

Oil on Bone  
by  
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OVER BLACK

The SOUND of branches snapping, something being dragged in the dirt.

EXT. ALLEGHENY MOUNTAINS, PENNSYLVANIA - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: Allegheny Mountains, 2009

A young girl (ZOE CARDINAL, 6) with strawberry blonde hair clutches a stuffed bunny rabbit, follows the trail of matted grass and snapped twigs in a dark forest.

Ahead of her a man drags something heavy wrapped in a blanket deeper into the woods. He stops, wipes sweat from his brow.

The girl ducks behind a tree, peeks out to watch. He digs, his shovel tossing dirt, until it clangs on metal.

He uses his muddy boots to roll the stuffed blanket into a hole. It lands with a squishy thud.

The clouds part, a nearly-full moon illuminates the man as he turns from the grave towards her.

He sings a song. [like California Stars, or one with a similar feel that's easy to get the rights to]

MAN  
(singing)  
*I'd like to lay my weary bones  
tonight, on a bed of California  
stars...*

She drops the bunny rabbit and runs.

OVER WHITE

WHOOSH, SWOOSH, WHOOSH.

The rhythmic sound of a paintbrush on canvas, like a heartbeat.

SUPERIMPOSE: Thirteen years later

INT. ZOE'S ATTIC STUDIO - DAY

Zoe holds the paintbrush. Her strawberry blonde hair pulled back in a messy ponytail, her grey eyes surveying the extravagant crown of a platinum-haired elf KING.

She's so intent on painting the King she doesn't notice when her niece LILY (8) enters, wearing an air cast. Lily's a ball of energy, curiosity.

LILY  
Aunt Zo? Zo!

Lily waves an arm in front of Zoe.

ZOE  
Oh! Hey.

Lily studies the painting.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
King Archibald of Zandia. Also known  
as, Grandpa Archie.

LILY  
Is he coming to my party?

ZOE  
I hope so. But I have a new subject  
to sketch, Princess Lily.

Zoe bows dramatically. Lily giggles.

Zoe points to a wooden stool nestled between the sloping  
roof of the studio. Lily hops onto it. Zoe trades her  
paintbrush for a pencil and sketchpad.

A CRASH from the hallway.

ERICA (O.S.)  
Shit! Effing roller-skates!

Zoe's sister ERICA (26) limps into the studio, rubs her  
shin. She sighs, looks at Lily.

ERICA  
Homework, Lily Anne.

LILY  
(to Zoe)  
Do me without the cast, I'm gonna  
take it off for the party-

ERICA  
You will do no such thing young la-

LILY  
But my arm needs fresh air and  
sunshine to heal!

ZOE  
Bad things grow in the dark.

Erica looks at Zoe, then Lily, who nods sagely.

ERICA  
 It needs to be protected until it  
 heals properly.  
 (pause)  
 Homework, or you won't have a party.

Lily humphs, slides off the stool, heads toward the door.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
 And put those roller skates away! I  
 nearly broke my-

Lily SLAMS the door shut.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
 ...neck.  
 (turning to Zoe)  
 I need you to watch her tonight, I'm  
 taking extra shifts...

Erica trails off as she recognizes the man in Zoe's  
 painting. She scowls, crosses her arms.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
 What, he's a fucking king now?

Zoe sighs, rolls her eyes, steeling herself for another  
 round of an argument they've had many times.

ZOE  
 It's my work, Erica. You want to  
 portray him as a villain, go make a  
 mud sculpture or macaroni art-

ERICA  
 Macaroni art?

Their voices fade.

PRE-LAP: CLANG.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD

Lily throws a tennis ball underhand, awkwardly with her left  
 arm. It CLANGS loudly against the metal door of the garage,  
 rebounds into the driveway. She picks it up, throws again.

CLANG.

The sister's argument drifts in snippets through the open  
 attic window.

ERICA (O.S.)  
 ...so fucking selfish sometimes...

ZOE (O.S.)  
 ...you're not my mother!

Lily's throw goes wild, lands on the roof of the garage. Her eyes grow wide as she watches the ball slowly roll to the right side of the roof, towards the neighbour's yard.

LILY  
 No, no, no!

The ball lands in the grass, behind the metal mesh fence separating Erica's driveway from the neighbour's yard.

Lily freezes, dread etching her face. She forces herself to walk towards the fence.

An athletic black woman (JACKIE STONE, 50s) strolls off her back porch, picks up the ball.

LILY (CONT'D)  
 Hello Ms. Stone.

Jackie tosses the ball a few feet in the air, catches it.

LILY (CONT'D)  
 Could I have my ball back, please?

Jackie tosses the ball again, steps forward, catches it behind her back. She looks at the ball, then Lily.

JACKIE  
 (mild Pittsburgh  
 dialect)  
 You remember the rules?

LILY  
 No singing 'crappy' pop songs at the  
 top of my lungs.

Lily searches her memory of Jackie's "do not" list.

LILY (CONT'D)  
 No roller skating on the driveway.

Jackie nods her head for Lily to continue.

LILY (CONT'D)  
 No bouncing stuff off the garage.

Jackie tosses and catches the ball once more, walks back to her porch, taking the ball with her.

Lily sighs, turns back to her house.

INT. ERIN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Erica's in morning multi-task mode: she makes breakfast for Lily, packs a lunch for herself and Lily, keeps an eye on the time, tidies as she goes, going faster and faster.

Zoe wanders into the kitchen, yawning, wearing pyjamas. Pours herself a bowl of kid's cereal.

ERICA  
Lily! Breakfast!

ZOE  
Can you go driving with me today?

Lily skips in wearing a bright green jumpsuit and dragon wings strapped to her back.

ERICA  
Wings, off.

LILY  
But Mom-

ERICA  
Lily! You have five minutes to eat breakfast before you catch the school bus. Wings off, now!

Lily pouts, slips the wings off, they land on the floor.

ZOE  
My driving test's this afternoon-

Erica sees the wings on the floor, glares at Lily.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
I need to practice the 3-point turn, and reversing. I did really bad at reversing, the last two tests. Going backwards isn't natural.

ERICA  
I have a twelve-hour shift today, I can't-

ZOE  
Okay, whatever.

Zoe stirs her cereal listlessly.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
You must really like being my chauffeur.

Erica hands Lily her lunch box. She looks inside, frowns.

LILY  
Bologna? Gross. Can I have peanut  
butter and-

ERICA  
No!  
(softer)  
We're out of peanut butter, I haven't  
had time to go shopping. Maybe you  
can trade with somebody, but you've  
got to go now or you'll miss the bus.  
I can't be late for work again.

Lily takes her lunch, reluctantly, walks out the back door.  
Erica shoves her packed lunch in a bag, grabs her purse, and  
dashes out.

Zoe looks at her soggy cereal, sighs.

EXT. ERICA'S DRIVEWAY

Zoe stands near the garage as a car emblazoned with '**A-Plus  
Driving School**' pulls into the driveway, parks.

The DRIVING INSTRUCTOR exits, goes to the passenger side.

ZOE  
Can we start on the street?

The Instructor shakes his head, gets in the car.

INT. DRIVING SCHOOL CAR

Zoe sits in the driver's seat. She takes a deep breath,  
performs a check-list.

ZOE  
Seatbelt.

She clicks the seatbelt on.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
Mirrors.

She adjusts the side and rear-view mirrors.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
Gear shift, reverse.

She moves the gear shift from "P" to "R".

The instructor sits with a tablet on his lap, tapping on the  
screen, as Zoe runs through the check-list.

Zoe stares out the windshield, summoning her courage.

INSTRUCTOR  
Whenever you're ready, Ms. Cardinal.

Zoe swallows, presses the gas pedal.

PRE-LAP: CRASH.

EXT. ERICA'S DRIVEWAY

A section of the metal fence between Erica and Jackie's yard topples to the ground, knocked over by the back bumper of the car that's swerved erratically off the driveway.

Jackie looks out the window of her house, shakes her head.

INT. DRIVING SCHOOL CAR

The Instructor turns the tablet off.

Zoe rests her forehead on the steering wheel, defeated.

EXT. ERICA'S GARAGE/BACKYARD - DAY

A hand-painted "**Happy Birthday Lily**" banner strung across the garage flaps gently in the breeze. Inside the garage, parents drink and talk, sheltering from the sun.

On the patio, the children and Zoe play musical chairs, Erica blasts MUSIC.

EXT. JACKIE'S BACK PORCH

Jackie sits on her back porch, reads a book. The MUSIC next door startles her. She ignores it, returns to reading.

The music gets louder.

Jackie stomps off the porch towards the racket.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD

A boy (SAM, 8) sees Jackie striding down the driveway and beelines for her.

SAM  
You one of the garage-livers?

JACKIE  
A what now?

Sam points at the garage.



SAM  
The grown-ups who live there.

JACKIE  
No.

Erica spots Jackie.

ERICA  
(to herself)  
Shit.

SAM  
You wanna play? It's fun!

JACKIE  
No.

Sam shrugs, runs to join the kids.

ERICA  
Hi Jackie.

JACKIE  
Erica. You trying to wake the dead?

Erica takes a deep breath, approaches Jackie quickly, slips her arm through hers.

ERICA  
We'll tone it down. How about a beer?

