

THE WHITE DEVILS

Written by

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BLACK.

DRIVING RAIN. Sounds of CAR pulling to a stop.

Only the WINDSHIELD WIPERS now.

WOMAN
It'll be fine.

MAN
Yeah.

A hard TAPPING sound.

CUT TO:

INT. SUV - NIGHT

From the backseat, we see the Woman and Man, and two baby boys. It's dark, we can't make out faces.

The driver's window is open. The Woman sits in the driver's seat. The sound of the window ROLLING DOWN. The rain is even LOUDER.

A BEAT.

A Police Officer appears.

OFFICER
License and registration.

WOMAN
Sure... Anything wrong?

OFFICER
That's why I stopped ya.

He walks off.

MAN
He's gonna *find* something. Watch.

WOMAN
We're fine.

MAN
You see how he looked at me? He gon' find something.

MOVEMENT, shifting.

WOMAN
What? You're really doing the most.

The Man pulls out his cell phone starts recording.

MAN
No sense having his word versus
mine.

WOMAN
Hey. You're scaring them.

MAN
They need to know--

WOMAN
That's enough.

FOOTSTEPS returning.

OFFICER
Step out of the car ma'am.

She CLICKS her seatbelt free.

MAN
...no. Why? For what?

OFFICER
I'm talking to the driver, sir.
Stay where you are.

A BEAT.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Ma'am?

WOMAN
Ok.

She opens the car, slams the door. From the backseat--

A CHILD
Mommy.

The Man opens his door, steps out.

Through the windshield, distorted with rain, we see the three
figures ahead. SOUNDS of an argument. Frenetic. The voices
blending, rising.

YELLING now. Posturing. One of them *reaches*... Then--

POP. POP. POP.

Gunfire, deafening and final.

One figure drops, another bends low over it.

OFFICER
JESUS. FUCK... AHH.

SOBS. Anguished SCREAMS.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
You didn't listen... FUCK!

Silence.

The RAIN and WIPERS the only sounds. Then...

CHILD
Daddy?

CUT TO:

BLACK.

CHOPPING. Something hard struck by something harder.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

CLOSE on small log, SPLIT with an axe. Another replaces it.
The axe falls again.

Pull back to reveal the man swinging it.

Powerful, sinewy. Bald, a wild, nappy beard from ear to ear.
He grits his teeth with each swing, this is almost therapy.

This is CASSIUS, 42, dark skin, furious eyes.

Cassius nearly splits the ground he's chopping on.

He stands, catching his breath... but the CHOPPING continues.
Cassius clutches his axe, looks over to the sound.

REVERSE to see a spindly young man with soft curls and a
determined face.

He places planks on a stump, positions a LARGE UTILITY KNIFE
on top, then hammers down with another log.

More splitting.

After a few, he lays the knife aside.

Wrings his hands, shaking off pain from the shock of
hammering the logs.

Cassius locks eyes with him. The boy stares back, defiant for a moment. Then, slowly, he picks up the knife again, positions a new log.

This is MALCOLM, 14, ruddy cheeks, ashy skin, not to be pitied.

He goes back to hammering logs.

CASSIUS
Toughen up them hands.

Malcolm grunts. Hammers.

EXT. POND - DAY

Malcolm and Cassius stand on the bank of green-ish pond, fishing from the shore.

Another, younger boy squats in the sand fiddling with his lure. He fixes a sinker and pauses. He sets his gaze on a pail of worms nearby.

This is MANDELA, 11, gentle, with big brown Disney-eyes.

Malcolm looks over sees him. He nods toward the bucket. Mandela hovers there for a second, but finally withdraws. He shakes his head at Malcolm.

Malcolm looks back at Cassius, who scans the trees and slowly rolls in his reel, dragging the water.

Malcolm motions to Mandela, hands the younger boy his reel. After the exchange, Malcolm baits the boy's hook.

They switch reels.

Cassius looks over just after they do. Mandela steps away and CASTS his reel out.

Cassius watches a few moments.

CASSIUS
...they're bait-stealers. Run the
hook all the way through.

Malcolm nods. Mandela nods too.

Cassius runs his hook through a worm, SLINGS out his line, it ZIPS and PLOPS into the water.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A campfire CRACKLES.

A few fish lean above the fire, suspended on sticks dug into the ground.

A stack of already roasted fish sit in an old iron skillet on the ground.

Malcolm, Cassius and Mandela chow down, picking fish from bones.

Mandela happily licks his fingers and tosses a tail into the brush behind him. He crawls toward the skillet reaches for another piece.

Cassius grabs his hand, tight.

He glares at the boy.

CASSIUS

Next time, bait your own hook.
...you don't work, you don't eat.

He releases. Mandela pulls back with the fish. He nibbles at it, avoiding Cassius' gaze. Malcolm cuts a look at Cassius, who is unmoved.

Cassius goes for another piece, bites it in half.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

A modest, weathered wooden cabin amongst a smattering of skinny red and white pines. Small. Utilitarian.

The only home the boys have ever known.

Malcolm sits against a wall as he fletches arrows. He holds one up to examine the shaft. Looks past it.

He finds Mandela, sitting on his knees in a pen cordoned off by a four feet high barbed wire fence staked into the ground. Mandela picks through the dirt with a spade, gathers bulbs, leaves and fruits from his garden.

He waters the plants carefully, prunes leaves.

Malcolm stares. Mandela is happy amongst the flowers.

Beauty in a cage.

Malcolm grabs another arrow.

EXT. CABIN - LATER

Cassius wears a boxing body protector, punching mitts and protective headgear.

He throws punches at Malcolm, who dodges and returns, circling.

CASSIUS
...two, three, slip, hook, roll...

Malcolm, a step behind the commands, comes at Cassius with speed and precision.

His punches are swift. Hard. He'd do real damage, if not for the pads.

This is routine. Not fun, work.

Mandela watches nearby, wearing his own gloves and shorts.

Cassius throws a hook for his head, Malcolm ducks it, comes back with a jab, straight, and two hard knees.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
(slapping mitts together)
Good.

Malcolm heaves, catching his breath. He nods, pleased.

Cassius wheels to face Mandela, starts throwing jabs without warning. The boy is on his heels, dodging, stumbling. He hits the dirt.

Malcolm starts to move to him, suppresses it. Cuts his eyes to Cassius, who hovers over Mandela.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Come on... get up.

Mandela stands, dusts himself.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Work.

He closes in again. Mandela slips blows.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela follow Cassius, running through the woods with a stopwatch.

Cassius comes to a stop.

The boys rest.

Malcolm looks over, spots a tree with a WHITE SYMBOL painted on the trunk. Something mysterious about it.

He STARES.

Cassius offers him a water bottle. Malcolm accepts, averts his eyes from the tree. Cassius sees it.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Cassius stands over the boys as they hold plank position. A LONG beat.

CASSIUS
...down.

The boys do a push-up. Then hold their planks again. Cassius looks down on them.

Their arms squirming with the effort...

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
(holding)
...rest.

The boys drop, face down into the dirt. They breathe, heavy and deep.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

The boys fill bottles and drink. Mandela splashes his face. Cassius stands behind.

CASSIUS
(watching)
I'm going out again. Tonight.

Malcolm rises.

MANDELA
Alone?

CASSIUS
Safest way. Be back before the hunt.

MALCOLM
"Safest".

CASSIUS
 (cutting him a glance)
 ...ain't no place out there for
 black boys.

MALCOLM
 ...but it's ok for you?

Cassius stares into him.

CASSIUS
 Finish up.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Early light. Malcolm stands near the front of the cabin looking out into the woods. Mandela emerges from inside, rubbing his eyes sleepily.

MANDELA
 Where's daddy?

Malcolm just stares out into the trees.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
 Supposed to be back by now.

Malcolm nods, concerned. Mandela sits in the dirt next to him.

A BEAT.

Cassius appears, emerging from the trees with a trail pack on his shoulders.

Mandela stands and moves to him.

Malcolm SIGHS, relieved. Follows.

EXT. TIP-UP MOUND - DAY

A large fallen ASH TREE. The root system has been ripped up, forming a wall of dirt, roots and rock. A lean-to has been built up against it.

...and a pair of legs poke out.

INT. LEAN-TO - CONTINUOUS

Mandela is lying down inside. Laid out on the ground above his head -- A tarnished silver compass. A plastic hairbrush.

A weathered copy of a book about Anansi the legendary spider spirit. A simple gold band.

Mandela plays with the compass a moment, in his own world.

He takes the book, reads a hand written note on the inside. Linger on the cursive.

For whatever reason, he beams.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

Man-man!

Mandela gathers the items, shoves them into an old leather purse, pushes them into the back of the lean-to.

EXT. TIP-UP MOUND - DAY

Mandela crawls out of the shelter. He runs up over a ridge, finds Malcolm calling, looking in another direction.

MANDELA

Hey.

MALCOLM

We gotta hunt.

Mandela nods, sweating a bit. Malcolm notes it.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

You ok?

MANDELA

Yes... I'm... just not good at it.
Not like you.

Malcolm considers it. Softens.

MALCOLM

Know what dad says?

MANDELA

"...it's called hunting, not
killing.."

MALCOLM

(nodding, smiles)
You'll get better. Come on.

Mandela walks ahead, Malcolm looks back where the boy came from.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela follow Cassius. He carries a shotgun, slung over a shoulder.

Malcolm carries a recurve bow.

He reaches a fork in the path. Nods to one direction.

CASSIUS
Take that side.

He turns back to face the boys.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Check the snares. Check your
targets. Don't cross "the line".
Back by sunset.

The boys nod. He lingers on that last bit. He walks away from them. Malcolm watches, turns back to Mandela.

EXT. RIDGE - LATER

Mandela lays on the ground, staring out at the clearing below.

Malcolm leans against a tree, bored.

MANDELA
Nothing out here.

MALCOLM
You gotta be patient.

LEAVES CRUNCH softly below. Mandela looks up. Reverse to find a young BUCK wandering casually through the path. He stops to snack at a berry bush.

MANDELA
(whispered)
Hey.

Malcolm shifts to his feet. Moves to his brother. He SMILES. Rubs Mandela's head. The younger boy grins.

Malcolm stands, raising his bow, sets his sights low, aiming for the Buck's heart.

He pulls the string taut. Breathes in. Mandela shifts, SNAPPING a stick. The animal turns on the sound.

Malcolm let's it FLY--

But the Buck is already spooked. The creature disappears into the woods.

MALCOLM

Damn it.

He kicks the leaves.

Malcolm hustles down the ridge, Mandela follows.

EXT. DEER TRAIL - DAY

The sun dropping low.

Malcolm walks, searching for tracks.

MANDELA

Are we going the right way?

MALCOLM

(not looking up)

...saw a deer bed a while back...
stream leads up this direction.
He'll be around.

Mandela nods. They walk further. Malcolm stops, he sees a thicket ahead. The brush is turn and drooping.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

There! He must've come this way.

Malcolm starts forward, Mandela pulls him back. He points up to thick tree trunk at their flank.

There is a large white "X" spray painted on the tree.

MANDELA

...forget about it.

Malcolm stares at it, willing himself to move. Malcolm looks back at his brother. Then turns around, heads back the way they came.

Mandela follows.

EXT. WOODS - FORK - DAY

The sun dropping low in the sky.

The meeting spot. Malcolm and Mandela waiting for Cassius. Malcolm sits against a thick tree.

MANDELA
There he is...

Malcolm stands, spots Cassius walking down the path. He has a half dozen or so dead squirrels strung together on a line.

He stops near the boys. Lays his kills on the ground.

CASSIUS
(stretching, looking)
Nothing?

The boys exchange looks.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
The traps?

Mandela dithers.

MALCOLM
We didn't check.

BEAT. Cassius drinks water from a tin bottle.

CASSIUS
(shaking his head)
...and if I hadn't caught anything?

MANDELA
--He almost had a buck.

CASSIUS
Almost?
(gloating)
...Can't eat 'almost'.

Mandela looks at his feet.

MANDELA
I--

MALCOLM
I scared it off. Too loud. Before
the shot.

Cassius nods, superior.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Would've had him, but he went past
the tree line.

Cassius whips around. Closes in on him.

CASSIUS
(eye to eye)
Then what? You gon' ask him to
stand still for a second shot?

MANDELA
--it's getting dark.

A BEAT. Cassius backs off. He spits in the dirt. Grabs his water bottle. Turns back for home. Thinks better of it.

He moves back to the pile of dead squirrels, picks them up. SHOVES them into Malcolm's chest.

CASSIUS
You don't kill, you carry.

Malcolm catches them. Stands there holding the kill.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

The interior of the cabin is austere. Three small bedrooms. A cramped kitchen. A living room anchored by a stone hearth.

Furniture is mismatched, discolored. The few appliances are tarnished. Tin teapot, cast iron pots and pans.

Noticeably, no TV, no laptop, no modern tech.

Mandela stirs a pot of stew as Malcolm leans against a cabinet. Mandela scoops out a spoon full, tastes it.

MANDELA
Can you give me the salt?

Malcolm hands him a nearby shaker. Mandela sprinkles up high, slowly mixing it in.

His movements are practiced, skilled. There is pride in it.

Malcolm watches.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
You wanna taste?

MALCOLM
(trying it, pleased)
How you know what to put in there?

Mandela smiles, shrugs.

MANDELA
Practice. You might get better if
you practice...

MALCOLM
I don't wanna get better at this.

Mandela looks away, offended.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Hey... I mean--

Cassius enters.

CASSIUS
How is it?

Mandela nods toward the pot Cassius scoops up a spoonful.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Mm-mm. That is good.

MANDELA
(beaming)
I picked the potatoes and onions.

Cassius takes another spoon.

CASSIUS
Mm. You got a gift son. Your
grandma used to make squirrel like
this.

MANDELA
Really?

