jo - a little too intimate. She's uncomfortable. Until Andy scoops up a handful of snow.

ANDY (CONT'D)

On the other hand, I hear there is one that says you gotta give a damn about your local park ranger, and if you don't --

He suddenly PELTS Jo with a snowball.

Jo reacts, runs off, laughs.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - DAY

Diane clutches herself, forging against the wind and snow toward the woods, just out of earshot. Calls out --

DIANE

Jo? Jo!

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Jo makes her own snowball and SLAMS it back at Andy. It's war. BOMBS OF SNOW hurl back and forth through the wind - laughter, screams, Rufus barking - Jo ditching this way, Andy darting that way. Until he gets the upper hand, hammering Jo with a steady stream of ammunition.

Jo drops to the ground. Andy pins her. Rufus BARKS.

JO

(laughing)

Okay, okay! I give a damn! I give a damn! I like you!

Andy is perched above Jo. Breathless. Jo considers what she's just said. And bravely --

JO (CONT'D)

I like you.

A SNAP nearby. Andy reels around.

ANDY

Sshhh!

He peers intently through the maze of trees.

JO

What is it?

Andy snatches up the axe, takes a few steps into the woods and listens with his whole being - axe at the ready. Only the SOUND of WIND and swaying branches...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - DAY

Diane crosses back the other way, searching, distraught.

DIANE

Jo!

Rufus bounds up and JUMPS on Diane, wags, kisses - as Diane spots Andy lugging the Christmas tree to the front porch.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Where's Jo?

ANDY

Can I give you a little advice, Stepmom? You're going about it all wrong with that girl.

Andy shakes snow off the tree. Diane is incredulous.

DIANE

Excuse me?

ANDY

See, you can't force your own agenda. You gotta let trust happen naturally.

Andy finishes picking the tree clean.

ANDY (CONT'D)

It's all about the trust.

DIANE

Where the hell is my daughter?

Just as Jo emerges around the corner. She heard this, stops.

ANDY

(to Jo)

She was just worried about you.

Jo pauses for a beat off Diane's expression, confused, rattled - and then continues inside. Andy grips the tree and follows her in. Turns back, looks at Diane. Smiles.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Comin'?

The audacity - Diane seethes.

UNKNOWN POV - INTO BIG WINDOWS OF GREAT ROOM

where Rufus wags happily and Jo helps Andy get the tree in place - giving directions, poking fun, laughing. If we didn't see DIANE'S APPREHENSION, we'd see a Hallmark moment here - just another happy family trimming the tree...

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

Bitter WIND, flurries of dry snow streaming off the surface. Gusts tug at BOARDS holding what's left of the station together. Cam DIGS, channeling out the snow under his legs with a broken board. The dead woman's gaze remains fixed on him.

A BLAST of wind. The rickety structure CREAKS.

Cam paws at the snow, no time to waste. Reaches deep under the boards, burrowing out the snow at his ankles, at his feet. Strains to move -- at last, his legs SHIFT. Progress.

He tosses the board aside, throws his arms out to grab the dead woman's tree and pulls himself to it, inch by hard-won inch.

The ghost of the station quivers and shifts. SNOW DUST skips over the bluff. Cam wraps himself around the tree and HEAVES his legs out from under the beast.

A SHUDDER AND RUMBLE - the shell of logs and beams COLLAPSES into itself and shimmies over the bluff, pulling everything in its path down with it. Cam bows his head and CLEAVES to the tree against the deluge of snow and debris.

THE DEAD WOMAN is jostled free from the branch, drops and hooks herself on Cam's shoulder, her weight working to pull his grip loose. His fingers SLIPPING - until her rigid arm dislodges, releasing him.

She spills over the bluff and plunges out of sight. Cam won't soon forget HER FACE. Neither should we.

EXT. BELOW BLUFF - DAY

Craggy rocks overhead and a DARK SKY full of weather.

And CAM - peering over the edge. Holy shit.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY (FROM ABOVE)

Cam sits under a tree, assembling SPLINTS out of gauze from his bag and whatever boards he can find in the rubble...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - JO'S LIPS

a slow draw across tender skin from a tube of RED LIPSTICK...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BATHROOM - DAY

Still in Andy's coat, Jo contemplates her reflection. Practices a little - a shy smile, a blush... She's alluring - she sees it, too. She'll be a woman soon.

A KNOCK on the door startles her - Jo the girl resurfaces.

JO
I'm in here.

DIANE (OS)
Can I talk to you?

Jo hesitates. Knee-jerk response - wipe the lips clean? No - instead, she opens the door, wearing that lipstick like a badge of honor. Diane notices - but not this battle, not now.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Your dad should've been back by now. I want you to go up to the neighbor's and radio for help.

JO
Now? In this storm?

DIANE
Now. Tell them about the slide. Have them send someone up there.

JO
But --

DIANE
Now, Jo.

Diane turns away, conversation over - but not for Jo --

JO
You don't like him, do you?

DIANE

What?

JO

Andy.

DIANE

This is about your dad. Let's just get him back in one piece, okay?

Diane heads downstairs. Jo simmers.

CLOSE ON - CAM'S FACE

smiling, for some reason. It's A PHOTOGRAPH. Cam, Beth and Jo in the snow framed in gold - AN ORNAMENT on the tree...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Daylight is waning, the STORM is worsening. Shadows reach up past the TREE standing there like history in the middle of the room, draped with balls and trinkets and TINY WHITE LIGHTS pulsing yellow on the low generator power.

Jo, cocooned for the cold, stares at the tree. At her memories... Then shuffles to the front door.

ANDY emerges from the basement, out of breath for some reason. Spots Jo heading out.

ANDY

Where you going?

JO

To use the neighbor's radio. We were waiting for my dad, but he's been gone too long.

ANDY

You can't see two feet in front of you out there.

JO

It's okay. I know the way.
(calls for the dog)
Rufus! Come on, boy.

Rufus lopes up wagging and Jo reaches for the door. But Andy steps in front of her, BLOCKS the way.

ANDY

I radioed this morning about the slide, before I headed down here. I'm sure they're up there by now.

JO

Oh.

(considers - then)

But what if they miss him? What if he needs help and --

ANDY

What if, what if, what if. Have a little faith, Jo.

Jo isn't convinced. Andy can see that.

ANDY (CONT'D)

This Stepmom's idea? What's she thinking sending you out there on your own? You're just a kid.

This is a trigger for Jo - she stands up to it.

JO

I'm not a kid.

Andy PRESSES HIS THUMB gently to Jo's LOWER LIP, drawing it through the lipstick. She's unnerved - and a little stirred.

Andy checks his thumb. And SUCKS it clean of lipstick.

ANDY

No. Maybe you're right.

DIANE is suddenly between them - shielding Jo.

DIANE

You need to step aside and let her go now.

ANDY

I really can't do that.

Diane raises THE SHOTGUN - pointing it at the ceiling.

DIANE

Let her go.

JO

Oh my God - Diane! Are you crazy?

Andy steps aside.

ANDY

I was only looking out for her.

DIANE

That's not your job.

ANDY

I was going to go so she wouldn't have to.

JO

(to Diane)

You are in serious need of help.

ANDY

Diane, look - apparently I've done something to upset you --

Suddenly, Rufus starts BARKING. He's heard something outside. Andy whips around.

The SOUND of BOOTS THUMPING just outside the front door.

And Andy springs back to the wall - oddly terrified.

DIANE

Thank God! It's Cam.

Diane YANKS the door open.

LOIS

stands on the other side in red plaid flannel, eyes blinking over the top of her scarf. She holds A BOTTLE out to Diane.

LOIS

Merry Christmas!

Diane veils her disappointment as best she can.

AT THE HEARTH

Lois unwraps herself accessory by accessory fireside.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Homegrown cheer in that bottle.
Old family recipe. Can't tell you
the proof, but I can tell you not
to drink it and light a match at
the same time.

A glance at Diane standing there, clutching the shotgun, clutching the bottle, still discomposed by the earlier clash with Andy. Lois warms her hands and holds one out to Diane.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Lois, your one and only neighbor.
I come in peace -
(off shotgun)
- no need for that.

Diane registers the gun still in her grip - god, what is wrong with me? Sets it down and takes Lois' hand.

DIANE

Sorry - Diane. Good to meet you.

LOIS

Likewise. I'm sure glad to see someone has stepped up to take care of my favorite family.

A pat and squeeze to Jo's shoulder.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Known this girl since she was knee-high to a jack rabbit.

Jo smiles, self-conscious, a glimpse in Andy's direction - enough to make Lois turn and see him there at the wall.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Oh. Hullo.

JO

This is Andy. Wait - you two know each other, I guess.

Lois shrugs - puzzled.

JO (CONT'D)

Your neighborly park ranger?

LOIS

You mean Henry?
(shakes her head)
That's not Henry.

Jo looks at Lois, Diane at Jo, and they all look at Andy - no idea what to think.

Until Andy steps forward and takes Lois' hand, a firm shake.

ANDY

Heard a lot about you, Lois. Henry told me to check in on you now and then before he left.

LOIS

Oh? Where'd he go?

ANDY

Spending Christmas with his family. My first week up here - hell of a week, too.

Lois mulls on this for a beat - then buys it.

LOIS

'Bout time. I've been nagging that man to have Christmas dinner with his wife and kids for years!

ANDY

He said they think you're some kind of Santa's helper now for getting him to finally come home.

They both laugh - hitting it off. Jo eases. Diane doesn't.

DIANE

We need you to radio out.

LOIS

Oh?

DIANE

There was a slide at the station. Cam went up there and the walkie-talkies cut out. He should've been back by now.

LOIS

Well, why didn't you say something sooner?

Lois tugs all her accessories back on.

ANDY

You just got here. I'll go.

LOIS

That's thoughtful, but no. The radio's old and finicky, just like me. You gotta tweak us both just-so to keep us operational.

Lois heads for the door. Diane follows.

DIANE

Thank you.

LOIS

What are neighbors for?

At the open door, Lois puts her arm around Diane's shoulder and pulls her close for a hug.

LOIS (CONT'D)
 You're gonna take good care of
 them, I can tell.
 (sotto, re: shotgun)
 That thing loaded?

Diane is thrown for a beat - then --

DIANE
 No...

LOIS
 Well load it and keep it close.
 Henry's a bachelor and a Jew.
 Whoever this guy is, he's lying.

Lois pulls away and smiles back at Andy.

LOIS (CONT'D)
 Save me some of that grog. I'll be
 back down to enjoy it with you all
 in a little bit.
 (to Diane - intent)
 I'll make that call.

And Lois exits. Jo looks at Andy. He's still unhinged.

JO
 Who did you think it was?

