

# THE GARDEN

Written by

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EXT. THE GARDEN, ESTABLISHING - DAY

*Spring.*

The river runs clear. Melted snow falls from the pine needles of the various fir trees.

Wildlife returns. A DEER bounds through a clearing. A family of BROWN BEARS walk one-by-one along the river bank. An EAGLE flies high above the tallest tree, overlooking the *massive* forest.

There are mountains, several waterways, and a blanket of green as far as the eye can see. But the land has one major distinguishing trait . . .

There are no people. No roads, no businesses, no farms. Nothing that would hint at the presence of human civilization. Just pure, undisturbed beauty.

The Garden.

*TITLE CARD: THE GARDEN*

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

The tree line breaks, clearing an upward path to the cloudless sky.

A LOW RUMBLE emits from the distance. It's getting louder.

A small PLANE breaks into sight, heading away from the mountain.

A FIGURE steps forward, watching the plane cut through the clouds. The figure breaks through the tree line, revealing -

- PAYTON (35).

She SMIRKS, recognizing the small, single engine aircraft. She swings her tattered BACKPACK off of her shoulder, and digs into it.

Payton brandishes a small, metal COMPASS. She reads the direction, confirming her suspicion. She is heading the right way.

Payton silently applauds herself as she packs the compass away. She slings the tattered bag over her shoulder, making sure it is secure.

Before heading into the woods, she reaches down and picks up her bolt action HUNTING RIFLE. Just in case.

Payton pushes through, blazing her own trail through the green inferno.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

The sun breaks through the leaves, casting hard shadows every which way.

Payton expertly marches through the brush. She's focused on every blade of grass, every fallen leaf. She moves like a hunter, tracking her prey.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Payton marches across a large, trail-less field. The field blossoms, with wildflowers and green grass covering every inch.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Payton leaps over a small stream. Two SQUIRRELS scatter up a tree as Payton passes.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Payton warms her hands around a small, contained fire. A small TENT is behind her, propped up by a two simple STAKES.

She rips a piece of dried MEAT with her teeth as she watches the dancing flames.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The sun peaks above the horizon as Payton rolls the tent into a small square.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BASE - DAY

Payton carefully maneuvers herself on the rocky ground. Even the base of the mountain is treacherous.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Payton BREATHEs heavily as she hikes. She pushes through the brush, realizing she is at the top of a large hill.

Below, a small port town. Maybe five buildings, tops.

Payton smiles. She's made it.

**END MONTAGE**

EXT. PORT TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Payton trudges through the port town, both hands holding onto her backpack straps. Her RIFLE is also slung over her shoulder.

Payton approaches a small HUNTING SHOP. She passes a sign that reads *Yuka's Hunting*.

A dirty MAN sits on a stump just outside the door. His hands shake as he whittles a knob of WOOD into a sharp point.

HARVEY MUTTERS to himself as he works, not noticing Payton walk past.

Thinking against interaction, Payton turns into the store.

INT. YUKA'S SHOP - CONTINUOUS

DING

YUKA, a 65-year-old Inuit, turns towards the entrance.

He smiles -

YUKA

- My, oh my.

Payton nods, masking her excitement as much as possible. She steps up to the counter, and hugs him.

PAYTON

Good to see you, Yuka.

YUKA

You too. I was gettin' worried, been some time since you've been down here. Thought you might have frozen.

PAYTON

You gotta give me more credit than that.

Yuka smiles.

YUKA  
You're right. How foolish of me.

Payton slings off her BAG, and digs into it.

PAYTON  
Got something for you . . .

Payton hoists a PAPER BAG out of her backpack. She places it on the counter.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
I'm sure you know what to do with these.

Yuka reaches inside, and takes an old BATTERY out.

YUKA  
Ah, yes. I do.

He turns, and opens the door behind him.

YUKA (CONT'D)  
I've got some things for you, as well.

He disappears into the dark room, taking the bag of recyclables with him.

A large RADIO behind the counter BLARES WHITE NOISE, startling Payton for a beat.

PAYTON  
Been busy?

YUKA (O.S.)  
Like never before.

PAYTON  
I saw you the other day, in your plane.

YUKA (O.S.)  
Did you, now? I was delivering some supplies to the camp just north of the big lake.

Yuka returns from the back room, a large square BAG in his hands. He places it on the counter -

YUKA (CONT'D)  
- Here you go. The usual, with a few surprises here and there.

PAYTON

Thanks -

- Payton digs into a small pocket on her coat. She pulls out a wad of cash, but Yuka places his hand over hers.

YUKA

Please. Meriwa and I enjoyed the meat you brought last time. Take this as our thank you.

PAYTON

I can't -

YUKA

- Please.

BEAT

Payton smiles. She places the money back into her pocket.

PAYTON

Thanks.

Harvey drags his feet as he walks past the window. Payton notices -

PAYTON (CONT'D)

- Been a while since I've seen Harvey around.

YUKA

He . . .

(beat)

Well . . .

(beat)

There are *strangers* on the mountain. They've been coming through my shop, actin' like tourists, campers.

Yuka nods towards the window where Harvey just walked by.

YUKA (CONT'D)

Ol' Harvey there was out at his camp last fall when some hikers found him. Played friendly, you know the type. Then they started taking soil samples, testing the water. Hikers, pssshhhttt.

(beat)

Eventually, Harvey had enough. Told them to go back where they came from. But, it's not his property.

(MORE)

YUKA (CONT'D)  
Technically, at least. Scooped it  
right out from under him, and tore  
into it. Every tree, every stream.  
It's all gone.

PAYTON  
Shit . . .  
(beat)  
That's why he's, well . . .

Yuka nods.

YUKA  
He helps out around here a bit. But  
he misses the forest. He's a shell  
of who he once was.

PAYTON  
(whispers)  
You think they'll make it all the  
way out to me?

YUKA  
Greed will take them farther than  
we can ever imagine. You must be  
careful. These men, mercenaries,  
are not to be trusted.

Payton nods, understanding. She swings her backpack around  
her shoulders, and slings the new bag over top. Much like a  
quiver.

YUKA (CONT'D)  
Why don't you stay a while? The  
spare room is still available.

PAYTON  
I'm sorry, but I really should get  
back home. Long journey ahead.

YUKA  
But of course.

He reaches across the counter, and hugs Payton.

YUKA (CONT'D)  
Take care, be safe. Radio if you  
need anything.

PAYTON  
Of course.

EXT. YUKA'S SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

The door swings open. Payton steps outside, the bright sun hitting her directly in the face.

Payton quickly glances at Harvey, who is sitting on the nearby dock. He stares into the watery horizon, lost in thought.

Payton turns away, and treks to the wood.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE, ESTABLISHING - DAY

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

The mountain is breathtaking. The snowy caps burst through the thick layer of smoke and cloud. Hundreds of miles of green forest surrounds it.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Payton hikes through the field, near the base of the mountain. Though its beauty is striking, it is something that Payton has long become accustomed to.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Once again, Payton is camping around a small fire in the forest. She bundles herself with a blanket, the gift from Yuka mere inches away.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Tired and dirty, Payton saunters through a large clearing in the middle of the dense forest. Though her body is tired, her eyes are kept on the prize.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Payton reaches a thick line of trees. She ducks down, and breaks through.

**END MONTAGE**

She enters -



EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

- *THE GARDEN.*

The Garden is beautiful. It has grown in a large clearing, with an opening to a slow pace river. It is about two hundred yards in total diameter, perfectly hidden in the dense forest.

Payton has created a little home in The Garden. There is a small, simple shed near the far side tree line. Half a CORD of LOGS are lined up next to the shed, and a FIRE PIT is several yards away.

Payton marches through The Garden, past a barren vegetable patch.

This small piece of paradise has been tweaked ever so slightly. What was a hidden camping spot has transformed into a permanent home.

Payton approaches her cabin, and walks through the door. It shuts behind her.

The door ECHOES over the beautiful land. It is perfect.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The cabin is quaint, about the size of a two car garage. There is a loft on the far side wall, with a BLANKET covered COT.

A TABLE and CHAIR is directly below the loft. A CAST IRON STOVE is on the side of the cabin, with an exhaust pipe leading outside.

Thin SHELVES hold a MUG and some BOOKS. A large MANTEL is under the loft. On top, a brown, leather bound JOURNAL rests next to the thick PICTURE FRAME.

The cabin is fairly bare, with very few non-essentials. Nearly everything has been made, or it is biodegradable.

A worn GUITAR rests against the wall, right by the table.

Payton sheds her BAGS, dropping them on the floor. She stretches her back, leaning until her hears a soft POP. She SIGHS in relief, and plops herself down on a crude stool.

Payton slides the bag of supplies along the wood floor, landing at her feet. She opens it . . .

Payton smiles.

The bag contains several different types of non-essential supplies. Payton digs through, pulling out each item.

Payton reaches in, and grasps a small NOTE:

*Until next time . . . - Yuka*

She stands up, and turns to a small WOODEN JEWELRY BOX on the mantel. She opens it, and drops the note inside. It rests on top of several other notes, as well as a couple rolls of CASH.

Payton turns back to the box. She sits down, and rifles through.

She brandishes a COPPER MUG, and places it down on the table.

Payton then takes out a BAG of COFFEE GROUNDS. That's a good one.

She places the next item, a reel of FISHING LINE on the table. Followed by more BULLETS for her bolt action rifle.

Payton reaches her hand back into the box. She stops abruptly, and her smile fades. She cautiously pulls her hand from the box. She holds the item with both hands, as if it were an injured baby bird.

It's a BOX of ALTOIDS. Just a simple box of altoids.

She quivers as she runs her fingers over the tin box.

There is nothing unusual about the altoid tin, but it's almost haunting to her.

She pops it open, and holds a singular ALTOID between her fingers.

She slowly places the mint between her lips. She enjoys it, without her expression changing one iota.

EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

- CHOP!

A large LOG is split with one fell swoop.

Payton wipes her brow, and places another log on the chop block.

CHOP!

Payton places the AXE down, and grabs a handful of the split logs. She places them on the now complete CORD, lining up perfectly.

Payton pulls the TARP over top of the cord, protecting it from the elements.

Soft THUNDER rolls in the distance.

EXT. THE GARDEN, RIVER - DAY

The water breaks, and Payton emerges. She runs her hands through her hair, her naked body cleansed by the pure water.

She crosses her arms, grasping her scarred shoulders. The long, deep SCARS run down to her lower back.

EXT. THE GARDEN, RIVER - DAY

Several FISH swim against a stone fish trap. A hand jets in, and snags one out of the water.

Payton, now dressed, holds the slippery fish on the stoney ground. She raises a rock, and STRIKES the animal, stunning it.

EXT. THE GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

Payton strolls through the long grass. Five FISH are strung to her BACKPACK, swaying back and forth with each step she takes.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Payton silently steps through the forest. She reaches a large tree, covered in moss. She inspects it, before breaking away.