CASSIUS
Close my eyes, could be her recipe.

Mandela seems to bloom from the praise.

MANDELA
Is it good as mom's?

Malcolm suddenly stands erect. Cassius puts the spoon down.

Mandela shrinks.

CASSIUS
...you boys set the table.

Cassius walks out.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Malcolm, Cassius, and Mandela eat stew at the table. A pall over the meal.

Only the sounds of SPOONS on bowls. Cassius rips into a piece of bread.

INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Malcolm and Cassius play dominos. Mandela reads a book across the room.

CASSIUS
(playing a domino)
How's that bow?

MALCOLM
Pullin fine.

CASSIUS
Hard to hunt recurve.

MALCOLM
Can you get me a gun?

CASSIUS
...you're gettin' better, but you
ain't ready for that.

Malcolm nods, plays.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
(baiting him)
Master the little things. Start by
not spooking your dinner.

MALCOLM
(cringing)
Yeah.

A BEAT. Cassius nods.

CASSIUS
Stickin' with that story?

Malcolm tries to interject.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
(silencing him)
Good. Looking out for your brother.
I can respect that.
(MORE)

CASSIUS (CONT'D)

But you oughtta remember-- sooner or later, everybody's gotta walk alone.

MALCOLM

Like you... and the raids.

CASSIUS

(nodding)

You do what you have to for your people. Family.

MALCOLM

(deliberately)

Even if you gotta leave the woods?

CASSIUS

(intuiting)

The tree line? That's different.

MALCOLM

Why?

CASSIUS

You know why.

MALCOLM

I never been out there... just wanna see for myself.

A BEAT. Cassius nods, Malcolm has his point.

CASSIUS

(final)

One day you might get your wish. When I'm gone. You'll see... ain't nothing out there for you, boy.

INT. CABIN - MALCOLM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Not much decoration save for the hunting bow, hung prominently on a wall.

Malcolm in bed, fast asleep.

He JOLTS awake. Cassius is sitting on the foot of the bed. He admires the bow.

CASSIUS

I gotta go back.

Malcolm is still groggy.

MALCOLM

Hm?

CASSIUS

(turning to him)
I'm going out again.

MALCOLM

(sitting up)
Why?

CASSIUS

Storm coming. Big one. It'll scare
away the game. Maybe overflow the
stream.

MALCOLM

...the garden...

CASSIUS

(shaking his head)
Floods would wash it away.

MALCOLM

This is two times. In just a week.
And it's almost dawn...

Cassius searches for an answer.

CASSIUS

...look after your brother. I'll be
back.

Malcolm suppresses the urge to want him to stay. Cassius
gets up, heads out.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela go through their routine. Malcolm CHOPS.
Mandela tends the garden.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Malcolm leads Mandela, running the trail.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Malcolm COUNTS OFF push-ups. Mandela struggles. They rest.
Malcolm looks up, the sun is high, the day running away.

INT. LEAN-TO - DAY

Mandela reads the Anansi book.

EXT. LEAN-TO - DAY

PULL BACK to find Malcolm watching. He's discovered his brother's hide away. He starts toward Mandela, thinks better of it. He turns back toward the cabin.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Mandela cooks dinner, Malcolm sets the table.

The rumbling of THUNDER brings to--

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Malcolm peeking out, up at the sky. Clouds gathering. Mandela nudges him from behind. Malcolm nods.

MALCOLM
Time to get some sleep.

INT. CABIN - VARIOUS - LATER

The storm RAGES outside. The cabin is still.

Mandela lies awake in his room.

Malcolm sits up on his bed.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

The earth is muddy and damp. Leaves full and green. Malcolm toys with his bow string, more nerves than purpose.

He perks at the sound of COUGHING.

Malcolm turns back to find Cassius dragging himself toward the side of the house. He's WHEEZING, wet, and his leg is CUT and BLEEDING.

Malcolm hesitates, the sight is shocking. Cassius collapses.

Malcolm races to him.

MALCOLM
 (hoisting Cassius)
 Mandela! MANDELA!

INT. CABIN - DAY

The door flies open. Malcolm helps Cassius to his room. Lays him down.

Cassius MOANS through each motion.

CASSIUS
 Where the hell is your broth-- AH!

Malcolm looks down at the leg, a bloody mess.

Mandela races in.

MANDELA
 Dad?

MALCOLM
 He's hurt...

Mandela looks over it, suddenly alive.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 He's been out there all night...
 went to get some supplies...

MANDELA
 Get some water.

Malcolm freezes up.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
 (grabbing him)
 We have to clean it. Get some warm
 water, and towels.

Malcolm heads to the kitchen. Mandela heads to his room. He returns with a small plastic first aid case.

Malcolm comes in with towels.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
 Lift up his leg...

Malcolm lifts it. Cassius SCREAMS.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
 Put it down, put it down...

Mandela feels Cassius' head, gingerly slips his boot off.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
It might be broken. He's running a fever. Might be in shock.

MALCOLM
What does that mean?

MANDELA
He'll be ok. We just gotta clean it, set it--

CASSIUS
(sweating, pained)
...where... where were you?

Mandela dithers. Cassius sits up.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Hm?

MALCOLM
--I sent him to check the wires.
Set new snares before the rain...

Cassius looks to Mandela. After a moment, he lays back, closing his eyes. Slowing his breath. Mandela stares.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Hey. What's next?

MANDELA
...the water.

Malcolm heads out.

INT. CABIN - CASSIUS' ROOM - LATER

Cassius is resting. Mandela sits by his side. Refreshes a towel on his head.

The leg is now wrapped and splinted.

Malcolm enters.

MALCOLM
(looking Cassius over)
Will it heal?

MANDELA
I think so.

MALCOLM
He looks... weak.

MANDELA
Fever is breaking. He should eat.
Something hot.

MALCOLM
I got some lunch ready.

Cassius stirs.

MANDELA
Dad... don't move too much.

Mandela reaches out with a few aspirin. Cassius bats it away.

CASSIUS
...don't want that...

MALCOLM
Here... drink.

Malcolm holds a glass of water to his lips. Cassius drinks, slowly.

Mandela watches them, soaking in their rapport.

Wishing.

CASSIUS
...I wanna tell you somethin...

MANDELA
What is it?

CASSIUS
I wanna tell *him* somethin...

Mandela is struck. He stands, leaves. Malcolm watches.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
(wincing)
GODDAMN IT.

MALCOLM
You can't move so much...

CASSIUS
...i'm gonna be out for a while...

MALCOLM
We've been doing everything like
normal... we'll be ok.

CASSIUS
I-I should've told you before...

MALCOLM
We can hunt and--

CASSIUS
NO. LISTEN to me.

Cassius grabs his son, a sudden energy. Malcolm is all ears.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Train, work. Look out for each
other. *Always*. But...
White men... they won't hesitate,
son. They'll kill you.

MALCOLM
Why?

CASSIUS
Out there... survival. War.

Malcolm sits, the weight of it leveling on him. Cassius lies
back.

Just outside the room, Mandela is eavesdropping.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Malcolm thumbs through the cupboards, all but bare. No food.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela stand over the remnant of the garden. The
plants and vines ripped and scattered.

Mandela stoops down to examine the damage.

MANDELA
The roots were too shallow, season
barely started.

Malcolm shakes his head. Looks off into the woods.

MALCOLM
Pft. If this was winter we'd have
something saved.

MANDELA
Dad can't hunt. Not on that leg.

MALCOLM

None of us'll last more than a few days without food.

Malcolm gives his brother a look.

MANDELA

He doesn't want us to go... it'll be more dangerous without him.

MALCOLM

So you won't. I'll go alone.

MANDELA

Malc--

MALCOLM

We need food. Unless you can grow a crop in three days... I'll go. You stay. Look after dad.

Mandela doesn't like it, but they don't have a choice.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Malcolm approaches the water, his father's rifle slung over his shoulder. He wears a backpack, fills a bottle with water, takes a long drink as he stares up the path.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Malcolm moves through the woods, following the stream bed. The trees now looking unfamiliar, even threatening.

He finds a hill, lays prone, rifle at his side.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Mandela cares for Cassius, floating in an out of consciousness. Giving his father the last bits of food in the house.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Malcolm all but asleep, clutching the rifle. RUSTLING, off-screen. He lifts his head, spots a DOE near the bank of the stream.

SLOWLY, he positions the rifle, lying prone, taking aim.

The Doe lifts her head, ears pent.

Malcolm takes a breath, pulls the trigger--

BLAM.

He stands, the Doe ROCKETS for the trees. Malcolm curses, watches her go.

He heads down to the stream. Stops.

Bends down, grabs a leaf.

It's SPRAYED with hot red blood. *He's hit her.*

Malcolm is buoyed.

EXT. DEER TRAIL - LATER

Malcolm stalks his prey. Moving slowly, his rifle raised. Something familiar to him about this stretch...

He stops. Finds BLOOD on the trunk of a Maple.

Then looks up to see the same white X emblazoned on a nearby tree. He stares for a moment, dithering, deciding. Finally, he shakes his head.

Takes off the backpack, reveals a very long rope. He takes it out, ties it to the bloody tree.

Resolved, he stomps past the blood and the blaze.

He's going after the deer.

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Malcolm steps into a barren area. A strong storm has passed through. It's wet and skeletal. The trees left standing are leafless below the forest canopy.

He spots the Doe, motionless by a sloping hill. It's bled out.

He approaches. Stands over it. A BEAT. He pulls the large wood-chopping knife.

Hesitates.

He shakes his head, clearing it. Kneels, JABS the blade into the earth nearby.

Grabs the rope, ties it around the deer's hind legs.

He picks up the knife again.

Raises it. JABS it into the doe--

A WEAK MOAN... a RUSTLING in the leaves... and Malcolm stumbles back, tripping onto his butt. He scrambles to grab his rifle.

He aims at the doe... it's lifeless.

Swallows, stands.

He looks around. Spots something. Moves to it. Across the desolate space. More and more certainty in his stride. He's sure of it... Suddenly he comes to a stop.

WIDE as we see what he's been looking at--

A spindly WHITE GIRL, 15, apple-cheeked and battered by the elements. Her breaths are labored. She's been out here a long time, but she won't last much longer.

Malcolm stares a long while... he's never seen a woman in person... much less... a *white woman*.

His mind races.

He lowers his head, turns to go... *she's not his problem...*

The Girl COUGHS. Shivers, nearly convulsing.

After a moment, fighting himself, looks back at her. Moves to the doe, rips the blade out.

He moves back to the girl, hangs there. Grips the blade, staring at her. Pats the sheath on his palm, smearing the blood, and presses his hand against the tree above her.

Takes off his jacket, lays it over her. He retrieves his backpack, takes out the water bottle -- considering. He lays the bag by her side.

Covers her in leaves.

He moves back to the doe, never taking his eyes off the girl, begins to gut the carcass.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The Sun nearly gone.

Mandela spots Malcolm approaching the cabin, dragging the deer behind him. He sweats, every muscle aching.

He stops a good distance from the house.

Mandela comes out, marveling.

Malcolm drops into the dirt, spent.

MANDELA

HA! Dad's gonna go crazy! A whole deer!

Malcolm GASPS.

MALCOLM

W-Water.

Mandela races inside comes back with a bottle.

MANDELA

Long as you were out, I knew you had to find something out there...

Malcolm gulps down his water, looks back at the trees, his mind on the girl.

Mandela finally sees the distance in his brother's gaze.

MANDELA (CONT'D)

Malcolm?

Malcolm looks up.

MANDELA (CONT'D)

Where's your pack? And your jacket?

Malcolm gulps the last of the water.

MALCOLM

(nodding to the doe)
...we gotta... string her up.

Mandela stares at Malcolm, the older brother still huffing. Malcolm stands moves back to the cabin.

MANDELA

Something happened?

MALCOLM

I went past the mark.

Mandela rises.

MANDELA
 ...What? Why? What did you see?

Cassius CALLS from inside.

MALCOLM
 Not now.

Mandela doesn't budge. Malcolm relents.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 I'll show. I swear. But not now...
 not him... And. I need your help.

Cassius YELLS again.

MANDELA
 (nodding)
 Ok.

Mandela moves back to the house. Malcolm stands alone with the carcass.

PRE-LAP, the sound of CRACKLING WOOD--

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

A campfire blazing. Mandela tends it. Malcolm helps Cassius lope to the door.

Cassius, still fevered, looks out past the fire.

The doe is flayed at the breastbone, strung up over a heavy branch by it's feet.

Cassius pushes off of Malcolm, leans against the door jamb. He admires the dead animal. He looks back at Malcolm.

MALCOLM
 ...I... went out. We needed the
 meat.

A BEAT. Cassius looking over his son.

CASSIUS
 Good kill.

Malcolm nods, miles away.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
 You field dress her? Drag her all
 the way here?

More nods.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
 (impressed)
 Coyotes'll come round soon.
 Merciful thing. Better than leavin'
 her out there. Alright. Get on with
 it.

Mandela hands Malcolm a knife, a knowing look between them.
 Malcolm stands before the hollowed deer.

He starts to STRIP her hide.

Mandela looks away.

INT. CABIN -- DAY

Morning. Mandela and Malcolm lace shoes, prep for a hike.
 They take pains to be silent.

Malcolm moves for the door.

CASSIUS
 Barely sunrise.

Mandela turns to see Cassius, reclined on the couch, groggy.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
 Where you going this early?

MALCOLM
 You were right. I heard coyotes
 last night. From the doe. We've
 gotta move the hide and the guts...

Cassius looks toward Mandela, who is clearly uncomfortable.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 I'm bringing him. So he can see how
 to do it.

CASSIUS
 (satisfied, fading)
 Don't take too long. Still got
 training...

MALCOLM
 We won't.

Malcolm heads out. Mandela still sweating, follows.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela hike the path toward the girl. They reach the mark.