ANDY
 What?

JO
 When you heard Lois out there, you
 kind of freaked.

Diane waits for the answer, too.

ANDY
 Just startled me is all.

Andy goes to the fire and pokes the logs with too much force -
 they split, tumble, flames dissipate and dwindle. Only one
 more log in the bin.

ANDY (CONT'D)
 We're out of wood. I'll get more.

Andy goes to the door - grabs THE AXE - and exits.

Jo shivers, sits on the hearth, buries her hands in the
 pockets of Andy's ranger coat.

DIANE

I want you to keep your distance from him.

JO

What does that mean?

DIANE

It means you're right. I don't like him.

JO

He's a federal employee - who you threatened with a shotgun. When they find out, you'll be lucky if they don't put you in jail.

DIANE

I'll take my chances.

JO

So will I.

Diane is fed up - no more mollifying this girl.

DIANE

This is not a game, Jo! I forbid you to go off with that man again.

JO

You forbid me?

No, that won't work. Diane adopts a different approach.

DIANE

Look, I know you're drawn to him. Believe it or not, I've been there myself.

She sits on the hearth beside Jo.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I remember what it felt like to be 14, to have an older guy pay attention to me. I remember how much more exciting he seemed than the boys my own age.

JO

Who was he?

Diane is encouraged - they're talking.

DIANE

He lived on the corner. My dad would pay him to help with odd jobs around the house. If dad wasn't home when he showed up, we'd talk and drink Coke while he waited. I still remember the way he smelled - like metal and cinnamon.

JO

So whatever happened between you?

Diane pulls each word out like a splinter in her flesh --

DIANE

He raped me.

Jo's eyes go wide.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I said "no" and he shoved his bandana in my mouth so no one could hear me scream it. I know Andy makes you feel things you haven't felt before. I know he makes you feel stronger, smarter, prettier just by the way he looks at you. I remember all that, Jo, I do. But, it's just not right for a man his age to take such an interest in a girl your age.

JO

I'm sorry about what happened to you, Diane, I am - but this isn't like that. Andy gets me.

Diane puts her arm around Jo.

DIANE

Oh, I know it feels that way. But, sweetie -
 (looks Jo in the eye)
 - you're wrong.

All that progress disintegrates. Jo goes rigid, shrugs Diane's arm off, the look she gives her firm and unforgiving.

JO

Feelings are never wrong, remember?

Diane is angry. Gets to her feet, steps away, turns back.

DIANE

Listen to me - you think you know
it all, but you're not even close!

JO

And you're not my mother. Not even
close.

SMACK! - Diane SLAPS Jo across the face.

As ANDY ENTERS - covered in snow, sling bulging with wood.

He DROPS the wood and flies at Diane, SHOVES her away from Jo
with so much force, she stumbles and BANGS HER LIP.

ANDY

You don't lay a hand on her!

Diane is stunned. So is Jo. But Jo is also just a little
bit enchanted - Andy is her knight in shining armor.

JO

Andy - it's okay...

ANDY

No. It's not. She's got no right.

JO

I'm fine. It was nothing.

But Diane isn't fine. She dabs at her lip - BLEEDING.

ANDY

I apologize for the shove, Diane.
But you had it coming.

He offers Diane the BANDANA from his pocket. She wouldn't
touch it with a ten-foot pole.

Diane picks up the shotgun and looks at Jo - uncompromising.

DIANE

I'm here. I'm watching.

Diane moves into the kitchen, just out of earshot,
maintaining a clear view of Jo.

Andy collects the scattered logs and pitches a few into the
fire. Jo watches him tense up again, notices BLOOD sprayed
on his sweater, just a little.

JO

Your nose bleeding again?

Andy quickly wipes at his nose. No blood there, but --

ANDY

Yeah. Guess so.

Jo buries her hands in the pockets of the borrowed coat - and suddenly JERKS BACK.

JO

Ow!

Something pricked her. She pulls it out.

A PIN - a National Park Service NAME BADGE: "HENRY AZAROFF".

Jo stares at it. Confused...

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

CAM shambles down the dark mountain on MAKESHIFT CRUTCHES, every nudge forward on his shattered legs agonizing. The FLASHLIGHT swings from his neck sending SHADOWS to play in the bare branches overhead. He's looking for something in his path...

Spots it - a faint RED GLOW under the snow.

Cam braces himself on one crutch and uses the other to dig up the WALKIE TALKIE. The red light flickers. Batteries dying.

He tries to bend to pick it up, but his legs refuse. So he THROWS himself to the snow, stabbing pain. Grabs the radio.

CAM

Diane? Jo! Can you hear me?

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Diane is dabbing her lip with a kitchen towel when she hears it -- CAM'S VOICE, very faint, from behind the PANTRY DOOR.

She glances at Jo and Andy by the fire - they didn't hear it - and she slips quickly into the pantry...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - NIGHT

Diane closes the door behind her and seizes the SPUTTERING walkie-talkie from the shelf where she left it.

DIANE

Cam! Thank God you're all right!

STATIC - and just the hint of Cam's VOICE.

CAM'S VOICE (OS)
 (through the radio)
 Diane? Jo?

DIANE
 It's Diane. I'm here!

CAM'S VOICE (OS)
 ...get help... in danger...

DIANE
 You're breaking up.

CAM'S VOICE (OS)
 If you can hear me...

DIANE
 I can hear you. I'm here!
 (her heart sinks)
 But, you can't hear me...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Jo holds the pin out to Andy.

JO
 Why do you have Henry's name badge?

Andy - damage control.

ANDY
 Can I trust you?

Jo's nod is so slight, we barely catch it.

Andy gently takes the name badge from Jo and slips his hand into the pocket of the coat, burying it there, returning the pin to where Jo found it. His hand lingers in her pocket. Leaning very CLOSE. His lips at her ear.

ANDY (CONT'D)
 I'm not the ranger.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Cam hears only STATIC through his end of the radio. SHOUTS.

CAM
 If you can hear me - get up to
 Lois's place and have her radio the
 police. Tell them there are two
 people dead at the station.
 (MORE)

CAM (CONT'D)

It wasn't the avalanche that killed them. Do you read me? They were murdered!

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Jo's lip trembles. Andy slips his hand out of the pocket - the withdrawal almost sexual.

Jo's eyes meet his and hold.

ANDY

I'm in trouble. Someone's after me. Someone very angry. He won't stop 'til I'm dead. Or he is.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - NIGHT

Diane clutches the radio, listening intently through the STATIC, trying to make sense of Cam's garbled words.

CAM'S VOICE (OS)

(through radio)

Lois... police... dead...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Jo's eyes are wide as she listens to Andy.

ANDY

Some people don't want other people to be happy, Jo, and they'll do whatever they can to see to it that we're all as miserable as they are.

JO

How do you know he's out there?

ANDY

He showed up at the station and...
(can't say it, instead --)
He's a very violent man.

It sinks in for Jo.

JO

Henry didn't go home for Christmas, did he?

Andy shakes his head "no", lays his finger across Jo's lips.

ANDY

Better if we keep this between us.
Stepmom would be pretty upset.

Jo agrees, nods - and it all comes together.

JO

That's what you meant when you said my dad had to be careful. And me, going out there...

ANDY

I won't lie to you, Jo - the guy's a loaded pistol with an itchy trigger. He's out there somewhere.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

The red light FLICKERS out to nothing. Batteries are dead.

CAM

I'll be there soon. I promise...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - NIGHT

Diane whispers into the radio.

DIANE

Cam?

The response is only STATIC.

Diane looks at THE SHOTGUN leaning there against the shelf. Deliberates - but not for long. All bets are off now.

She climbs up on the STEP-LADDER, clutching the shotgun in one hand, desperately POKING around in the dark between boxes and cans with the other, looking for something... Finds it.

THE CARTRIDGES

She grabs them - and the FULL BOX nearby. Climbs off the step-ladder, fumbles with the cartridges, the gun - doesn't have the first clue how to load it. Frantic. The box SLIPS from her hand and cartridges CLATTER to the floor...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Andy and Jo look up at the OS SOUND. Andy speaks a little faster, a little more will to his words.

ANDY

Where's a good place to hide in this house?

JO

What?

ANDY
Someplace no one would ever find
you. Think now, Jo. Think!

Andy's intensity is too much pressure for Jo. She's scared.

JO
I don't know!

Andy moves away, frustrated. Tries to shake it off.

ANDY
Then we've got no choice. We gotta
get him before he gets us.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - CATWALK - NIGHT

Andy leads Jo down the corridor toward THE MASTER BEDROOM...

ANDY
I saw the big windows up here from
a mile away, they've got a good
view of the valley. You sit up
here and watch. You let me know if
you see him coming.

For a beat, Jo just stands there at the threshold.

JO'S POV - MASTER BEDROOM

The WHITE GLOW from Jo's kerosene lantern blasts the walls
and beams, the bed - confronting her in the enormous dark
windows with its REFLECTION, and her own, like an apparition.

All her will - and at last, Jo steps forward into the room.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo moves to the windows, the LIGHT from her lantern swinging
like a swollen firefly. Her silhouette in the REFLECTION -
and Andy's in the doorway behind her.

ANDY (CONT'D)
You yell out if you see him.

Andy lingers a beat longer - then leaves.

JO'S HAND draws across the bed's footboard. Her fingers move
over the textured comforter... She sets down the lantern and
sits on the bed.

She looks OUT THE WINDOW.

JO'S VISION IN THE REFLECTION - BETH

lying there in bed, little life left - just enough to turn and look at her daughter. Jo's hand moves ever so slightly toward her mother - her fingers creeping nearer to Beth's...

She turns from the window, looks at the bed - empty.

Jo wraps herself in the blanket from the foot of the bed and slides to the floor, dwarfed by the massive windows. Inserts her earbuds, turns on the IPOD. Her face to the glass. Watching. Waiting.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Clothes, books, stuffed animals FLYING out of the closet and littering the room as Andy rummages through to THE WALL at the back. Lays his palm against the boards, moves it slowly one way then the other, feeling for something.

A SHADOW over his shoulder and Andy whirls around, startled - confronted by the nose of the SHOTGUN Diane aims at his back.

DIANE

This time, it's loaded.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo's face at the window - breath FOGGING the glass. Darkness beyond the cascade of SNOWFLAKES. Rufus lies nearby. Jo pets him, sees a STACK OF DIANE'S BOOKS next to the bed, the one second from the top. Jo reads the title --

"What to Expect When You're Expecting"

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andy stumbles over the clutter at his feet as he moves out of the closet at gunpoint.

ANDY

Look, Diane - we definitely got off on the wrong foot.

DIANE

Just step on out of the room.