Payton reaches the nearby brush. She grabs a SNARE, where a deceased RABBIT had been tangled.

She holds the rabbit with both hands, and inspects it.

Nodding to herself, Payton places the rabbit down and resets the snare.

EXT. THE GARDEN - EVENING

A modest FIRE CRACKLES in the fire pit. A metal GRATE hovers over the flames, where the FISH are cooking.

Payton sits next to the fire as she dresses the rabbit.

**END MONTAGE**

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The sun dips below the horizon. Night has arrived.

CUT TO: BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. THE GARDEN - MORNING

The sun is just breaking over the horizon. Gold colors wash over the breathtaking landscape.

Large BUMBLEBEE'S hover above flower that are on the verge of blooming.

Happy birds SING, announcing the arrival of the day.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The door to the cabin opens, revealing Payton. She is shrouded in black, with her HUNTING RIFLE in hand. She steps off the porch, and marches towards the woods.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Payton cautiously steps through the foliage, her RIFLE up and ready to fire. As she moves deeper into the woods, the sounds of nature become more sparse.

It's as if the forest is holding its breath.

CRACK -

- Payton immediately stops, and crouches down. She puts her eye to the scope, and scans the area.

The forest is still.

Payton pulls the rifle away from her face. She takes one long step, and then another.

She passes through a deep thicket.

EXT. HUNTING POST - MOMENTS LATER

A stark HUNTING POST is hidden amongst the tree branches about seven feet in the air. Three tree branches act as a ladder.

Payton reaches the base of the hunting post. She surveys the space, and swings the RIFLE over her shoulder. A few steps up the tree, and she is safely inside.

As she moves, the old wood CREAKS and MOANS. A large CRACK in the middle beam has almost completely snapped, unbeknownst to Payton.

Crouching down, Payton snags the rifle from around her shoulder. She double checks the action, SNAPPING it shut. She places the scope to her eye, searching the woods.

There is nothing but a deep sea of green.

Payton BREATHES silently as she patiently waits.

EXT. HUNTING POST - EVENING

The sun creeps just below the horizon. The forest is blanketed in a blue hue.

Payton sits back in the post. She silently tears a piece of DRIED MEAT into small hunks, popping them individually in her mouth.

Just off of her peripherals, the brush SHAKES. Payton snaps her head in that direction.

She grabs her rifle, pointing it towards the sound.

Payton's finger hovers over the trigger, ready to fire. Her eyes are focused, under control.

The tree line shakes ever so slightly. A shadow creeps forward . . .

Payton grinds her teeth. She waits, patiently.

A low GROWL comes from the trees. Payton's EYES grow wide, and she gradually lowers the rifle.

PAYTON  
(whispers)  
Shit . . .

The LEAVES rustle more rapidly. *Something* steps forward into the clearing -

- a DEER. A healthy, adult deer.

Payton breathes deeply, now under control. She takes a step over the cracking boards . . .

Payton raises the weapon, the barrel sticking through the hunting post -

- BANG!

The bullet STRIKES the deer, tearing through the back half of the torso. The deer staggers for a beat before disappearing into the woods.

It's alive, but it won't be for long.

Payton lowers the scope just a hair. She SMIRKS, satisfied at her shot.

GRRRRRR . . .

The GROWLS from the brush return.

Payton's mouth drops open. She cautiously pans her head to the left.

A dark, shaggy FIGURE, with PIERCING EYES, is hanging from a nearby tree branch. It's *feet* away from Payton.

Payton GASPS! She takes a step back -

- SNAP!

The cracked beam SNAPS completely. Payton falls through the landing, and tumbles to the forest floor. She lands with a CRUNCH.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
(screaming)  
Ahhh!

Payton holds her left leg in agony. The ANIMAL SCREAMS from the trees return, surrounding her.

Payton drags herself to her rifle. She grabs it, and pops out the shell casing from the ejection port.

The tops of the trees are shaking, circling her. The darkness makes it impossible for her to see what is up there.

Payton FIRES randomly into the darkness. This proves to be ineffective, as the HOWLS grow louder.

Payton crawls over towards the base of the tree. She rapidly whips her head all along the trees, searching for the threat.

LEAVES and BRANCHES break free and fall to the forest floor as the forest falls silent.

Payton BREATHES heavily. She moves slightly -

PAYTON (CONT'D)

- AH!

Payton pulls up her pant leg. The skin is intact, but the skin is already swollen. Swirling black and blue bruising is spreading rapidly.

Payton GROANS. She leans back, her head resting against the tree. She breathes through her noes, trying to control her breathing.

The thick brush slightly moves. A shadow lurks past.

Her eyes *shoot* back open. She holds her gun with one hand, and drags herself with the other around the trunk of the enormous tree.

Payton reaches the other side, holding the gun in front of her face with the barrel facing upwards.

GRRRRRRRRRRR

The Shadow slinks by the other side of the tree. Rail thin, there is some sort of texture covers its body. Like hair, but something else.

The Shadow stands on it's hind legs. And SNIFFS the area. Payton is *just* out of sight.

The Shadow drops back down to all fours. It slinks into the brush, out of sight.

BEAT

Payton shakes. The shock of the Shadow, combining with her massive injury, are more than most can bear.

Payton takes a deep breath before pushing herself up off of the forest floor.

She plucks herself up, hunched over. She uses the gun as a cane and she peers around the area.

It's getting too dark, too fast. She cannot see a thing.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

Shit . . .

The GROWLS return! They're getting closer.

She moves away from the post as fast as her injured leg will take her. The further she moves, the louder the GROWLS echo.

Payton limps through the trees, finding her escape.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The forest has become completely shrouded in darkness.

Payton limps heavily through the forest, using the rifle to push aside various tree branches. With each agonizing step, a soft groans escapes her pursed lips.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The tree line breaks, and Payton stumbles through. She breathes a SIGH of relief as moves towards the cabin.

Payton grabs a long, thin TREE BRANCH from a discarded pile. She drags it with her through the door of her home.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton drops the RIFLE, CLANKING on the wooden floor.

She SLAMS the door behind her, and drops a 2x4 atop two metal hooks that have been nailed to each side of the frame.

The cabin is secure, for now.

Payton grabs a small OIL LAMP, and IGNITES the flame with a BIC LIGHTER. She places the lamp on the table, and drags a stool out to the middle of the cabin.

Payton YELPS in pain as she plops herself down on the stool. She holds a small HATCHET, HACKING the thin TREE BRANCH into bits.

Payton swings her leg in front of her. She places two pieces of wood in each side of her leg, as a makeshift splint.

RRRRRIIIIIIPPPPP

Payton RIPS the DUCT TAPE free. She feverishly wraps it around the top part of the splint, setting it.



She opens her KNIFE, and cuts it free. She moves to the bottom of the splint, taping it down. After a moment, her ankle is secure.

Payton digs through a packed shelf. She brandishes a WALKIE TALKIE. She holds it to her mouth -

PAYTON

- Hello, anyone? Is someone there?

Payton pauses, waiting for a response.

Nothing.

Payton holds the walkie close -

PAYTON (CONT'D)

- Please, Yuka. Please answer.

Still nothing.

Payton drops the walkie to her side. She leans back, BREATHING heavily.

The pain is excruciating.

She carefully makes her way to the floor, sprawling out. Tears well up in the corner of her eyes, but she wouldn't dare let them fall.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The WIND blows over the otherwise silent land. The full moon cascades a light blue light across the cabin.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton's teary eyes shoot open. She sits up, wincing.

She's perfectly still, listening outside. She cautiously pans her head to the wall closest to her.

The silence in The Garden is a telling, yet haunting, sign.

Payton drags herself across the floor, grabbing for her RIFLE. She fumbles with it, trying to hoist herself up while checking for ammunition.

Using the back wall to keep her propped upright, Payton lifts the rifle. It's fixed on the door.

Silence.

Payton's finger hovers over the trigger, dangerously close to firing.

The shadows from the lantern dance over the large, well constructed door. It is the only way in or out.

Payton holds the gun on the door for what feels like ages.

BEAT

She lowers her gun, but keeps her eyes on the door.

The silence is excruciating.

Payton shakes her head -

- SLAM!

Something has SLAMMED itself into the door, jarring the door on the hinges.

Payton SCREAMS! She points her rifle to the door, shaking violently.

The Shadow SLAMS into the door again. The hinges shake again, nearly giving way.

PAYTON

Stop!

The GURGLING creature CLAWS at the door, forcefully trying to get inside.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

(screaming)

I did what I was supposed to do!

BANG!

Payton FIRES the rifle, BLASTING a hole in the door.

The Shadow SCREECHES from just outside. It falls to the porch floor, and drags itself to the woods.

Payton stares ahead, the barrel of the gun shaking. She limps forward, heading towards the door. She peers through the bullet hole, scanning the area.

It's too dark, she can't see anything. She steps away from the door, keeping her line of sight through the hole.

THUMP

Payton tilts her head to the ceiling. Whatever is out there, it has found it's way onto the roof.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

Shit -

- THUMP!

The Shadow moves across the platformed roof. Payton hobbles to the middle of the floor, with her rifle pointed up.

Her eyes do not blink. Her hand is steady. She's ready to fire, but then . . .

Silence.

BEAT

Payton slinks to the back corner of the cabin, her eyes never breaking from the ceiling.

Her back hits the wall. She slides down, wincing when she hits the floor.

Payton pulls the gun around, resting the stock against her stomach. She points it up, waiting.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The air is completely still. There is nothing on the property.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - DAY

Payton's eyes open.

BEAT

Payton sits up, her RIFLE still grasped in her hand. She fell asleep in the corner of the room while on guard.

Payton YELPS as she twists her body. Her injured leg is swollen and purple, worse than before.

Payton GROANS as she stands to her feet. She heavily limps to the door, pressing her face to the hole in the door.

She peers around the property, checking every inch possible. It's safe.

Payton takes a step back. She removes the 2x4, and props it against the wall. She grabs the door handle, and takes a deep breath.

She flings the door open -

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

- and points the rifle outward, ready to fire.

She scans the area, before looking down at her feet. She softly GASPS.

Blood. Pooling on the porch, caked to the door. It's everywhere.

But it is not normal blood. It has the same consistency, same texture. But it's dark green.

She turns away, and notices something lying in the tall grass. She cannot tell what it is.

Payton raises her weapon, limping off the porch.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Payton drags her bum leg through the tall grass, keeping herself as upright as possible.

Just inside The Garden lies something. Payton can't tell what it is. She approaches it, lowering her gun the closer she gets.

A dead DEER lies in a mangled heap. Its black eyes staring forward, tongue hanging out.

Payton crouches down, inspecting it. There are areas with GREEN blood matted into the fur. Several BITE marks litter the carcass, with chunks of flesh missing.

Payton continues to assess the body, She stops when she recognize something . . .

A bullet hole. Right in the back torso, where Payton hit the previous day.

This is her deer.