MALCOLM

There. I came in right under the sign.

He starts past, stops. Turns back. Malcolm is frozen on the path, kicks the dirt.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

What?

MANDELA

I don't know... Dad says--

MALCOLM

Dad says a lot of things.

MANDELA

You're saying he's a liar?

MALCOLM

No... But... maybe he doesn't know everything.

Mandela shakes this off.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

So how you know there's not a whole other world out there? Other kids like you? Or other cabins?

MANDELA

I like *our* cabin.

MALCOLM

I know. But, where do you think he goes? And why not ever bring us?

MANDELA

You know it's dangerous.

MALCOLM

It's dangerous in here too, more, cuz you don't see it.

Mandela SCOFFS.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

But maybe there's something out there besides that. Don't you wanna know?

Malcolm turns, walks past the boundary. He turns back, gesturing to his brother. *See, I'm fine.*

Mandela hangs there a moment, then follows.

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela step into the clearing. Mandela marveling at the desolation of it.

MANDELA

How come... the other trees?

MALCOLM

Sometimes small storms are worse than the big ones.

Malcolm searches for the blood marked trunk. He spots it, approaches, but there is no sign of the girl.

His jacket lays on the ground. His backpack emptied.

MANDELA

(approaching)

What happened? You leave it? Wolves?

MALCOLM

...a girl. A... woman. She was right here.

MANDELA

(struck)

Like mom?

MALCOLM

No. She was white.

MANDELA

Her skin?

MALCOLM

Yes. Mostly yeah. Kinda pink. Must've been out here for a while. Maybe two days. Looked sick.

MANDELA

Maybe the wolves got her.

MALCOLM
 (searching, moving)
 No blood.

MANDELA
 So maybe she left.

MALCOLM
 She was in bad shape.

MANDELA
 So... ok. Where is she?

Malcolm doesn't answer, he searches.

Mandela stands over the spot where she was found. Something pulling his gaze. He squats down.

A small CIRCULAR EMBLEM, half-covered in dirt. A PATCH--

A White Wolf with open jaws. Lightning bolts on either side of it's face. The animal's eyes are sharp and cruel. Something... Terrifying in it.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
 Malcolm...

Malcolm turns-- in a flash The White Girl SPRINGS from behind a tree SNATCHES Malcolm into a hold, presses a sharp rock to his neck.

MALCOLM
 ...shit!

MANDELA
 MALCOLM!

She squeezes tight, coiling her arm around Malcolm's neck. Her eyes are feral. She grits her teeth, HISSES at Mandela.

Malcolm looks down, notices she's still favoring a dark, bloody gash on her side. She sees it, frantic, yanks at him.

Mandela picks up a rock, approaches.

MALCOLM
 (choking)
 Stop.

MANDELA
 What? NO!

MALCOLM
 STAY BACK. Man-man. She's scared.

Mandela freezes. Eyes fixed on the girl.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 (slowly)
 Is that right? You're scared?

She never takes her eyes off Mandela. Pulls back. Mandela closes again.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 Stop it. Stop. I found you
 freezing. Hurt. I gave you the
 jacket, and the water and food.

The White Girl considers this, shakes it away.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 I wanna help you... that's why we
 came back.

Mandela cuts his eyes at Malcolm.

WHITE GIRL
 Bullshit.

MALCOLM
 It's true... I found you. I want to
 help you... I swear. ...I swear on
 my mother.

This seems to strike a chord. She casts a sidelong glance at Malcolm.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 My brother can help fix you up... I
 can build you a fire.

MANDELA
 Malcolm--

MALCOLM
 Man-man. Put that down.

Mandela stares at The White Girl, anger in his eyes.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 MANDELA!

Mandela tosses the rock away.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 (to the White Girl)
 There. See?

She gives Mandela one more look, releases Malcolm. He grips his throat, catching his breath.

Mandela races to his side.

MANDELA
Are you ok?

MALCOLM
(nodding)
I'm fine.

Malcolm stands, Mandela still seething. They both look back to the White Girl. She stands against tree, still clutching the rock.

She no longer masks the pain of her injury, clutching her side, barely standing.

Malcolm steps toward her, fearless. Mandela follows.

She swells, points her makeshift blade.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
(stopping)
That looks bad...

WHITE GIRL
(never dropping her eyes)
Make the fire.

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - LATER

Malcolm puts another branch on the fire. He sits back down next to Mandela. Stares across the fire at the White Girl.

She still clutches her rock, further away from the flames. Malcolm's jacket on her shoulders. She searches the ground frantically for... something--

Mandela watches as well. He thumbs the Wolf emblem in his palm, suspicious.

MALCOLM
How you think she got here?

MANDELA
...when is she leaving?

Malcolm looks to Mandela.

MALCOLM

She's probably lost... We gotta help her.

MANDELA

(incredulous)

No we don't. She tried to stab you...

MALCOLM

What would you do if you woke up with two strangers standing over you?

MANDELA

She's the stranger. She shouldn't be out here.

MALCOLM

You're scared?

MANDELA

No.

MALCOLM

You are. Cuz daddy says so. All white folks are dangerous. Well... I don't think so.

MANDELA

Mal... She tried to kill you.

MALCOLM

(nodding)

--she didn't know me then, though.

He moves to the other side of the fire, the White Girl tenses.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

You don't wanna move closer?

No answer.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

You'll need to stay warm. Get some sleep. Tomorrow, I can come back with some medicine, maybe some bandages. My brother's better with that stuff, but... he's... shy.

Mandela stares daggers at the White Girl from across the flames.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Anyway. Just... stay warm. We gathered plenty of wood. Should last through the night. There's a stream on the other side of the clearing. Water's clean.

He turns to leave. She shifts to her feet. Malcolm turns back. She doesn't want him to go.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I'll come back tomorrow. Promise.

She looks him over a moment, then extends the jacket.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

(shaking his head)

Keep it. It'll be cold tonight. I'll try to sneak some blankets.

She nods to him. Malcolm SMILES. He walks back to Mandela, takes his pack, the boys head out.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Cassius eats dinner, laid out on the couch. The boys sit in a chair and on the floor.

Cassius alternates biting and wincing from his leg.

Finally, sets the plate aside, trying to find comfort. His eyes on the boys, separated. All too quiet.

CASSIUS

(leaning back)

...what I miss?

MALCOLM

Hm?

CASSIUS

I'm laid up here like an invalid. I want to know what's happening outside.

MALCOLM

Nothing.

Cassius weighs it out. Looks to Mandela.

CASSIUS

What did your brother teach you today?

Mandela looks to Malcolm, Cassius spots it. Sits up.

MALCOLM
Same th--

CASSIUS
(eyes on Mandela)
I'm asking *him*.

MANDELA
...we just... did the normal stuff.

A BEAT. Cassius, mulling this.

CASSIUS
Stuff.

MANDELA
Yeah.

MALCOLM
Training. Running. Cooking.

CASSIUS
That all?

MANDELA
(wary)
Yes. Dad.

CASSIUS
...okay.

The boys go back to eating, trying hard not to look guilty.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
And... getting rid of the guts.

Malcolm SPUTTERS, drops his fork.

MANDELA
Yes.

CASSIUS
You forgot that.

MALCOLM
--he didn't touch them. I just
showed him where to put it all.
(to Mandela, leading)
Remember?

MANDELA
...by... the stream.

The stream near the White Girl. Malcolm didn't expect that. Mandela looks back to his food.

Malcolm watches a beat longer, then looks purposefully away at his plate.

CASSIUS
Good and far.

Neither boy looks up. Cassius can see the daylight between them.

INT. CABIN - LATER

The boys clean the dishes, Cassius in his bedroom, SNORING.

MALCOLM
(drying a plate)
...you had to say the stream?

MANDELA
No. I could've said the clearing.

Malcolm turns Mandela around by the arm.

MALCOLM
What's your problem?

MANDELA
(shrugging)
Nothing...

SILENCE.

Malcolm, exhausted with it. Mandela goes back to the dishes.

MALCOLM
She's out there alone. I just... I want to help her stay alive.

MANDELA
And hear what else is out there while you're doing it?

MALCOLM
What's wrong with that?

MANDELA
What's wrong with here?

Mandela, more stung than he thought, shakes his head. Goes back to the dishes.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
 Know what's coming up?
 (off the silence)
 Momma's birthday.

Malcolm swims in thought.

MALCOLM
 I just want to see it, Man. I
 wasn't gonna leave. I'm *not*
 leaving.

SILENCE.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 She's hurt now. But you saw her.
 Just a few scrapes. In a couple
 days she could hike. Less than a
 week.

MANDELA
 Then she'll be gone?

MALCOLM
 ...then it'll be just us. Before
 mom's birthday. We can still have
 our thing. *If* you help me...

Mandela stops, hands dripping.

MANDELA
 You swear?

MALCOLM
 Swear.

Mandela smiles, nods to his brother. Malcolm rubs his head.
 They go back to their work.

INT. CABIN - CASSIUS' ROOM - SAME MOMENT

Cassius, breathing heavily, awake. Who knows what he's heard.

EXT. WOODS - FORK - DAY

Malcolm approaches The White Girl, who is barely standing,
 wincing with every step.

He looks around quickly, then races to her side.

MALCOLM
 What are you doing out here?

He moves to help her to her feet. She shoves him away.

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

She looks at him, then away.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I'm Malcolm.

She barely acknowledges this.

She struggles, gulp breaths through the pain. Malcolm just hangs there watching. Even in pain, dirty and frustrated he can see--

She's pretty.

WHITE GIRL
(noticing his look)
What?

MALCOLM
Huh?

Finally to her feet, she leans toward him. Opens her eyes wide, cartoonishly. Mocking.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
(quickly)
I'm not staring. I'm looking.

WHITE GIRL
Why?

MALCOLM
I've never seen a girl... like you before.

Malcolm looks away, evading.

WHITE GIRL
Where are we?

MALCOLM
The woods.

WHITE GIRL
I mean... What's close to here?

MALCOLM
Don't know.

She looks through him a minute, puzzled by this.

WHITE GIRL

You got... clean clothes, you don't sleep out here. Where do you go?

MALCOLM

Home. But... I grew up here. I don't know that much about any other woods...

WHITE GIRL

Much?

MALCOLM

Nothing.

WHITE GIRL

(Final)
Shit.

A BEAT.

MALCOLM

Where's your home?

WHITE GIRL

Nowhere close to yours.

MALCOLM

You're lost... Where were you going?

She shields her wound, favoring her side.

WHITE GIRL

Hm?

MALCOLM

When you got lost?

WHITE GIRL

(hesitating)
...I was with my Dad. Storm kicked up. I bumped my head. That's all.

Malcolm considers this, an odd story.

MALCOLM

It's not safe out here. You gotta stay off the trail.

(sudden)

Oh! You need a shelter.

WHITE GIRL

(wary)
Why?

MALCOLM

I wanna help. And... I wanna see
where you come from.

She looks him over, measuring.

PRE-LAP, Cassius SCREAMS in pain...

INT. CABIN - LATER

Cassius grips a ratty couch cushion, racked with pain.
Mandela is attempting to clean his leg wound.

MANDELA

--it'll get infected.

CASSIUS

FUCK!

Malcolm enters. Cassius shoves Mandela to the ground hard,
overcome by pain.

Mandela gets up, some hint of defiance in him.

MANDELA

(to Malcolm)
He's gotta sit still. If it get's
infected he could lose it...

Cassius catches his breath, sweating hard on the couch, every
move seeming to pain him.

MANDELA (CONT'D)

(sotto)
See? It's getting worse. He needs
medicine. His cut is dirty and it
needs to close.

MALCOLM

What can we do?

MANDELA

Hold him.

Mandela looking up at Malcolm. In unison, the brothers dive
on top of Cassius, Malcolm weighing down his torso. Mandela
pouring VODKA on his open leg wound.

Cassius BUCKS, CURSES and SCREAMS. The boys struggle to hold as Mandela splashes the bottle onto the gash.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
That's it!

Finally, Malcolm relents, a second before Mandela. Cassius kicks the younger boy away. Malcolm helps him up.

CASSIUS
You pour liquor on my goddamn leg?!

MANDELA
We don't have anything else.

CASSIUS
(raging, reeling)
Fuck... FUCK. Don't EVER do that--

Malcolm stands in front of Mandela. Cassius tries to get off the couch, but the pain is too great.

Malcolm watches a moment.

MALCOLM
(not turning away)
The leg?

MANDELA
I... I don't know...

MALCOLM
Man-man. Hey. Look at me.

Mandela does.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
The leg?

MANDELA
(eyes on the wound)
It's better. The liquor kills the germs, but it won't close... not by itself. W-we need guaze and... I don't know maybe he needs stitches Malcolm.

Cassius GRUNTS, lunges again. Malcolm shoves Mandela out of the way.

CASSIUS
--too soft to be a fucking nurse?

Mandela scrambles to his feet. He's fuming, caught between rage and tears.

MALCOLM
Get the gauze.

Mandela runs outside.

CASSIUS
(growling)
Get me some aspirin or something...

MALCOLM
We don't have it.

CASSIUS
In the cabinet. Got it last time I left...

Malcolm moves to the kitchen, searches the cupboards. Finally, finds a bottle of painkillers.

He moves to the fridge, pours water into a mug. Hands the water and pills to Cassius.

Cassius gulps them down.

MALCOLM
(looking out the door)
He's trying to look out for you.

Cassius looks Malcolm up and down.

CASSIUS
One leg under me and he's still trembling.

Malcolm frowns.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
And you? Can't stand up, so you stand in for him.

Cassius gulps a few more pills.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
I ain't the one needs looking out for... Soon as I get back on this leg. You'll see.

MALCOLM
You're tired.

CASSIUS
 (drifting)
 Heh. Yeah.