ANDY

You've got it all wrong. If I were the guy you think I am, you wouldn't be the one holding the gun.

DIANE

I said out!

Andy does as he's told. Diane backs up to give him room.

ON THE CATWALK,

Diane guides Andy with the shotgun.

DIANE

Downstairs.

He notices - HER HANDS ARE TREMBLING.

ANDY

That gun goes against your nature,
Diane. You're not the type.

DIANE

You don't know the first thing
about what type I am.

ANDY

So let's talk. Tell me about it.

DIANE

I'm all talked out.

They move past the MASTER BEDROOM. Jo - immersed in her iPod
and Diane's book - doesn't see them.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Diane and Andy descend the stairs.

DIANE

Get in the basement.

ANDY

I'll freeze down there.

DIANE

Plenty of blankets. Go!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo puts the book back and rests her arms on the window sill.
Peers outside, still listening to her iPod. Can't hear a
thing going on downstairs...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Andy eases toward the basement door - Diane right behind him.

ANDY

Diane look - I'm sorry I lost my
temper earlier.

DIANE
So am I. Move!

Then Andy just STOPS. Stands there in front of the basement door. His hands come down.

ANDY
Thing is --
(turns to Diane)
I'm pretty sure I'm not in any
danger here.

Diane swallows hard, keeps the shotgun aimed.

DIANE
Keep moving.

ANDY
You could never do it.

Diane's shaking hands, trembling lips - can't hide it. She's terrified.

Very slowly, carefully, Andy reaches for THE NOSE of the shotgun, wraps his fingers around it - and gently pulls it to his stomach. PRESSES it against his own flesh.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Moment of truth.

Perspiration on Andy's upper lip - not entirely convinced...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

THE WINDOW in front of Jo's face suddenly QUIVERS with the impact of something somewhere else in the house. She doesn't hear it, but FEELS it - right through the wood of the sill.

RUFUS sits up - on the alert. Jo tugs out her earbuds - what was that? Only silence now. She gets to her feet guardedly.

OS SOUND of FOOTSTEPS coming up the stairs...

JO
Diane?

Rufus WHINES and quivers, the dog's stare fixed on the open bedroom door. Jo slips her fingers around his collar. HOLDS on tight. The OS approach continues, floorboards CREAK.

Jo pulls Rufus close, HIDES behind the bed.

REFLECTION IN WINDOW - A SHADOW

moves into the doorway...

Jo grips the dog by his fur - too hard. Rufus YELPS. Jo looks up -- and finally breathes.

JO (CONT'D)
I didn't know it was you.

ANDY

stands in the doorway.

ANDY
Didn't mean to scare you.

Andy moves to the window, looks out. He's different. More intense. Whole body tight enough to snap. Jo notices. Climbs up to sit on the bed.

JO
I thought maybe that guy got in.

ANDY
Well then that would mean you
hadn't done your job, wouldn't it?

Jo pets Rufus. Pause. Then --

JO
What happened downstairs? The
windows shook.

ANDY
Must've been the door slamming when
Diane left.

JO
She left?

ANDY
Went up to see if the old lady got
through on the radio.

Jo stops petting the dog, grappling with this new information. Andy turns from the window to look at her.

ANDY (CONT'D)
I'll look after you.

Sits beside her.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Listen, people turn their backs on us all the time in this world. The ones who are supposed to be there, the ones we need the most - they always let us down. I've been there.

He draws his hand to Jo's face, gently cradles her cheek.

ANDY (CONT'D)

But, I won't leave you, Jo.

Jo leans into his palm. Eyes lift to his. Her face all innocence, fear - and desire.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Would it be okay - if I kissed you?

Jo can barely breathe, let alone form words - but, she does. Just one --

JO

Yes.

Andy leans forward -- and KISSES Jo, his lips just brushing against hers. Tender, the kind of kiss a girl never forgets.

But Jo is the one to break away. Flushed.

ANDY

What's the matter?

JO

I just - what if someone walks in?

Andy's fingers thread through Jo's - pressing her hand down on the bed. Holding her there.

ANDY

I'm the only one here for you.

Andy's other hand strokes down Jo's hair, following the curve of her shoulder, her collarbone...

JO

We probably shouldn't.

ANDY

Shouldn't what?

JO

You know...

ANDY

Maybe I do, maybe I don't. Maybe
you should say it just to be sure.

Jo is uncomfortable, her eyes dart away from Andy. He notices.

ANDY (CONT'D)

You're not gonna tease me now - are
you, Josephine?

Andy leans in close, grazing Jo's neck with his lips, WHISPERS something inaudible in her ear. She's not ready for this, turns away...

OUT THE WINDOW - A LIGHT IN THE VALLEY

moving closer. The DISTANT SOUND of a whining engine. A SNOWMOBILE headed this way.

JO

My Dad!

Andy turns, sees the light. And suddenly, aggressively, PUSHES away and bolts out of the room. Jo is confused.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Against the biting pain, Cam pulls himself to his feet with the help of his makeshift crutches. Hobbles forward, battling the wind and the dark... Peers ahead. And stops dead in his tracks.

THE CROOKED TREE

The snow has been dug out - SKIDOO TRACKS into the veiled distance... Someone has stolen his snowmobile.

CUT TO:

JO'S POV - MOUNTAIN VALLEY

The SKIDOO LIGHT stops moving. Switches off. Darkness.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Andy throws on a coat and grabs the shotgun. Jo stands at the base of the stairs.

JO

It's not my dad, is it?

ANDY

No.

JO
What are you gonna do?

ANDY
I'll tell you what I'm not gonna do. I'm not gonna let this bastard rob me of the only chance I've ever had for a life worth something.

Rufus SCRATCHES at the basement door - WHINING, agitated.

Andy KICKS the dog away.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Knock it off!

Rufus YELPS. Jo reaches for the dog, but he cowers.

JO
What did you do that for?

ANDY
Couldn't hear myself think.
(off Jo's pained expression)
The dog is fine. It's me you should be worrying about.

Andy moves forward, grabs Jo's arm.

ANDY (CONT'D)
I need to know you're with me, Josephine. Can I count on you?

It's not immediate - but a beat later, Jo NODS.

Satisfied, Andy turns for the kitchen and Jo goes to the bin beside the front door - but what she's looking for isn't here.

JO
Where is it?

Andy turns.

ANDY
What?

JO
The axe.

Andy's anger tightens his face - eruption just below the surface. He fights to keep it in check.

ANDY

What do you need the axe for?

JO

In case he gets in.

ANDY

He's not getting in, Josephine.

Andy storms to the back door.

JO

Andy...

He stops, doesn't turn this time. It's all he can do to hold it together. His back is to Jo.

JO (CONT'D)

I'm scared.

Andy hesitates - then pulls open the back door and exits in a flurry of wind and snow.

Jo spots the FIREPLACE POKER and snatches it up. Rufus WHIMPERS his way into lying down. Jo creeps to the window by the front door and crouches just out of sight, gripping the poker with white knuckles. And waits.

Rufus HEARS something. Sits up. GROWLS at the window. Jo follows the dog's gaze.

OUT THE WINDOW - A MAN'S SHADOW

cast in the BLUE LIGHT from the generator shed, moving over the snow out front. The man's shadow changes directions - SWELLS LARGER - and disappears around the side of the house.

Jo scrunches up as small as she can and peers across the room, watching as the man steals past one window. Then another... He's circling the house, nearing the front door.

Jo leaps up, PINS herself against the door, raises the poker. The DOORKNOB RATTLES. He's trying to get in. Jo holds her breath - trembling, terrified.

And the rattle STOPS. All is still.

Jo cranes around to look outside.

JO'S POV - OUT THE WINDOW

Battling the wind, THE MAN - BEARDED, half-frozen, clothes covered in snow and ice - slithers off the porch and moves behind a tree, fixed on something off-screen. He reaches inside his coat - and pulls out A HAND-GUN...

POW!

Jo jumps back, startled.

JO'S POV - OUT THE WINDOW

The man falls forward onto the snow.

ON JO - ashen.

She finds her breath, hesitates - then carefully unlocks the door and opens it. Peers into the whipping snow - is he dead?

Rufus bounds from the house, charging at the man's body, BARKING. Jo can't wrap her mouth around the words to call the dog. She CLUTCHES the door frame, the poker, staring.

JO'S POV - ANDY

as he emerges like an illusion through the shroud of blowing snow, smoking shotgun slung over his shoulder. As he leans over the man, as he picks up the hand-gun - and FIRES twice more at close range. Definitely dead. CLICK! Out of ammo.

And Andy chucks the hand-gun. No use to anyone now.

He moves up onto the porch, bangs the snow off his boots and heads inside. STOPS in the doorway. Takes Jo's face in his hands. Another KISS - this one hard and fast and triumphant.

And he walks into the house.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - NIGHT

RUFUS frantically circles the body. Approaches, tentative. And begins to LICK AT THE BLOOD on the man's back...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Jo is mortified, steps out, waves the poker at the dog.

JO

Rufus! No!

But Rufus pays no mind.

JO (CONT'D)
Rufus! Stop it!

Still, the dog licks...

Jo turns to look behind her, back into the house.

JO'S POV - ANDY IN THE KITCHEN

opening LOIS' BOTTLE OF HOOCH - pouring himself a drink.

ANDY
(his best Bing Crosby)
"But baby, it's cold outside!"

JO
You're just going to leave him?

ANDY
Come inside and shut the door,
Josephine.

Jo turns back to look at Rufus cleaning the man up - she can't bear it. She steps down off the porch.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - NIGHT

Pelted by SNOW and WIND, Jo approaches Rufus.

JO
Rufus!

She reaches for the dog, but he DARTS away and runs inside. Her eyes lock on the dead man's coat. Something spills from the pocket, something ROUND AND SHINY.

Jo nudges it closer with the toe of her boot. Picks it up.

A BADGE.

The man is a U.S. MARSHAL. Was.

ANDY'S VOICE (OS)
Josephine?

Jo turns to see Andy standing in the open doorway. Reality hits her hard - crashes into her like a Mack truck. The badge falls to the snow.

ANDY
You should come in now.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Jo stands in the middle of the room SHIVERING. Andy pours another drink and holds the glass out to Jo.

ANDY

Have some. I won't tell your folks.

Jo doesn't take the glass.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Death is just part of the cycle. You of all people should know that.

Jo finds her voice.

JO

He was a U.S. Marshal.

ANDY

Point being?

Rufus is sniffing at the basement door again.

JO

You said --

ANDY

(cutting her off)

What? What did I say? Did I lie? Did I tell you he wasn't? I said I was in trouble. I said someone's after me. I said he was angry. All true.