Payton scans the area before slinging the rifle over her shoulder. She grabs hold of the carcass, and drags it through the grass.

EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

Payton digs a thin, deep hole in the ground. She raises a large STAKE, and drives it into the hole.

She works with purpose, covering several torn pieces of cloth with some sort of sticky RESIN.

Payton then wraps cloth around the top of the wooden stakes.

There are now several posts wrapped in cloth littered around The Garden.

Homemade security lights.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - DAY

Payton sits on the porch with her pant leg rolled up. The tissue around the injury is purple.

Payton SCREAMS in agony as she aligns her leg. She then sets it with much thicker, much straighter branches.

Again, she secures it with DUCT TAPE.

EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

A large POST, bigger than Payton, stands near the tree line. A pulley system holds ropes against the post, tied to a CLEAT in the back.

A long, wooden trough sits at the foot of the post.

Payton drags the DEER CARCASS over to the post. She ties the back feet of the deer to the rope, and hoists the deer in the air. Once it dangles above the trough, she ties the rope off to the cleat. This keeps the deer airborne.

Payton removes a KNIFE from her pocket, and inspects the mysterious bite marks. She cuts the wounds from animal, revealing the healthy meat a few inches deep.

Satisfied, she sticks the knife into the gut of the deer. She pulls up, cleaning it.

The blood and excrement falls into the waiting trough.

EXT. THE GARDEN - NIGHT

A fire ROARS over the pit. Slabs of MEAT roast over the flames.

Payton enjoys a large slab of VENISON, eating it with her hands.

The glow of the fire illuminates the cord near the cabin. It's still only half full.

EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

*TEXT -- Summer.*

The sweltering sun beats down on Payton as she raises her AXE high. She brings it down, SPLITTING a piece of wood right down the middle.

She places the axe down, and grabs the LOGS. She limps over to a CORD, and lines them up. There are now two cords *full* of firewood.

EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

Payton sprinkles MANURE over her garden. The once bare space is now sprouting life. Soon, they'll be ready for picking.

She no longer has the splint on her injured leg, but she does have homemade CRUTCH under her left armpit.

She hobbles around the vegetable garden, still very hampered by the injury.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

A thin line of SMOKE climbs over the tree, dissipating in the otherwise clear sky.

That smoke is from a man-made fire.

Payton notices it along the tree line. She shakes her head, continuing her trek through the forest.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BASE - DAY

A large TRAILER rests at the base of a small mountain. Several MEN in HARDHATS survey the area.

A tree branch moves, revealing Payton. She scowls as she watches the Men taking samples from the soil.

She disappears into the woods.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

**END MONTAGE**

*TEXT -- Fall.*

The woods are in mid-transformation. Red LEAVES are sprinkled throughout the foliage, while other colors are consistently falling to the forest floor.

A BOOTED FOOT, propped by a crude metal BRACE, CRUNCHES though a large pile of dead leaves. Payton surveys the forest as she walks, keeping a watchful eye with several dead RABBIT slung over her shoulder.

EXT. THE GARDEN - LATER

The Garden has gone through some noticeable improvements. There are now three complete CORDS of firewood. More than enough to last the cold winter.

The cabin has been re-enforced, and the vegetable garden has exploded with various VEGETABLES. The long stalks softly waving to her as she blows by.

Though the constant overcast has dampened the area, the beauty still remains.

Payton limps through The Garden, towards the cabin. Indistinguishable SHOUTS come from the river, causing Payton's ears to perk up.

She points her rifle to the river, advancing like a soldier in battle.

EXT. THE GARDEN, RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Payton slinks along the shrubs, keeping hidden from sight. Her hands are still on her weapon, ready to fire at a moments notice.

Two grown PEOPLE emerge from the river bend. They look cold and tattered.

DOMINIC (38) leads the way. He is dressed head to toe in what was stylish North Face apparel.

Caked with mud and stains, he carries a torn BAG over his shoulder. It's too small to carry anything of note.

LARA (33) has similar garb. Her hair is matted, as if she hasn't bathed in weeks. Without a bag, she uses a large TREE BRANCH as a walking stick.

Dominic stops along the river edge. He is no more than fifteen yards away from where Payton is hiding.

LARA

See, this is what I was expecting  
when we came up here. Look how slow  
it is.

She plops down on the bank -

LARA (CONT'D)

- I need to rest.

DOMINIC

We're going to get caught in the  
dark again.

Lara puts her head into her hand. She SIGHS as she massages her temples.

Payton holds her rifle tightly. She is still on guard.

LARA

My mother is probably worried sick.

DOMINIC

Yeah, I know. We'll explain the  
whole thing, we just need to focus  
right now.

Lara raises her head. She stops at the river.

LARA

Wha . . .  
(beat)  
What's that?

Dominic matches her eye line.

DOMINIC

Huh.

Dominic wades in the water to get a closer look. It's Payton's stone fishing trap.



DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
It looks like a fishing trap. I've  
read about them.

LARA  
In the middle of nowhere?

Dominic's face hints of realization. He scans the area for  
human life.

DOMINIC  
Yeah . . .  
(beat)  
Someone is here.

Payton's finger hovers over the trigger.

Dominic sees the cabin, just in the distance.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
There! A cabin!

Lara pops to her feet.

LARA  
Oh, thank God. We're saved!

Dominic and Lara hurry away from the river, towards the  
cabin.

Payton, wide eyed, bounds from her hiding place. She points  
the rifle in the air, and FIRES a shot.

Dominic and Lara cower down at the explosion. They turn  
around, shocked to find Payton.

DOMINIC  
Shit! Don't shoot -

LARA  
- Please!

PAYTON  
How did you find me?

DOMINIC  
We didn't mean to! We're lost,  
we've *been* lost.

LARA  
We've been out here for days. Our  
canoe flipped, and we lost  
everything. Please, we're going to  
die out here!

DOMINIC

Look -

- Dominic moves himself in front of Lara.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

We're not here to report you or anything. Just, maybe . . .

(beat)

Do you have any food? Maybe some dry clothes?

PAYTON

I don't know you.

DOMINIC

Well, uh, I'm Dominic. This is my fiancé, Lara. We can pay you, we have money.

(beat)

Well, once we get to civilization.

PAYTON

I don't need money.

DOMINIC

There's gotta be something we can offer. I have . . .

(beat)

A lot.

Payton cautiously lowers the gun. She stares at the two weak, malnourished people in front of her.

PAYTON

Come with me.

Payton marches past them, heading to the cabin.

EXT. THE GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

Payton leads the mysterious couple through The Garden. Dominic and Lara stare in awe at the camp that Payton has created.

DOMINIC

(whispers)

This is unbelievable.

Lara stops at the vegetable garden. She runs his fingers along the stalks, staring in amazement.

LARA  
There is so much life here.

Dominic approaches the cabin -

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

- and Lara follows.

Payton opens the door -

PAYTON  
- C'mon.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton grabs two thick BLANKETS made of bear fur. She hands them over -

PAYTON  
- Here.

Lara grabs them.

DOMINIC  
What . . .  
(beat)  
What is this place?

PAYTON  
This is my home.

Lara looks on in awe as she hands over one of the blankets to her boyfriend.

Dominic throws the blanket around his shoulders while simultaneously dropping his bag to the floor.

Payton stands in front of the open door.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
I'll get you some food, and you can  
be on your way. Deal?

The couple nods.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
Good. I'll let you guys change.

Payton shuts the door, leaving the pair alone. They strip off the cold, wet clothes.

LARA  
This is so bizarre.

DOMINIC  
No kidding. Do you think she really  
lives here?

LARA  
Looks like it. I don't know how.

DOMINIC  
It's . . .  
(beat)  
Incredible.

LARA  
Oh, please -

DOMINIC  
- No, really! She has to be the  
constant survivalist.

LARA  
Yeah, but would you actually want  
to live without mineral water or  
Soho Sushi?

Dominic LAUGHS as he peels his wet shirt off.

DOMINIC  
You know, somehow I think I could  
do it.

LARA  
Just so you know, I'm picking the  
next trip.

Dominic GROANS -

LARA (CONT'D)  
- I don't wanna hear it! We're are  
going to the Virgin Islands, and we  
are not leaving the beach. That's  
final.

DOMINIC  
What about Costa Rica?

LARA  
No, I know your plan. You're just  
going to want to go on jungle  
treks, or climb some mountain. You  
heard me; *beach*.

DOMINIC  
Fine, fine.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

The couple exits the cabin. Payton is waiting for them. She holds out a WALKIE -

PAYTON  
- I've never been able to get a  
signal out here. But it's worth a  
shot.

Dominic accepts the walkie. He holds it to his mouth.

DOMINIC  
Hello, hello. Is anyone there?

He waits. Nothing.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Mayday, mayday.

Still, nothing.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
(to Payton)  
You're right.

PAYTON  
There's a port town not too far, so  
the walkie -

DOMINIC  
- That's we're supposed to be!

LARA  
Wait, what's not too far?

PAYTON  
About a three day hike.

LARA  
(under her breath)  
We'll never make it.

DOMINIC  
That's our only option?

PAYTON

There's a guy with a plane. An  
local named Yuka. He'll pick you up  
if you can get him on the radio.

Payton motions to the woods.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

If it were me, I'd make for the  
quarry, about half a days hike. It  
could be high enough to get a  
signal. There is even some water  
nearby, just big enough for him to  
land and take off.

DOMINIC

Yeah, that would be great.

LARA

Can we go now?

PAYTON

You can do whatever you want. It'll  
be dark soon.

Payton moves past the couple.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

I got work to do. If you're going  
to stay, just . . .

(beat)

Just don't touch anything.

Dominic and Lara exchange nervous glances.

EXT. THE GARDEN - NIGHT

The FIRE softly CRACKLES, breaking up the silence of the  
night.

Dominic and Lara sit next to each other, sharing the bear  
skin blanket between them.

PAYTON

Here -

- Payton brandishes some JERKEY.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

It's good.

The couple accepts. They eat the meat silently for a beat.

DOMINIC

So . . .

(beat)

Thank you. For everything, really.

PAYTON

I wouldn't worry too much about it.

But . . .

(beat)

You're welcome.

Lara GNAWS at the dry meat. Dominic nervously taps his knees with his hands.

DOMINIC

So, where are you from? Are you from the States?

PAYTON

I . . .

(beat)

Yeah, originally.

DOMINIC

We're from Detroit.

PAYTON

You don't say?

DOMINIC

Yeah, but it's so nice to get out of the city. Hiking in the Amazon, camping in the Serengeti. We're adventurers, it's in our blood. Like Percy Fawcett, ya know?

PAYTON

I don't know who that is.

DOMINIC

Oh. He was an explorer, who . . .

(beat)

Never mind.

(beat)

My job kinda gives us the opportunity to travel, and we love it. Especially way up here.

Payton suspiciously glares at Dominic.

PAYTON

What did you say you did for work again?

DOMINIC

I, well . . .