Malcolm turns to go.

CASSIUS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 You get to those snares yet?

MALCOLM
 (whipping around)
 What?

...But Cassius is out. Malcolm watches him for long minute,
 then runs off.

EXT. TIP-UP MOUND - DAY

Malcolm moves through the trees toward Mandela's hideaway.

MALCOLM
 (calling)
 Man-man.

No answer.

Malcolm reaches the lean-to.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 Mandela.

Not even a rustle. Finally, a WHIMPER. Malcolm sits down,
 next to the mound.

The WHIMPERS morph into soft SOBS.

Malcolm plays with leaves on the ground, uncomfortable.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 He didn't mean none of that. He's
 just hurtin'... You know?

MANDELA (O.C.)
 (muffled, from inside)
 Mm huh.

MALCOLM
 You comin out?

MANDELA
 (softly)
 No.

Malcolm SIGHS. Rolls to his hands and knees, crawls toward the shelter, inside. He lays on his side as Mandela huddles in the back of the space.

He wipes at his tears.

MALCOLM
You built all this?

MANDELA
I'm not useless...

MALCOLM
--I know. I know you're not.

MANDELA
How'd you find me?

MALCOLM
I followed you here a while ago...
We're brothers. You don't need
secrets from me.

Mandela looks away. Busies himself with the same items from before. Malcolm watches him.

Mandela singles out the book. He reads and re-reads his mother's journal.

Malcolm sees the words.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I thought all her stuff was gone.

MANDELA
I only have a few things.

MALCOLM
She write that?

Mandela nods.

SILENCE falls, the boys reveling in thoughts of their mom.

MANDELA
Do... you miss her?

MALCOLM
(mulling)
I don't know.

MANDELA
I miss her.

MALCOLM
 (nodding)
 Things would be different. Dad
 would be different.

Mandela starts to tear up.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 Hey.

MANDELA
 (looking up)
 Hm?

MALCOLM
 I won't leave you alone like that
 again. With him.

Mandela nods, not totally convinced. Malcolm sits up, about
 faces to crawl out.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 Dry your eyes, and come on back. We
 got training today.

He moves to leave--

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 (touching a branch)
 You did a good job here.

MANDELA
 You won't tell him about this?

MALCOLM
 No, I won't.

He crawls out. Mandela thumbs the pages of his mother's book.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela run the trails, again.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Malcolm spars with Mandela, the older wearing training mitts.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Malcolm demonstrates the recurve bow to Mandela. Sinks a shot
 into a tree.

Mandela takes the bow, apprehensive and awkward.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela gather water in buckets.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Malcolm and Mandela work the garden. Malcolm repairs the fence and wire. Mandela turns the earth with a hoe.

They spread seeds in new rows.

Mandela pats the earth flat, he's happy. Malcolm stands proud over him.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

CRICKETS and the CRACKLE of a tiny fire in the hearth.

Malcolm and Mandela sit on the floor. Mandela stretched out on a rug. Malcolm clutching his knees near the fire.

MALCOLM

...you know momma used to call you
Doctor?

Mandela perks up.

MANDELA

Doctor?

MALCOLM

Yep. Sometimes Dad used to let it
slip. For the first few years. Then
he stopped.

MANDELA

(barbed)
He never talks about her.

MALCOLM

He don't know how.

Mandela considers this.

MANDELA

Why did she call me that?

MALCOLM

She thought you were gonna be that.
You'd help people. Can't be nothing
in here your whole life.

Mandela YAWNS.

MANDELA

What else?

Malcolm looks away.

MALCOLM

(distant)

She loved us. Wanted us to have a
good life.

MANDELA

Mom was really smart right?

Mandela hungers for this, like a baby bird. This is routine,
but still he yearns for it. He looks up at Malcolm, hopeful.

MALCOLM

(uncertain)

Yeah. And she was beautiful. And
everybody loved her.

MANDELA

She could sing?

MALCOLM

Pretty. Like a bird.

MANDELA

(barely awake)

...and she was really nice?

Malcolm looks down at Mandela. *So innocent.* Malcolm pities
him. The pity turning to a loving lie:

MALCOLM

(faithless)

Sure. ...she'd do anything for you.

Mandela falls asleep. Malcolm sees it.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I'd do anything for you.

He leans back, staring into the flames.

Something is tugging at him. Malcolm stands, walks to the
kitchen. He opens a cabinet, finds the painkillers.

Pockets them.

He slips on a sweater, heads to the door, takes a look around.

Mandela is out like a light.

Malcolm leaves.

Mandela opens his eyes, a look of worry crossing his face.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Malcolm makes his way down the path toward the clearing. Unbeknownst to him, someone is watching...

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - NIGHT

Malcolm emerges from the trees. Spots The White Girl, curled next to a campfire.

Makes his way over.

MALCOLM

Sorry I've been gone so long... My brother needed me. Our dad is... suspicious. Maybe. I'm not sure.

She won't budge.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to leave you out here.

(re: the fire)

But... you found my striker.

Still, nothing. Malcolm rolls his eyes. Steps between her and the fire.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I brought you something for the pain...

He presents the pills, looks down to see that she's shivering, eyes barely open.

He drops to her side.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

(patting her cheek)

Hey? Hey! Um... girl...

He stands, unsure what to do. Wanting to call for help. He reaches down, tries to sit her up. She's limp, clammy.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Come on...

RUSTLES from the trees.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
(freaked)
Who's that?!

He picks up a branch.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
WHO'S THAT?

A shadow emerges from the foliage. Malcolm steels.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Come on!

The form moves closer and we see it's Mandela. The older brother EXHALES, relieved.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Why are you following me?

Malcolm turns back to The White Girl.

MANDELA
Bad enough you want me to lie to dad in the day time-- now, past the line, *at night??* I thought you weren't gonna leave--

MALCOLM
She won't wake up.

MANDELA
...what?

Mandela gets closer, touches her forehead.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
She's got a fever.

MALCOLM
Can you help her?

MANDELA
I'm... not sure. We don't know how long she's been like this...

MALCOLM
What do we do?

MANDELA
We gotta cool her off.

MALCOLM
(searching)
The stream!

Mandela nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREAM - NIGHT

The boys struggle to carry The White Girl to the bank of the stream.

They lay her down there.

MANDELA
You have a bucket? A bottle?

MALCOLM
(shaking his head)
When you were a baby you got sick... dad held you up, put your whole body in the water...

MANDELA
Gotta get her cold fast.

Malcolm takes his jacket off her shoulders. He pulls her top off, exposing a bra underneath. Mandela looks away.

MALCOLM
You said you would help.

Mandela hesitates. Malcolm GRUNTS. He lifts the White Girl under her armpits. Drags her backward toward the stream.

He shuffles and pulls until they hit the water.

SPLASHING and struggling, he pulls her in. Mandela watches from the shore.

A long BEAT.

Malcolm cradling her. The water, settling.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Come on...

MANDELA

Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Come on.

He splashes water on her face.

The White Girl SPRINGS to life, eyes wide. Kicking and splashing, shocked to find herself in the water.

She CLINGS to Malcolm.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

(smiling)

Tried calling you... You wouldn't wake up...

WHITE GIRL

June.

MALCOLM

June?

She nods, calming.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

June.

Mandela watches them, staring as they embrace in the moonlit stream. They seem to forget the world a moment. Mandela clenches his jaw... he doesn't like it.

Malcolm and June move to the stream bank, out of the water. Malcolm hands her his jacket, she bundles up.

Malcolm, finally, looks toward Mandela.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Mandela nods.

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - LATER

Malcolm and June sit close to each other. Mandela nurses a fire, separated from them.

Malcolm hands her a few of the painkillers.

She gulps them down, gratefully.

MALCOLM

There's more in the bottle. Just take a few at a time. It'll help with the fever and everything else.

She nods.

JUNE

Thank you.

Malcolm smiles.

JUNE (CONT'D)

How you know how to do all that?

MALCOLM

(motions to Mandela)
He's the doctor in the family.

JUNE

Doctor?

MANDELA

...my mom taught me.

JUNE

Where is she?

The boys grow silent.

MANDELA

Dead.

MALCOLM

(off her puzzled look)
She was a nurse. Left some books and stuff. My brother's read every word. Twice.

Mandela suppresses a smile.

Malcolm moves to stoke the fire. June watches Mandela a moment, crosses to him. Sits.

An AWKWARD BEAT.

JUNE

...thank you for what you did.

Mandela shrugs.

MANDELA

Malcolm just don't like to read.

JUNE
I-- owe you. Wish I could pay you
back.

MANDELA
Leave.

JUNE
(slowly, melancholy)
If I could.

Silence. Malcolm watches them, makes a face at Mandela. The younger rolls his eyes.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Don't blame you... wanting me to
go. I been mean... I'm sorry for
that.

MANDELA
(softening)
It's fine.

JUNE
(looking to Malcolm)
Mean to him too. Y'all been good to
me, though. I just miss my
family...

Mandela nods, connecting.

JUNE (CONT'D)
--and I ain't ever really been
around niggers before...

A BEAT.

Malcolm and Mandela exchange a look.

MANDELA
...niggers?

MALCOLM
What are niggers?

JUNE
(quickly)
Don't mean to be no kinda way--

MANDELA
We're not niggers. We're just boys.

June stares, confused. She nods to Mandela. The boys share a look, quizzical. Malcolm shrugs.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Malcolm and Mandela walking back. The younger a few steps behind, lost in thought.

MALCOLM
Gotta hustle back, Dad'll be up soon.

MANDELA
You gave her the pills. Dad's pills.

MALCOLM
Hm? Yeah. He's almost better. If he asks, I'll tell him they got lost.

MANDELA
You gonna lie to him yourself?

Malcolm glances over, reading his brother's tone.

MALCOLM
You'd rather I let her die?

MANDELA
...no.

They walk in silence again.

MALCOLM
Summer's coming soon. We can get anything we need outside the woods. Raids. Like before.

MANDELA
Dad can't do that.

MALCOLM
His leg'll heal.

MANDELA
...you doing all this for her?

MALCOLM
Maybe... so?

Mandela pulls the wolf emblem from his pocket. A moment, Mandela wrestling with his brother's feelings.

MANDELA
...I just, want things to go back to normal.

Deciding to let Malcolm dream. He examines the patch, puts it away. Malcolm looks back. Mandela catches up.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Mandela tends the garden. Malcolm CHOPS wood. He stops as Cassius makes his way out of the cabin. He leans on a large branch, a makeshift cane.

Mandela moves to help.

CASSIUS
(waving him off)
...nah. Nah. I got it.

He sweats and struggles; he's in great pain. But he's WALKING. *On his own.*

Malcolm just watches.

Cassius makes his way all the way out and sits in a chair. Mandela claps. Malcolm, slowly, does too.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
(catching his breath)
Heh. Thanks.

Mandela goes back to his garden. Malcolm lingers, staring at Cassius a moment too long. Then goes back to CHOPPING.

Cassius notes this.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Almost on my feet. Rest makes a man
feel brand new.

Mandela approaches, kneels down at his side. Looking at his leg. Tinkers with the dressing.

MANDELA
It's healing.

CASSIUS
That's cuz of you.

Mandela looks up.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Thank you son.

MANDELA
(floating)
You're welcome.

Cassius pats his head. Malcolm slows a moment, Cassius watches him.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
Dad?

CASSIUS
(absent)
Hm?

MANDELA
What's a nigger?

CASSIUS
What.... ? What you say boy?

MANDELA
(shrinking back)
Nigger.

Cassius leans forward. SNATCHES Mandela's arm.

CASSIUS
Where you get that? Hm?

Malcolm is just as puzzled as Mandela. The younger brother looks back to him. Malcolm looks away.

His brother is letting him take the fall.

Malcolm shuffles, mind racing.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
I'm askin, not him... Look at ME.

MANDELA
I...

CASSIUS
(enraged)
What? Where you get that?!

MALCOLM
His BOOKS!

Mandela stands face to face with his father, refusing to relent this time.

Cassius stares for a moment, testing his mettle.

CASSIUS
(looking back at Malcolm)
Books...

Cassius stands.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
What book?

Mandela searches for an answer.

MANDELA
...one of mom's.

A BEAT.

CASSIUS
I don't wanna hear it again.

He hobbles back to the cabin.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
And bring me the book.

Mandela turns back to his garden. Malcolm wanders over, guilty.

MALCOLM
I didn't know what to say.

Nothing. Mandela simply works the dirt. Malcolm watches a moment, then heads back to chop wood.

Mandela never looks up.

They toil, silent and separate.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Cassius stands over a fire, flipping through the pages of their mother's book.

Mandela watches, his eyes never leaving the book. Malcolm sees the sadness on his face. His hopes pinned to the pages.

CASSIUS
(shaking his head)
This ain't doing nobody no good.

Locks eyes with Mandela.

He tosses the book on the flames. Mandela almost leaps after it. Cassius moves to him, hugs him to his side.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
...gotta stand on your own.

EXT. LEAN-TO - DAY

Malcolm approaches the shelter, holding a bucket. Mandela's legs are sticking out of the lean-to.

MALCOLM

Man-man. I'm going to get water.

SILENCE. Finally the legs twist away from Malcolm as Mandela turns his back inside the shelter.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I... couldn't jump in.

INT. LEAN-TO -- CONTINUOUS

Mandela lays on his side, listening.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

What was I supposed to say? Huh?
You tell me! I don't know what he
was gonna do.

Mandela shakes his head.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

(calming)

I'm just sick of all the trees.
Anyway. Thank you.

A BEAT.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Well... ain't you coming out?

Mandela doesn't budge.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Fine.

Mandela hears FOOTSTEPS walking away.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Malcolm arrives at the stream, the bucket swinging from his arm. He stoops to fill it, something catches his eye.

June stands up stream, in her bra and panties, RINSING her skin. Running water through her hair.