Rufus CLAWS at the basement door. Jo looks at the dog, at the door - what's he after?

ANDY (CONT'D)

Josephine?

Jo looks back at Andy.

ANDY (CONT'D)

You said I could count on you. Was that a lie?

Andy steps forward - and Jo steps back. SHUDDERS.

And the change in Andy is like a kick to the gut - sudden and sickening. In the next beat, he's removed. Mechanical.

ANDY (CONT'D)
You're cold. I'll get more wood.

JO
I'll go.

Too quick, too much intention. Andy steps in front of Jo.

ANDY
No. I'll go. And when I get back,
we'll have ourselves a little talk.

Jo watches Andy head out. Watches the front door close.
Stands there - what the hell does she do now?

Rufus is BARKING now at the basement door. Frantic, panting,
worked up with worry. Jo watches him - DREAD grips her and
won't let go. What's behind that door?

She approaches the BASEMENT DOOR. Rufus WHINES as she places
her hand on the knob. The dog can barely contain himself.

Jo unlocks the door, opens it - and Rufus charges down the
stairs into the dark basement.

The SOUND of someone GASPING in pain...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BASEMENT DEN - NIGHT

Jo grabs at the FLASHLIGHT hanging on a peg just inside the
door, switches it on - barely works. Yellow stuttering light
leads her DOWN THE STAIRS.

JO
Rufus...?

A WHISPER (OS)
(very faint)
Jo...

Jo stops on the stairs. Throws the light into every corner.

The room has been turned INSIDE OUT.

Every cupboard and closet door hangs open, its contents
SPILT, scattered and tossed about with abandon. Shelves have
been cleared, a topple of books and collectibles on the
floor. Trunks have been flung open and pillaged. The
cushions on the sofa are all overturned.

Finally, Jo's flashlight finds Rufus. He's wagging, licking
at something - someone - on the floor... DIANE.

Jo scrambles down the stairs to Diane. Sinks to her knees. Can't fathom what she's seeing - Diane's BRUISED AND SWOLLEN face, the terror in her eyes. Freezing, teeth chattering.

JO
What happened...?

Diane grips Jo's arm as she helps her to the sofa.

DIANE
Where is he?

JO
What?

DIANE
Andy - where is he right now!

JO
Outside.

DIANE
Get help. Run to Lois before he comes back in.

JO
What are you saying - Andy did this to you?

DIANE
He's looking for something and we're in his way. Go before it's too late.

Jo starts to move away, but Diane is still holding her.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Your dad - he's okay, Jo. He called again. He'll be here soon.
(then --)
Now go.

Jo stumbles back, DROPS the flashlight, fumbles to pick it up and the LIGHT SWINGS to the WINDOW --

ANDY

peers in from outside at the wood-pile, watching them.

Jo SCREAMS.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Go!

Jo BOLTS for the stairs, but stops - looks back at Diane.

DIANE (CONT'D)

GO!

Jo launches up and out of the basement.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Jo darts for the front door - just as Andy enters - blocking her way out.

ANDY

Time for that talk.

Jo turns and sprints for the kitchen. Andy dashes after her, his hands snatching and missing. Jo flies across the kitchen, TRIPS on the loose SHOTGUN SHELLS spilled outside the pantry door. She falls - scrambles to get up...

Andy throws himself at Jo - GRABS her ankle.

Pulls her down again.

Jo lashes out with her foot...

THWACK! Kicks Andy in the mouth, wrenching her ankle free.

She gets up, leaps for the back door. It's locked.

Fumbles with the bolt - yanks the door open.

Andy's hands grab for her...

RIP! He tears a pocket off her coat.

And Jo is out the door, RUNNING...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - NIGHT

KNEE-DEEP SNOW - adrenaline propels Jo forward. Wind sheers snow sideways, blurring her path. She can't see more than a few feet ahead. She looks back.

ANDY - braced in the door frame.

ANDY

Thought you liked me, Josephine.

Jo pushes on. Yanks up her hood, shields her mouth and nose from the freeze. Holds those tears at bay.

BEHIND HER - the glow of the house dissolves into the storm's dark slur.

AHEAD - SOMETHING PROTRUDING from the snow...

THE AXE HANDLE

Jo wants it. Moves faster. Trudges up and grasps the handle. It won't budge. Uses both hands. TUGS.

She lurches back and falls.

She SCREAMS.

LOIS' RED PLAID FLANNEL COAT

yanked up from beneath a layer of new snow. The axe - embedded in the flannel - buried in THE OLD WOMAN'S BACK.

Lois is DEAD.

ANDY'S VOICE (OS)

Josephine...

And Jo is on her feet, boots SLAMMING into the snow, RUNNING.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Trees bow in the wind, branches WHIP and SNAP. Bitter cold. Every lunge forward takes more and more out of Jo. She's exhausted. Ice has begun to form on her eyelashes.

She peers into the fierce wind ahead. Can't see a thing. Her legs fail her. She can't go on. Falls.

And there in front of her - THE TOP OF THE SPLIT-RAIL FENCE. She knows where she is now. She's close.

Very faint in the distance behind -- ANDY'S VOICE CALLING...

Jo rallies everything she's got left and gets up. Hoists herself over the fence. Treads up the hill...

A PORCH LIGHT

stuttering through the whipping snow and ice...

EXT. LOIS' CABIN - NIGHT

Jo plunges to the front porch. She's made it. A beat to catch her breath. She barrels up the steps to the front door and throws it open.

INT. LOIS' CABIN - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Jo shoves her weight into the wind and closes the door. Her hand slams at the BOLT, locking it.

She slaps at the light-switch. The bulb in the ceiling fixture sizzles out a DULL, THROBBING GLOW. Generator's low here, too.

Jo takes in the murky room around her. A LOFT overhead. A few EMBERS blushing in the wood-stove. CLUTTER in all directions - books, stacked furniture, photographs, keepsakes, animal carcasses STUFFED and MOUNTED, things that will never be used and things that were used up long ago.

And then Jo sees it - THE RADIO.

A dinosaur machine - massive and covered in switches. The desk where it sits is piled high with newspapers and photos and maps. Jo SWIPES her arm through it all to make way, seizing up the RECEIVER MIC and flipping switches.

JO
(into mic)
Hello? Anybody out there? Please,
I need help! Come in!

STATIC splutters. Jo throws more switches.

JO (CONT'D)
(into mic)
Come in! Come in! I'm about forty
miles north of Severton on the west
border of the Sappatch Wilderness --

The SOUND of BOOTS THUMPING on the porch. Jo whips around.

THE DOORKNOB turns, rattles. The bolt holds.

ANDY'S FACE in the window - swollen where Jo kicked him.

ANDY
(muffled through the
glass)
Let me in, Josephine. I just wanna
talk to you.

JO
(into mic)
Help me. Please.

Andy's rage is palpable. He ducks away for a beat and then --

CRASH! A hunk of firewood SMASHES through the window.

GLASS SHATTERS and flies in all directions. SHARDS launch toward Jo. She turns away - but, too late. A CHUNK OF GLASS pierces through the coat she's wearing (still the ranger's) and EMBEDS itself in her arm. She DROPS the radio mic, CRIES OUT in pain and grabs at her arm.

WIND tosses Lois' clutter around like anger.

Andy CRANES his arm inside, reaches for the door, urgently sweeping his hand up and down for THE BOLT. Just REACHES it. Shreds of glass in the window frame snag his sleeve. HIS FINGERS work the bolt.

CLICK! He's got it.

Jo YANKS out the glass shard from her arm.

Looks up just in time to see Andy throw the door open.

She lunges for the LADDER to the loft and clambers up.

Andy is on Jo, grabbing at her from behind. Jo kicks, her boot CRUSHING again into Andy's face. He staggers, then claws at her, YANKS her down a rung. They grapple, snatching and flinging arms.

Andy latches hold of the ranger's coat and jerks. Jo claws her way up the ladder and twists, coming out of the coat as Andy TUGS, pulling it inside-out. Jo RIPS her arms out of the sleeves and as Andy falls back on the floor, still clinging to the coat --

THE CELL-PHONE

is expelled from the breast pocket and slides into a corner. We notice, but they don't.

Jo scales the last few rungs and hurls herself to the loft.

LOFT

More of the same CLUTTER. Everywhere. Jo desperately scans her immediate vicinity, looking for something - and spots AN OLD PITCHFORK. That'll do. Seizes it.

MAIN ROOM

Andy gets up, grabs for the ladder and propels himself up.

WHOOSH! The pitchfork zings past his ear.

Jo waves her weapon with abandon - but, the pitchfork is unwieldy and the injury to her arm zaps her strength.

Andy clings to the ladder with one hand and snatches out with the other, trying to snag the rusted tines as they whip within inches of his head. His fingers LATCH ON.

The radio SPITS AND HISSES. And then --

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
 (through the radio)
 I copy you, Sappatch Wilderness.
 This is Iron Eagle. Come in.

Andy spins to look at the radio. Jo sees her chance and takes it. One hard JAB, FLINGING Andy off the ladder.

The pitchfork GRAZES his cheek as he careens back into a tower of Lois' amassed hoard. Books tumble, vases smash, stiff and dusty animal carcasses plummet all around him.

JO'S POV - FROM THE LOFT

Andy prostrate, unmoving, in the pile of junk on the floor.

MAN'S VOICE (OS) (CONT'D)
 (through the radio)
 Sappatch Wilderness, do you copy?
 Did I hear you right? You need
 help? Over.

JO'S POV - THE RADIO MIC

Can she make it?

No time to deliberate. Jo swings her legs back onto the ladder and begins her descent, one eye on Andy. Her boots are cumbersome, hard to maneuver on the narrow rungs. Her arm is useless. She SLIPS. Catches herself. Halfway there.

MAIN ROOM

ANDY moves.

Jo stops. Holds her breath.

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
 (through the radio)
 Sappatch Wilderness, do you read
 me? What is your exact location?
 Over.

Andy touches his cheek - blood on his fingers. Sits up, shakes it off. And notices Jo perched there above him.

Jo bolts back up the ladder --

LOFT

-- and scrabbles to pick up the pitchfork again, aiming it at Andy like it's loaded.

MAIN ROOM

Andy pulls himself to his feet. Struggles to stand.

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
(through the radio)
I repeat, what is your exact
location? Over.

Andy staggers through the debris to the desk.

JO WATCHES over the edge of the loft as Andy wrenches up the radio mic and YANKS. THE WIRES jerk free.

MAN'S VOICE (OS) (CONT'D)
(through the radio)
Sappatch Wilderness, come in!

And Andy grasps the radio with both hands, heaves it up off the desk - and HURLS it across the room. The metal box strikes the iron stove and BLASTS APART into a scatter of irreparable parts.