(beat)

I work for the government,  
technically -

LARA

- He doesn't like to talk about it.  
But his work *is* important.

Lara rubs Dominic's thigh with her hand.

DOMINIC

Yeah, I suppose so.

Payton grinds her teeth as her grip on the FIRE POKER tightens.

PAYTON

The government got you coming up  
here?

DOMINIC

No, not this time. They send me to  
rural communities all over the  
world. Make sure they have water,  
shelter. Sustainable, the word they  
use.

PAYTON

Pretty sustainable up here, don't  
ya think?

Dominic and Payton stare at each other over the CRACKLING flames. An awkward silence has taken over.

DOMINIC

I . . .

(beat)

I would. Yeah.

BEAT

LARA

I just come along for the ride.

(beat)

But this forest is really pretty.

Payton shakes her head as she stares into the burning embers.

THUNDER ROLLS in the distance.



I/E. PAYTON'S CABIN - LATER

The front door opens, and Payton enters. She realizes that she is alone, and turns around.

Dominic and Lara stand a few yards away from the porch, anxiously waiting like kids on Halloween.

DOMINIC

We, uh . . .

(beat)

We don't have a tent, or anything.

Do you think we could, just for tonight, sleep inside?

Payton blankly stares at the couple. Her jaw rhythmically moves as her brain is ticking.

PAYTON

Come on in.

The couple BREATHES a sigh of relief and hurries inside.

Lara bounds past Payton. Dominic nods his thanks, but he's met with a harsh glare from Payton.

DOMINIC

You can trust us.

Payton ignores him. She SLAMS the door shut.

EXT. THE GARDEN - NIGHT

The Garden is covered in a blanket of stars.

The last burning ember in the fire pit goes out. A thin line of smoke escape into the air.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton sleeps in the loft. Her eyes flutter under her eyelids.

Dominic and Lara sleep next to each other on the hard ground. One blanket is over top of them, and another is between their bodies and the wood floor.

Dominic softly SNORES. He COUGHS, waking himself up.

DOMINIC

Shit . . .

Dominic sits up, rubbing his eyes. He SIGHS as he stares off into space.

Dominic GROANS as he drags himself out from under the blanket. He snatches a FLASHLIGHT off of the table, and FLICKS it on.

He stumbles towards the door, and opens it.

Payton TWITCHES as the door CREAKS.

Dominic YAWNS, and stumbles into the dark.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Dominic maneuvers his way to the tree line. He stops right at the edge, and ZIPS open his pants.

He places the FLASHLIGHT under his arm, and URINATES on the forest floor. His eyes close as he softly sways back and forth.

A shadow SLINKS in the forest. It's long limbs are the only discernible trait, but one thing is clear . . .

*He's hunting.*

Dominic COUGHS as he ZIPS his pants back up. He turns away from the tree line, *just* as a shadow darts away.

Dominic stops. The shadow was just out of the corner of his eye.

Dominic cautiously turns back to the tree line. He raises the flashlight, checking the area.

Nothing.

Dominic takes a step forward -

- CRUNCH!

Dominic pans the light, just seeing a thick pack of grass moving back and forth.

Something ran through, just out of sight.

Dominic's eyes grow wide.

A barely audible GURGLE comes from the brush. The light isn't strong enough to penetrate the darkness.

Dominic takes a step back.

DOMINIC

Shit . . .

Dominic squints his eyes.

*Something* slinks through the brush, pushing branches out of the way. It crawls forward, keeping just out of the light.

It stares at Dominic, eyes glowing from the moonlight. It's GURGLES grow as the Figure erects itself straight up.

Whatever it is *stands upright!*

Dominic stares in horror -

- BANG!

Dominic crumbles to the ground, covering his head. Just behind him, Payton points her smoking rifle into the woods.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lara JOLTS awake!

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton yanks on the bolt handle, sending the SHELL flying. She charges towards the woods -

- BANG!

She FIRES again, stepping over cowering Dominic.

The Shadow YELPS, and bounds off into the woods.

Payton stands just inside the tree line, her gun at the ready. She pans left to right, looking for the perfect shot.

BEAT

Payton lowers the rifle, just as Lara runs up -

LARA

- Dominic!

Lara falls to Dominic's side. She turns to Payton -

LARA (CONT'D)

- What did you do?

Dominic lifts his head, and pulls himself up.

DOMINIC  
I'm okay -

LARA  
- You *shot* at him!

DOMINIC  
No, there was . . .  
(beat)  
There was something.

Payton backs away from the tree line, ignoring the couple. She bends down, and picks up the spent shell casings off of the grassy ground.

LARA  
Oh, my God! I'm so happy you're okay.

DOMINIC  
It was, like . . .  
(beat)  
A bear?

LARA  
There are bears here, I read about it -

DOMINIC  
- It was right there, scared the shit out of me.

Payton takes one last look at forest before turning to the couple.

PAYTON  
Don't come outside by yourself.

Payton storms past the pair, leaving them to collect themselves off of the grass.

CHOP!

EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

A LOG splits in two. Payton wipes her brow, and places another log on the chop block.

The door to the cabin CREAKS open. Dominic exits, approaching Payton.

CHOP!

Payton tosses the split LOGS aside. She notices Dominic.

PAYTON

I'll start a fire. Boil some water,  
make coffee.

DOMINIC

Can you whip up a cappuccino?

Payton rolls her eyes. She hoists the AXE in the air, and  
brings it down -

- CHOP!

PAYTON

I don't think so.

Dominic SMIRKS. He looks around The Garden as Payton works.

DOMINIC

Don't you think you have enough  
wood?

PAYTON

Rule number two; There is never  
enough wood. Winter is harsh.

DOMINIC

You stay here during the winter?

Payton grinds her teeth. She drops axe head to the ground,  
holding the handle with one hand.

PAYTON

Ya know, I don't just do this for  
fun.

DOMINIC

Then . . .

(beat)

Why do you?

Payton SCOWLS. She grabs another log -

PAYTON

- It's a long story.

CHOP!

DOMINIC

Maybe one day I'll hear it.

PAYTON

Maybe.

BEAT

DOMINIC

I don't mean to intrude. It's just  
that . . .

(beat)

I've traveled to a lot of places.  
And this . . .

(beat)

I've never seen anything like this  
before. With you, and how you've  
been living.

PAYTON

It's a life.

Payton drives the axe into the ground. She reaches down,  
collecting the logs.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

Help me.

Dominic snatches a few logs off of the grass, and follows  
Payton towards the cords of logs.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The door to the cabin CREAKS open, and Lara steps out. She  
folds her arms, watching Payton and Dominic working together.

EXT. THE GARDEN - LATER

Dominic and Lara are packed, and ready to make their way  
through the wilderness.

Payton approaches them. She holds out the WALKIE -

PAYTON

- You'll need this.

Dominic brushes her hand with his as he takes it.

DOMINIC

Of course.

BEAT

LARA

Thank you so much. For everything.

Payton nods towards the woods.

PAYTON

Just keep west, you'll run into the quarry. Remember, ask for Yuka.

DOMINIC

Got it.

The couple turns and enters the brush. Dominic takes one last look at The Garden, before locking eyes with Payton. She avoids his gaze, and heads towards the cabin.

Dominic SIGHS, and follows Lara into the green forest.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton hops on the porch. Before she enters the cabin, she takes one last look at the visitors as they disappear from view.

Dark clouds converge over the normally blue sky. SNAPS, HOWLS, and the TWISTS of moving vines are suddenly amplified.

For the first time the forest feels . . .

Evil.

Payton ponders for a beat before looking back towards the covered horizon.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Payton ties her boots tight. She picks her RIFLE up off of the ground, and rests the stock in the crook of her arm.

She SIGHS as she stares out the open door. The mountain range is miles and miles away.

Payton steps forward, in the door frame. Before stepping out, she whips her head to the back wall.

The JOURNAL rests on the shelve. Beckoning.

Payton approaches it. She props the gun against the wall, and unwraps the leather strap that holds the pages together.

She skims through the pages. Each one is filled with notes, diagrams, and lists.

Payton stops on one hand drawn MAP -

PAYTON

- Here you are . . .

Payton uses her finger, and follows a passage around the mountain.

Payton's eyes well-up as she stares at the map. She apprehensively wraps it with the leather strap, and places it in her BAG.

EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Dominic and Lara cut through the brush.

PAYTON (O.S.)

Hey!

The couple stops, and turns around. Payton bounds up behind them -

LARA

(whispers)

- What is she doing?

DOMINIC

I think she's . . .

(beat)

Coming with us.

Payton reaches the pair. She rubs her injured leg as she catches her breath.

PAYTON

I'm here to lead you to the ravine.  
Couldn't let you just wonder out  
here on your own.

DOMINIC

Wow. Yeah, we appreciate it.

PAYTON

Sure. And plus, yanno, I get my  
walkie back.

DOMINIC

Oh, of course.

(beat)

Well, we could definitely use you.

PAYTON

Not as much as you could use this.

Payton raises her RIFLE.



EXT. FOREST - DAY

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

A flock of BIRDS flies overhead, CAWING as they go by.

The forest is massive, stretching miles past the nearby mountain range.

Payton leads the way, using the barrel of her GUN to push past the various foliage.

Dominic presses down on his WALKIE -

DOMINIC  
- Hello, hello? Mayday, mayday.  
(beat)  
Is anyone there?

He turns to Lara, shaking his head.

EXT. FOREST, RIVER - DAY

The party crosses a shallow section of the river. Payton holds her rifle high, making it impossible to get wet.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Lara opens a PLASTIC WATER BOTTLE. She takes a long drink before offering it to Dominic.

Dominic takes it, and drinks. He holds it out for Payton -

DOMINIC  
- Water?

PAYTON  
No. Thank you.

Payton presses on. Dominic shrugs, and hands the water bottle back to his girlfriend.

Lara scowls at Payton. She finishes the rest of the water bottle, and *tosses* it into the forest.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

The trio slugs past the drop zone. Payton glances up at her broken hunting stand before quickly looking away.

Dominic notices, too.

DOMINIC  
Huh. You might not be the only one  
out here, Payton!

Lara SMIRKS. Payton ignores both of them.

EXT. FOREST, ESTABLISHING - DAY

The green forest circles some large, rocky quarries. Fog is rising from the green ground, hovering at the tops of the trees.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Payton's eyes are fixed on the green horizon.

**END MONTAGE**

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - LATER

The party trudges at the bottom of the quarry, their shoes CRUNCHING over the rocky ground.

LARA  
Thank God.

Payton stops, and points -

PAYTON  
- We'll get a much better signal up  
there.

Lara tests a nearby boulder -

- RUMBLEEEEE!

It breaks free, and rolls just past her feet.

LARA  
Shit . . .

DOMINIC  
We can do it. We just gotta be  
careful.  
(to Payton)  
Don't supposed you've ever climbed  
this before. Have ya?

Payton shakes her head.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Great.