Jackie's too surprised to protest as Erica leads her to a loaded picnic table. Zoe's at the table, face painting the kids-she transforms Sam's face into a lion.

Erica hands Jackie a bottle.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
I could introduce you around, might be a chance to meet new clients?

Jackie half-shrugs.

ZOE  
(to Jackie)  
How's work, any juicy cases?  
(pause)  
Jackie's a private detective, Sam, like Veronica Mars, Jessica Jones.

JACKIE  
Private investigator.

SAM  
You ever see a dead body?

ERICA  
Sam.

Erica motions to the kids playing in the yard. Sam sighs, leaves. Erica sets a plate with a loaded burger in front of Jackie, smiles, leaves.

ZOE  
So have you ever seen a dead body?

Jackie jumps up, breathing hard. Zoe's surprised, follows Jackie's gaze.

A daddy-long-legs walks along the table, toward Jackie's plate. Zoe grabs a plastic cup, nudges the insect into it, places the cup in the grass, away from Jackie.

Jackie eyes the cup warily, approaches the table cautiously.

ZOE  
It's okay, spiders are our friends.

Jackie shakes her head 'nope.' She inspects her plate carefully, picks it up, eats the burger while standing, quickly stepping away from a bubble-bee as it drones by.

INT. ARCHIE'S JEEP/EXT. ERICA'S DRIVEWAY

Drifting through the half-open window of a Jeep, the sounds of Lily's party. A tall silver-haired man (ARCHIE, late 50s) in the driver's seat.

He opens the door, stretches, walks toward the party.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD

Erica sets a birthday cake with nine lit candles on a table.

ADULTS & KIDS  
(singing)  
*Happy Birthday dear Lil-y, Happy  
Birthday to you!*

Lily wears dragon wings that flap as she bounces with excitement. Zoe stands next to her.

ERICA  
Make a wish, lady bug.

Zoe closes her eyes, same as Lily, like she's making a wish too. Lily opens her eyes, blows out the candles.

Erica hands out slices of cake.

LILY (O.S)  
Grandpa Archie!

Erica's eyes widen, she turns in Lily's direction, sees Lily laughing as she rides on Archie's shoulders.

ZOE  
Dad!

Archie approaches the table.

ERICA  
(to Lily)  
Get down, it's not safe.

Lily bounces on Archie's shoulders, precariously. Archie laughs, grips her legs to keep her steady.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
(to Archie)  
Please, put her down.

ZOE  
You made it!

ERICA  
Down!

Archie sighs, sets Lily down, musses her hair. Erica glares.

ERICA  
I'll get you a coke.

She goes to the cooler, her eyes locked on Archie.

ZOE  
I've finished your portrait.

ARCHIE  
I'd love to see it.

Zoe beams, beckons him toward the house. Lily tries to follow but Erica grabs her.

ERICA  
You've got icing all over your hands  
and face lady bug.

Erica yanks a few sheets of wet wipes from a package on the table, roughly cleans Lily's hands and face as she watches Zoe and Archie slip through the back door.

LILY  
Ouch! Mom-

ERICA  
Sorry...

INT. ZOE'S ATTIC STUDIO

Zoe bounds into the studio, Archie strolls behind her.  
She approaches an easel and canvas draped with a sheet.

ZOE  
This is part of the series I'm doing  
for the Exhibition.

ARCHIE  
Uh huh.

Zoe grips either side of the sheet, getting ready to reveal  
the painting beneath.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
Only three new artists were invited  
to show their work.

Zoe lifts the sheet with a flourish. Archie tilts his head.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
You don't like it?

She looks at it, gasps. A large X has been cut into the  
canvas, disfiguring King Archibald's face.

Zoe's mouth opens and closes. No words escape.

ARCHIE  
It's okay, it's just a painting.

ZOE  
But...

ARCHIE  
The most important thing is family.

Zoe sniffles, Archie pulls her into a hug.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
Things come and go. Family is  
forever. You do whatever it takes to  
keep the family together, remember  
that, Zoe.  
(pause)  
Let's get some of that cake, huh?

Zoe nods.

A breeze from the open window ruffles the ragged edges of the slashed painting, turning King Archibald's magnanimous face into a disfigured mask.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD & DRIVEWAY

The kids play with squirt guns and water balloons. Archie watches, smiling. His phone rings, the caller ID: **Rooster**

Archie's surprised, then annoyed. He walks to the top of the driveway, looks out over the street, answers the phone.

ARCHIE  
(on phone)  
This better be important, I'm with my family-

Archie pauses, listens. His face turns to stone.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
When's he gettin' out?  
(listening)  
An investigation? You said-  
(listening)  
He comes near my family I'll kill that bastard myself.

Archie turns back toward the house. Lily stands a few feet away, holding a water balloon, looking uncertainly at him.

He ends the call, smiles reassuringly at Lily.

ARCHIE  
What you got there?

She hands him the balloon.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
Who should we get first? Your Mom?

Lily giggles. They walk back toward the party.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD AND GARAGE - DUSK

Erica tidies the picnic table, puts dirty paper plates into a garbage bag. Zoe finishes a piece of cake, sets the plate on the table.

Erica looks at her meaningfully. Zoe's oblivious. Erica sighs, picks it up.

The kids play 'bloody murder' in the yard. Five kids, eyes squeezed shut, stand in a circle at the far end of the yard, counting the hours until midnight, while Lily searches for a hiding place.

Archie's in the garage, laughing and talking with a few parents. He holds a red plastic cup.

Erica watches Archie take a sip.

ERICA  
He's drinking again.

ZOE  
It's kid's punch.

KIDS (O.S.)  
Six o'clock...

Erica frowns, shoves Zoe's plate into a garbage bag. Lily dashes into the garage.

ZOE  
Somebody slashed my painting.

KIDS (O.S.)  
Seven o'clock...

ZOE  
Was it you?

Erica watches as Archie calls Lily over.

KIDS (O.S.)  
Eight o'clock..

Lily points to his cup, he gives it to her. She sips, makes a face, shakes her head.

KIDS (CONT'D) (O.S.)  
Nine o'clock..

Erica drops the bag, charges toward the garage.

INT. ERICA'S GARAGE

Erica smacks the cup from Lily's hand, spraying red liquid onto the concrete floor.

Lily freezes for a moment, watching the red cup roll on the floor. She finds her voice.

LILY  
Mom!

KIDS (CONT'D) (O.S.)  
Ten o'clock..

ERICA  
(to Archie)  
You're giving her alcohol?

Erica notices the shocked and curious faces of the parents. She breathes deeply clenching and unclenching her fists. Archie laughs, shakes his head.

ARCHIE  
Punch, Erica.

KIDS (O.S.)  
Eleven o'clock..

ERICA  
She made a face, when she tasted it!

ARCHIE  
So?

ERICA  
Get out.

EXT. BACKYARD/INT. ERICA'S GARAGE

Zoe observes the exchange from the patio.

She starts toward the garage but Lily runs to her, hugs her around the waist, burying her head in Zoe's midriff.

KIDS (O.S.)  
Midnight!

Zoe rubs Lily's back, watches Erica's fury escalate. Erica argues with Archie, her eyes blaze, her whole body vibrates with coiled tension. Archie smiles, laughs.

Archie reaches for Erica's shoulders, as if to placate her.

Erica flinches, raises her arms to ward off his overture. He steps toward her, she pushes him back.

SAM (O.S.)  
Bloody murder!!

Archie stumbles backwards, lands hard on the ground, his head hits a wooden chair.

Zoe gasps. Lily turns to see what she's looking at.

LILY  
What's wrong with grandpa?

Zoe swims through the stream of kids running toward the back porch. She reaches Archie, blood oozes from a cut on the back of his head, dripping onto his shirt.

ERICA (O.S.)  
Keep him still! Don't let him get up.

Zoe nods, Erica dashes to the house.

ZOE  
Dad?

Archie coughs, opens his eyes - he's dazed. He struggles to focus on Zoe.

ARCHIE  
Lillian, you...

ZOE  
Dad, it's Zoe.

He grabs Zoe's wrist, squeezes. She winces.

ARCHIE  
You're not taking my kids!

ZOE  
Mom's not here, it's Zoe!

Archie blinks, focuses again, but he's still not totally with it.

ARCHIE  
It's okay, Zoe, you're safe now.

Archie relaxes his grip a little, smiles. He HUMS the melody from the song Zoe heard in the forest.

ERICA (O.S.)  
I'll take it from here.

Erica kneels, applies a bandage to Archie's head.

Zoe stares at Archie, a strange look on her face, like she's trying to remember something.

She wiggles her wrist free, gets up, leaves.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Zoe sits at the picnic table, alone, staring into the night.

The screen door creaks, then footsteps.



ERICA (O.S.)  
It's getting late, why don't you-

ZOE  
Why do you always have to ruin  
everything?

Erica dries her hands on a tea towel.

ERICA  
He's fine, didn't even need stitches-

ZOE  
Why do you hate him? It's like you  
want him dead!

Erica's shocked. She moves toward Zoe.

ERICA  
Zoe-

ZOE (CONT'D)  
Leave me alone!

Erica shakes her head, leaves. Zoe sighs, looks up at the three-quarters moon.