Jo's hope disintegrates.

Andy turns and looks up at her.

ANDY
You let me down, Josephine.

Andy leans down to collect the ranger coat. And stops. A PHOTOGRAPH on the floor in a crushed frame draws him. He picks it up. Gazes.

ON PHOTO - A YOUNG WOMAN smiling, sitting on Gunther.

We might recognize her...

ANDY (CONT'D)
Where you gonna go?

Andy stands the photo in its broken frame on the desk. And heads for the front door.

As he passes the loft, he abruptly KICKS THE LADDER AWAY. It clatters against the wall and slides to the floor, Jo's only way down.

Andy stops at the door, stands there a beat, his back to Jo.

Without a word, he SLAMS HIS FIST into the wall.

And exits.

LOFT

Jo crumples in despair, SHIVERS without a coat. Pushes back against the wall in the dark favoring her cut arm, tucks in her knees, and cradles herself. Just a frightened kid.

AN ELECTRONIC PINGING...

Jo doesn't hear it at first - until she does. She slowly looks up. Sits up. Peers around. Follows the sound.

JO'S POV - THE CELL PHONE

down in the corner of the room amongst all that clutter.

Jo crawls from one end of the loft to the other, looking for a way down. A ten-foot drop, too far to jump. The top of A RICKETY BOOKCASE swollen with junk is her only option.

On her stomach, Jo worms her way back, legs dangling over the edge, heavy snow boots threatening to pull her over. Her foot jabs in search of the top shelf. Contact. The bookcase JOSTLES. A ceramic horse shimmies off a shelf and SMASHES on the floor.

Jo works her way down from one sagging shelf to the next - but the bookcase is precarious. It LEANS with her weight. TIPS too far. No stopping it - the thing is coming down.

Jo LEAPS off to the side as all those bloated shelves PITCH down and explode in a mess on the floor.

She lands hard. It takes a beat to find her breath. She staggers to the corner and snatches up the cell-phone.

CELL-PHONE - CLOSE ON PHONE SCREEN

PING - "Low Battery".

Jo frantically punches in "911"... Still NO SIGNAL.

JO

No! Please! Please!

ON PHONE SCREEN-SAVER

a blurred VIDEO STILL of a YOUNG WOMAN'S FACE.

Jo is compelled - what is this? She selects "PLAY"...

ON SCREEN - the woman's face suddenly snaps to life, though we can't make out the details. By the way the video swings around the room, we know she's the one holding the phone.

WOMAN (OS)
 You can't manhandle him like this!
 That's excessive force!

U.S. MARSHAL'S FACE - THE BEARDED MAN

aggravated, moving past the camera and shoving Andy into a chair. They've recently come in from outside - snow on their clothes. Andy has been roughed up.

In background - the interior of the RANGER STATION, intact.

U.S. MARSHAL
 Ma'am, I'd advise you to keep your distance. This man is a fugitive. If you continue to interfere with his arrest, I'll arrest you, too.

The Marshal attempts to slap hand-cuffs on Andy, but Andy resists. The Marshal STRIKES him, chugging his fist into Andy's nose. Hard. Andy's NOSE BLEEDS.

WOMAN (OS)
 I'm getting this. All of it.
 We'll sue your ass!

A man approaches from behind the Marshal to help - RANGER HENRY - we know him, the dead man on the floor.

The Marshal tosses Ranger Henry a second pair of hand-cuffs.

U.S. MARSHAL
 Cuff her, too.

Ranger Henry, out of his element and rattled, approaches the camera. A brief SCUFFLE - and the video plummets end over end until coming to a JARRING STOP on the floor.

It's still recording...

LOOKING UP NOW - pixelized, the picture murky, strange and incomplete angles - bodies hurl past, GRUNTS, SOUNDS of flesh being pummeled, the woman SCREAMING and --

THUD!

A beat later - Andy moves past, dragging the badly-beaten and UNCONSCIOUS Marshal.

The OS SOUND of a door slamming shut.

Movement just off-screen - injured Ranger Henry stumbles into frame, reaching for A KNIFE in the sheath on his belt, moving for THE RADIO. Just as his hand grips the mic --

-- Andy explodes into frame, SHOVING him off-screen. The radio mic dangles... THWACK! off-screen. Then silence.

ABOVE US NOW - the woman's legs, her arms gripped around her waist. Stunned.

WOMAN'S VOICE (OS)
Oh my God... You killed him?

ANDY
He was gonna radio out, baby. I had no choice. I'm not going back to prison.

Andy rakes a hand through his hair - and without warning, flies at the woman. FIERCE. Not just angry - ENRAGED.

ANDY (CONT'D)
You said they wouldn't be there! You said they never come up to that house anymore. That's what you said!

WOMAN (OS)
Don't yell.

ANDY
How hard could it be to hide it? Ten-thousand acres of wilderness out here and you plant it in a goddamn house full of people!

WOMAN (OS)
Don't yell!

ANDY
Just tell me where you hid it!

WOMAN (OS)
You're hurting me!

CRACK! - THE WOMAN'S FACE

as she slams against the wood floor planks right in front of us. Now we know her. The dead woman at the station. The woman on the horse in the photo --

JO
Maya...?

MAYA's head bleeds. She gasps, can't catch her breath. Her hand appears in frame, moves to her neck, MARKS FROM ANDY'S FINGERS are starting to bruise. And slipping from her hand --

THE SKELETON KEY

with the pink beaded tassel...

A DEEP RUMBLING - the video VIBRATES. Things tumble from the walls, off the table, slide across the floor, the ceiling splits -- AVALANCHE...

And the video abruptly CUTS OUT. Battery's dead.

Jo digests all she's just seen.

She looks at the PHOTO OF MAYA riding Gunther... And something brews, her hopelessness melting into a new resolve. We see it on her face. She has an idea. A good one.

And she's up and on her feet. Scrambles through the rubble, snatches one of Lois' coats at the door - and exits.

EXT. LOIS' CABIN - NIGHT

Jo forges her way through the storm to the BARN...

INT. LOIS' BARN - NIGHT

Gunther dozes in his stall. Looks up at the sound of someone approaching - Jo. A WHINNY of recognition...

EXT. LOIS' BARN - NIGHT

The gargantuan horse BURSTS from the barn with Jo clinging to his back. Each thrust forward through the deep snow is an effort, but this horse is powerful and willing.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Jo rides Gunther through the tangle of winter trees, down hill, cleaving to him for dear life. His sheer size makes it hard to stay on. Jo slips, rights herself, clings. Brutal wind and snow buffets her face.

JO'S POV - MOUNTAIN CHALET

up ahead, glowing dim through the murk.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - NIGHT

Jo rides Gunther past the house, not intending to stop.

The SOUND of Rufus' distressed BARKING from inside.

Jo looks back.

JO'S POV - BIG WINDOWS THROUGH THE TREES

IN THE GREAT ROOM, Andy SHOVES Diane into a chair.

Jo yanks back on Gunther's reins.

JO

Whoa!

The horse reluctantly comes to a halt, antsy to keep going.

JO'S POV - BIG WINDOWS

Diane wavers to her feet, but Andy shoves her down again. Rufus is going crazy.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Andy whips off his BELT and wraps it around Diane's arms, securing her to the chair, CINCHES it tight.

ANDY

I want you where I can see you.

Rufus suddenly charges forward and SNAPS at Andy, GRAZING him with his teeth. A warning.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Ouch! Son of a bitch!

Andy reaches for the shotgun --

DIANE

Andy, no! Please!

Andy is affected - an ounce of decency? Reconsiders. Grabs Rufus by the collar and drags him SNARLING across the floor, TOSSES him into the basement den and SLAMS the door closed.

All is quiet.

Until Andy starts violently RANSACKING the room. SWEEPING his arm across tables, launching lamps into mid-air, RIPPING open boxes and drawers.

ANDY

Where the hell did she hide it!

DIANE

Tell me what you're looking for.

ANDY

You'd like that, wouldn't you? So
you could hoard it for yourself.
You're all liars and snakes!

DIANE

Andy, I've never lied to you.

He SURGES at Diane, KICKS her chair over. Her arms are bound,
she can't break her fall. Her face SMACKS hard on the floor.

ANDY

Shut up! Just shut up!

Andy KICKS the chair again and again, each thrust of his boot
like a sledgehammer to Diane's spine. She can't breathe.

JO'S VOICE (OS)

STOP!

Andy turns, startled out of his rage.

JO stands there behind him, half-frozen and wild-eyed.

ANDY

Well, look who couldn't live
without me after all.

Diane clutches her belly and SOBS.

Andy advances on Jo. Jo holds her ground.

JO

I know what you're looking for.

And she tosses Andy his CELL-PHONE.

Andy grabs at his sweater, suddenly remembering, patting
himself down, searching - but of course, it's not there...

And Jo notices BLOOD blushing through DIANE'S jeans.

JO (CONT'D)

(to Andy)

I'll help you find it. But you
have to let me help her first.

Andy follows Jo's gaze to the blood...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Jo helps her stepmother up the stairs, a lantern on one arm,
Diane on the other. Diane is in pain, doubled-over, clutching
her stomach, leaving SPOTS OF BLOOD on the wood underfoot.

Andy stands at the base of the stairs, clenching the shotgun, watching them climb.

ANDY
What's wrong with her?

Jo doesn't turn, doesn't miss a beat.

JO
She's pregnant.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jo cranks on the tub faucet. Diane leans against the sink - exhausted, but grateful for Jo's kindness. Surprised by it.

JO
Water probably won't get as hot as it should with the low generator.

DIANE
How did you know?

Jo helps Diane undress. Awkward. Jo still guards herself with a certain irreverence.

JO
I heard you puking. And I saw the book.

DIANE
We only just found out. We wanted to tell you when the time was right. We thought coming up here, to your favorite place...

JO
(snaps)
Is that what my dad told you? That this is my favorite place?

Diane - no adequate response. Jo shifts gears.

JO (CONT'D)
Girl or boy?

Diane stands naked, exposed and vulnerable.

DIANE
Neither. Anymore. I'm losing it.

A moment of connection - LOSS. Something they share now.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Andy paces at the base of the stairs, glancing up at each pass under the thunder of the water pipes. Uptight.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Diane lowers herself into the bath. The water goes PINK.

Jo kneels beside the tub, hands Diane a washcloth, speaking quietly under the ROAR of the faucet.

JO
Lois is dead.

Diane reacts.

JO (CONT'D)
And the radio - Andy busted it
before I could get to anybody.

Diane's hopelessness takes over. TEARS well.

THUD THUD THUD! Sudden banging on the bathroom door.

Jo whips around.