Dominic peers up the rocky quarry.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY TOP - CONTINUOUS

The trio looks like ants at the bottom of the quarry. The tree line at the top of the quarry rustles. GURGLES and SNARLS grow louder.

Payton slings the RIFLE over her shoulder, and starts her ascend. As she does, a SHADOW approaches the edge of the quarry.

A green, leafy arm reaches out, grasping hold of the cliff. It HISSES as it peers down.

The arm has human traits. Five fingers, muscle, flesh. The whole thing. Flowers and roots break through the skin, flower pedals bloom and die.

This is not a human. It is a *GREENLING*.

And it's waiting at the top of the rocky quarry.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - CONTINUOUS

Payton grasps onto a boulder, and hoists herself up. She winces as she stands upright, her weak leg shaking.

PAYTON

Yeah. Yeah, I think we can get through this. Definitely.

The color rushes out of Lara's face. She turns to Dominic -

LARA

- I can't do this.

DOMINIC

Remember when we went jumping off of the falls in Hawaii? You did that, you can do this, too -

LARA

- You're not listening to me. I am not climbing this mountain.

BEAT

PAYTON  
We'll get up there, see if we can  
get a signal. You can stay.

Payton pulls a KNIFE from her belt. She gives it to Lara -

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
- Just in case.

Lara holds the knife awkwardly as Payton grabs hold of  
Dominic to hoist him up.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
There.

She points up -

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
- We can go up right here. There's  
enough room for our feet. Follow  
me.

She digs her feet into a path created by water flow hundreds  
of years ago. She extends her arms for balance, and short,  
choppy steps to power upward.

Dominic follows, but with much less conviction.

Payton reaches the very last hurdle; an enormous boulder.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
We just gotta make it over this!

Payton grabs hold, and pulls with all her might. She reaches  
over, and grasps a jetting boulder.

Payton GRUNTS as she pulls herself -

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY TOP - CONTINUOUS

- on top of the quarry.

Payton closes her eyes, and BREATHES deeply. Dominic's CHEERS  
are faintly audible.

DOMINIC (O.S.)  
Yes! Great job!

Payton opens her eyes. She pops to her feet, and stares over  
the edge.

PAYTON  
Be careful.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - CONTINUOUS

Dominic tries to mimic Payton. He grabs hold, and hoists himself up -

- CRACK!

A boulder BREAKS FREE!

Dominic's feet slide out, and CRASHES down onto the perch below.

LARA  
Dominic!

Dominic lies still, twisted in a mangled heap.

PAYTON (O.S.)  
Are you okay?

BEAT

Dominic opens his eyes. He blinks several times before GROANING -

LARA  
- Oh, thank God!

Dominic sits up.

DOMINIC  
I'm . . .  
(beat)  
I'm okay.

Dominic squints upward. Something dark is moving towards Payton.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
What . . .  
(beat)  
What is that?

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY TOP - CONTINUOUS

Payton's eyes pop open. She takes the RIFLE off of her back, and spins around.

The forest sways with the wind, but there is nothing there.

DOMINIC (O.S.)  
Payton?

Payton grinds her teeth, and turns back around.

PAYTON

Yeah?

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - CONTINUOUS

Dominic staggers to his feet.

DOMINIC

I'm going to try again!

LARA

No! Come back down, she can handle it.

DOMINIC

(under his breath)

I can do it. I can.

Lara bites her lip and rocks back in forth. She can barely watch.

Small ROCKS break free, falling to the several stories to the rigid bottom.

Dominic scales the quarry. He GROANS as he pulls himself over the large boulder.

Payton holds her hand out -

PAYTON

- Here!

Dominic reaches. They connect hands, and -

- CRACK!

Again, a small rock breaks free and falls. Dominic loses his footing -

LARA

- No!

Payton SCREAMS as she pulls Dominic over the edge -

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY TOP - CONTINUOUS

- and onto the top of the quarry.

Payton and Dominic lie sprawled out, BREATHING heavily.

DOMINIC  
That was *exhilarating*.

PAYTON  
I have a different word in mind -

LARA (O.S.)  
- Hey! Are you guys okay?

The pair sits up, peering over the edge of the quarry.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - CONTINUOUS

Payton and Dominic look very small at the top of the quarry.

PAYTON  
We're good! Gonna try and get a  
signal from here!

LARA  
Okay, well . . .  
(beat)  
Hurry.

DOMINIC  
We'll be back down before you know  
it.

PAYTON  
Remember not to touch anything!

Dominic and Payton move towards the woods beyond the quarry.

Just like that, they're gone.

Lara's face turns sour.

LARA  
(whispers)  
Don't touch anything . . .  
(beat)  
I took biology class too, you  
bitch.

Lara kicks a rock.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY TOP - CONTINUOUS

The adventurer's mosey away from the cliff. Payton hands over  
the WALKIE -

PAYTON

- Here.

Dominic accepts. He holds it to his mouth -

DOMINIC

- Hello, hello? Mayday, we need help. Is anyone there?

BEAT

Nothing.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Hello? Mayday, mayday.

Dominic presses the walkie to his ear.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

This is useless, we're never -

YUKA (O.S.)

- Hello?

Dominic's mouth drops open. Payton whips around, just as surprised.

DOMINIC

Hello! This is Dominic Gardner. We are stranded, and we need to be picked up.

YUKA (O.S.)

Where are you?

DOMINIC

We are at a large quarry. We found someone out here, she's been helping us.

YUKA (O.S.)

Must be Payton.

DOMINIC

Yes! Yes, we are.

YUKA (O.S.)

Good. She'll take care of you until I can get my bird out there.

DOMINIC

What . . .

(beat)

How long will that be?



YUKA (O.S.)  
Three days at the least, I'm about  
to leave for another drop.

Dominic hangs his head.

YUKA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I'll be able to land in the cove  
right by the camp. She'll know  
where to go.

DOMINIC  
That's it?

YUKA (O.S.)  
I'm sorry, that's the best I can  
do.  
(beat)  
Is Payton there now?

DOMINIC  
Uh, yes.

Dominic turns, holding the walkie out.

Payton accepts -

PAYTON  
- Hey, Yuka.

YUKA (O.S.)  
Great to hear your voice. I was  
getting worried, I hadn't heard  
from you in a while.

PAYTON  
I had an . . .  
(beat)  
Accident. I'm okay, I just can't  
hike far right now.

YUKA (O.S.)  
Well, I'll bring a small treat for  
you when I pick up the tourists.  
Sound good?

PAYTON  
Copy that. And . . .  
(beat)  
It's good to hear you, too.

CLICK

Payton pockets the walkie.

DOMINIC  
Good thing we didn't make the full  
trek.

PAYTON  
Yeah.

The pair approaches the cliff. They peer down -

DOMINIC  
- It's gonna be a lot harder  
getting down. Especially with that  
leg . . .

PAYTON  
Don't worry about me.

DOMINIC  
I'm just saying . . .

Dominic scans the area.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
There might be a better way to get  
down.

Dominic points to a small crease between the trees -

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
- Like there. That looks like it's  
heading down.

LARA (O.S.)  
What are you guys doing?

BEAT

Payton looks down to Lara -

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - CONTINUOUS

PAYTON  
- We're going to find a better way  
to get down. Stay right there,  
we'll be fast.

LARA  
Don't you dare leave me -

DOMINIC  
- Babe, it's not safe to scale  
down. Just hang tight.

LARA  
Alright, Captain.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY TOP - CONTINUOUS

Dominic shakes his head.

DOMINIC  
Sorry. Sometimes she gets like  
this.

PAYTON  
It's an extenuating circumstance. I  
understand.

DOMINIC  
Yeah, I guess.

Payton and Dominic trek into the forest, disappearing into  
the brush.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - CONTINUOUS

Lara paces around the base of the quarry, bored out of her  
mind. She turns to the deepest part of the forest, where  
something catches her eye.

Lara's feet CRUNCH as she approaches something on the rocky  
ground. She bends down, inspecting it.

LARA  
Hmmm . . .

A FLOWER. A single flower, it's thick stalk bursting through  
the rocky ground.

Lara reaches her hand out. She caresses the flower head in  
the palm of her hand, staring deeply at it's immense beauty.

LARA (CONT'D)  
How pretty -

- Lara *pulls* the flower, tearing the head from the stalk. A  
hush falls over the forest as she stands upright.

Lara spins the flower in between her finger and thumb. She  
places the flower head over her ear, just poking through her  
hair.

LARA (CONT'D)  
Perfect.

She almost skips away, leaving the limp stalk behind.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Payton pushes through the brush, leading the way. Dominic gets a mouthful of leaves as he tries to match her movements.

DOMINIC  
Ah, plllehhh.

Dominic spits on the ground. Payton SCOFFS.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Hey, I heard that!

Payton SMIRKS. Dominic squints through the trees.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
We're still going downward. This might just work.

PAYTON  
Yeah. It has too.

The pair hikes in silence for a beat.

DOMINIC  
So . . .  
(beat)  
Kinda funny, hearing that guy call us tourists.

PAYTON  
Isn't that what you are?

DOMINIC  
Well, yeah. It's just, I don't know. When we come out here, we're not really vacationing. We're working, exploring. Like -

PAYTON  
- Like Percy Fawcett, I remember.

BEAT

DOMINIC  
So, there is no one else out here, huh?

PAYTON

Not this far north. There is some mining, and a little town. But, yeah. Just me.

DOMINIC

Mining, huh? Yeah, I can imagine that there would be a lot of money buried in these woods.

Payton stops. She turns around.

PAYTON

Talk like that'll get you shot around here.

Dominic raises his hands, defensively.

DOMINIC

I didn't mean anything by it. Honest.

BEAT

PAYTON

You said you worked for the government. What is it you do, exactly?

Dominic stares at Payton for a beat.

DOMINIC

I, well . . .  
(beat)  
It's not important.

Payton raises the gun, pointing it directly at Dominic's heart.

PAYTON

It is.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - CONTINUOUS

Lara lies on her back at the bottom of the quarry. Her arms are up, and resting against her forehead. Her eyes are still underneath her closed eyelids.

She shifts her body, trying to get comfortable. The flower falls from behind her ear, dying on the boulder.

CLICK

Lara pays no attention.

CLICK CLICK

Just above Lara's head, two dark *hands* appear. They pull the body forward, briefly revealing the piercing eyes.

Just as it appears, the Greenling darts away.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Dominic steps back.

DOMINIC

Don't point that at me!

PAYTON

I don't like strangers. Strangers come, and they bring bulldozers with them. And now you know where I live -

DOMINIC

- Okay, okay! I'm not here to take your land. I'm a Doctor.

PAYTON

A Doctor?

DOMINIC

Yeah. An orthopedic surgeon, actually. I used to work in a hospital in Detroit, but now I get paid to travel. I check out villages in Africa, military bases in the Arctic. Just making sure everyone is healthy.