June is BEAUTIFUL, SEXY... And vulnerable.

He scrambles back to where she can't see. Malcolm watches her, full on-enamored.

She steps out of the water, grabs her clothes from the shore and heads back to the clearing.

Malcolm realizes she's leaving, grabs his bucket and follows.

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - DAY

Malcolm follows June from tree to tree. She holds a scratched cell phone high up, looking for reception.

MALCOLM

How come you didn't call home if you had it the whole time.

JUNE

I dropped it in the storm, found it when I was wanderin. Wasn't workin. Must've dried out in the sun.

Malcolm is suspicious, but he shrugs it off.

No bars. She SIGHS. Sits.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Useless though.

An idea occurs--

JUNE (CONT'D)

Hey do you--?

MALCOLM

(shaking his head)
Never seen one before. My dad told me about 'em though. Just one more way they keep track of you, keep their boot on you...

JUNE

They?

Malcolm looks up, the error dawning on him. The phone BEEPS.

MALCOLM

(evading)
Did it find somebody?

JUNE

No. It's dying.

MALCOLM
It's not alive... right?

June smiles.

JUNE
You miss a lot out here.

Malcolm sits.

MALCOLM
I do? Like what?

JUNE
...cell phones. Ice cream. Roller
coasters. Swimming.

She shuts her eyes, drifting into memory.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Even sometimes parties with your
friends.

MALCOLM
Friends.

She opens her eyes. Looks him over.

JUNE
Yeah. I didn't have a lot of those.

MALCOLM
But you got everything else.

JUNE
Everything?

MALCOLM
(longing)
The whole world.

JUNE
(melancholy)
I used to just wanna leave. Go
somewhere. Get lost. I'd dream
about it. Now...

The sit in silence a moment.

MALCOLM
There was this Indian Chief a long
time ago. And he gets old and he
wanted to pass along the tribe.

JUNE

The tribe?

MALCOLM

The power, I think. The throne. So. He makes this contest for all the boys in the tribe.

JUNE

Boys? Not girls?

MALCOLM

Men. And he says bring me a gift. Man with the best gift gets the throne. And everybody brings dead bears and gold and stuff they find. And this one guy comes back with nothing. And he says I couldn't find anything worth more than what you gave us. The times you took us fishing. The way you taught us to hunt. The stories you told at the fire circle. That was the best gift and it's already given.

JUNE

So he took it back. Indian Giver!

She LAUGHS. Malcolm doesn't get it.

MALCOLM

No. The Chief gave him the throne.

JUNE

Why?

MALCOLM

Cuz he said the best gift was memory. That's what the man gave him.

She smiles.

JUNE

Where'd you get that?

MALCOLM

It was a story I heard.

JUNE

Where?

MALCOLM

Dad says mom used to tell me.

JUNE
You don't remember?

Malcolm shakes his head.

JUNE (CONT'D)
(easing off it)
Why you wanna leave?

MALCOLM
Why do you want to go back?

She considers this, leans her head on his shoulder.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Malcolm approaches with the bucket of water. He spots Cassius sitting out front, waiting.

The boy approaches, puts the bucket down.

MALCOLM
--It was heavy carrying back...

CASSIUS
Don't do that.

MALCOLM
Wha--

CASSIUS
Lie. I know where you been.

Mandela appears in the doorway.

MALCOLM
I was at the stream.

CASSIUS
You been past the line. Don't play
me dumb.

MALCOLM
Dad...

CASSIUS
(rising)
You've been out of yourself.
Getting lost. Getting distant.
Telling tales. I don't know what
you been doing, but I'm done with
it now. You don't go past that mark
again.

Malcolm's eyes flit to Mandela, *did he tell?*

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
You understand?

MALCOLM
No.

CASSIUS
No...?

MALCOLM
You always saying there's
nothing good out there.
There's people who want to
hurt us... I don't believe
you. I think there's
something better... And you
can't have it, so you don't
want us to have it either.
You want us to die in here
Sad and alone with YOU!

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
You don't know what you're
saying... watch your mouth
boy... SHUT UP!

Cassius SLAPS the boy. Mandela watches.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
You living cuz of me. Everything
you have, is cuz of me.

Cassius hobbles inside. Mandela and Malcolm stare at each other. Mandela turns, heads inside.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

THOCK. A large blade sinks into the trunk of a tree.
Malcolm's knife. His hand pulls it out.

Malcolm steps away from the tree, turns and THROWS the blade
again.

Walks up to retrieve.

Mandela approaches. Malcolm gives him a passing glance.

MALCOLM
You told him?

Another THROW.

MANDELA
No. He's not stupid.

MALCOLM
He doesn't know anything.

MANDELA
I think he's right.

Malcolm SCOFFS. THROWS.

MALCOLM
You think June's dangerous?

MANDELA
Maybe not her...

Mandela hands him the patch. Malcolm looks it over.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
I found it... I think it's hers.

MALCOLM
So? Ain't a real wolf.

MANDELA
(growing angry)
You're being stupid. You don't even
know her.

MALCOLM
I know she ain't a killer.

Mandela fumes, aggravated.

MANDELA
You don't know anything!

Malcolm watches him go. Pulls the knife from the tree. Stands there, considering it.

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - NIGHT

June sits by a fire. Alone, lost in thought.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Cassius stands near the front door. He looks from a pair of binoculars.

He sees the GLOW from the fire in the woods.

Cassius SCOWLS.

Heads inside.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Malcolm tosses and turns. Gets up, heads into the kitchen for water.

He drinks from a mug, lays it aside.

He walks toward the couch, no sign of Cassius. Malcolm frowns. He walks to his father's bedroom. No luck there either.

MANDELA (O.S.)

He went out.

Malcolm turns to him.

MANDELA (CONT'D)

I heard him get up. Walked outside. Then he came back in, got the rifle and left.

MALCOLM

Where?

MANDELA

Why what are you going to do?

MALCOLM

WHERE?

A standoff. Mandela shakes his head.

MANDELA

I'm not sure.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Cassius limps along bushwhacking his own trail. His rifle at the ready.

A VOICE ECHOES... calling *JUNE! JUNEBUG!*

Getting closer.

Cassius stops, finds a vantage. Tucks behind a boulder. He peeks out, watching the woods ahead of him.

A man appears, MILITARY from the look of him.

Boots and Flack Vest. A shamog around his neck. A mask obscuring his face. A sidearm strapped to his thigh.

Cassius breathes deep and slow.

SOLDIER

JUNE!

The man moves ahead a bit.

Cassius SPRINGS OUT, rifle trained.

CASSIUS

That's enough there.

The man freezes.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)

Turn around.

He complies, turning away from Cassius.

Cassius slowly descends his vantage point, wary. He limps and shuffles toward the man.

CLOSE ON the Soldier, listening to his awkward gait.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)

What you doin' out here?

SOLDIER

Same as you. Lookin for somebody.

CASSIUS

Whose that?

The Soldier is silent. Cassius jabs him with the rifle.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)

Who?

SOLDIER

You don't know her.

CASSIUS

Her?

Nothing.

Cassius jabs him again, but the Soldier spins away from the muzzle. A SHOT rings out.

They struggle for the rifle. Cassius pulls it away, the soldier kicks him in the leg.

Cassius SCREAMS, drops.

The Solder pulls his pistol, ready to end it, gets close. Cassius grabs his wrist, diverting his aim.

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE for the weapon, both men grunting.

Their bodies tight, close. The Soldier LEANS on his leg. Cassius SQUEALING. Soldier tries to apply pressure with his hand.

Cassius takes the opening, presses the pistol under his chin, FIRES.

Point blank. Blood and brain matter SPLATTERS Cassius.

He rolls the man off him.

GRITS his teeth in pain, trying to catch his breath.

He struggles to his feet.

Grabs his rifle. Picks up the pistol, tucks it away.

Looks down on the man. SPITS at him.

He notices something on the man's chest. Reaches down tugs at it. Looks around for a tool. Pulls the deadman's knife from it's holster.

CUTS the cloth from his chest.

He holds it up to the light.

We see it now-- THE SAME EMBLEM MANDELA FOUND ON JUNE.

The WHITE WOLF'S GAPING JAWS.

Cassius pockets it. Pulls the mask up the dead man's face.

He's White.

Grim, Cassius turns, heads back.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Dawn just breaking over the horizon. Malcolm and Mandela sit watching the path from June's clearing.

Malcolm fretting. Fearing the worst.

MANDELA
Maybe she left...

Malcolm sneers.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
It's better that way.

Cassius appears, from the OPPOSITE direction. Mandela spots him.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
He's back there.

MALCOLM
Where's he coming from?

Malcolm and Mandela share a look, puzzled.

Malcolm runs to him.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
What happened?

He takes his father in, dirty, spattered with blood, spent. Cassius shoves the rifle at him.

Walks past.

Mandela takes in the sight.

The boys stand in the dawn light, looking at each other, trying to make sense of it.

Cassius returns from inside the cabin, carrying a bottle of whiskey.

He sits, drinks. Looks out toward the woods. The boys approach.

MANDELA
Dad?

CASSIUS
I found an injured animal. Heard him callin. I put him down.

Mandela looks his father over.

MALCOLM
What kind of animal?

CASSIUS
(turning)
Wolf.

The boys exchange a look.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Get dressed.

MALCOLM
For training?

CASSIUS
No. We're going hunting.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

The boys follow Cassius as he limps along the path toward June. He shoulders the rifle.

Malcolm carries his bow.

The boys silently argue. Malcolm worried for June.

Neither can stop their advance.

EXT. STREAM - LATER

Cassius splashes water on his face and neck, washing away the blood.

Malcolm watches.

MALCOLM
What are we looking for?

CASSIUS
Deer.

MALCOLM
We still got food at home.

CASSIUS
Then let's call this sport. Only
one way to learn to hunt.

He pulls a map from his pants. Malcolm watches. Cassius finds his position, folds the map and puts it away. He prepares to stand, but spots a footprint in the dirt.

June's footprint.

He looks down stream, finds the path toward the clearing. Starts to follow the path.

Malcolm is right on his heels, racking his brain for a way out.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
(walking)
Animals are predictable. Food.
(MORE)

CASSIUS (CONT'D)

Water. Shelter. Sometimes they get clever, though. Fight their nature. Leave their herd... that's usually when you get your shot.

Cassius arrives at a tree with his mark painted on. The boys catch up. Cassius takes a look back.

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - DAY

June unwraps the gauze around her wounds. She presses her flesh. It's tender, red, but healing. She stands, STRETCHES.

VOICES on the path. *Malcolm's voice.*

She perks up, STANDS to greet him.

A LONG BEAT.

Her smile fades... Something... off.

WE PUSH CLOSER to the foliage. TIGHTER and TIGHTER. The leaves RUSTLE. And--

Cassius pushes into the clearing. The boys trailing.

MALCOLM

Dad...

Cassius holds up a hand. Silencing him. He scans the clearing.

He spots the ASHES of campfire.

Moves to it. Feels for heat.

As he looks around the clearing, PULL BACK to REVEAL June, pressed up against a nearby tree, just out of sight. She holds her breath.

Malcolm looks around searching for June, trying not to give her away.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

(stepping forward)

What are we doing Dad?

CASSIUS

(focused)

Hunting son...

MALCOLM

There's nothing out here.

Cassius looks down, kicks away some leaves and sticks to find Malcolm's Jacket.

CASSIUS

You sure?

Malcolm is silent. Mandela simply watches. Cassius turns back. Walks toward June's tree, steps around it-- but she's not there.

Cassius hangs there a moment, he can almost SENSE her.

Malcolm's heart pounds in his chest.

Cassius stands on a low ridge. Just below him there is a fallen tree trunk. June is LYING FACE DOWN in the dirt, STILL as the grave.

He puts a foot on the side of the log. Dirt and debris falling on top of June's face. Across her eyes and nose.

Tickling. Irritating.

She holds her breath.

Cassius leans forward about to take another step...

MALCOLM

It was me!

He turns back to Malcolm. A moment of relief for June.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

It was me. I was out here. I left my jacket. I went across the treeline. I just wanted to see what it was like.

Cassius hesitates, then walks back to his son. He takes the boy's head in his hands and... pulls him in for a hug.

CASSIUS

I set those blazes for you. I left that world, for you. I'm not gone let them have you now.

Malcolm nods.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)

This is family is the only important thing. No more lies now. Hm?

Mandela stares at Cassius, the words sounding sincere. This is love. This is all there is.

MANDELA
No more lies.

Cassius looks to Malcolm.

MALCOLM
Ok, dad.

The three of them bask in the feeling a moment. Cassius SMILES at his sons. After a moment, he feels convicted, pulls something from his pocket. The Wolf Emblem.

CASSIUS
I took this from a man who was...
trying to hurt us. From outside the
trees.

Malcolm and Mandela recognize the patch, both trying to play it cool.

Cassius notes it.

MALCOLM
...what is it--

MANDELA
What happened to him?

CASSIUS
He's gone.

Back at the log, June is listening.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Have you seen this?

Malcolm shakes his head. Mandela stares for a moment.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Son?

MANDELA
I... no.

Cassius takes in both boys. He can feel their tension. They lied right to his face. Cassius, heartbroken, puts the patch away.

CASSIUS
(feigning relief)
Ok, good.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Malcolm leads them back to the cabin. Mandela walks next to his father, head hung low.

Cassius spots a squirrel in a tree.

He stops, shoves the rifle at Mandela.

CASSIUS
See that?

Mandela spots the squirrel.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Take him.

MANDELA
Me?

CASSIUS
You're old enough.

Malcolm turns back, spots the gun in Mandela's hands.

MALCOLM
What--what are you doing?

CASSIUS
Your brother's going to kill that squirrel.

MALCOLM
He's a bad shot... Let me--

CASSIUS
He'll learn.