ANDY (OS)
What are you doing in there?

JO
Diane's taking a bath.

ANDY (OS)
Open the door.

JO
What? No!

Jo jumps up and anchors her weight against the door.

JO (CONT'D)
I told you, she's in the bath.

ANDY (OS)
And I told you, open the door!

CRUNCH! Something slams up against the door.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Open.
(THWACK!)
The damn.
(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)
 (CRASH!)
 Door!

Wood splinters and the door crashes off its hinges. Andy stands on the other side, panting, shotgun over his shoulder.

Jo stares. Diane shields her breasts and stares.

Andy spots the pink bath-water and turns away.

ANDY (CONT'D)
 No secrets.

He walks off. They HEAR him creaking down the stairs. Jo looks at Diane, at her despair.

JO
 I have a plan.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo moves to THE CLOSET. This is hard. She deliberates. Then lugs the doors open. By the light of her lantern --

HER MOTHER'S IV STAND

her mother's hospital gowns, her mother's worn SLIPPERS...

Memories Jo wasn't prepared for. She can't move for a beat. But, she rallies. Pushes aside the sick-wear to the sweaters and jeans at the back. Tugs down a cold-weather outfit.

A small DOOR IN THE WALL at the back of the closet with a WARDED LOCK - built for a skeleton key. Jo eyes it...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo reaches under her bed, way at the back, as far as her arm can stretch. Where is it? A little further... JO'S FINGERS finally locate a small velvet box. She grabs it, slides it out, opens it.

INSIDE BOX - a skeleton key was here once, the indentation in the velvet still visible. All that's left behind are a few tiny PINK BEADS...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jo sets HER MOTHER'S CLOTHES on the edge of the sink.

JO
 These should fit. You're about the same size.

Diane is moved by the gesture. And suddenly, PAIN. Diane folds over, trying to breathe through it.

JO (CONT'D)
How bad is it?

Diane can't even answer.

Jo turns and digs through the hutch beside the tub - rifles through her mother's OLD MEDS. Finds the bottle she's looking for, pops the cap and offers Diane TWO PILLS.

JO (CONT'D)
They're old, but it's better than nothing.

Diane takes the pills and Jo fetches her a glass of water. Jo reaches to return the bottle to the hutch - but reconsiders. Tucks it in her coat pocket just in case.

JO (CONT'D)
You're going to have to climb out the window and down the roof-line.

DIANE
I don't know if I can do that.

The water's turning RED. Jo is desperate. Adamant.

JO
You have to!

Jo digs a HAIR PIN out of the hutch and bends it into a HOOK.

JO (CONT'D)
I'll be out as soon as I can.

DIANE
Why aren't you coming with me now?

JO
Because he's not going to let us go until he gets what he wants.

Jo heads out.

DIANE
Jo?

Jo turns at the door.

BETH

sits in the tub. Smiles.

BETH
I'm proud of you.

Jo swallows hard and exits.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - CATWALK - NIGHT

Jo moves silently to the railing and looks over, down into THE GREAT ROOM. She can't see Andy, but she can HEAR him - SOUNDS of things being moved and thrown aside downstairs...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo returns to her mother's closet. Sinks down to her knees. Crawls to the door at the back - and inserts the bent hairpin into the warded lock. Digs, turns --

CLICK! The door pops open.

One long breath. Jo braces. And pulls the door open.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

By the light of Jo's lantern - a 5x5 foot little girl's SHRINE to her beloved mother. Photos, drawings, trinkets, flowers in a vase dried by time, a lovingly-made and dusty pillow embroidered with "Mom", an unopened Christmas present - "To Mom from Josey". This space is loaded.

Jo chokes on the emotion.

It takes every ounce of resolve she has to pull the place apart in search of what Maya must have hid here - opening music boxes, photo boxes, slipping her hand behind milk crates full of dolls and toys and keepsakes...

Behind a drawing on the wall scrawled in crayon years ago - "JO AND MAYA - FRIENDS 4-EVER!"...

Under A BLANKET - and Jo finds it.

A BLACK, VINYL BAG.

Jo pulls the bag into her lap. Tugs the zipper back.

HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS. Too many to count.

The SOUND of crashing and smashing directly beneath her.

Jo pushes aside the blanket to reveal A TRAP DOOR IN THE FLOOR, LIGHT fingering its way up through the GAPS in the boards. She presses her eye to the gap, peers down.

JO'S POV - THE PANTRY BELOW

glimpses of Andy gutting the shelves, flinging everything to the floor. Nearing rabid.

Jo sits up and clutches the bag of money, inching her way back and out of the secret room...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - NIGHT

Andy chucks a box to the floor and suddenly stops. The SOUND of floorboards CREAKING overhead. He looks up - notices THE DOOR IN THE CEILING.

He props up the step-ladder and climbs to the top rung. Pushes into the trap door over his head. It gives.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

Andy throws open the trap door and discovers Jo's shrine. The thrill of finding what he's been looking for - his obsession finally within reach. Intoxicated by it.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo barely makes it out in time.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

Andy hoists himself up and starts digging through it all.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - CATWALK - NIGHT

Jo moves past the door-less BATHROOM on her way to the stairs. Stops there.

JO'S POV - DIANE

dressed and just climbing out the window. Diane turns, looks back at Jo. A moment of shared fear and determination.

Jo turns and hurries down the stairs.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - JO'S SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

There's nothing else for Andy to eviscerate. It's not here.

THE DOOR TO THE CLOSET - slightly ajar.

Andy notices. Infuriated. He bounds for the door.

ANDY

Jo!

JO (OS)

Andy?

Andy halts. Jo's voice came from downstairs.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - PANTRY - NIGHT

Andy slips down out of the trap door. Kicks his feet to find the step-ladder - misses. And plummets to the floor. Pulls himself to his feet and exits the pantry. Pissed.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Jo stands at the fireplace. In her hand, the POKER. At the end of the poker - THE BAG OF MONEY dangling over the FLAME.

Andy freezes in place. Shit.

JO

I set the money on the hearth, you let us walk out of here, and we all get what we want.

ANDY

"We" huh? So what - you and Stepmom are soul sisters now?

JO

Do we have a deal or not?

A beat - Andy chews on it. Finally --

ANDY

You're judging me, Josephine. I can see it on your face. You don't know what I had to go through to get that money.

Andy moves forward a step - not part of Jo's plan.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Born with a silver spoon in your mouth. You don't know what it's like to be me.

A few more steps...

JO

Stop. Right there.

ANDY

(ignoring her)
My whole life, nothing but nothing to show for it.

Jo shoves the poker closer to the flames.

JO

Come any closer and it's going in,
Andy. You'll still have nothing.

Andy stops.

ANDY

I thought maybe Maya was the one.
I thought maybe for once I had
someone I could trust. Turns out,
she was just stringing me along. A
lot like you.

Jo has no choice but to tip the bag into the flame.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I'm not going back to prison,
Josephine. I'll die before I let
that happen.

The vinyl on the bag starts to CONSTRICT AND MELT.

Too close. Andy can't take it. He throws up his hands.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay. You win. You win.

JO

We're walking out of here.

ANDY

Okay. Just - you're burning it.
Don't burn it.

Jo swings the poker out of the flames.

The bag SMOKES.

She lowers the bag to the hearth, glances at the front door
behind her, assesses the distance, the probability...

And TOSSES THE BAG INTO THE FLAMES.

ANDY (CONT'D)

NO!

And she RUNS.

Andy dives at the fire as Jo bounds out the front door.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - CARPORT - NIGHT

Jo rounds the corner to find Diane dangling from the eaves, clutching the roof-line, flanked by BLADES OF ICICLES. Jo rushes in to help. Positions herself directly beneath Diane, icicles poised like deadly sabers over their heads.

JO
Let go. I've got you.

DIANE
I can't!

Gunther snorts and stomps, spooked, ready to move.

JO
Let go!

Diane peers down at Jo, closes her eyes - and lets go. Jo's got her, maneuvering Diane safely to solid footing.

An ICICLE plummets to the ground, missing Jo by an inch.

Diane clutches her stomach - the pain almost too much to bear. Jo wraps an arm around her stepmother and together they scabble across the snow and ice to the huge horse.

Diane stops - stares at Gunther in disbelief.

DIANE
A horse?

JO
The car's buried and he's not.
Come on!

Diane is terrified - but she rallies and climbs up with Jo's help, slipping on the logs until Jo threads her arm through hers and hoists her onto the horse.

Jo follows Diane up, leans over Gunther's neck, unties the reins from the post, barely getting them unfastened before the horse is off and running.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Gunther charges toward the road, boring into the snow, every muscle straining for speed against snow so deep his legs disappear with each stab forward.

Jo and Diane hang on.

POW!

The horse suddenly buckles beneath them.

Jo and Diane are flung headlong into the snow.

Gunther's immense body collapses, pinning them.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - NIGHT

Andy stands on the front porch - and lowers the shotgun...

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Jo shoves Gunther, trying to free her legs - but the horse isn't responding.

JO

I can't move him!

Diane garners all her strength and joins Jo, both pushing their weight against the titanic beast - everything they've got. Shoving, rocking, straining... Jo sidles her way loose. Then Diane. And they're free.

Jo crawls through the snow to Gunther's head. Coaxes.

JO (CONT'D)

Get up, Gunther. Come on, boy.

DIANE

He's gone, Jo.

The SOUND of boots CRUNCHING through the snow.

They look up to see ANDY APPROACHING, reloading the shotgun.

Jo is inconsolable.

JO

How could you? You bastard!

Diane grabs Jo by the arm and yanks her to her feet - and they RUN. Stumbling and dragging in the deep snow, back through the maze of trees, back toward the house.

Andy pursues them - but he's in no rush. Every footfall deliberate, unhurried. All the time in the world...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jo and Diane fling themselves in through the back door, breathless, slamming it shut behind them. BOLTING it.

Jo flies across --

THE GREAT ROOM

-- to the front door and SLAPS THE BOLT into place.

She leans back against the door. Diane braces against the counter, doubled-over in pain. They stare at each other from one end of the room to the other. For a beat, they just breathe.

At last, Jo moves into the disarray of the room, stumbling over the broken and battered remnants of Andy's search - and throws herself into a chair with her back to the windows. Her head falls into her hands. Exhausted.

Diane suddenly goes pale.

DIANE

Jo, get away from the windows.

Jo looks up and follows Diane's gaze over her shoulder.

ANDY

stands just on the other side of the enormous windows. THE SHOTGUN RAISED and aimed directly at Jo.

Jo jumps to her feet but freezes there. Too scared to move.

Andy mouths the word "BANG!". Smiles. Lowers the gun.

JO

You have your money! What more do you want?