BEAT

PAYTON

Okay.

Payton lowers her gun.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

I believe you.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY BASE - CONTINUOUS

Lara paces around the base of the quarry with the flower in her hair.

The Greenling returns behind her! It silently descends down the rocks, getting closer and closer to unsuspecting Lara.

DOMINIC (O.S.)

Lara!

The Greenling stops in it's tracks as Lara turns towards her fiancé's voice.

Dominic and Payton appear from the brush. The Greenling falls behind a collection of rocks, hiding from view.

Dominic hugs her -

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

- We did it, we got ahold of someone.

LARA

That's great! When will they be here?

Dominic breaks free, avoiding eye contact.

LARA (CONT'D)

Dom? When is the plane coming?

PAYTON

It'll be a couple of days.

LARA

What? A couple of days? And what are we supposed to do until then?

DOMINIC

We can stay with Payton. The plane can pick us up right there.

Tears well up in Lara's eyes. Her frustration is near a breaking point.

LARA

Let's just go.

Lara storms through the forest.

DOMINIC

Lara!

She ignores him.

PAYTON

It's okay.

Dominic shakes his head.

EXT. FOREST, ESTABLISHING - EVENING

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

The sun peaks over the mountains. It is dangerously close to nightfall.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The trio trudges through the woods much slower than they were when the day was young.

EXT. FOREST, ESTABLISHING - LATER

A thick fog falls over the forest.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The worn-out party treks through the forest.

Payton WINCES. Her mended leg locks up with every step she takes.

Dominic notices.

EXT. THE GARDEN - EVENING

The trio breaks through the woods, and enters The Garden. They are malnourished, and worn out.

**END MONTAGE**

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - LATER

POP

The fire in the stove CRACKLES. Payton pops another LOG inside, before closing the iron door.

Dominic motions towards the guitar hanging from the wall.

DOMINIC  
You play?



PAYTON  
Kinda. I'm not very good.

LARA  
Neither is Dominic, but that's  
never stopped him.

DOMINIC  
Ouch.

Dominic hops to his feet -

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
- May I?

Payton nods.

Dominic grabs the guitar off of the wall. He plops back down  
on the stool, STRUMMING a few cords.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Little out of tune. That's okay.

Dominic TUNES the guitar.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Almost there . . .

Dominic sits back, a smile on his face.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Here we go. You guys like  
Wonderwall?

LARA  
Dominic, please.

DOMINIC  
Babe, I'm kidding.

LARA  
It's just a small cabin, is all.

Lara pops up off of her stool.

LARA (CONT'D)  
I need some air.

Lara opens the door.

PAYTON  
We shouldn't -

LARA  
- I'll be careful.

Lara SLAMS the door behind her.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lara stares into the dark. She SHIVERS, bundling her COAT tighter around her neck.

She closes her eyes for a beat. When she opens them, her eyes are filled with tears.

Lara tilts her head down, and plays with the large diamond ring on her finger.

BEAT

LARA  
(whispers)  
God . . .

She wipes the tears from her face before bounding off the porch.

CUT TO:

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Dominic shakes his head. He STRUMS on the guitar a bit, as Payton rubs her left leg.

DOMINIC  
So . . .  
(beat)  
What happened with that?

PAYTON  
Just something stupid. Happened a while ago.

DOMINIC  
Let me see.

PAYTON  
It's fine.

DOMINIC  
No, really.

Payton relents, and rolls up her pant leg.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
You definitely had a fracture.

PAYTON  
I set it.

DOMINIC  
Yeah, incorrectly. You're going to need surgery.

PAYTON  
That's not happening.

DOMINIC  
You can't walk around like that.  
Why did you do this yourself?

PAYTON  
My father, well . . .  
(beat)  
He was a doctor, too. And he taught me all kinds of things.

DOMINIC  
Huh. What was his specialty?

PAYTON  
He was an emergency doctor. At a county hospital, so he saw the worst of the worst.

DOMINIC  
Yeah, that takes a special kind of person. I can see why he wanted to take you out here. Away from the medicine, the machines.

PAYTON  
It was more about getting away from people. And what they do to each other.

Payton stands, and approaches the mantel.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
It started when I was little. We would make small survival kits -

- Payton holds the ALTOIDS TIN -

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
- in something like this.

She places it back down and grabs the JOURNAL out of her bag.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
As I got older, he taught me what  
it really took to survive.

Payton sits down.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
Our week trips turned into a month,  
and then into full summers. Once he  
died, I just couldn't find my way.  
I came out here permanently.

She opens the journal. She flips through it, page by page.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
But he's still with me. This was  
his, and it's my most prized  
possession. Maps, carpentry, what  
kind of berries to eat. It's all  
here. I must have read it a  
thousand times. But . . .  
(beat)  
It's still hard.

A tear falls off Payton's chin, landing on a page.

She SNAPS the journal shut.

EXT. THE GARDEN, RIVER - CONTINUOUS

A flower PEDAL floats down to the ground, landing in the slow  
moving river.

Lara plucks the pedals from the flower in her hair, one after  
the other. As she does, she mouths a phrase . . .

*He loves me. He loves me not.*

She runs her fingers over the last remaining pedal. She SIGHS  
as she plucks it, and lets it go with the others.

A soft GURGLE comes from the tree line.

Lara doesn't notice. She turns and walks back to the cabin.

Something emerges from the river. A dark, thin creature. The  
darkness makes it impossible to discern any detail.

A Greenling.

The Greenling GROWLS as he cuts against the moving water. He  
reaches shore, following sLara.

I/E. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lara approaches the cabin, the Greenling about fifty yards behind her.

She silently peers through the cracked door. Her mouth drops open.

Dominic sits next to Payton, with his arm wrapped tightly around her shoulder.

DOMINIC  
I know it's hard. It's okay . . .  
(beat)  
Shhhh . . .

Payton TREMBLES before bursting into TEARS.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Let it all out.

Dominic pulls her in closer. He pats her head.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
That's it . . .

Dominic drops his face into her hair. He closes his eyes, as if he were enjoying the moment.

Lara takes a step back, shocked.

GRRRRRR

Lara turns away from the cabin, BREATHING heavily.

The Greenling that was following her is close. But Lara can't see anything.

Lara grinds her teeth, stepping inside the cabin. She shuts the door hard behind her.

GRRRRRRRRRR

A Greenling *shadow* falls over the door.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lara places the 2x4 across the door. The cabin is secure.

Dominic releases Payton, surprised.

DOMINIC  
Honey, hey -

LARA  
- I'm fine.

DOMINIC  
I was just going to say -

LARA  
- Enough.

Lara brushes past Payton, who is wiping her eyes.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

**BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE**

The sun cuts through the trees, casting interesting shadows all across the forest.

The morning dew has coated the green ground, with a thick mist hanging below the canopy.

Payton comes to a stop in the clearing. She breathes the fresh air, before charging forward.

YUKA (O.S.)  
Are you sure?

INT. YUKA'S SHOP - DAY

Yuka takes his glasses off, confusion washed over his old face. Payton, dressed to hike, stands on the other end of the counter.

PAYTON  
I'll be fine, I have this.

Payton waves her fathers JOURNAL. Yuka nods -

YUKA  
- That is one fine tool.

PAYTON  
Yeah. You're right.

Yuka points to his RIFLE.

YUKA  
Take that which ya. You'll need it more than me.

Payton approaches the rifle. She grabs it, feeling the weight in her hands.

YUKA (CONT'D)

Payton?

Payton looks up. Yuka SIGHS.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Payton hikes with her head held high.

YUKA (O.S.)

Just be careful.

Payton pushes her way through a thick brush.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Payton stops in her tracks, her mouth wide open.

She has found The Garden. Exactly like she remembered.  
Wildlife roams free, an assortment of plants sprout out of  
the fertile earth.

Paradise.

BANG

**END DREAM SEQUENCE**

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - DAY

Payton's eyes pop open. She listens . . .

BANG

PAYTON

What . . .

Payton leans over the loft. The cabin is empty.

BANG

Payton GROANS. She leaps out of the loft, and glides towards  
the door.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

An AXE drives into a healthy tree, splintering the base.  
Dominic pulls the tool back for a beat, before swinging it  
with all his might.

PAYTON (O.S.)

No!

Dominic pulls the axe back, and stares at Payton as she sprints towards him.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

DOMINIC

I'm cutting firewood, you said it yourself -

PAYTON

- We only take downed trees. Trees that have lived, had a chance!

DOMINIC

I'm sorry, I didn't know -

- Payton grabs the axe with both hands, ripping it out of Dominic's arms.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Woah, easy -

PAYTON

- You come, and you take. I thought you understood. But you're no better than the rest.

Payton storms back towards her cabin, with the axe in her hand. The couple stands behind, dumbfounded.

Dominic turns to Lara.

DOMINIC

Could you go check those rabbit snares?

Lara coldly nods, watching as Dominic goes off after Payton.

The half cut tree pitifully stands, nearly split in two. It will surely die.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Payton leans against the mantel, shaking in anger. She stares at the JOURNAL, her teeth clenched.

The door opens, and Dominic pokes his head inside.



DOMINIC  
Hey. You okay?

PAYTON  
You had no right.

DOMINIC  
I'm sorry, I didn't know. I'm  
trying to learn, really. I . . .  
(beat)  
I don't want to leave with Lara.  
I'm not getting on the plane.

Payton's eyes nearly pop out of her face.

PAYTON  
What?

DOMINIC  
This life. What you're doing, and  
how you're doing it. It's . . .  
(beat)  
It's what I've dreamed of.

Payton stares at him, with her mouth open.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
I wouldn't need to live here,  
obviously. I could have my own  
place, close-by. You could teach me  
how to live on the land.

PAYTON  
Aren't you getting married?

DOMINIC  
Lara, she . . .

Dominic shakes his head.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Lara stomps through the forest. She approaches the large  
tree, where they placed the snare trap.

DOMINIC (O.S.)  
She isn't what I want anymore.

A small RABBIT, caught by the trap, hangs lifelessly.

Lara grabs the rabbit, and works feverishly to free it. Once  
she does, she inspects it.

The animal is tiny, with not much meat at all.

Lara shakes her head.

LARA

Gross . . .

Lara tosses the small rabbit into the woods.

She turns back to the tree, re-setting the trap.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton shakes her head.

PAYTON

You can't. Not here.

DOMINIC

Why the hell not?

PAYTON

You just don't understand.

DOMINIC

Try me.

BEAT

PAYTON

This place, it's a paradise. But if  
you aren't careful . . .

(beat)

It'll fight back.

DOMINIC

What are you talking about?

PAYTON

That thing you saw in the woods? It  
wasn't a bear.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Lara steps back, and inspects the trap. Not bad for a city  
girl.

A thicket of branches suddenly *moves*. It's not a tree at all!

A GURGLE faintly ECHOES in the forest. Just enough for Lara  
to hear.

She spins around. The green inferno muddles everything together.