INT. ERICA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Erica tosses and turns in her bed, kicking the covers off.

She sits up, sweating. She opens the window, pauses when she sees something in the backyard.

Zoe kneels on the ground, facing away from the house. She's wearing pyjamas and leaning slightly forward.

The curtain twitches in the breeze as Erica's footsteps echo down the hall, followed by the squeaking of the screen door.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD

Erica approaches Zoe. Zoe rocks back and forth, humming a tune quietly, the same one Archie did earlier. She reaches into the hole she's dug, scoops more earth out, adds it to a small mound.

Erica helps her up. Zoe's eyes are blank, unfocussed. Erica guides her back toward the house.

INT. ERICA'S HOUSE, ZOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Zoe stretches, yawns.

She lies on a single bed loaded with stuffed animals some of which have spilled onto the floor, joining piles of clothes. The walls are decorated with posters of bands and fantasy/sci-fi movies.

Zoe goes to the window, gazes at the backyard. She starts to open the window, notices dirt under her fingernails. She examines them, confused.

INT. ZOE'S ATTIC STUDIO

Zoe paces up and down in her studio, distraught.

She stops to study the completed paintings on a wall. Each depicts a different scene in the same idyllic fantasy world: A joyous family of elves, mother, father, and two daughters ride on a butterfly carousel, the elf family on unicorns flying across the billowing clouds, the mother elf picking magical flowers in a forest. And, the disfigured portrait of elven King Archibald.

She SCREAMS in frustration, rips strips of canvas from the King's painting, throws them down.

She paces again, lost, overwhelmed.

She pauses in front of the mother elf in the forest, her eyes glaze over, like she's imagining herself in that world.

She places an empty canvas on the easel, paints.

INT. ERICA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lily and Erica at the kitchen table, Lily finishes her last bite of lasagne.

Erica gazes at the untouched lasagne on another plate. Nods to Lily. Lily grabs the plate, leaves.

INT. HALL LEADING TO ZOE'S STUDIO

Lily stands before the closed door. On the floor, an uneaten tuna sandwich. Lily places the plate of lasagne next to it.

She knocks.

LILY

Aunt Zo? Mom made lasagne, your favourite.

Lily waits, then knocks again.

LILY (CONT'D)

Aunt Zo?

She tries to turn the knob, it's locked. A shuffling from inside the studio.

ZOE  
Okay. Yeah. Thanks.

Lily sighs, picks up the plate with the sandwich, leaves.

TIME-LAPSE OF FOOD AT ZOE'S DOOR

- Lily places a plate of scrambled eggs on the floor. Knocks on the door. Waits, removes the plate of lasagne.

- Erica knocks on the door, speaks. Leans her head against the door, relents, places a bowl of soup on the floor, removes the scrambled eggs.

- Lily places a plate with a slice of pizza on the floor. Says something. Frowns. Removes the bowl of soup.

INT. ERICA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lily carries the bowl of soup into the kitchen. Erica looks up hopefully, Lily shakes her head.

ERICA  
That's it. We're going in.

LILY  
Did you find the key?

ERICA  
No. How hard can it be to break it down?

PRE-LAP. A loud THUMP, then Erica screaming 'Fuuuudge!'

INT. HALL LEADING TO ZOE'S STUDIO

Erica holds her shoulder, her face contorted in pain.

LILY  
Maybe we can call the fire-fighters,  
or the police?

Erica leans against the door, panting.

ERICA  
Or a locksmith. Somebody who can  
break into stuff.

EXT. JACKIE'S FRONT DOOR

Erica rings the doorbell, Lily holds her hand.

Jackie opens the door, she's wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt. A fine sheen of sweat on her forehead.

ERICA  
Sorry to disturb you, Jackie.

Jackie looks from Erica to Lily, back to Erica.

INT. HALL LEADING TO ZOE'S STUDIO/INT. ZOE'S STUDIO

Jackie kneels on the floor, jamming various lock-picking instruments into the lock.

A series of clicks, the door swings open.

Zoe's back is to them, she stands before a canvas. Erica walks towards her.

ERICA  
Zoe?

ZOE  
(incoherent mumbling)

Erica places a hand on her shoulder. Zoe shrieks.

ZOE  
I have to finish!

Erica tries to soothe her.

ERICA  
Okay, okay. I know the Exhibition is  
in a few months...

Zoe sobs, shakes.

ZOE  
Why, why, why.

Erica turns Zoe towards her. She's shocked by what she sees. Zoe's gaunt, dark circles under her eyes, hair in disarray.

Erica gently holds Zoe, rocks her.

ERICA  
It's okay, it's okay.

Erica freezes for a moment when she sees what's on the canvas: a CABIN, in the woods, remote, illuminated by a gibbous moon.

Erica glances around the room. Leaning against the walls are at least a dozen new paintings. All the same: the cabin.

Jackie and Lily look at the paintings.

JACKIE  
Creepy AF.

LILY  
What's 'AF' mean?

ERICA  
'and fun.' Go to bed lady bug.

LILY  
But-

ERICA  
No ifs, ands or buts. Get a move on!

Lily pouts, stomps away.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
Thanks for your help. I'll take it  
from here.

Jackie looks around the room once more, leaves.

JACKIE  
(under her breath)  
Don't gotta ask me twice.

Erica rocks Zoe gently. Her eyes land on the painting of the cabin, she shivers.

INT. ERICA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Zoe sits at the kitchen table, sipping tea. The colour's returned to her face, but dark rings circle her pale eyes.

Erica sets a plate of scrambled eggs in front of her, sits at the table. Zoe stares at the plate.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
You need to eat, Zoe.

ZOE  
Why?

ERICA  
To get your strength back-

ZOE  
Why did I paint it? What's it mean?

Erica shakes her head, gives a strained smile.

ERICA  
 Sometimes a cabin is just a cabin.  
 There's iced tea in the-

Zoe sets down her fork, begins to stand.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
 I locked your studio.  
 (pause)  
 I have to go to work. I've already  
 missed a shift...

Zoe sits back down, pokes listlessly at the eggs on her plate. Erica goes to the sink, rinses her mug.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
 Lily's at a sleepover.

She walks back to Zoe, hugs her from behind.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
 Get some rest.

Erica grabs her purse and leaves.

Zoe adds milk to her tea, stirs it, mesmerised by the ghostly shapes consumed by the brown water.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD

Zoe drinks iced tea at the picnic table, reads 'The Body Farm' by Patricia Cornwell.

She sets the book down, watches birds hop in the lawn. A robin pulls a worm from a hole, eats it.

A WHEEZING sound.

Zoe turns her head toward the driveway. The wheezing gets louder, followed by a hacking cough.

She stands, inches toward the sound.

A man, LEON (70s) rounds the corner of the house. He's got dark eyes, bushy brows, and a scar on his left cheek.

He sizes up Zoe.

LEON  
 You one-a Lillian's girls?

Zoe stops in her tracks. Leon coughs, wheezes, coughs.

LEON (CONT'D)  
 Took some doin'. Tracking you down.

He smiles, yellow teeth, what's left of them, and shuffles towards her. Zoe steps back.

LEON (CONT'D)  
 I'm Leon Tippins. Pleased to make  
 your acquaintance. And I got  
 somethin' to get off my chest.  
 (laughs, coughs a lot)

Zoe observes the rise and fall of his chest, the unsettling rattling of lungs struggling for oxygen.

He spots the picnic table.

LEON (CONT'D)  
 Mind if I...

He makes it to the table, collapses on the bench, grabs Zoe's ice tea and drinks, the liquid spilling from his mouth onto his dirty shirt.

Zoe looks on in disgust. He catches her staring.

LEON  
 In my younger days I was quite the  
 looker.  
 (winks, laughs,  
 coughs)  
 Ah, take a seat, I won't bite.

Zoe crosses her arms, remains standing.

LEON (CONT'D)  
 I seen the photos, in the paper,  
 years back, of your ma. Ain't you the  
 spittin' image.  
 (cough)  
 You hearda Frank Gale?

Her sharp intake of breath answers his question.

LEON (CONT'D)  
 He was my cellie, after the police  
 arrested him on suspicion of  
 murdering your ma.

Leon observes the house's flaking paint.

LEON (CONT'D)  
 Could use a lick of paint, eh?  
 Anyways, a cop said if I ratted on  
 Frank, he'd get me a friendly judge.  
 So I made up a story, 'bout him  
 confessing.

Zoe's eyes widen.

ZOE

Are you saying he didn't kill her?

Leon slaps his hand on the table, Zoe flinches.

LEON

Ha, no! Can't say that he done it, can't say he didn't. All I can say, he never told me he done it. If you ask me whether I think he done it.

Zoe sits on the other side of the table, at the end, as far as she can get from Leon.

LEON (CONT'D)

He was an odd duck. Hardly said a word, but I could tell he was scheming, always up to somethin'.

(pause)

You keep a sharp eye out now, I heard he might be gettin' out.

ZOE

When? How?

LEON

New lawyer, got the evidence thrown out.

(pause)

I imagine he'll come for me, considerin' what I done. But I might deny him that pleasure, if I meet my maker first.

(coughs)

You got any more tea?

INT. FRANK'S CELL IN SMITHFIELD PRISON - DUSK

SCRATCH, SKRITCH, SCRATCH.