Andy raises his finger and definitively POINTS at Jo - "YOU".

Jo snatches up a vase and CHUCKS it at the window, SCREAMING in frustration, in anger. Bad idea. As the vase strikes, a CRACK fissures the length of the glass - and stops. It doesn't shatter - yet. Matter of time.

Andy shakes his head in mock disapproval and walks away.

Jo is keyed up.

JO (CONT'D)

Where's he going?

She rushes to the window and presses her face to the compromised glass, peering in the direction Andy headed.

JO (CONT'D)

I can't see him. Where is he?

Diane edges Jo back from the window - aware that it could implode at any second. Jo breaks free from Diane, runs to a side window. Peers out.

JO'S POV - ANDY

plodding his way through the snow to THE GENERATOR SHED.

JO (CONT'D)

He's not gonna let us go, is he.

Jo begins to sink into the worst kind of despair - until her gaze draws up the wall in front of her to --

THE STEEL JAW ANIMAL TRAPS.

Aged and rusty antiques, but vicious. Merciless.

Jo is inspired. Drags a chair to the wall and climbs up.

DIANE

What are you doing?

JO

Just keep an eye on him.

Diane moves to the window - one eye on the shed, one on Jo.

Jo unhooks one heavy foothold trap from the wall. And another. Loaded down, she stumbles off the chair.

DIANE

You know what you're doing with those things?

JO

No.

Jo moves to the front door and unlocks it.

JO (CONT'D)

Yell if you see him coming.

She tugs the front door open and grabs the shovel, leaves one trap behind and slips outside with the other.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Jo works fast - digging a hole in the snow at the top of the porch steps. She lays the trap in the hole and measures out the CHAIN. Wraps the chain around the porch railing, snatches the open padlock from the storage box, and hooks it through, clamping it locked.

She handles the trap - doesn't have the first clue how to set the thing. Determined, she tugs. The jaws give slightly. She's got it. She hooks her fingers over the jaws and pulls, strains, until they lie at 180 degrees. CLICK! It's set.

She pushes the snow back over the hole, smooths it out. No one would ever know.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Jo throws the front door closed behind her, bolts it again. Shoulders the shovel, picks up the second trap and SPRINTS for the back door. Diane glances as she passes...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BACK STOOP - NIGHT

Jo DIGS. From this angle, she can SEE the GENERATOR SHED.

JO'S POV - ANDY'S SHADOW

moving inside the buzzing light of the shed.

Jo works faster, securing the trap chain around the leg of a heavy propane grill. Lays the trap in the hole. Sets it. Covers it.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN

Jo flies in, locks the door. A beat to catch her breath.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTS suddenly brighten. Full blast. A lamp in the living room comes to life. A BURNER on the stove glows up, smokes. Jo rushes over and turns it off.

JO

He's powered up the generator full blast. We'll burn out of fuel.

Jo goes to a window and peers out.

JO'S POV - THE GENERATOR SHED

Andy emerging, on his way back to the house.

Diane joins Jo at the window. Jo pulls away to snatch up the fireplace poker. Keeps it close.

DIANE

Jo, if something should happen to me and you're alone with him --

JO

(cuts her off)
Nothing's going to happen to you.

DIANE

Listen - Andy wants to trust you.
He wants an ally. You have to play
along while he waits out this
storm. He won't hurt you as long
as he thinks you're on his side.

JO

(adamant)

Nothing's going to happen to you!

Suddenly - THWACK!

The SOUND comes from just outside the back door. The trap has been triggered. A YELL of anguish from OUTSIDE. He's in pain. Jo and Diane stare at each other. Now what?

Jo goes to the back door and cautiously spies out the inset window. But snow blows up against the glass in the dark, she can't see a thing. Her hand clenches around the door knob.

DIANE

It might be a trick.

UNKNOWN POV - FROM THE STAIR LANDING

on Jo and Diane huddled at the back door...

MOANING outside.

JO

We could just - leave him.

They contemplate.

ANDY'S VOICE (OS)

Oooo - that's cold, Josephine.

Jo and Diane whip around to see --

ANDY

-- descending the stairs.

ANDY

But thanks for leaving the window
open up there. That, on the other
hand, was very thoughtful.

Jo's face suddenly loses all color.

JO

Oh god...

She throws back the lock and yanks the door open.

CAM

lies in the snow, one splinted leg snagged in the trap.

JO (CONT'D)

Dad!

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - BACK STOOP - NIGHT

Cam's face is besieged with BLISTERS AND FROST-BITE. He's listless, frozen, barely present. Jo flies to her father's side and drops to the snow, desperate to help, her hands flitting and darting around Cam's shattered leg.

JO

I don't know what to do! I don't know how to get this off!

Jo looks up for Diane's help, only to find Andy standing in the doorway behind Diane, the shotgun barrel PRESSED across Diane's neck. She can't move.

ANDY

We could just - leave him.

Jo grabs hold of the trap's steel jaws and forces them open.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Wasn't a question, Josephine.

Jo ignores Andy, straining to hold the trap open.

JO

(to Cam)

Pull, Daddy. Pull!

But Cam is in too much pain, too weak to make any progress.

A sudden BLAST from the shotgun sends Jo reeling back. The BULLET strikes the snow inches from her leg. The trap SPRINGS from Jo's grip and clamps back onto Cam's leg, cracking the makeshift splint to pieces.

Cam SCREAMS in agony.

Jo catches her breath and looks at Andy as he brings the barrel of the gun back to Diane's neck. The metal is HOT, it burns Diane's flesh. She yelps.

Jo is livid. YELLS at Andy.

JO (CONT'D)
What is wrong with you!

ANDY
I'll tell you all about it inside.
We can start with my childhood and
work our way up to all of tonight's
betrayals. Oh, sorry - was that a
rhetorical question?

Jo stumbles back to Cam, grabs at the trap again. Now it's Andy who's livid. He dives forward and SNATCHES Jo by the hair, his grip never loosening on Diane - and HURLS them both back into the house.

From the doorway, Andy peers at Cam lying there like a dying animal.

ANDY (CONT'D)
You never did me any harm, Doc.
I'm not gonna pull the trigger.

A glance at the weather, at the trap, at Cam's predicament.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Looks like Mother Nature will take
care of that.

Andy closes the door and bolts it.

Cam is left alone to die in the bitter cold and dark...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Diane COUGHS the air back into her lungs, her neck RAW where the searing gunmetal burned her skin.

Jo flies at Andy, fearless, tries to yank away the shotgun, beats on him with her fists.

JO
I won't just leave my dad out there
to die!

Andy is barely fazed. When Jo tries to get around him to the back door, he holds her off with one arm. She's exhausted, weak, no match for this man.

Andy pushes Jo and Diane to the sofa, hundred dollar bills wagging out of his coat pockets like living things.

The minute she's pushed down, Jo jumps back up.

Andy FLINGS her down again with force and aims the shotgun at her head. Diane grabs Jo's hand - it's all she can do.

ANDY

Never had to be like this, ladies.
I would've been in and out. You'd
be missing me by now.

He pushes the gun to Jo's flesh.

ANDY (CONT'D)

But you had to go and lie to me,
Josephine. Why'd you do that?

Jo won't look at him, won't answer. Buries her hands in her pockets. Insolent.

Infuriated, Andy GRABS Jo by the hair and YANKS her head back.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Why'd you tell me there was no
goddamn secret room?

Jo's face is all defiance. She doesn't whimper, doesn't cry, doesn't speak - just STARES hard right back at Andy. He's affected by that look. No denying the animosity in her eyes.

Andy releases her. Gets up. Switches gears.

ANDY (CONT'D)

In case no one noticed --
(gestures at wall clock)
Merry Christmas.

He smiles at Jo. At Diane.

ANDY (CONT'D)

You're stuck with me til daylight.
Might as well make it a jolly time.

He walks over to the old record player.

Jo looks at Diane trembling beside her, drained, no longer fighting. And slowly, carefully, pulls her hand out of her pocket. In Jo's palm - THE BOTTLE of painkillers. Something brews, another plan. She slips the bottle back in her pocket.

All at once, the room fills with the SOUND of Bing Crosby and Doris Day singing "Baby It's Cold Outside". Loud.

Andy turns and grins.

ANDY (CONT'D)
I love this song.

Jo's face twitches - and finds its way into a SMILE back.

JO
So do I.

Andy double-takes. Did she just smile at him?

Jo stands and heads for the kitchen. Andy YANKS her back.

ANDY
Where do you think you're going?

JO
To make us some cocoa. Like you
said, it's Christmas.

Andy considers - then releases her.

ANDY
Well hallelujah. Make mine leaded.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jo sets the kettle on a burner. She looks at the back door, then at ANDY singing and dancing with himself in THE GREAT ROOM. It's written all over Jo's face - this is war and she intends to win.

SMASH CUT TO:

THE KETTLE WHISTLING...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jo pours boiling water into three mugs - two red, one blue - "World's Greatest Mom". Powdered cocoa dissolves, the contents of the mom mug BUBBLES and HISSES... Jo adds some of Lois' hooch to the mug and stirs quickly.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Jo hands Andy a RED MUG.

JO
So. Merry Christmas.

Andy watches Jo place the other red mug in front of Diane and take blue for herself. Watches her raise it to take a sip.

ANDY
I want yours.

JO
What's wrong with yours?

ANDY
Let's just say I have trust issues.

Jo hesitates, plays it out - then reluctantly trades mugs.

Andy raises the mom mug --

ANDY (CONT'D)
Deck the halls.

-- lifts it to his lips under Jo's furtive gaze, and --

THUD! Something thumps up against the BACK DOOR.

Andy lets the MUG FLY as he throws the butt of the shotgun up against his shoulder. Ceramic fractures all over the floor.

Jo looks down at the shattered mug, at "Mom" in pieces, at her shattered plan and the tainted cocoa as it seeps down between the floorboards...

ANDY FIRES.

A HOLE blasts through the back door.

Diane SCREAMS and lunges at Andy.

DIANE
No! It's Cam! You'll kill him!

Andy chucks Diane aside --

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - NIGHT

-- and approaches THE BACK DOOR. Yanks it open.

RUFUS THE DOG bounds away and out of sight.

POW! Andy FIRES again. Misses.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - NIGHT

Rufus runs past the BROKEN BASEMENT WINDOW...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Andy peers into the dark behind the house. Grabs a FLASHLIGHT from the counter.

ANDY'S POV - OUTSIDE IN THE FLASHLIGHT GLOW

the empty trap - Cam is gone.

Andy quickly tries to reload - too late.

CAM

is right behind him. Sliding along the wall for support, with the very last ounce of strength he's got - Cam raises THE FIRE POKER and THRUSTS it into Andy's back, spearing him.