The GURGLES turn to GROWLS and SNARLS!

Lara's eyes grow wide. Her SCREAMS ECHO . . .

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton turns away from the mantel.

PAYTON

My Dad used to say they were older than us. He taught me that if I leave them alone, they leave me alone. And that's usually enough.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Lara bolts through the forest so fast she is barely visible. She BREATHES heavy, trying not to break down right then and there.

PAYTON (O.S.)

Usually.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Dominic rubs his temple.

DOMINIC

Even though they're dangerous? Why don't you just hunt them all down?

Payton shakes her head.

PAYTON

If you're going to stay out here, you're going to learn.

(beat)

If you pick a fight with nature -

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The tree line is quiet, peaceful.

PAYTON (O.S.)

- you lose.

Lara BURSTS through the brush, and falls into The Garden. She staggers to her feet, in shock.

Lara has been *mauled*. Her entire body is soaked in blood, and her left arm has been torn to shreds.

LARA  
Help!

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Dominic and Payton's ears perk up simultaneously.

DOMINIC  
Lara . . .

Payton grabs her RIFLE, and charges out the door.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Payton and Dominic sprint through The Garden -

DOMINIC  
- No!

Lara collapses into the long grass just before Dominic reaches her.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Lara! Lar -

- Dominic's eyes grow wide when he gets an up close view of her wounds.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Shit . . .

PAYTON  
Get inside!

Dominic hoists his girlfriend up, and carries her to the cabin. Payton backpedals, with her gun ready to fire.

She stares into the forest, waiting -

- BANG!

She FIRES into the brush. Something bolts away, disturbing the tree line.

Payton turns, and SPRINTS towards the cabin. She SLAMS the door behind her.

A GREENLING slinks from the forest, into The Garden. He hides in the shadows . . .

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lara twists in agony on the floor as Dominic tries to calm her down. Blood sprays every which way.

Her unnerving SCREAM penetrates to the bone . . .

DOMINIC  
Lara, stay still.

Dominic turns to Payton.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Do you have a first aid kit?

PAYTON  
Yeah -

Payton TEARS into her stacked SUPPLIES. She hands over some white RAGS -

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
- This'll stop the bleeding.

Dominic wraps the largest RAG around Lara's arm.

LARA  
Ah!

DOMINIC  
I know, I know.

Payton hands over a VILE of clear liquid.

PAYTON  
Antibiotics. For infection.

DOMINIC  
I have to do this sweetie, I'm  
sorry -

LARA  
- I'm going to die!

DOMINIC  
You're not going to die, it's okay -

LARA  
- It came out of the trees! Oh, my  
God . . .

Dominic takes the HYPODERMIC NEEDLE, and injects the antibiotic into Lara.

PAYTON  
I have some morphine, too.

DOMINIC  
Give it here!

She hands the new VILE over. Lara WHIMPERS as that is injected as well.

Payton charges to the door. She cracks it open, and stares outside. There is nothing there.

EXT. FOREST - EVENING

The forest is quiet. Too quiet.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The sun has nearly disappeared, shrouding The Garden in a blue hue.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

FISHING LINE glides across the wound, acting as a suture. Dominic focuses intently on sewing up his fiancé as quickly as possible.

Payton watches.

DOMINIC  
She's going to be fine. Nothing  
vital was hit, just really deep.

Lara softly GROANS.

LARA  
(whispers)  
I know it . . .

DOMINIC  
Honey?

LARA  
(whispers)  
You're going to leave me . . .

Lara discretely pulls off her ENGAGEMENT RING. She drops it on the ground.

Dominic flashes a quick look to Payton.

DOMINIC  
No, Lara. Please don't say that -

- THUMP

Something SMACKS against the outside of the cabin. Payton and Dominic are quiet, listening for another.

THUMP

Another.

Payton quietly picks up her RIFLE. She checks to see if it's loaded before standing up.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Do not go out there.

Payton swipes a BIC LIGHTER off of the table. She pockets it, and moves to the entryway.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
Payton, come on.

Payton opens the door. She slinks out, closing it behind her.

Dominic shakes as he places the 2x4 across the door.

Lara GROANS in pain.

Dominic stares with pity at his broken love.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton slinks along the cabin, like a hunter in the night. Each step she takes is all but silent.

Payton turns the corner, to the *thump* wall. She stares hard at the wall.

A bloody print is in the middle of the panel.

BANG!

Payton ducks as an object WHIZZES over her head and slams into the side of the cabin.

Payton scans the area, barrel first. Coast is clear.

She pans her head, staring at the object that was flung at her.

Payton tiptoes over, and stares at the body of a DEAD RABBIT. There are several around her, evidence of the barrage.

Much like the rabbit Lara discarded before her attack.

Something BOLTS through the brush. Payton whirls around, but she cannot find it.

The forest is silent, sans Payton's heavy breathing.

GGGRRRRRR . . .

Payton's shakes as she peers to the top of the cabin.

A thin, scruffy GREENLING crouches down near the steel chimney. His sharp teeth reflect the moonlight.

PAYTON

No -

- Payton raises the rifle, and FIRES it!

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Both Dominic and Lara JUMP at the surprise gunshot.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The Greenling scampers on the roof, and LEAPS onto the ground. It bolts through The Garden, away from the cabin.

Payton charges after it.

EXT. THE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The Greenling charges into the shadows, just out of reach of the cabin.

Payton stops at a planted TORCH. She LIGHTS her BIC LIGHTER, and sets it aflame!

The light from the torch spreads quickly, illuminating a small circumference.

Payton sprints across The Garden. She reaches another TORCH, which she lights.

And another. And another. Soon, light from the flames spreads across the entire Garden.



Satisfied, Payton backs away from the forest edge. She reaches the center of The Garden, and raises her GUN.

Long SHADOWS creep closer to Payton. SNARLS and YELPS echo across The Garden. And they're getting closer.

PAYTON  
Shit . . .

Several figures slink into The Garden. There isn't just one Greenling. There are six.

Payton turns around, and *sprints* back to the cabin.

The Greenling's *chase* after her! And they're gaining ground.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton reaches the cabin.

PAYTON  
Open the door!

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Dominic hops to his feet. He hurries -

LARA  
(weakly)  
- Wait.

He stops at the door, turning to her.

LARA (CONT'D)  
Leave her.

Dominic's mouth drops open.

DOMINIC  
You . . .  
(beat)  
What?

LARA  
Let them take her.

BEAT

Dominic shakes -

- BANG!

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton SLAMS her closed fist into the strong door.

PAYTON

Dominic!

Payton steps back, and raises her RIFLE.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Dominic grabs hold of the 2x4 propped against the door, and lifts it.

Lara glares at her fiancé -

LARA

(whispers)

- I was right.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton lowers her gun.

The door opens -

DOMINIC

- Hey.

A Greenling drops from the roof, and blitzes Payton.

She SCREAMS, and wildly FIRES her gun.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Payton!

The Greenling SNARLS, VISCOUSLY CLAWING and tearing at Payton with his sharp teeth.

Dominic approaches the attack. The Greenling SCREAMS at him, much like a lion protecting a carcass would.

PAYTON

Help!

The Greenling drags her towards the tree line.

Dominic turns to the cabin, and bolts inside.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

Dominic!

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Dominic flies past Lara, grabbing a nearby AXE.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Dominic charges the Greenling, the AXE held high. He swings, crashing the iron blade into the monsters back.

The Greenling SCREAMS, releasing Payton. She scampers away, still holding her rifle.

She points the weapon at the Greenling. The injured creature turns towards her, staring into her eyes.

The oozing green skin is covered in vegetation. Flowers, live and wilted, cover long scars over the Greenling's body. It's black, lifeless eyes are fixed on Payton.

As it bleeds, flowers bloom over the wound.

BANG! A bullet RIPS through the monsters skull, exiting out the back.

A tattered Payton lowers the rifle. She stares at the slumped body for a beat before standing.

PAYTON

We have to get inside. There's more  
of them.

Payton and Dominic jet into the cabin. The door SLAMS behind them.

BEAT

Only the sound of the CRACKLING torches can be heard.

Shadows slink into The Garden. The Figures grab hold of the dead Greenling, and drag it into the woods.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - LATER

Dominic dresses Payton's wound -

DOMINIC

- Hold still, last one.

Payton GROANS. She takes a long drink of water from her CANTEEN.

Lara stares at Dominic with envy. Dangerous envy.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

There. That should do it. Not so bad.

PAYTON

You came just in time.

LARA

(under her breath)

Yeah. Just in time.

PAYTON

They might try to get inside. We have to have someone on guard. I'll start -

DOMINIC

- No, you're hurt. I'll do it.

PAYTON

This is just a scratch, I'll be fine.

DOMINIC

Trust me, your body is going to shut down. You're running on pure adrenaline right now. When that wears off, you're going to crash. I'm thinking of the group here.

BEAT

Payton holds out the RIFLE.

PAYTON

Wake me up if you hear anything.

Dominic nods.

EXT. THE GARDEN - LATER

The torches are fading. A thick fog of smoke hangs over The Garden.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Payton and Lara lie sound asleep in the loft, their soft SNORES exhibiting a peaceful rest.

Dominic is slumped back, passed out while on guard.

Though nothing has changed, the once strong and reliable door feels vulnerable.

The porch CREAKS ever so slightly. A shadow moves from just behind the door.

Dominic stirs, but does not wake.

A strange SLITHERING emits from the other side of the door. Suddenly, several small VINES work their way through the cracks in the door!

The vines crawl up towards the 2x4. They grasp on, and carefully lift it up.

The 2x4 is lifted over the metal HOOKS. And, just like that, the vines drop the 2x4 to the floor. It CLATTERS on the ground, waking the entire cabin up.

DOMINIC

Whaaa?

The vines disappear through the cracks. Dominic waves the RIFLE around wildly, looking for the threat.

He stares at the 2x4 in bewilderment.

*How did that happen?*

Payton sits up, and looks to the door. She notices the 2x4 as well.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

This just fell -

PAYTON

- No! Don't go near the door -

- The door BURSTS open! A oozing GREENLING SNAPS its jaws, and lunges at Dominic.

LARA

Dominic!

The Greenling latches his claws into Dominic, and bites down on his neck.

Dominic's SCREAMS are quickly cut, replaced by GURGLES. He falls to the floor, with the Greenling feeding on his throat.

Payton leaps from the loft, and grabs a stool. She raises it over her head, and swings it down at the Greenling.

CRASH! The stool is broken over the back of the feeding Greenling. It SCREAMS, and crumples to the ground.

Lara hurries down the ladder as fast as she can.

Payton snatches her HUNTING KNIFE off of the table. She advances on the SNARLING Greenling, stabbing it over and over in the abdomen.

Before long, the Greenling is dead. But Payton keeps stabbing it. Over and over and over.

SNAP

Payton leans back, holding the knife handle. The blade broke off inside the monster.