The sound of charcoal on paper.

A gaunt man with grey eyes (FRANK GALE, 40s) sits on a tidy bunk in a prison cell.

On his lap, a sketchpad. He smudges a charcoal line with long fingers.

Next to him, taped to the wall, more sketches: a Zoe lookalike, a younger Archie (40s), a man with short hair, the crown sticking straight up. And, a CABIN in the woods, eerily similar to the one Zoe painted.



He sets the sketchbook down. On the paper, he's drawn a younger Leon (60s).

He washes his hands in the sink, stares out the barred window at a parched yard. A crow pecks at the dry earth.

He dries his hands, wiggles a beaten harmonica from his pocket, plays a folk song.

The crow tilts its head toward the music, takes flight, its wings flapping loudly as it flies over the fence.

EXT. ERICA'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Erica pulls into the driveway, parks in front of the garage.

She groans as she gets out of the car, massages the back of her neck with one hand, holding a white plastic bag stacked with take-out containers in the other.

INT. ERICA'S KITCHEN AND LIVING ROOM

The screen-door creaks as she enters the kitchen. She sets the take-out bag on the counter.

ERICA

Zoe? I got ox roast.

Erica walks into the living room and stops dead.

The furniture's been moved, giving Zoe access to a large wall. She's painting on it.

Erica gapes at the very large rendition of the CABIN.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Zoe, what are you-

Zoe turns to her, wild-eyed.

ZOE

It has to mean something!

Zoe moves a chair away from another wall, picks up her paintbrush, she's about to paint-

ERICA

Stop!

Zoe shakes her head, makes a green zig-zag on the wall. Erica takes a deep breath, blows it out.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Zoe! I know what the cabin is.

INT. ERICA'S KITCHEN

Erica and Zoe at the kitchen table. Erica drinks whiskey from a small glass. Zoe drinks iced tea.

Erica takes a deep breath.

ERICA

We used to go there, as kids.

Zoe looks confused. Erica gulps a slug of whiskey.

ERICA (CONT'D)

When Mom, disappeared, you were there. So was I. Mom took us there.

Zoe shakes her head in disbelief.

ZOE

When?

ERICA

You were six, I was twelve.

ZOE

I was there? What happened?

Erica drains the glass of whiskey, pours more.

ERICA (CONT'D)

You sleepwalked a lot, so when you weren't in bed, I went looking for you. You were in the backyard, laying flowers on a mound of dirt, some bird or mouse you'd buried.

Zoe looks at her hands.

ERICA (CONT'D)

I got you to come inside. I thought Mom might be sleeping still, but she wasn't in the cabin. Then Dad showed up. I wanted to go look for Mom, he said no, I tried to get past him...

Erica takes a large swig, studies Zoe's face, calculating if it's safe to continue.

ERICA (CONT'D)

He knocked me down. I hit my head on the table leg and blacked out. When I came to, you were sitting on the floor, in a trance of some kind.

(pause)

(MORE)

ERICA (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
I managed to get you to the porch.  
Then the police showed up.

ZOE  
But why can't I remember any of that?

ERICA  
Psychiatrists said it was  
dissociative amnesia. You saw  
something your brain wouldn't let you  
remember.

ZOE  
Amnesia?

Zoe's confusion turns to anger.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
You didn't tell me about the cabin,  
when you knew what it was!

ERICA  
You stopped talking, for months.  
You'd stare off into the distance,  
looking at, I don't know what.  
Doctors told Dad he might have to put  
you in an institution.

Zoe's eyes blaze.

ZOE  
He'd NEVER do that!

ERICA  
How would you know? You don't  
remember what he was like!

Zoe glares, tries not to cry.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
Shit, sorry.

ZOE  
Where is it, the cabin?

ERICA  
Tionesta, the Allegheny Mountains. I  
don't remember the road.

ZOE  
Would Dad?

A long pause before Erica answers.

ERICA  
He doesn't like thinking about that  
place, Zo.

Zoe frowns, taps her fingers on the table, considering other options.

ZOE  
Can we look it up on Google?

ERICA  
Maybe-

ZOE  
What about Mom's old stuff? The boxes  
in the spare bedroom?

Erica shrugs.

Zoe jumps up from the table, runs from the room.

Erica listens to Zoe's footsteps on the stairwell, she takes another slug of whiskey and sighs.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
Shit.

INT. ERICA'S SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

A small room stacked with cardboard boxes.

Zoe goes to the first tower of boxes, lifts the top one off, opens it, searches it, sets it aside. She repeats this process over several hours (time-lapse).

She opens a box - it's full of loose papers. She flicks through them. She lifts a manilla folder to reveal a small velvet box underneath. She opens it. It contains a diamond ring. Zoe puts it on, tilts her head to admire it.

She returns to the cardboard box, sorts through the papers.

INT. ERICA'S KITCHEN - DAY

POP. POP. PLOP.

A coffee machine percolates on the counter, dripping coffee slowly into a carafe.

Erica, bleary eyed, hung over, grabs the carafe, pours coffee into a mug. A sizzle and splash as liquid drips from the machine's filter onto the warming plate.

ERICA  
Fuck!

Erica snatches a tea towel, wipes the warming plate, replaces the carafe.

She takes a grateful sip from her mug.

ZOE (O.S.)  
Morning!

Erica grunts.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
Guess what I found?

Erica takes another sip, turns to face Zoe.

ERICA  
Coffee?

Zoe nods. Erica fills another mug and tops up her own, carries both to the table, sits.

ZOE  
Keys!

Zoe shakes a zip-lock bag, opens it, pulls out a keyring with 3 keys. The bag is labelled **Camp**.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
And...

Zoe sits at the table across from her sister, slides a telephone bill to her, points to the address.

**Lillian McNichol, 1408 Church Hill Road, Tionesta,  
Pennsylvania**

ZOE (CONT'D)  
That has to be it, right?

Erica scans the bill, nods.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
So when can we go?

ERICA  
To the cabin?

Zoe nods enthusiastically.

Lily, wearing a backpack, bursts through the back-door.

LILY  
(singing)  
*We're gonna party like it's 1999!*

Erica groans.

Lily hugs her Mom, kisses her on the cheek, runs to Zoe who ignores her, she's waiting for an answer from Erica.

ZOE  
Yes, to the cabin.

Lily grabs Zoe's hand, dances.

LILY  
(singing)  
*C'mon let me hear you say, Par-tay.*

Zoe smiles, despite herself.

LILY AND ZOE  
(singing)  
*Par-tay!*

Erica pinches the bridge of her nose.

ERICA  
Jesus.  
(pause)  
Enough! Lily, go unpack.

Lily drops Zoe's hand, frowns. Erica musters a smile.

ERICA  
Then I want to hear all about the  
sleepover. C'mere.

Lily skips to her Mom who kisses her on the forehead. Lily bounds away.

LILY (O.S.)  
(singing)  
*Par-tay.*

ERICA  
I can't take any more time off work.

ZOE  
This is really important!

ERICA  
So is keeping a roof over our heads  
and food on the table and buying your  
art supplies!

Zoe humphs, crosses her arms. Erica drops her head for a moment, raises it back up.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Frank Gale's getting out, this week.

ZOE

What? What else aren't you telling me?

ERICA

I was going to tell you, once you, got better-

ZOE

There's nothing wrong with me!

Zoe slams her palms on the table, stands. Paces the kitchen.

ZOE (CONT'D)

And now he's getting out! If you told me all this sooner, maybe I could have remembered something. Some VITAL piece of information that would have kept him from getting released!

ERICA

It's been thirteen years, you think you'll find something the police haven't?

ZOE

I don't know! Maybe being there will help me remember.

ERICA

Or you could have a relapse-

ZOE

Why do you always see the negative?

ERICA (CONT'D)

We don't even know if the cabin's still standing, or if somebody lives there now-

ZOE

Will you help or not?

ERICA

Let's just take a breath, okay? We can find out more about the cabin without-

ZOE

Nevermind! I'll go there myself.

Zoe stands, grabs the bill, stuffs the keys back in the bag.

ERICA  
How? You don't even drive.

ZOE  
No thanks to you!

Zoe stomps from the kitchen.

ERICA  
Shit.

INT. ERICA'S HOUSE, ZOE'S BEDROOM

Zoe paces back and forth, kicking clothing out of the way.  
She pauses, gets out her phone, dials a number.

ZOE  
(on phone)  
Dad, can you call me when you get  
this?

Zoe sits on the bed in silence for a few moments.

The SOUND of mail being delivered through the slot in the  
front door.

INT. ERICA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM

A stack of mail on the floor at the foot of the front door.  
Zoe flicks through letters and magazines, most addressed to  
Erica. She pauses.

There's two pieces of mail for Ms. Jacqueline Stone. One  
stamped OVERDUE in large red letters, and another stamped  
FINAL NOTICE.

She drops the other letters and magazines.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE

Zoe RINGS the doorbell. A rustling from inside, Jackie  
answers the door in a robe.

ZOE  
Mail for you.

Zoe waves the envelopes. Jackie takes them, closes the door.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
Wait!

Jackie stops, squints at Zoe.



ZOE (CONT'D)

I want to hire you. As a private  
detect-, investigator. I have a very  
interesting case-

JACKIE

Eighty-five per hour, plus expenses.  
Two-hundred dollar retainer.