Andy spins around as he's falling and the butt of the shotgun CRACKS into Cam's head. The two men go down - ANDY'S SKULL SMACKING the corner of the counter, knocking him unconscious.

Jo and Diane scramble to Cam. Diane takes stock of his weather-ravaged face. Jo checks for signs of life.

JO

Dad? Daddy, can you hear me?

Cam GROANS.

Jo looks at Andy on the floor nearby, face down, poker protruding from his back. He's out - but not for long.

DIANE

I saw a rope in the basement.

JO

Get it.

Andy makes a GARBLED SOUND from deep in his throat.

JO (CONT'D)

Hurry!

Diane bolts for the basement.

Jo reaches up and grabs a kitchen towel from the counter, rolling it and tucking it under Cam's head as a cushion.

She turns to Andy. The SHOTGUN is within her reach, but it's lodged under Andy's arm.

Jo summons all her courage with a deep breath - and slowly, carefully, leans for the shotgun. Her FINGERS wrap around the barrel and she gently tugs it toward her. Andy's body LURCHES. Jo stops. Waits. No further movement - she pulls again, drawing the shotgun out from under him. She's got it.

She collects a handful of the spilled CARTRIDGES off the floor, scrabbles to her feet, and now it registers - Andy's body is stretched across the entryway. The only way out of this room is to step over him.

He's coming-to slowly with burbles and murmurs...

Clutching the shotgun like a last hope, Jo LEAPS over Andy --

ANDY'S HAND

DARTS OUT and knocks Jo off-balance. She falls with a SMACK, knocking the wind right out of her.

Andy pulls himself up off the floor and grabs at the poker lodged through his back. Can't reach it - fingers crawling, writhing up to his shoulder-blade, craning to grasp the iron rod. He HOLLERS OUT in pain.

Jo catches her breath. Staggeres to her feet. Tries to load the shotgun, but her hands are shaking. She DROPS the cartridges on the floor...

Andy's fingers loop around the poker handle. And he YANKS...

Jo scoops up the cartridges as fast as she can...

Andy throws the poker aside and turns to face Jo.

ANDY

This is gonna have a goddamn happy ending, Josephine.

No time to reload. Jo clutches the cartridges and the shotgun and runs for the stairs. Andy is right behind her.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - STAIRS - NIGHT

Jo hauls up the stairs in her boots. Trips. The shotgun slips from her grip and clatters through a slat between the steps. Her arm jabs out, snatching the shotgun back just in time. Back on her feet and running.

Andy thunders up behind her, but pain is slowing him down.

ANDY (CONT'D)

You got it all wrong, Josephine.
You don't have to run from me.

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - CATWALK - NIGHT

Jo races to the end of the catwalk and scrambles to load the shotgun - but she can't get the chamber open.

Andy is at the top of the stairs now...

ANDY (CONT'D)

We like each other, remember?

Jo backs up against the wall in the far corner of the catwalk, strains to snap the shotgun open. Andy keeps advancing on her.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Oh wait, I forgot - you lied.

Andy is right on top of Jo, now.

Without bullets loaded, the shotgun is only as good as a bat - so Jo SWINGS. Andy throws his arm out, deflecting the blow and grabs hold of the barrel. Jo isn't about to let go.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Give me the gun, Josephine.

Jo sees DIANE creeping up behind Andy with the bloody POKER raised over her head.

Andy catches the shift in Jo's gaze and turns just as the steel poker WHACKS against his skull, sending him hurling over the railing.

On his way past Jo, he manages to snatch at her coat, snags it - and PULLS her over with him, the shotgun tumbling out of Jo's grip and onto the floor of the catwalk.

Jo CATCHES the lower rung of the railing and dangles there as Andy plunges down to the floor below, HITTING hard, landing with his leg bent unnaturally beneath him.

Diane drops the poker and dives for Jo, grabs her at the wrists - and tugs. Jo's legs swing until her feet make contact with the catwalk. Diane pulls and Jo climbs, until she's back up and over the railing.

Together, they slump into an exhausted heap on the floor.

DIANE

You alright?

Jo nods.

The lights suddenly FLICKER and start pulsing down. The MUSIC SLOWS to a creepy, tuneless moan - and then it stops.

Jo and Diane are now sitting in absolute DARK and SILENCE.

Jo scrambles for the shotgun and cartridges, feeling around on the floor until she finds them. Snatches them up, fumbles in the dark - still can't figure out how to load this thing.

Diane takes over, a whole new confidence, new momentum. SNAPS the gun open, POPS in the two cartridges, and snaps it shut again. Jo is impressed.

Diane looks over the catwalk railing, but it's too dark downstairs. She can't see a thing.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Andy?

No response. Jo and Diane look at each other...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Diane descends the stairs slowly, silently, shotgun leading the way. Jo is right behind her with the poker...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Diane approaches the spot where Andy landed. Peers into the dark. Moves closer - looks left, right. No sign of him.

The SOUND of Cam MOANING from the kitchen floor...

Diane heads in that direction. Jo doesn't. She's listening, HEARS something. A RUSTLING right behind her. Jo spins around - and Andy's hands are suddenly all over her. She SCREAMS and blindly THRUSTS the poker in terror.

A YELP.

They weren't Andy's hands at all - but only RUFUS jumping up.

The dog slumps to the floor. Jo drops the poker, devastated.

The SOUND of a THUD! and SCUFFLE from the kitchen.

Jo whips around. Through the darkness, she can see body shapes negotiating for control of the shotgun. The SKY behind them is starting to lighten...

INT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - KITCHEN - PRE-DAWN

Andy shoves Diane against the counter, tugging at the shotgun in her grip. But he's weak, his injuries taking a toll. She battles to aim the gun at him, but he's just strong enough to deflect it and knock it out of her hands to the floor.

Andy's hands fly to Diane's neck and CHOKE, his fingers digging deep into her flesh.

Jo bolts to the kitchen - this ends now.

She sees the shotgun is out of reach on the floor beside Andy. Knows she has to act fast. Looks for a weapon. Anything... Spots a lantern, MATCHES --

-- and the BOTTLE OF LOIS' BREW.

Diane's legs are giving out, she won't last much longer.

JO

Andy!

Andy turns, grip still firmly locked around Diane's neck.

Jo raises the bottle of Lois' high-octane concoction --

JO (CONT'D)

Join me in a drink?

-- and she flings the alcohol with a vengeance, drenching Andy's clothes.

ANDY

What the hell?

Andy lets go of Diane who collapses on the floor, GASPING for air, filling her lungs. He looks at his clothes, at Jo - confused, growing more infuriated by the second.

ANDY (CONT'D)

That's it, Josephine. That's the end of it.

He limps around the kitchen counter - his twisted leg flinging uselessly as he approaches Jo, jaw set, furious.

Jo STRIKES A MATCH.

JO

Cheers.

And she FLINGS the match at Andy - FLAME leaping from the match to his liquor-drenched clothing, his skin, crawling up his chest, his neck, across his face - IGNITING Andy in a ball of fire.

Andy spins, flails, arms flapping and grabbing at his clothes - but to no avail. He's engulfed.

BURNING BILLS waft from his pockets as he blindly swings his way across THE GREAT ROOM, HOWLING in pain, slamming into the enormous WINDOW. The fissure in the glass spreads like a web and --

CRASH!

-- the window explodes, Andy bursting through in a blizzard of flames and flying glass, throwing himself on the SNOW.

Jo scrambles to Diane.

JO (CONT'D)

You okay?

Diane sits up with Jo's help, coughs, nods.

Cam is just stirring. Jo goes to his side, threads her fingers through his. Those TEARS she's been holding at bay finally come. She CRIES. Cam looks up at her.

CAM

I'm sorry, Josey. I should have been here for you.

JO

You're here now.

They hold each other. It's been a long time coming.

JO (CONT'D)

I miss her so much, Dad.

CAM

I know, sweetheart. I know.

Diane moves past them, clutching the shotgun, heading for the obliterated floor-to-ceiling window. As she walks, a BREEZE ruffles her hair, the house now open to the elements.

Jo and Cam look up.

JO

Diane...?

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - DAWN

Andy sizzles flat on his back in the snow. The flames have been snuffed, but his hair, skin and clothing are CHARRED and still smoking. He's hideous. Alive, but only barely.

ANDY'S POV - LOOKING UP

a dark silhouette moves into frame. DIANE. Shotgun in hand. She stands over him. Doesn't speak.

Andy licks his cracked lips. A blistered hand moves slow and stiff into his coat pocket, feebly retrieving a clutch of smoldering HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS. He holds them raised in his fist for a beat. Then opens his hand and releases them.

The breeze carries the blackened bills churning and useless across the snow. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

DRIP! A drop of water strikes Andy's forehead. And another.

Andy looks up. Diane looks up.

THE RISING SUN

glints off a band of mammoth, sparkling, dagger-like ICICLES affixed to the roof-line directly above Andy.

Diane looks back down at him. DRIP!

Points the shotgun at his head.

DIANE

You were wrong. This - is the moment of truth.

DRIP! Andy grins grotesque.

ANDY

(hoarse, barely audible)
- could never do it.

DIANE

Never say never.

Diane raises the nose of the shotgun to the roof-line.

And FIRES.

ICICLES

detach with the impact...

EXT. SKY - DAWN

BIRDS take flight in a startled swarm, swinging up past the house and into the clearing sky.

In the distance - A POLICE HELICOPTER approaches...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CHALET - DAWN (FROM ABOVE)

Below us, Diane lowers the smoking shotgun.

Andy lies at her feet dead - IMPALED BY ICICLES.

All around him - the scattered ashes of his beloved money.

Jo emerges from the house with Cam on her arm, stumbling their way through the snow to Diane, wrapping their arms around her. The shotgun slips from Diane's grip. She turns to her husband, her step-daughter, and buries herself in their embrace. They survived. Together.

DISSOLVE TO:

FROM ABOVE - PRISTINE WHITE SNOW...

and the soft outline of a SNOW-ANGEL.

JO (V.O.)

I guess some lies were truths once upon a time.

PULLING UP, we see a second snow angel beside it, the "hands" of each joined, intentionally connected.

JO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But what I've learned, some lies, the ones you keep trying to prove --

A YEARLING FAWN

steps lightly into frame, moving across the snow angels, stopping to nibble at a few blades of early spring grass. Maybe it's the orphaned fawn, maybe not.

JO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

-- sometimes, they're a sort of bigger truth. Sometimes, a person doesn't have to be here - to be there.

And the fawn moves UP-SCREEN and off, leaving the mark of its hoof-prints across the angels...

FADE TO WHITE

THE END.