Lara holds Dominic's lifeless body, WEEPING. His blood has sprayed all over the cabin, washing it red.

Payton limps over to the door. She stares outside and the all but burnt out torches. The darkness has taken over once and for all.

Payton shuts the door silently. She places the bloody 2x4 over the hooks, securing the door.

Lara rocks back and forth, Dominic's lifeless body close to hers.

Payton stares at the Lara, her heart visibly breaking.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - DAY

Lara stares ahead, in a trance. The smoke from the fire pit billows by her face, but she does not notice.

Payton finishes wrapping a large tarp around Dominic's body. She ties it tight with fishing wire, making sure it is ready to transfer.

She turns to the cabin. The red blood is visible, even through the cracked door.

PAYTON

The, uh . . .

(beat)

The plane should be here soon.

He'll . . .

(beat)

He'll have room for Dominic.

Lara closes her eyes. A single tear falls down her cheek.  
Payton approaches Lara.

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

Lara opens her hateful eyes -

LARA  
- Did he say anything to you. Did  
he say anything about . . .  
(beat)  
Leaving me?

Payton's mouth falls agape.

PAYTON  
I didn't . . .  
(beat)  
That wasn't something we -

LARA  
- I saw the way he looked at you.  
The way he talked to you.

PAYTON  
He didn't love me -

LARA  
- He loved the idea of you. And  
maybe that was enough.

Lara turns around, facing the fire.

LARA (CONT'D)  
They should have taken you.

BEAT

PAYTON  
(meekly)  
I'm going to go down by the water  
and wait for the plane.

Payton turns towards the cabin. She reaches for the RIFLE  
propped up against the cord.

Instead of grabbing it, she leaves it for Lara. Shoving her  
hands into her pockets, Payton hikes deeper into The Garden.

When she's about fifty yards away, Lara's eyes break from the  
fire. She stares at Payton, who is falling out of eyesight.

Lara stands up, and sheds free of the WOOL BLANKET wrapped around her shoulders.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

The door to the cabin CREAKS open. Lara stands just outside of the doorway, staring at the blood that has dried over the wood.

Lara quietly steps through the cabin, staring at the walls intently.

Tears well up in Lara's eyes.

The ENGAGEMENT RING sits in a pool of dried blood. Lara has to peel it from the floor.

She stares at the stained ring. Her sadness is replaced by a strange disassociation. Her face is completely blank.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lara drags her feet as she moves through the matted grass. She looks down at her lover's makeshift body bag. She falls to her knees, and caresses the head through the plastic tarp.

LARA  
(whispers)  
I forgive you.

Lara turns her head towards the fire pit. She stares deep into the ash as the wind picks up microbes and sends them away.

Ideas begin to flash in Lara's mind.

EXT. THE GARDEN, RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Payton stares into the water. She, too, is in some type of trance. The wind softly blows her hair across her face, almost giving her a kiss.

She holds her father's journal, tightly. Feeling his presence.

Payton turns to her stone fishing trap. Sure enough, there are three fish swimming in the small space.

Payton kicks off her boots, and rolls up her pants.



She wades in the water, and reaches the trap. Dipping her hands in, she pushes the rocks aside, freeing the fish.

Payton stands upright, watching the fish disappear into the water.

INT. PAYTON'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lara piles pieces of cloth in the middle of the cabin, surrounding Dominic's body. She rips pages from BOOKS and stuffs them in little corners.

She works feverishly, ignoring that blood is seeping from her wounds.

Lara steps back. The already flammable cabin has been turned into a tinder box.

Lara takes the BIC LIGHT, and ignites it.

EXT. THE GARDEN, RIVER - CONTINUOUS

The wind blows softly. Payton is in a trance, her eyes fixed on the river.

She SNIFFS, her nose crinkling. Something is burning.

Payton turns around, and stares at the sky. Thick, black smoke is poisoning the otherwise blue sky.

PAYTON

Oh, no . . .

Payton hops to her feet, and sprints away from the river. Her stiff leg barely slowing her down.

EXT. PAYTON'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

The cabin is ENGULFED in flames!

Payton comes to a stop, staring at the carnage in horror.

PAYTON

Lara! Where are you -

- BANG!

A bullet rips into Payton's chest. She crumples to the ground.

Lara steps forward, the RIFLE stock pressed against the inside of her elbow.

LARA  
This is all your fault!

A faint ENGINE HUMS over the ROAR of the flames.

Lara looks to the sky, where the small passenger plane is circling.

She flashes a crooked smile before turning to Payton's body.

Lara slings the RIFLE over her shoulder. She grabs hold of Payton's arms, and drags her towards the cabin.

LARA (CONT'D)  
No one needs to know.

Payton softly GROANS as her body is dragged onto the porch. The cabin is about to collapse!

LARA (CONT'D)  
If Dominic wanted to stay here,  
with you, then fine. Let him.

Lara's eye catches something, just outside the cabin.

Greenling's. Three of them.

Lara drops Payton's body with a THUD. Her eyes grow wide -

LARA (CONT'D)  
- Get out of here!

The Greenling's cautiously ascend to the burning cabin.

Lara fumbles with the rifle, trying to get it off of her shoulder.

She points it towards the middle Greenling -

- BANG!

The bullet misses. The siege continues.

Lara pulls on the bolt action, but it's not smooth.

LARA (CONT'D)  
Shit -

- The creatures of the forest attack! They leap over Payton, and slam Lara into the fiery inferno.

Lara SCREAMS as her body quickly incinerates, along with her Greenling attacker.

Another Greenling stares into the flames from the porch. It turns to Payton. Green ooze dripping from his clamped jaws.

Payton closes her eyes as she shakes uncontrollably. The Greenling leans down, and SNIFFS Payton.

BEAT

The Greenling pulls back. The two remaining slink away from the burning building, and disappear into the forest.

Payton's eyes start to fade. The POPS and CRACKLES are becoming muddled as she loses consciousness.

Yuka hurries through The Garden, and runs up to the burning cabin.

YUKA

Payton? No!

Payton can barely make out Yuka's face before passing out.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Payton GROANS in her hospital bed. Her face is black and bruised, her slashes have professional stitching. Much of the ash has been washed away.

She sits up, wincing. The nearby window shade is drawn, allowing sunlight to pour in.

Payton squints her eyes, focusing. Small SNOWFLAKES fall from the sky, fluttering past Payton's room.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Payton?

Payton turns, and faces the DOCTOR.

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

You were very, very lucky. Some smoke inhalation, but that's nothing compared to the bullet that shattered your collarbone.

Payton gazes at her shoulder. A black SHOULDER brace is wrapped tight.

Payton's eyes drift back towards the Doctor.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
We also noticed some extensive trauma from an old leg injury. That must have been very painful. That will need to be operated on, as well.

Payton's eyes shift to the floor, deep in thought.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Payton flips through her father's JOURNAL.

She canvasses the maps, the lists, the adventures. She re-reads survival techniques, what products are biodegradable, and which berries are safe to eat.

PAYTON  
How long?

DOCTOR (O.S.)  
Sorry?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Payton's surgically repaired leg is being held in place by a crude, iron brace.

Payton cautiously rotates her arm while placing her free hand on her collar bone. She winces, but she can move.

PAYTON (O.S.)  
How long until I'm healed?

DOCTOR (O.S.)  
I'm afraid to answer that. Could be weeks, could be months. That shoulder needs at least four weeks.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

*TEXT -- Winter.*

The streets are covered in snow.

The LANDLORD opens the door, and exits the small house.

LANDLORD

Like I said, it's nothing to write  
home about.

Payton follows. She has crutches under her arms, keeping her  
injured leg hovering above the ground.

PAYTON

No, it's perfect. I'll take it.

LANDLORD

Great. Rent's month-to-month, so  
how long you planning on staying?

PAYTON

Just the winter.

Payton smiles as her plan comes into place.

INT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

Payton tears the VELCRO from her soft cast apart. She pulls  
her leg free, moving it every which way.

Satisfied, she stands up, putting weight on it.

So far, so good.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY

Payton walks down the icy streets with her healthy leg. She  
moves with purpose, charging down the street.

Feeling confident, she starts to *run*. She jogs down the empty  
street, a huge smile engulfing her face.

Payton comes to a stop at the end of the street. She throws  
her arms above her head, breathing heavily.

She turns around, and stares at the mountains in the far off  
distance. It's almost as if they're calling her.

EXT. FOREST, ESTABLISHING - DAY

*Spring.*

The clouds begin to part, showing the first sunlight since  
the fall.

Ice melts, the rivers run clear. The forest does the same  
thing it does every spring; bloom.

INT. YUKA'S SHOP - DAY

DING

Payton, fresh and healed, stands just inside the doorway. Yuka takes off his GLASSES, and smiles.

The sequence plays out just like Payton's dream.

YUKA  
Are you sure?

PAYTON  
I'll be fine, I have this.

Payton waves her fathers JOURNAL. It is singed, and a bit tattered. But it's just as useful as ever.

Yuka nods -

YUKA  
- That is one fine tool.

PAYTON  
Yeah. You're right.

Yuka points to his RIFLE.

YUKA  
Take that with ya. You'll need it more than me.

Payton approaches the rifle. She grabs it, feeling the weight in her hands.

YUKA (CONT'D)  
Payton?

Payton looks up.

YUKA (CONT'D)  
Just be careful.

Payton places the rifle down. She approaches the counter, and throws her arms around Yuka.

Yuka accepts the warm hug.

They break free. Yuka motions to the back.

YUKA (CONT'D)  
I had a feeling you'd return. So, I put some supplies aside. Just in case.

Yuka leads Payton into the room behind the counter.

DOCTOR (O.S.)  
It's going to be tough. But with  
proper treatment, you'll be back to  
your old self in no time.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Payton treks through the forest. Her leg, now healed,  
strongly steps through thick brush.

DOCTOR (O.S.)  
I will say, I do think it would be  
smart to stay in town for a bit.  
Give yourself time to heal.

Payton pushes aside some low branches, and hikes through.

EXT. FOREST, QUARRY - DAY

Payton carefully scales down the familiar quarry. Her strong  
leg gives her more confidence than before.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Payton marches through the forest clearing.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Payton grinds her teeth, deep in thought.

PAYTON  
The first snow is at least a month  
away . . .

Payton turns to the Doctor -

PAYTON (CONT'D)  
- I want to get better. I *need* to  
get better. There's a place. It's  
waiting for me.

EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

**END MONTAGE**

Payton breaks through the tree line, and reaches The Garden. Though the damage was great, beauty has returned to this sacred place.

The layout of her home is the same, but the grass has grown over the cords. The ash from the burned cabin has all but blown away, leaving a perfect place to rebuild.

Payton turns to the quiet forest. *Respect nature, and nature will respect you.*

Payton drops her bag at the foot of her old fire pit. She stacks LOGS from one of the moss covered cords. First step, fire. Second step, shelter.

Payton is home.

CUT TO: BLACK