ZOE

Retainer?

JACKIE

Pre-payment. Weeds out the wackos.

ZOE

I don't have that.

JACKIE

Not my problem.

She closes the door.

Zoe stares at the door, wondering what to do.

She raises her hand to ring the bell, the sun catches the  
ring, the diamond sparkles.

Zoe rings. Jackie opens the door, impatient.

ZOE

What about this?

Zoe wiggles her hand toward Jackie.

JACKIE

Cash or credit card.

ZOE

I could sell it?

JACKIE

Pawn shop on Forbes.

Jackie shuts the door.

ZOE

Wait! Can you drive me?

INT. JACKIE'S SUV PARKED ON FORBES - LATER

The neon sign of Mack's Pawn Shop blinks through the  
windshield.

Zoe in the passenger seat, grips the ring box. Jackie taps her fingers restlessly on the steering wheel.

Zoe swallows hard as a skinny tattooed woman leaves the shop, limps past the SUV, her eyes vacant.

ZOE  
You could do it for me?

Jackie shakes her head 'no.'

ZOE (CONT'D)  
Please. I could pay.

Jackie sighs, holds out her hand, Zoe gives her the box.

INT. ERICA'S KITCHEN

Erica chops vegetables, Lily bounces in.

ERICA  
Hands.

Lily goes to the sink to wash her hands. Zoe comes in through the backdoor.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
Where you been?

ZOE  
Out.

ERICA  
With who?

ZOE  
I'm going to the cabin, tomorrow.

Erica stops chopping. Lily skips to Zoe.

LILY  
Can I go with you?

ERICA  
You are not going! Either of you!

Zoe stomps past Erica, up the stairs.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
Where are you going? We're not done talking!

Lily starts to follow Zoe.

ERICA  
Lily, outside.

LILY  
But I just washed my-

ERICA  
Now!

Lily sighs, leaves. Erica follows Zoe.

INT. ZOE'S BEDROOM

Zoe throws clothes in a suitcase.

ERICA  
Who's taking you?

ZOE  
Jackie.

ERICA  
Jackie?

Erica tries to process this information, fails.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
I don't want you going. Especially  
with someone who doesn't know about  
your...

ZOE  
My what?

ERICA  
Your history...your condition.

ZOE  
The only condition I have is you  
treating me like a child!

ERICA  
You want to be treated like an adult,  
act like one! Get a job, clean your  
fucking room-

Zoe blazes with frustration, anger.

ZOE  
I can't get a job without a driver's  
license, and you refuse to help.

ERICA  
You know what adults do? They take  
responsibility for their own actions-

ZOE

I am taking action! I'm going to that cabin and I'm going to find something. Some piece of evidence we can use to put a killer away for good!

ERICA

Reading Patricia Cornwell books doesn't make you-

ZOE

Cornwall.

ERICA

What?

ZOE

Patricia Cornwall.

ERICA

You are totally unprepared to go away to some backwoods cabin. Can't you see that?

ZOE

Everyone's unprepared until they're ready.

ERICA

What does that even mean?

ZOE

You know what would be really nice? If you supported me without suffocating me.

Erica's stunned, then angry.

ERICA

Gah!

She fumes, leaves in a huff.

EXT. JACKIE'S FRONT DOOR

Erica rings the doorbell. Jackie opens the door.

ERICA

Zoe says you're driving her to the cabin?

(no response)

She's different. Developmentally delayed, more like a fifteen-year old than a nineteen-year old.

(MORE)

ERICA (cont'd)  
 (pause)  
 Is there somewhere we can talk?

JACKIE  
 We're talking right now.

Erica tenses, continues.

ERICA  
 When she was a kid, she may have  
 witnessed something bad happen at  
 that cabin. But no one knows, not  
 even her, because she can't remember.  
 (pause)  
 Look, she's vulnerable. She needs to  
 be protected!

JACKIE  
 Legally, she's an adult. And I can't  
 talk to you about my clients.

Jackie hands Erica her business card.

JACKIE (CONT'D)  
 If you need to reach me.

The door closes. Erica stares at the business card.

ERICA  
 Client?

EXT. JACKIE'S SUV DRIVING ON ROUTE 28 - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Classic Blues MUSIC plays.

A sunny morning with storm clouds skulking on the horizon.  
 An old SUV navigates Route 28, alternating between open  
 fields and more forested hills.

INT. JACKIE'S SUV

Jackie lowers the music, it plays faintly in the background.

JACKIE  
 Leon say who the judge was, or the  
 police officer who offered the deal?

ZOE  
 No.

Zoe looks at the sky.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
 Cumulonimbus.

JACKIE  
What?

ZOE  
Those clouds, means rain.

JACKIE  
It's odd.

ZOE  
The clouds?

JACKIE  
Frank got 20 years.

They crest a hill, thick clouds of fog roll across the road.

JACKIE (O.S.)  
Whoa.

Jackie slows down.

JACKIE (CONT'D)  
That's a lot, considering a body was  
never found.

Condensation coats the windows. Jackie turns on the wipers.  
SWISH, THUMP, SWISH.

JACKIE (CONT'D)  
The first step is to investigate the  
investigation. See what evidence they  
gathered, what assumptions they made,  
see if they missed anything.

ZOE  
But they must have had a good reason  
to put Frank away for so long.

Jackie nods.

JACKIE  
Ninety-nine times outta a hundred,  
it's the husband-

ZOE  
My Dad would never do something like  
that! He loved Mom.

JACKIE  
-or boyfriend. Frank was your  
mother's boyfriend, right?

Zoe shrugs, looks out the window into the whiteness.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Makes him a prime suspect. And he admitted he was meeting your mother. Police mighta felt he did it, but couldn't prove it. So they found another way, through Leon.

Zoe turns to face Jackie who's deep in thought.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Sometimes the ends justify the means.

EXT. JACKIE'S SUV DRIVING ON ROUTE 28 - CONTINUOUS

The mist is gone, the road flattens out. The SUV passes by tracts of land, occasional farmhouses and barns.

INT. JACKIE'S SUV

Zoe dozes in the passenger seat. Her eyes move rapidly beneath the lids.

INT. CAR - DAY - DREAM

The wind whistles through a car window.

Young Zoe (6) puts her hand out the window, it bobs up and down, riding the waves of wind.

In the passenger seat of an old sedan, her mother (LILLIAN, late 20s) turns to face the back-seat. The resemblance to Zoe is striking.

LILLIAN

Almost there girls!

Zoe claps her hands.

ZOE

Will there be bears?

Sitting next to her, young Erica (12) laughs, twists her dark ponytail.

The man driving speaks.

MAN (O.S.)

Once upon a time there were three bears, who lived together in a house of their own in a wood. One of them was a little, small wee bear; one was a middle-sized bear, and the other was a great, huge bear.

(growling)

Zoe giggles.

INT. JACKIE'S SUV

Zoe wakes with a start.

JACKIE  
GPS says another hour.

Zoe reaches into the back-seat, rummages around some blank painting canvasses, retrieves a bottle of water from a bag. She faces front, cracks it open and drinks.

Jackie observes her from the corner of her eye.

JACKIE (CONT'D)  
Lily's birthday party, didn't look like Erica invited Archie.

Zoe shrugs.

JACKIE (CONT'D)  
They get along?

ZOE  
He struggled, after Mum. Started drinking, lost his business, couldn't take care of us like he wanted.

JACKIE  
What business?

ZOE  
Construction company.  
(pause)  
He's tried to make amends, but Erica won't give him a chance. He just wants his family back.

JACKIE  
You remember what he was like, before?

They stop at a red light. Zoe looks out the window, smiles.

ZOE  
He was a great Dad. Taught me how to throw a ball, and draw and...

Zoe trails off as she notices a man in a three-piece suit pulling the leash of a calico cat. The cat holds its ground pressing its paws into the pavement, refusing to move.



ZOE (CONT'D)

I'm going to get my own place, soon  
as I sell my paintings. Then I can  
see him whenever I want.

Zoe's phone RINGS.

She reads the caller ID, slips the phone into her purse  
without answering.

INT. ERICA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Erica on her cell phone paces in the living room.

ERICA

(on phone)

Hey Zo, give me a call.

She turns to the wall, looks at Zoe's painting.

She dips a roller in a pan of white paint and swipes it  
across the wall.

The screen door creaks open.

ERICA

Lily?

Heavy footsteps from the kitchen.

ARCHIE (O.S.)

You redecorating?

Erica freezes, places the roller in the pan, faces Archie.

ERICA

What do you want?

ARCHIE

Other than spending quality time with  
my family?

Erica's mouth twitches, she grabs the roller, turns back to  
the wall, makes another swipe across the painting.

Archie takes in the painting, pales, makes his way to a  
chair before he collapses.

He leans forward, elbows on knees, fingers rake his hair.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Jesus.

Erica looks at him.

ERICA  
She doesn't know why she paints it.

ARCHIE  
You think she's starting to remember?

Erica shrugs.

ERICA  
I don't know. I hope not.

Archie sits up, looks at the cabin again.

ARCHIE  
Where is she?

Erica swallows, considers what to say.

ERICA  
Some art camp thing. She'll be away  
for a few days.