MALCOLM
He can't even bait a hook.

MANDELA
I can do it.

Cassius looks to Malcolm. Mandela nods, shoulders the rifle awkwardly.

Malcolm frets.

CASSIUS
He'll learn.

Malcolm stands aside silently. Cassius looks between his sons, his manipulation finding ground.

Mandela gets a line on the squirrel. He aims... hesitates.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
It ain't hard once it's over. Just
take a breath, and pull.

A BEAT.

Mandela FIRES, the noise near deafening to him. He stumbles
back. Cassius takes the rifle.

Cassius SIGHS.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
You winged him.

Moves to the squirrel. Mandela follows. Malcolm watches from
the path.

Cassius stands over the squirrel.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
He's suffering. Slow. Bleedin' out.

MANDELA
I didn't mean that...

CASSIUS
It happened. You gonna leave it be?
Or finish what you started?

Mandela steps forward, staring down.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Boot or the tree.

Mandela frowns. Raises his foot, STOMPS down on the rodent's
head, killing it.

He is frozen for a moment. Malcolm is fully STUNNED.

Then he turns, and walks toward the path.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

The boys sit silently at a fire. Malcolm tries to look at his
brother but Mandela only looks down.

MALCOLM
That shouldn't have happened. He
shouldn't--

Cassius appears holding the squirrel by it's tail.

CASSIUS
What shouldn't?

Malcolm clams up. Cassius sneers. He sits. Pulls at the stiff squirrel's spine, loosening it up.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
I know what you're thinkin. You're down because... you think you did something evil. That's wrong.

He lifts his blade, checking the edge in the firelight.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
...all you did, was survive. That ain't on you. That's God's plan.

MANDELA
Then maybe God's evil.

Cassius lift's the squirrel's tail, cuts a slit along it's back. He twists the tail SNAPPING it's tailbone. More cutting.

CASSIUS
In these woods, you're kids. Somebody else gonna do all the nasty things. Out there... when they see you... you get grown.

Cassius pulls the skin of the lower back up, making a small flap from the animal's hide.

He lays the creature on the ground, grips its legs in his hand, steps his heel on the flap of skin and fur.

In one motion Cassius RIPS THE SKIN off the squirrel like skin-tight pullover. He tosses the sticky white skin into the woods.

He holds the pink fleshy mass in his hand.

Mandela tries hard to look on.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
You remind me so much of your mother. I love you both. Soft hearts though.

Mandela meets his gaze.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
She wasn't right for that world. That's why she's gone.

Cassius cracks open the rib cage. Pulls the HEART.

He sticks it on the tip of his blade holds it over the fire. It STEAMS and smokes.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Those white men are coming. You
don't get to be boys anymore.

Mandela watches the heart ROASTING. Malcolm stares into Cassius, refusing to accept this.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
So, you gotta decide what you're
gonna be.

A BEAT.

Mandela grabs the heart from the knife. He BLOWS it, pops it in his mouth and chews it up.

Cassius sits back. Satisfied.

Malcolm watches Mandela fall under Cassius' spell.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

The boys are laid out asleep near the fire. Cassius snoozes in a chair.

Malcolm lays alone on the ground.

A PEBBLE lands on his hand. Another on his stomach. Then another.

REVEAL June is tossing them. Trying to get his attention. Malcolm wakes, spots her. He's immediately alarmed.

He gets up gingerly, moves to her at the edge of the dense foliage.

MALCOLM
(whispered)
My dad could wake up anytime...
plus Mandela might tell on us.

JUNE
The man. Your dad mentioned
someone. Said he was gone. Who was
he?

MALCOLM
...You think it's your dad?

JUNE
 (somber)
 Or my uncle.

MALCOLM
 That's good right?

June shakes her head... No.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 What's going on?

JUNE
 I can't say right now.

MALCOLM
 (end of his rope)
 Of course. You always say that.

JUNE
 This is different.

MALCOLM
 How? You barely answered one
 question about you since we met.
 Why don't you tell me?

JUNE
 I *will*.

MALCOLM
 No. Now.

JUNE
 Why?! You don't care about me. You
 just want to leave here.

MALCOLM
 You don't know what he's like...

JUNE
 Yeah. I do.

A BEAT. He sizes her up, she seems sincere.

MALCOLM
 My dad found something the guy in
 the woods. Took some patch from
 him. That's all I know.

JUNE
 Patch?

MALCOLM

A picture of a white wolf with
thunderbolts.

June goes pale.

JUNE

You haven't seen the man?

MALCOLM

No.

JUNE

We've got to find him.

MALCOLM

Why?

JUNE

Because he wouldn't take that patch
off. Never.

MALCOLM

(nodding)

Dad's got a map, I saw. Probably
marks it all, it's how he found you
in the clearing.

JUNE

He must have all of these woods
figured out on there.

MALCOLM

I can get it. We'll find him. It's
going to be--

JUNE

It's not. It's gonna be bad.

MALCOLM

For my dad?

JUNE

For everybody.

Malcolm looks back to his family. The terror in her voice
unsettling him.

EXT. SOUTH WOODS - NIGHT

June waits for Malcolm by the trail behind the cabin. The
path his father took. Malcolm sneaks down, his bow in hand.

MALCOLM

I couldn't get the map.

JUNE

What? How do we find him then?

MALCOLM

We never use these trails. They'll be signs.

He clicks on a small flashlight. Walks ahead, June follows.

TIMECUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH WOODS - NIGHT

JUNE

Why would your dad even be out this far?

MALCOLM

I don't know.

JUNE

For a man that wants to be left alone he sure's got a funny way.

MALCOLM

What you mean?

JUNE

All of it I guess. The guns. The fighting. Some people can't put it down.

MALCOLM

...Dad says it's them. The world out there. It's dangerous. He just wants to protect what we have.

JUNE

(shrugging)

World's okay. I lived there my whole life. It's just some people... some people just looking for a fight.

Malcolm stops.

MALCOLM

My mom died out there. She wasn't anybody like that.

(MORE)

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Soldier or anything. She was good.
Nice. They killed *her*.

June considers this, softens. Malcolm spots something ahead.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Look...

They walk ahead, the dead Soldier lies on the ground,
partially chewed and trampled by animals.

June CHOKES.

Malcolm spots the jacket where the patch has been cut away.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

He's dead.

JUNE

I know.

MALCOLM

(reeling)

My... dad killed him. Just... shot
him dead.

JUNE

I know.

MALCOLM

He said... this man was trying to
hurt us. Do you... know him?

She looks the body over. Kneels next to him, lifts his mask.
She looks away at the smell, the sight.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Is it your dad?

JUNE

No.

Malcolm breathes a sigh of relieve.

MALCOLM

Your uncle?

JUNE

(grave)

No. But... he's not alone. They're
coming.

MALCOLM

Who's coming?

JUNE
My family.

EXT. SOUTH WOODS - LATER

June speeds back up the trail, toward the cabin.

MALCOLM
Slow down.

JUNE
No.

He gets in front of her.

MALCOLM
What are you so scared of? What's
out here? What's that patch mean?

JUNE
It's like a medal. A reward.

MALCOLM
Reward? For what?

JUNE
Something bad. PLEASE. Stop.

Malcolm calms.

JUNE (CONT'D)
We have to go.

MALCOLM
Go back to the cabin?

JUNE
No. Leave the woods. Run. Go as far
as we can.

MALCOLM
Why?

JUNE
Your dad killed one of them. It
won't be long. They use radios.
They know where he went. They'll
come looking for him... and then
they'll find all of us.

MALCOLM
I can't just leave my brother, my
dad...

JUNE

They don't want them... Not really.

MALCOLM

How do you know?

June hesitates.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

June. How do you know?

JUNE

They're looking for me.

MALCOLM

What?

JUNE

My uncle is not a good man. Worse than your dad. A lot worse. But I lived with him and the others. They were like my family. Only one I ever knew. My dad came for me one day. Like magic. Like a fairy godmother. But my uncle didn't want to let us go. Said my dad owed him. So... we ran. And we got separated in that storm and I got lost. They want me back. They sent him. They'll send more. Until--

MALCOLM

We'll go. I'll get the map, some supplies. We can run. Tomorrow. They won't find us.

JUNE

Yeah?

Malcolm nods.

JUNE (CONT'D)

What about your family?

Malcolm weighs it out.

MALCOLM

My dad won't leave.

JUNE

What about your brother?

MALCOLM
(uncertain)
...he'll go.

They turn back toward the road. Malcolm heads back for the cabin.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Sunrise. Cassius waking up with the first light. He stretches. Looks over at Mandela. SMILES.

Rubs the boys head.

Mandela flutters to life.

CASSIUS
Morning son.

MANDELA
(groggy)
Mornin'.

Cassius looks over at Malcolm, offers a smile.

CASSIUS
Gonna be a good day.

Malcolm nods, looks out on the woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Cassius stands over Mandela and Malcolm as they do push-ups. Malcolm clearly distracted.

Cassius' eye is on Mandela now. The boy pushes himself hard trying to impress.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Cassius and Mandela set snares and trip wire in the woods.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Malcolm steals Cassius' map. Loads a backpack full of food, bandages, a water bottle...

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Cassius shows Mandela how to shoot with the rifle, taking aim at distant trees.

Malcolm dry-tests his bow.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Malcolm slips on his boots. He looks around his bedroom, turns, and leaves.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Sun dropping low.

Malcolm peeks out, no sign of his brother or his dad. He slips the backpack off his shoulder, turns to go.

MANDELA

Dad's checking snares in the woods behind the house. You're leaving, right?

Malcolm spins.

MANDELA (CONT'D)

Going to meet June?

MALCOLM

(frozen)
You going to tell?

MANDELA

I don't know.

MALCOLM

I want you to come too.

Mandela shakes his head.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Really. This... what you're doing now... it's dad. Not you.

MANDELA

It's being a man.

MALCOLM

Who says?

Mandela is struck silent.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I wasn't going to leave you.

MANDELA
Don't go.

MALCOLM
We have to.

MANDELA
Dad says-- you could get killed if
you go.

MALCOLM
He lies.

MANDELA
How do you know?

MALCOLM
Dad killed somebody. Now his
friends are going to come looking
for us, unless we go now.

MANDELA
(trying to comprehend)
A white man?

MALCOLM
Does it matter?

MANDELA
He must've had some reason--

MALCOLM
This is dad's fault.

MANDELA
Maybe it's... her.

MALCOLM
What?

MANDELA
Before June came, everything was
fine. Now more white men come. And
what about that patch? This is all
her fault.

Malcolm stares at his young brother, incredulous.

MALCOLM
 ...I'm going. Tonight. If you want
 to come... you know where to find
 me.

Malcolm pushes past him, starts for the trail to June.

MANDELA
 Malcolm... tonight?

MALCOLM
 Yes.

MANDELA
 Did you forget?

MALCOLM
 (stopping)
 ...forget?

MANDELA
 Mom's birthday. You said you'd
 celebrate with me...

Malcolm hesitates.

MALCOLM
 Dad never talks about her... you
 were too young to remember... and
 so was I.

MANDELA
 Remember what?

MALCOLM
 (turning)
 It's not her birthday. I don't even
 know when it is. Just another
 story.

Mandela is crushed, TEARS welling and falling. Malcolm sees
 it. He stands there, fighting himself. Wanting to move to
 Mandela's side.

Both boys wishing things were different. Malcolm looks away,
 and walks off.

Mandela stands there watching his brother disappear.

He SNIFFS, wipes away his tears... and SNARLS at his absent
 brother, sadness turns to resentment.

EXT. CABIN - LATER

Night has fallen. Cassius finally returns, his injury now just a hitch in his walk. Mandela waits by the front door.

CASSIUS
Hey son.

MANDELA
Hi Dad.

CASSIUS
(stretching)
You and Malcolm ready for dinner?

MANDELA
Malcolm left.

Cassius pauses, thinking.

CASSIUS
When is he coming back?

MANDELA
He's leaving forever. Went to the north woods.

Mandela motions toward the trail. Cassius FUMES.

CASSIUS
Why?

Mandela moves to his father hands him something. Cassius looks down at it, REVEAL the patch Mandela found.

Cassius pats his own pocket. Pulls out the patch he cut from the soldier. Compares the two.

CASSIUS (CONT'D)
Where'd you get this?

MANDELA
I found it in her things.

CASSIUS
Her?

MANDELA
June.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Malcolm and June following Cassius' map... trying to. June shines a light as Malcolm twists the map around, confused.

MALCOLM

I thought we were past the ravine... I'm sorry. I've never been this far out.

JUNE

We'll use a handrail.

MALCOLM

What?

She hands him the light, takes the map. Lays it on the ground, squats. Scans it with her finger.

JUNE

The stream is there... leads to a bigger creek... all the way out to these falls. If we keep it on our side, we're going the right way.

Malcolm nods, impressed.

MALCOLM

How you know so much about this stuff?

JUNE

...my uncle taught me. How come you don't?

MALCOLM

My dad never showed us his map. I guess... he never wanted us to leave.

JUNE

Well... I never met nobody like you before out there. Don't think I was supposed to.

A BEAT. Tentative, he touches her hand.

JUNE (CONT'D)

(awkward)

I... gotta pee.

She stands.

She moves behind a set of trees. Malcolm sits alone with the map.

After a moment, he hears RUSTLING.

MALCOLM

June?

No response.

Malcolm folds the map, sticks it in his backpack. Shines his light on the dark woods around him. Shadows dancing, Malcolm on edge.

He pulls out his knife.

Settles on a mossy oak, nearby leaves still shaking.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Come out! I see you!

BEAT.

A VOICE

OK. Ok. Here I come.

Malcolm stands, knife at the ready as a man steps from behind the oak. Tall and solid with a neat goatee. He's older. White hair, cropped close.