Archie stands, rocks from one foot to another.

ARCHIE  
You need some help?

Erica dips the roller in paint, swipes another stripe of white across the wall.

ERICA  
Nope, I got it.

Archie sighs.

She listens to his footsteps recede, the squeak of the screen door.

She blows out a long breath, steps back from the wall, looks down at her hands, they're shaking.

INT. ARCHIE'S JEEP/EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE

Archie pulls into the parking lot of a gas station convenience store. He turns off the engine, removes the key, stares out the windshield, taps his fingers on the wheel.

He starts to put the key back in the ignition, stops, sees a man carrying a six-pack of beer. His phone RINGS.

The caller ID: **Rooster**

Archie listens for a few moments.

ARCHIE

That could work. Where's he live?

Archie looks at the store again, thinking.

Several minutes pass, he exits carrying a six-pack of beer.

He sets it on the passenger seat, cracks a can open, drinks.

Archie finishes the can of beer, throws it out the window, reverses with screeching tyres.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The Allegheny River winds through a thick forest.

A timber truck stacked with huge tree trunks rumbles past Jackie's SUV.

INT. JACKIE'S SUV DRIVING - CONTINUOUS

Jackie glances at her phone attached to the dashboard. A map shows the river on the left and a few small roads branching off from Route 66 on the right.

Zoe rolls down the window, takes a deep breath.

ZOE

Smells like earth, and leaves and worms.

JACKIE

Worms?

Zoe smiles, relaxed and happy. Jackie shakes her head.

They pass a sign saying **Welcome to Tionesta, Population 418, Incorporated 1805.**

JACKIE

Shit.

ZOE

What?

JACKIE

Lost GPS. Church Hill Road should be a few miles ahead, on the right.

They pass Haller's General Store, guarded by a life-sized statue of Sasquatch - his hairy body hunched over, frozen mid-stride, a curious mix of annoyance and confusion on his animal-human face.

A dirt road appears on the right. Jackie slows, reads the sign, speeds up again. She repeats the procedure at the next dirt road. The third doesn't have a sign.

She spots a lay-by, pulls into it.

ZOE  
What's wrong?

JACKIE  
Gonna have to ask for directions.  
Don't wanna get into a Deliverance  
situation.

ZOE  
Huh?

Jackie pulls back onto Route 66, going the other direction.

JACKIE  
(makes banjo sound)  
Da da near da near da near da near.

Zoe looks at her, confused.

JACKIE (CONT'D)  
Deliverance...Duelling banjos?

Zoe shrugs 'whatever', looks out the window.

Jackie pulls into the parking lot of Haller's, parks in front of a 'live bait' sign.

She scans the other vehicles in the lot. Two pick-up trucks, one with a confederate flag painted on the tailgate. Jackie grips the wheel.

Zoe hops out. She inspects a glass box on the front porch of the store. Jackie mouths 'fuck', gets out.

EXT. HALLER'S STORE

Jackie joins Zoe, looks into the glass box. A RATTLE greets her as she peers down onto the coiled grey and brown snake.

Jackie jumps back.

WALTER (O.S.)  
They milk 'em for the venom.

Jackie and Zoe turn to see a grizzled man (WALTER, 60s) wearing jeans and a camo trucker cap.

JACKIE  
As long as he stays where he is.

Walter laughs.

WALTER  
Plenty more where he came from.

Walter assesses Zoe's and Jackie's sneakers, grunts.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
Better get some boots to protect your  
ankles, that's what they go for.

Jackie frowns. Zoe looks at the snake.

ZOE  
He must be lonely.

WALTER  
Yep, I imagine so.

Walter walks into the store, a bell over the door DINGS. Zoe and Jackie follow.

INT. HALLER'S STORE

The shop is packed with shelves of fishing gear, sunglasses, and bug spray, watched over by the heads of dead-eyed moose and deer hanging from the wood-panelled walls.

A CASHIER (20s) greets them.

CASHIER  
Afternoon. Lookin' for anything  
particular?

Jackie grabs three cans of bug spray, goes to the counter.

JACKIE  
Directions.

Zoe wanders the aisles. She passes a display of cheap mobile phones, stops at a shelf of souvenirs, reads a wooden plaque titled 'The Deer Hunter's Prayer.'

Snippets of Jackie's conversation drift by.

CASHIER (O.S.)  
...two ways to get there...

JACKIE (O.S.)  
...a left at the third dirt road...

CASHIER (O.S.)  
...no street signs. When you see the  
old church...

Zoe heads back to Jackie. Walter waits in line behind Jackie carrying a half-gallon of milk.

JACKIE  
(to Cashier)  
Do you know if anyone lives there?

WALTER  
The McNichol place?

Jackie turns to face Walter.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
Nobody's lived there for years.

CASHIER  
It's haunted, by a woman in black.

Walter laughs. Zoe's eyes widen.

WALTER  
Well, I don't know about that. What  
you want there?

ZOE  
My mother used to take me there, when  
I was a kid.

WALTER  
That right? What's your name?

ZOE  
Zoe. Zoe Cardinal. But my Mum's name  
was Lillian.

Walter nods.

WALTER  
You know, your Mum's family built  
that cabin in the fifties. Came up  
every summer. And hunting season, of  
course.

ZOE  
You knew my Mum?

Walter nods.

WALTER  
When she was a kid, she'd run wild  
through the woods. Mistook her for a  
doe many times, she was so quick.  
(laughs)  
(MORE)

WALTER (cont'd)

After your Grandpa Robert died, it was too much of a drive for Margaret. but I heard Lillian took over, kept the place up nice.

JACKIE

Were you here when Lillian disappeared?

Walter shakes his head.

WALTER

Moved to Colorado, when she was still a kid. Came back home in two-thousand ten. But I still drop by the McNichol place, keep the weeds at bay, make sure raccoons haven't taken over.

He brightens.

WALTER (CONT'D)

If you're thinkin' of stayin' there-

Zoe nods, Jackie frowns.

WALTER (CONT'D)

You'll need to hook up the 'lectric and phone. Water too, but you got a hand pump for drinking and an out-house for the other business.

Jackie shakes her head, Zoe wrinkles her nose.

Walter sets the milk on the counter, scribbles on a piece of paper, hands it to Zoe.

WALTER (CONT'D)

You need anything fixin', I'm cheap and good, but not so fast these days.

Zoe reads the slip of paper.

ZOE

Thanks, Walter.

Walter nods.

WALTER

I'll stop by later, see if you need anything.

Zoe smiles, Walter leaves, the door ringing his exit.

EXT. HALLER'S STORE AND PARKING LOT

Zoe's engrossed in her phone as they leave the shop, doesn't see a large dog sleeping on the front porch. She trips over it, her phone falls, cracks on the ground.

Zoe picks it up, presses buttons. She passes quickly through the first four stages of grief: denial, anger (dirty look aimed at dog), bargaining (please please please), and depression.

Then the fifth: acceptance. She heads back into the shop.

INT. ARCHIE'S JEEP/EXT. RURAL ROAD AND HOUSE

A rural road, a modest ranch house with a 2-car garage. Archie's in his Jeep watching the house through the scope of a rifle.

The garage opens, a car pulls out, a woman is driving. The garage door closes.

Archie stows the rifle, puts on gloves, exits the Jeep.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/INT. JACKIE'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

PING, THUNK, PING.

The sound of pebbles hitting the undercarriage of the SUV.

Jackie glances in the rear-view. Behind them, a trail of dust. Ahead, a dirt road. No other vehicles in sight.

JACKIE

Working?

Zoe nods. She holds a new phone, stuffs its packaging into a cloth bag branded Haller's.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Text me your new number.

The road narrows as they climb a hill, a steep ravine on the left side, no guardrails, and a drainage ditch running along the right. The trees press in on both sides, filtering the sunlight.

Jackie grips the wheel, careful to keep in the centre of the road as the SUV slips on dirt and pebbles.

The road flattens, Jackie loosens her grip, relaxes. They pass an open field of wild-flowers.

Zoe's engrossed in the variable landscape, smiling as the sun hits her face through the window.



As they round a bend, the white wooden steeple of a church appears above the grass. They pass the dilapidated one-room chapel, bleached the colour of bone.

The SUV slows to a crawl as they near a rutted single-track road on the right, turns onto it.

They bounce slowly down the mile-long driveway, bordered by trees, the branches arching overhead and striking the sides of the truck.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE/INT. ARCHIE'S JEEP

Archie exits the garage carrying a rifle.

He sets the gun in the back seat of the Jeep, the barrel's engraved with a forest scene and deer, and the initials **FG**. He covers it with a blanket, takes off his gloves.

He drinks another beer from the six-pack.

EXT. HUNTING CABIN AND CLEARING

A clearing appears. Zoe takes it all in, excited, nervous.

On the left, a single-story cabin, clad in wood, fronted by a glass-enclosed porch. To the right, a small outbuilding.

Jackie parks in a pebbled, dirt-packed area.

Zoe exits the car, heads toward the cabin, scrutinises it. Jackie studies her carefully.

JACKIE

Looks like your painting.

Zoe walks toward it, as if pulled by an invisible force. She touches the handle on the screendoor, closes her eyes, concentrates.

Her shoulders slump, she turns to Jackie.

ZOE

I thought touching something she touched would help.

Jackie nods.

JACKIE

Keys?

EXT./INT. HUNTING CABIN

Zoe finds the key for the porch door. They step into the glass-enclosed room.

A three-seat weather-proof glider stretches across the right wall of the porch, a few glider chairs on the left accompanied by small tray tables.

Jackie sniffs the air, opens a few windows.

A heavier wooden door marks the entrance to the main cabin. Zoe tries it, but it's locked. She finds the key, it creaks open. She steps inside.

It's dark. Zoe flicks the light switch on the wall. Still dark. Slivers of sunlight sneak around the blinds. Zoe hesitates.

Jackie passes by her, raises the blinds, light streams in.

The cabin consists of a large room. On the left, a living space with a few couches and chairs and a sturdy coffee table with thick wooden legs.

An antique gramophone sits on a wood cabinet, its squat body and large brass horn covered in dust.

Beyond the living space, a small kitchen tucked into the corner. On the right, a wood burning stove and two doors on either side.

Zoe explores a short hallway at the back of the cabin. She sees a small bathroom and a pantry with jars labelled coffee, sugar, flour.

The hallway leads to a back door. Zoe opens it, steps onto a concrete pad. Beyond the overgrown backyard, a dark forest.

In the main room, Jackie sets a gym bag on the coffee table, unzips it.

ZOE (O.S.)  
What's in there?

JACKIE  
Tools of the trade.

Zoe intrigued, approaches.

ZOE  
Like what?

Jackie snaps on plastic gloves, removes a spray bottle and a battery-operated black light from the bag.

Zoe reaches into the bag, pulls out a BALLPOINT PEN. Jackie takes the pen, slips it in her jacket pocket.

JACKIE  
Recording devices, fingerprinting  
kits, luminol, for detecting blood.

ZOE  
Blood?

JACKIE  
Forensics did a sweep of the cabin,  
found the fingerprints you'd expect  
to see, Lillian, Frank, Archie, but  
no blood. There's an outbuilding, but  
they didn't do forensics on it. So  
that's where I'm going.

Jackie leaves.

INT. CABIN'S BACK BEDROOM/MAIN ROOM

Zoe opens the door to a medium-sized bedroom with a double-bed, a night stand, a small wardrobe and dresser.

She walks back into the main room, opens the door to the front bedroom.

INT. CABIN'S FRONT BEDROOM

Zoe stands in a dark room, as her eyes adjust to the dim light, she makes out a single bed, and something lying on it. She approaches, sees it's a stuffed bunny rabbit.

Zoe picks it up, holds it to her chest, smells it.

She raises the blinds, sits on the bed, looks around the room, notices a scrapbook on the night-stand.

She opens it. It contains mementos and photos of Lillian's life. The first few pages show Lillian as a child with her parents in the same house and yard as Erica's.

The next few pages show Lillian as a young teen, hanging out with her friends.

EXT. CLEARING/INT. SMOKE HOUSE

Jackie heads to the outbuilding. A sign hangs above the door: **Smoke House**.

She opens a screen door and steps into a narrow room. Metal hooks hang from the ceiling.

Jackie sprays the area with luminol, turns on the black light. Large blue pools glow on the floor, blue splatters glimmer across the walls - a scene of a horrific massacre.

JACKIE

Shit.

She hears a hum of sorts behind a door, opens it.

The room is pitch-black. The hum becomes an intense DRONE.

INT. CABIN'S FRONT BEDROOM

As Zoe nears the middle of the scrapbook, photos of Archie (early 30s) and Lillian (19) appear.

There's two photos taken at a mountain stream. One with Archie (mid 30s) and a pregnant Lillian (20s) who holds a fishing line with several rainbow trout dangling at the end.

And one with Archie and two men - one has a crew cut, his red hair sticking up from the crown of his head, and the other is a larger, rotund man. Each smiles as they hold a dead trout.

A SCREAM startles Zoe.

EXT. CABIN AND CLEARING

Zoe bursts out of the cabin.

Jackie runs full-tilt from the Smoke House, slapping her neck and head.

JACKIE

Ahhhhhhh!

A swarm of hornets chase her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

GET INSIDE!

A pick-up truck rolls into view.

Zoe's eyes widen, she heads back into the cabin, followed by Jackie who slams the door shut.

The pick-up truck parks. Walter gets out. He scans the ground, bends over, scoops mud from a small puddle.

WALTER

Alright now, you can come out.

Jackie opens the screen door, looks for hornets. She walks slowly toward Walter. Zoe follows.

Walter dabs the mud on the stings.

JACKIE

Ouch!

WALTER

That oughta do the trick.

Walter looks at the Smoke House.

WALTER (CONT'D)

We never did get totally rid of them yellow-jackets. Think they're attracted to blood.

ZOE

Blood?

WALTER

Hunters slaughtered deer there.

(pause)

You find the water pump?

Zoe shakes her head.

Walter walks to the side of the cabin, Zoe and Jackie follow. He stops at the hand pump.

WALTER (CONT'D)

You grab the handle Zoe.

Zoe's doubtful, but grabs the middle of the handle.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Lower, toward the end, where it's thinner.

Zoe slides her hands down the handle.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Lift it up as far as it'll go, then push it down.

Zoe hauls the handle up, waist-high. The metal squeals in protest. She pushes it down. Nothing happens. She stops.

Walter motions she should try again. Zoe grunts as she lifts the handle, blows out as she pushes down, her arms shaking with the effort. Still nothing.

ZOE

I'm not strong enough.

WALTER

You gotta show it who's the boss. You ever get angry, frustrated?

Zoe wipes her brow, nods.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
Imagine whatever gets your blood  
boiling, and direct that energy  
there.

Zoe takes a deep breath, grabs the handle, lifts and pushes several times, a determined look on her face. A GURGLING sound, rusty water flows from the faucet, splashing on the concrete base.

Zoe beams.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
Keep going, 'til it runs clear.

Zoe pumps with enthusiasm. Walter places his hand in the clear stream, sniffs it, tastes it.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
Yep, that's good.

Zoe's smile fades when she sees a slightly mounded area of earth near the pump, about 5 feet long, 3 feet wide. Walter clocks her gaze.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
Oil tank, for heating. I installed it  
a while back. The neighbour's too.

ZOE  
There's neighbours?

WALTER  
Not any more. The Walker lodge burnt  
down 20 years ago. McNichols bought  
the land. Now there's not a soul for  
miles.

Walter smiles. Jackie frowns.

JACKIE  
Is there a motel in town-

ZOE  
What? Why?

Jackie gestures to the cabin.

JACKIE  
No electricity, no heating, no  
running water, no bathroom-

WALTER

There's the outhouse. Might be a few spiders-

JACKIE

Oh HELL NO.

ZOE

Please stay. Just one night.

JACKIE

No way, no how-

ZOE

Please! I don't have money for expenses Jackie-

WALTER

Expenses?

Zoe looks to Jackie to explain, but she's silent.

ZOE

A guy called Leon told me he lied about Frank Gale confessing...  
(voice fades)

PRE-LAP: The SOUND of a metal door sliding open.

INT. FRANK'S CELL IN SMITHFIELD PRISON

The door to Frank's cell CLINKS fully open.

Frank removes the last of his drawings from the wall, tucks them into his sketchbook.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE FRANK'S CELL IN SMITHFIELD PRISON

Frank exits his cell, follows a GUARD down a hallway.

INT. RELEASE ROOM IN SMITHFIELD PRISON

A small room with a metal table. A female GUARD hands Frank a large brown envelope.

Frank dumps the contents on the table. Amongst a few crumpled dollar bills is a red WRISTWATCH, nothing fancy.

Frank turns it over, looks at an engraving on the back. **PB, Counting the seconds til we're together. Love, MamaBear**

A mix of sadness and anger flicker on Frank. He straps the watch on, signs a form, slides it back to the guard.

FEMALE GUARD  
You got someone pickin' you up?

FRANK  
Brother, driving down from Oil City.

FEMALE GUARD  
Stay outta trouble, Frank.

On Frank, a humourless smile.

EXT. SMITHFIELD PRISON PARKING LOT

A weathered man (MIKE, late 40s), used to working outdoors with his hands leans against a battered Pick-up truck.

Frank heads toward him, slows to a stop as he nears.

The brothers appraise each other. Mike breaks the stalemate, engulfs Frank in a hug, tries not to cry.

They separate, Mike to the driver side, Frank to the passenger seat.

They leave the prison in a cloud of dust.

INT. FRONT PORCH OF CABIN - NIGHT

SQUEAK, CREAK, SQUEAK.

Zoe rocks on the sofa glider, wrapped in a colourful afghan quilt. A few candles flicker.

Jackie sits in a glider chair, grips a flash-light, looks through the scrapbook.

An owl hoots. Jackie startles, flicks the beam toward it, but the windows reflect the light.

She removes the photo of Archie and the other men, flips it over. Written on the back: **Hickory Creek Ace, Rooster, Guelcher**

JACKIE  
You recognise the men?

Zoe shakes her head.

A chirp. Jackie pulls her cell phone out of a jacket pocket, sees a message from ROACH.

JACKIE  
Roach says Frank Gale got out, he's in Oil City, remanded to the custody of his brother.