This is BILL, 54. Wearing army fatigues and tactical gear. Walks with the confidence of a man who wins the fights he starts.

He shields his eyes from the light, approaches slowly.

MALCOLM

That's enough.

Bill stops, hands up.

BILL

(smiling)

Alright.

Malcolm just stares.

BILL (CONT'D)

Now what?

MALCOLM

What do you want?

BILL
Me? This is your show. Simon Says.

Malcolm, flustered, not daring to take his eyes of Bill. He spots a gun on his hip.

Bill follows his eyes.

BILL (CONT'D)
This? Alright. Simon Says put it down.

Bill reaches for the gun.

MALCOLM
(almost pleading)
Stop.

Bill smirks.

BILL
Sounds like a request boy...

He pulls the gun. Malcolm TREMBLES. He inches back, trying to retreat.

BILL (CONT'D)
(barking)
STOP.

Malcolm stumbles, freezes.

BILL (CONT'D)
See? Isn't that better? Now. Put that blade down.

Malcolm, slowly, lowers it to his side. Bill stands there watching him, a cat with a mouse.

BILL (CONT'D)
Good. Come on out ya'll.

Malcolm looks around, frantic as a dozen men emerge from the trees like wraiths. All in paramilitary gear. All Armed.

All WHITE.

Malcolm's breath quickens. Bill never takes his eyes off the boy.

JUNE (O.S.)
Let me go!

Malcolm looks over to see June, roughly escorted by one of the men. She kicks and swings, but it's no use.

BILL
Calm down, Junebug. Gonna give
yourself a hernia.

Bill walks over to her.

BILL (CONT'D)
Don't you know how much I worried?

He leans down and June SLUGS him. A solid shot.

Bill stands, swallowing rage. His man JERKS her back. Bill steps closer, raises a hand to slap her. June flinches.

He stops.

Points a scolding finger.

BILL (CONT'D)
You are an ungrateful child. Just
like your daddy.

June lights at this.

JUNE
Where's my dad?

Bill SMILES.

BILL
Bring 'em both. Fall out.

The soldiers hop to action, a pair of soldiers snatch up Malcolm.

BILL (CONT'D)
And let me have a look at that...

A soldier hands him the knife.

They drag Malcolm and June into the trees. Bill follows, looking the blade over.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Cassius, armed with his rifle searches the woods with Mandela. He looks over at his son, a somber thought in his head.

He pulls the pistol he found on the dead soldier, hands it to Mandela.

Mandela holds it awkwardly.

CASSIUS
Take the safety off.

Mandela nods, feeling the weight of it.

EXT. BILL'S CAMP - NIGHT

A bivouac near a sloping hill. Multiple campfires. A temporary shelter made from tin siding.

Malcolm sits alone at a fire. Two of the white men, faces obscured standing guard.

A few others talk and drink. One lounges, lying across an ATV.

Bill sits under the shelter, leaned back against the roots of a tree, feet elevated.

Malcolm spots June flanked by two men, standing a distance away. He flags her, gets her attention. Malcolm looks around, motioning back toward the woods.

Let's make a run for it.

June follows his gaze. Shakes her head.

MAN'S VOICE
June?!

A wiry, wild eyed man runs past Malcolm's fire. He's not dressed like the others. He doesn't move like the others. The soldier's stand to attention, ready to go.

Bill looks up, leisurely rising to his feet.

The soldiers get in his way...

BILL
(waving)
Let him through...

They step aside and the stranger pushes past.

STRANGER
JUNE!

JUNE

Dad!

June leaps up, hugs him tight. He stands back and looks her over.

This is DECKARD, 40, stringy and unkempt. He looks like he's been on a desert island. Bill's baby brother.

Bill approaches.

BILL

I'll tell you. Reunion like this...
You've got no idea how much joy it
brings.

Bill CLAPS.

The Soldiers, rowdy and drunk follow. HOOTING and HOLLERING.
Deckard looks around.

June sneers at her uncle.

JUNE

Dad... can we go?

Deckard looks to Bill, who stops clapping. Bill looks around the camp.

BILL

Get set. Moving out in 10.

The Soldiers prep their gear.

Malcolm, far from Bill and the others, looks around him as the camp springs to activity.

AT JUNE'S CAMPFIRE--

DECKARD

I just want to take her home.

BILL

And you will Deck. Just a little
detour first.

(to June)

We put a lot of time into finding
you, girl. Ironic really. Soon as
he steals you away, he loses you
and comes crying to me to fix it.

JUNE

Dad, what's he talking about?

DECKARD
Nothing... nothing.

BILL
That's your problem... I never lied
to that child.

DECKARD
(angry)
She's not your child.

BILL
Then why am I raising her?

Bill shakes his head.

BILL (CONT'D)
Ungrateful.
(scolding)
Teaching her all the wrong things.

JUNE
Dad? What's going on?

Deckard stares at Bill a moment, wilting. His anger turning
to a plaintive stare.

BILL
(sighing)
Your daddy needed my men to help
look for you. He was with the Bravo
team, and one of those boys never
came back from recon. We never
woulda been out here if it wasn't
for you. And him askin... so it
stands to reason, he'd help me
catch the sonofabitch who killed my
man... and string him up. Least...
that was the terms.

Deckard shakes his head, willing this moment to be over. June
steps to him.

JUNE
Is it true?

DECKARD
...you could've been killed.

June pulls away.

BILL

I swear if we ain't have the same daddy, Deck, I'd think you were half-nigger. Once we get our killer, you're free and clear.

DECKARD

You've got the boy. He was armed right?

BILL

Him?

(HEARTY LAUGH)

That boy is five-six, what, a buck thirty? Jared was airborne infantry. TOUGH. That boy ain't alone. Now... It's time to do the right thing... then you go home.

Deckard scowls at Bill, lacking the courage to say anything.

JUNE

My dad can't help you. He doesn't know anything.

Bill looks to the girl.

JUNE (CONT'D)

But... I do.

BILL

Deck, she must've gotten all the brains. So. Tell me what you know.

June looks back to Malcolm, torn.

AT MALCOLM'S FIRE -- LATER

Malcolm stares up at the hill, at the top. A few trucks parked close. There's a gravel road.

It leads out-- A WORLD OUTSIDE THE WOODS. There is a soft glow, a town, miles down the road.

He's never been this close.

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

You seem close.

Malcolm snaps out of it, finds Bill standing over him with his knife.

BILL (CONT'D)
 (motioning with the blade)
 You and my niece.

Malcolm is stoic.

BILL (CONT'D)
 She's a sweet girl. Got a good
 heart. But... She don't always make
 the right choices.

Bill sits. Face to face with Malcolm now.

BILL (CONT'D)
 You know this isn't gonna work,
 right? Different worlds and all.
 You know that.

MALCOLM
 ...yes.

BILL
 Yes. Good. What's best, I think, is
 for you and her to part ways. And
 you go on back where you came from.
 We do the same... Before this gets
 outta hand.

Malcolm hesitates. Bill takes the knife by the blade, extends
 the handle to Malcolm.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Go on, son.

Malcolm takes the blade.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Run on home.

Malcolm stands. The soldiers watching. One of them hands him
 his backpack.

Malcolm takes a look back at June. Guilt racking her. He
 turns, and runs off into the trees, back toward home.

A BEAT.

Bill stands.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Well... Let's go get 'em.

The soldiers fall out. June runs over to Bill.

JUNE
You promised not to hurt him...

BILL
(turning to her)
I'm not. I'm gone shoot him in the
head.

Bill walks away. June is powerless to stop him.

EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT

Malcolm races through the dark, stumbling and falling and
scrambling. Lost.

He crests a hill and runs into--

Mandela and Cassius.

MANDELA
Malcolm!

MALCOLM
Dad!

He runs, hugs his father tight. Mandela watches. He and
Cassius are surprised.

They hold tight a moment.

CASSIUS
(pulling back)
What the hell are you doing here?
Huh? I told you--

MALCOLM
I know. I'm sorry. But... Dad...

CASSIUS
What is it?

MALCOLM
We have to run. They're coming.

Cassius sees the terror in his eyes.

CASSIUS
Let's go. Come on...

He ushers the boys back ahead of him. He turns back to
covering their exit, eyes sharp, rifle raised.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The boys race down past the stream, down toward their cabin. Cassius struggles to keep up on his game leg.

EXT. MICROBURST CLEARING - NIGHT

Bill and his men make their way into the clearing.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The cabin in sight. The boys running, a little relief on Malcolm's face.

MALCOLM
We're almost there.

Mandela stops running. Malcolm turns back. Jogs to him.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

MANDELA
Where's dad?

Malcolm looks around. They've lost him.

MANDELA (CONT'D)
(calling)
DAD?

MALCOLM
Shh!

Footsteps behind them.

MANDELA
(relieved)
Dad.

Two soldiers appear, guns drawn.

SOLDIER #1
Nope.

They close in. Malcolm stands in front of Mandela.

BLAM BLAM. Two shots ring out. The first soldier drops, dead. The second wheels on the muzzle flash--

BLAM. He's struck, falls, lifeless.

Mandela stares at the bodies. Malcolm tries to turn him back toward their path. Cassius appears, rifle still raised.

He motions toward the cabin.

MALCOLM
(taking Mandela's hand)
Come on...

Cassius stops him.

CASSIUS
Son... the snares.

Malcolm nods. The trio run off.

EXT. CABIN -- NIGHT

Malcolm, Mandela and Cassius reach the clearing before their cabin. They sprint across the open expanse, looking back for their pursuers.

They reach the cabin. Mandela runs in followed by Malcolm.

They stand their, beckoning Cassius.

He stops at the door. Pulls to close it.

MALCOLM
Dad? No...

CASSIUS
Barricade it. Defend yourselves.

Mandela holds up the pistol.

MALCOLM
Dad--

CASSIUS
You ain't boys anymore. Look out
for each other.

Cassius pulls it closed, hobbles off.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Malcolm and Mandela stand staring at the door. Malcolm steps forward, locks it.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Bill stands over the bodies of the two men Cassius shot. A few of his men stand behind him.

Another appears ahead of him.

SOLDIER

We scouted ahead. There's a cabin.

BILL

(burning)

The fuck are ya'll waiting for?

He stands, shoves the man aside. They all follow.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Cassius moves to the woodpile. Drops to his knees, moving logs, giving himself a vantage.

He sets his rifle, lays prone, waiting.

Cassius catches his breath.

WIDE ON THE CABIN, from the woods.

SILENT, isolated.

INT. CABIN - SAME MOMENT

The boys race around, closing shutters and drawing curtains.

They push furniture against the front door.

Malcolm pulls the recurve bow from the wall in his bedroom, collects the arrows.

They sit on the floor.

Only the sound of their BREATHING.

EXT. CABIN - SAME MOMENT

Cassius, hunkered behind the woodpile, stares down his rifle sight.

In the distance, at the tree line, all is still and dark.

A LONG BEAT.

Something moves.

BLAM.

Cassius takes his shot. No more movement. He strains to see, can't confirm the kill.

Cassius SWEATS. Breathes deep, trying to calm himself.

He steadies for his next shot... But nobody comes.

WIDE and HIGH we look down to see--

The Soldiers creep from the edges of the forest. Cassius, the cabin and the boys are COMPLETELY SURROUNDED.

BEHIND THE CABIN--

A pair of soldiers creep toward a side window.

AS--

Another man sneaks up on Cassius' blind side...

AND--

Cassius finds a soldier across the field in his sites...

AND--

Mandela spots a shadow shifting down the hall. Picks up his pistol, creeps toward it...

But there's nobody there.

WE PULL BACK to see a Soldier, standing silently behind Mandela, just outside the glass window.

The man lifts his gun, takes aim--

EXT. CABIN - SAME MOMENT

Cassius FIRES at the distant soldier, who drops, struck.

A man appears at his side, swings for him with a blade, Cassius rolls out of the way. They WRESTLE.

INT. CABIN - SAME MOMENT

The man in the window turns, distracted.

A SHARP WHISTLE. Mandela spots Malcolm aiming his bow, Malcolm let's it fly, Mandela ducks.

The arrow shatters the glass, PIERCES the soldier through the NECK.

Mandela ducks as the glass rains down.

The Soldier CHOKES and SPUTTERS, falling dead on the window sill.

Mandela crawls away from the dead man. Utterly shocked.

EXT. CABIN - SAME MOMENT

Cassius and his man, wrestle in the dark, Cassius gets the upper hand, flips him on his back.

The soldier gets his pistol free, first a SHOT into Cassius' left side.

He GRITS through the pain, smashes the man's wrist on the ground until he drops the gun.

Cassius drops a few THUNDEROUS forearms. The man goes dizzy. Cassius grabs a log and BASHES his SKULL in.

He rolls over on his back. Exhausted. FOOTSTEPS and VOICES echo across the field.

Cassius crawls back to the pile, lifts his rifle, positions again. He's nearly worn out.

He looks for targets, breathing heavy.

INT. CABIN - SAME MOMENT

Malcolm crosses to the dead man, looking him over. He turns back to Mandela.

MALCOLM

Y--

A SHOT from outside distracts him...

Another SOLDIER APPEARS, grabs Malcolm from outside the window. They struggle.

Mandela fumbles with the gun, tries to fire, but the trigger won't pull.

Malcolm, GASPING and CHOKING, reaches down, grabs his knife from a scabbard on his waist, STABS the soldier in the arm.

He SCREAMS, releases.

Malcolm scrambles away--

Mandela finds the safety, FIRES. BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM.

The soldier drops to the ground, dead. The boys fight to catch their breath, both terrified.

Malcolm touches Mandela, who is still pointing the gun.

Mandela turns to him, nods. Malcolm nods back. He looks out the window.

Points toward the South Woods.

Mandela hesitates. Sounds of more GUNFIRE out front.

The boys stare at each other a moment, on Malcolm's face, the look-- *trust me*.

Mandela stands, Malcolm grabs one of the dead men's pistols. Checks for other soldiers. He crawls out the broken window.

Helps Mandela.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Cassius FIRES between ragged breaths.

Muzzle flashes from the woods, fire returned from unseen soldiers.

ORDERS and RESPONSE.

Cassius sinks down behind the wood pile, the situation is desperate.

He looks back toward the cabin.

Steels himself. Rises again. Shooting with everything he has.

And then--

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

The rifle is empty.

Cassius pulls it back. Sits with his back to the pile. He grabs the dead man's pistol. Checks the magazine. 3 or 4 rounds left. He loads the weapon.

Looks up, wheezing. A silent prayer.

OUT ON THE FIELD --

The remnant of Bill's men emerge. Just a handful now, moving toward the cabin.

One rides an ATV in.

Bill leads them.

BLAM. BLAM.

Cassius blind-fires over the pile, Bill and his boys hit the dirt, evading.

BLAM. BLAM. CLICK.

Bill rises again. Motions his men forward.

A pair of Bill's soldiers reach Cassius. They take away his rifle and the dead man's gun.

Bill arrives. He looks Cassius over. Bleeding out, barely awake.

Bill nods toward the cabin a pair of men move to search it.

BILL

Up.

The soldiers wrestle Cassius onto his knees, hold him steady.

They lock eyes. Cassius sizing the man up.

BILL (CONT'D)

You're a brassy fucker.

Cassius GRINS, losing consciousness. He spots the WOLF emblem on BILL's chest.

CASSIUS

Army?

BILL

(nodding)

Once. You?

Cassius lifts his arm. Bill shines a light on a "Semper Fi" tattoo.

BILL (CONT'D)
 (almost respectful)
 Marines.

CASSIUS
 ...why?

Bill sighs.

Bill spots a hunting restriction sign, high up in a nearby tree.

BILL
 Just ain't enough for everybody, I guess. Not even out here.

CASSIUS
 (deep breath)
 My--

Bill turns, SHOOTS him twice, point blank in the chest. Bill looks down on Cassius dead body for a moment.

The soldiers return from the Cabin.

SOLDIER #2
 It's clear.

BILL
 Bring her.

One of his men stomps off. He returns with June and Deck, hands in zipties.

She spots Cassius' mangled frame and nearly vomits.

BILL (CONT'D)
 What other surprises they got out here?

JUNE
 That's it. It was just him.

DECKARD
 You got what you wanted.

Bill frowns, grim. June spots a can of mace on one of the men's hip.

BILL
 Where would they go?

June shrugs.

DECKARD
 (stepping forward)
 She doesn't know anything else...

BILL
 SHUT YOUR GODDAMN MOUTH.

He shoves Deckard who tumbles back and falls. As the others look on, June grabs the mace, sprays at the soldiers, Bill shields his face and turns away.

June runs off into the South Woods -- after Malcolm.

Deckard writhes in the dirt, scrambling to follow, but Bill's men are on him.

BILL (CONT'D)
 (roaring)
 They're fucking CHILDREN! HOLD HIM.
 I'll get that little bitch!

Two men detain Deckard.

The soldier on the ATV scouts ahead, Bill goes after her, two other men follow him in.

EXT. SOUTH WOODS - NIGHT

Mandela and Malcolm hustle through the woods, Malcolm leading. They stumble upon the first man Cassius killed.

Mandela slows.

MALCOLM
 Come on.

Mandela can't move. He drops into the dirt nearby.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 They could be right behind us.

MANDELA
 Dad did this.

MALCOLM
 To the man trying to kill us yes.

Mandela shakes his head.

MANDELA
 Is it any better out there Malcolm?

MALCOLM
(out of hope)
It's not worse.

Honesty... for once. Mandela nods. He stands.

The ROAR of the ATV sounds. Malcolm looks back, spots the approaching headlight.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Come on...

Malcolm and Mandela start to run.

In the distance, the soldier on the ATV spots them. He beelines, speeding up. HOOTING and HOLLERING, like he's hunting rabbits.

Malcolm and Mandela are pushing, but they can't outrun the thing.

The Soldier is gaining.

A meter away.

Yards.

Feet.

He stands, reaches--

Malcolm pulls Mandela to the ground next to the trail, out of the ATV's path.

The soldier whizzes by and is nearly DECAPITATED by a high wire, suspended between trees. A snare line.

The ATV keeps going. The man COUGHS, GASPS and BUCKS around on the ground, clutching his bloody throat.

Malcolm looks back at him.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Come on Man--

Mandela stands, marches to the injured man and UNLOADS the clip into him.

The soldier lies motionless.

Mandela looks down on him a moment. Then turns, and walks past, continuing their escape. Malcolm is blown away, he follows.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

First Light.

The boys emerge from their woods into a misty, cold meadow. A long paved road runs toward a nearby town.

Malcolm steps forward. Looks around. Breathes DEEPLY.

MALCOLM
We're out...

MANDELA
But. Dad.

Malcolm looks back to the woods.

MALCOLM
He wanted you to be safe.

Mandela nods.

JUST INSIDE The TREE LINE--

One of Bill's men takes position. Aims at Malcolm.

Malcolm hears a noise, turns. It's June, SPRINTING, she nearly tackles him and--

BLAM.

She takes a bullet. Falls hard right on top of him. Mandela rushes to their side. Malcolm, in shock himself, looks down at June, dying in his lap.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
(shaking his head)
...no... no. No. Why'd you do that?

She COUGHS, trying to speak... and dies.

Malcolm just sits there. Mandela's eyes go wild.

MANDELA
She can't... June?

Bill's men appear. Bill in the center of it. They start crossing to the boys. Mandela pulls his pistol up, rage in his eyes. He raises it, SCREAMS.

FIRES, every last bullet.

Bill's men scramble for cover. Bill takes one in the shoulder.

BILL

FUCK!

The pistol empty, one of the soldier's runs up and takes it, SMACKS Mandela to the ground.

The Soldiers cover Malcolm and Mandela.

Malcolm hasn't looked up from June. Bill stands, clutching his new wound.

Mandela fights free of the soldier, runs to Malcolm's side.

BILL (CONT'D)

Goddamnit. Fine. Fine. He can die right here. Just dig one hole.

Bill lifts his pistol, deliberately.

BILL (CONT'D)

I... loved that girl. She was my blood.

Malcolm finally looks up, tears in his eyes.

BILL (CONT'D)

Just got out of hand is all...

Malcolm's face changes, pure HATE for this man. Bill feels it, grits his teeth.

Aims.

Then--

SIRENS. Police cars. Trucks.

A dozen cops or more. They race out, weapons trained. Take positions.

Bill and his men are outgunned.

A black woman in dress uniform and a leather coat takes aim at Bill. Steely eyes, hair pulled tight behind her. This is Officer PAT, 35.

OFFICER PAT

PUT THAT DOWN! GET ON YOUR KNEES!

Bill looks at the boy. Malcolm looks back. Venom in both their eyes.

A STANDOFF.

Officers move to flank.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
You want to walk away?

A BEAT.

Bill lowers the pistol. Throws it away. His men do the same. The cops move in, cuff them.

Officer pat lowers her weapon. Cops move in, pull the boys back. One separates Malcolm from June.

Officer Pat sees Bill escorted past her to a police car. She's dumbfounded.

Turns to look back at the boys.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
Jesus.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Sunrise. The police swarm the cabin and the field. Sweep through, arresting Bill's men.

They free Deck.

He ASKS about his daughter. Someone breaks the news.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

UNIFORMED OFFICER
...neighbors reported shots... we
get out her and it's a goddamn
horror show. Far back as the other
access road... bodies...

Mandela and Malcolm sit in the back of a police car. Officer Pat breaks off from a group discussing the scene.

She moves to the cruiser.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Mandela and Malcolm stare as she approaches. She looks them over. Bloodied. Cold. Tired.

OFFICER PAT
...are you hungry?

Malcolm and Mandela exchange looks. They nod.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
 (calling)
 YATES?

Another uniformed officer, young, white, handsome. Approaches. He smiles at the boys.

They stare back.

EXT. POLICE CRUISER - DRIVING - DAY

A single beat-up cruiser is driving through empty early morning streets.

A flat, depressed town passes by. Strip malls. Shuttered shops. Empty lots. The part of America that needs to be made 'great again'-- if ever it was.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - DRIVING - DAY

The boys sit in the backseat.

Officer Pat and the white cop Yates, in the front. Yates drives, looks back at the boys in the rearview.

OFFICER PAT
 (turning)
 You like burgers and fries?

Mandela looks toward Malcolm.

MALCOLM
 We don't know.

Officer Pat glances at Yates.

OFFICER PAT
 That's alright. We'll find out.
 Even get you some shakes.

More blank stares.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
 Ice cream?

Nothing.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
 You'll love it.

She turns around, the boys look out the window. Officer Yates leans over.

OFFICER YATES
(whispered)
What kinda kids never had ice
cream?

She jabs him, he quiets down.

From the back seat we watch the Police Cruiser gaining on a pickup truck. A confederate flag hands from the back.

A bunch of SKINHEAD PUNKS sitting in the flatbed.

The HOOT and Holler as the cops roll by.

Malcolm and Mandela stare.

The Punks start acting like monkeys. Screaming inaudible things.

Mandela clutches Malcolm's hand.

Malcolm stares them down.

OFFICER PAT
Idiots. Some cities get mafia. We
get militia. There oughtta be a
law.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A small town police station. Virtually empty.

Mandela swivels in a desk chair, sips a milkshake. Officer Pat sits nearby, watching.

Malcolm sits on the other side of the desk, munching fries.

Yates sits across the bullpen, filling out a report.

OFFICER PAT
(to Mandela)
Good hm?

Mandela nods, quickly.

OFFICER YATES
I'll bet. That's your second one...

OFFICER PAT
You can afford it right?

OFFICER YATES
(nodding)
I only do it for the money.

Officer Pat turns to Malcolm.

OFFICER PAT
How's yours?

MALCOLM
It's good.

OFFICER PAT
Malcolm, I want to ask you some
questions.

Malcolm quickly glances at Yates. Officer Pat follows.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
Yates. You mind finishing that up
in a few?

Yates looks up. Pat motions to the boys.

OFFICER YATES
Too early to work anyhow. I'll grab
some sleep before my shift.

Yates leaves.

OFFICER PAT
Ok. Do you know where you live?

MALCOLM
In the woods.

OFFICER PAT
Before that.

MALCOLM
We always lived there.

OFFICER PAT
What about... family?

Mandela looks away.

MALCOLM
Our dad... was in the woods when...

OFFICER PAT
Ok. Ok. What about your mom?

Malcolm shakes his head.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
Is there anyone we can call?

MALCOLM
Why?

OFFICER PAT
To take care of you.

MANDELA
We take care of ourselves.

Officer Pat looks between the boys. She sits back.

MALCOLM
I have to go pee.

OFFICER PAT
There's a bathroom down the hall,
to the left.

Malcolm stands, hesitates. Mandela sips his shake.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
I'll look after him. We'll be right
here.

Malcolm leaves.

Officer Pat makes a face at Mandela. He LAUGHS.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The sound of a FLUSH. Malcolm exits the bathroom. He looks down the hall.

Officer Pat is still playing with Mandela.

Malcolm looks to his right. An open door. He follows his curiosity inside.

There is a smaller set of desks. A shared office.

Malcolm takes a seat behind a desk. He leans back in the chair, testing it.

Plays with the knick knacks on the desk. Repositions office supplies. Opens drawers. He shuts one--

REVEALING a handgun in a lower drawer, the lock is broken, the drawer can't be closed.

Malcolm slides the drawer as closed as he can.

He looks around the room, taking in the sight of it. On the wall, he sees a set of photos. Police in dress blues. Plaques awarding Distinguished Service.

Malcolm stops at one. Reads the inscription, then moves down the line. SMILING.

He freezes as he arrives at one picture toward the end of the line. He moves closer, takes the photo down.

It's a labeled, *William Finley...* and it's a picture of BILL. The militia leader from the forest...

Is a retired COP.

Malcolm shudders, stares. Unsure what to do.

OFFICER YATES (O.S.)
We never forget our brothers.
(at the door)
Those men are heros.

Malcolm looks back at him.

OFFICER YATES (CONT'D)
Every. One.

He steps in toward Malcolm.

Malcolm breathes heavy. Faster. He glances down, sees the gun in the drawer.

INT. POLICE STATION - SAME MOMENT

Back in the bullpen.

Mandela sits across from Officer Pat.

OFFICER PAT
When you finish, I'll take you both somewhere you can get a bath, some new clothes. You smell like you've never left the woods.

MANDELA
I haven't.

BLAM! BLAM!

Mandela springs to his feet. Officer Pat pulls her weapon. She pulls Mandela back, shelters him on the ground behind a desk.

Officer Pat moves to the hallway. She makes her way don, slowly, gun at the ready.

She looks left and right, the doors all locked but for the bathroom. She peeks in, but there's nothing.

A CRASH in the office at the end of the hall. She moves to the door. Opens it--

Just as Malcolm appears. Officer Pat JUMPS.

OFFICER PAT
Malcolm? You almost gave me--

She sees he's still holding the gun.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
Malcolm.

He raises his gun. A BEAT. She puts her back in her holster. She's at his mercy.

She sees the photo of Bill on the ground, the frame shattered.

Officer Pat recognizes the man. She shakes her head -- *this isn't right.*

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
The man from the meadow?

Malcolm sizes her up.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
Yates.

WIDE and we see Yates, bloodied and still on the ground.

OFFICER PAT (CONT'D)
Son...

Malcolm stares her down. Something new in his eyes, something cold. Something... absent. **Something lost.**

He fingers the trigger well. And we--

CUT TO:

BLACK.

THE END