ZOE

Roach?

JACKIE

(smiles)

He crawls into the dark corners,  
finds the dirt.

ZOE

I'd like to see him.

JACKIE

Roach?

ZOE

Frank. Might help me remember.

Jackie shakes her head.

JACKIE

If he killed your mother, and  
suspects you know something about it,  
you don't want to invite him into  
your life. If he didn't kill her,  
thinks you could have proved he's  
innocent, he's not going to be happy  
to hear from you.

Zoe sighs, wraps the quilt more tightly round her.

PRE-LAP: recorded music, *"I'd love to feel your hand  
touching mine. And tell me why I must keep working on."*

INT. MIKE'S PICK-UP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

RECORDED MUSIC

*I'd give my life to lay my head  
tonight, on a bed of California  
stars.*

Frank taps his fingers in time with the music on the radio.

Mike turns onto the main street in Oil City. Through the  
windshield, several shops: Venango County Museum, Oil City  
Tattoo artists.

MIKE

(clears throat)

Ginny an' Mikey is lookin' forward to  
seein' you.

FRANK

How they doing?

MIKE

Good, yeah. Mikey's growin' like a weed. 'Course they'll be asleep by the time we get there, but you can see 'em tomorrow.

Frank nods. Mike turns onto a dark rural road, pulls into the driveway of a modest ranch house with a 2-car garage - the same house Archie staked out. The garage door opens.

INT. MIKE'S GARAGE

Mike and Frank exit the truck. Mike walks toward a door at the rear of the garage. Frank follows, pausing briefly when his eyes light on a GUN RACK with one rifle and an EMPTY SPACE for another.

Mike opens a small fridge near the door. He grabs a can of beer, gives it to Frank.

The overhead light clicks off. Moonlight streams through a window.

MIKE

I'd join, but I gotta get up early.

(pause)

Ginny's made up the spare bedroom-

FRANK

I'll be in shortly.

Mike nods, leaves.

Frank cracks the beer open, takes a long drink. The moon reflects off the barrel of the rifle on the rack, showing an engraved scene of a forest, deer, and the initials, MG.

PRE-LAP: the SOUND of gunfire.

INT. LEON'S APARTMENT

An old Western plays on an ancient TV, a shoot-out in a saloon.

A rattling cough and wheeze.

Leon sits in a dark living room lit by the flickering TV.

A KNOCK at the door. Leon struggles to stand, breathless, shuffles to the door, opens it.

The barrel of a rifle greets him. The muzzle rests on his chest, pushes him back. Leon gasps, like a fish in a pail.

INT. CABIN'S MAIN BEDROOM

Jackie lays on the bed, eyes open, flash-light on, darting toward every forest sound. She hears a faint humming noise, outside her window.

She bolts up, goes to the window, squints.

JACKIE  
What the actual f-

EXT. CABIN AND BACKYARD

The beam of a flash-light falls on Zoe's back. She's sitting cross-legged in the yard, wearing pyjamas.

JACKIE (O.S.)  
Zoe? Zoe!

Jackie grips a handgun in one hand, a flash-light in the other. She snaps the gun back into its holster and approaches Zoe, who hums a familiar tune.

The beam shines on a hole Zoe's dug. Small bones reflect in the light - a skeleton of a bird.

ZOE  
I found her in the woods.

JACKIE  
Okay. Let's go back inside.

Jackie gets Zoe to stand, they head to the back-door. Jackie pauses, looks toward the bird grave, shivers.

INT. FRONT PORCH OF CABIN - DAY

Zoe's on the glider sofa, watching the birds out the window. She sips from a mug.

Jackie enters, it's clear she's not slept well. Zoe doesn't seem to notice.

Jackie observes a pan of murky brown water on a tray table.

JACKIE  
What is that?

ZOE  
Huh? Oh I made coffee. It's okay, if you add lots of sugar.

JACKIE  
Hard pass.

Jackie sits on a glider chair. Pulls out a beaten notebook.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Roach found the judge who gave Leon a light sentence, he's also the judge who gave Frank twenty years. Patrick Guelcher.

ZOE

The Guelcher in the photo?

Jackie nods, shows a photo of Patrick Guelcher on her phone--it's the same as the man in the Hickory Creek photo.

ZOE (CONT'D)

So my Dad knows the judge?

JACKIE

Knew him, he died a few years ago. Your mother probably knew him too, she musta took the photo. At least we know Leon was telling the truth about getting a lighter sentence for snitching on Frank.

Jackie gazes at the clearing, the sun rising over the tops of the trees.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

We still don't know who the cop was, or who orchestrated the deal...coulda been the judge, or the cop, or even your father.

ZOE

My Dad? No, he wouldn't.

JACKIE

Why not? If he thought Frank was guilty.

Zoe considers.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Only other reason is if someone was setting Frank up.

ZOE

Why would they do that?

JACKIE

If they're the killer. Or protecting whoever did it.

Zoe sets the mug on the coffee table, leans toward Jackie.

ZOE

So, either Frank did it, and the cop and the judge manufactured a confession to put him away. Or somebody else did it, and they convinced the cop and judge to frame Frank?

(pause)

Why would they agree to frame Frank?

Zoe looks out the window again, gazes at three crows fighting over a dead mouse.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Maybe one of them killed my Mom?

Jackie shrugs.

JACKIE

Or the killer convinced them to blame Frank, using money, threats. Roach's digging into the judge's background and finances. We need to find the cop. I'm going to Oil City, show Leon the photo, see if it jogs his memory. Maybe he'll remember the cop's name.

Jackie stands.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

You alright for a few hours?

Zoe nods. Jackie tucks the notebook into her jacket pocket, opens the porch door, stops, turns back.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Last night you were digging in the backyard.

ZOE

What?

JACKIE

Looked like you were sleepwalking.

ZOE

Erica said I sleepwalked as a kid.

JACKIE

Mmm.

Jackie leaves, heads to the SUV.

EXT. CLEARING AND JACKIE'S SUV

Jackie gives the Smoke House a wide berth. She sees a few hornets circling around it. She jogs to her SUV.

The notebook slips from her jacket onto the ground. Jackie doesn't notice.

She gets into the SUV and drives away.

INT. PORCH OF CABIN

Zoe watches the SUV disappear down the wooded driveway.

EXT. CABIN'S BACKYARD/FOREST

Zoe stands on the concrete pad, looking out at the yard, and forest beyond. She dumps the remainder of the coffee in the grass, sets the pan on the ground, walks toward the forest.

She makes it a few yards in, starts breathing fast and shaking. Goosebumps rise on her bare arms, she rubs them to warm up.

She scans the forest, turning in a full circle, then stops, sees an overgrown path ahead of her, on the right. She's terrified, can't go any farther. She runs back to the cabin.

She picks up the pan, her hands are shaking.

JACKIE'S SUV DRIVING - CONTINUOUS

Jackie plugs in her phone to charge, sees a missed call from Roach. She puts the phone through the car's speaker system.

ROACH (V.O.)

Jacks, you enjoying that country air?  
(laughing)

JACKIE

Fuck off.  
(smiling)  
What you got?

ROACH (V.O.)

That photo you sent, I got a match on the other guy, Rooster. A Robert Kowal..ski? Polish name. K O W A L C Z Y. Jacks?

JACKIE

Yeah?

ROACH (V.O.)

He's a cop, in Oil City.

Jackie frowns, mouths 'fuck.'

ROACH (V.O.)  
But wait, there's more. He's got an offshore bank account under a bogus company, Gallus Enterprises.

JACKIE  
A shell company...

ROACH (V.O.)  
Where he's stashed two-hundred grand.

JACKIE  
Where'd he get that?

ROACH (V.O.)  
Don't know, yet. I looked into Archie's and the judge's finances.

JACKIE  
And?

ROACH  
You know Archie declared bankruptcy?  
He was in debt, nearly a quarter mil.  
Might be a coincidence, but looks dodgy as fuck to me.  
(pause)  
Stay safe, Jacks.

JACKIE  
Later, Roach.

Jackie ends the call, deep in thought.

INT. FRONT BEDROOM OF CABIN

The bed's unmade, her clothes from yesterday scattered on the floor.

Zoe searches the twisted sheet for something, removes the stuffed bunny rabbit.

She picks up her clothes, puts them in a drawer, turns to leave, stops. She looks at the unmade bed, straightens the sheet, tucks it in.

As she walks to the foot of the bed, a floorboard creaks. She rocks her sneakered foot on the board - it's loose.

She kneels to examine it. One edge is grooved. She tries to lift it but can't get a grip. She looks round the room, thinks, leaves.

She returns with a butter knife, wedges it into a small gap and lifts the board.

Beneath is a metal box. She places it on the bed.

There's a small lock on the box. She retrieves the key ring, finds the smallest key, opens the box.

Inside: a letter addressed to Lillian and a few old photos.

Zoe picks up a photo, it shows Young Zoe sitting on a man's (Frank's) lap, eating an ice-cream cone in front of Haller's store. Zoe and the man have the same pale grey eyes. He wears a red wristwatch.

She opens a letter. It's hand-written on thick paper. The second page is a pencil sketch of Lillian.

Zoe flips to the last page, finds the signature.

**All my heart, all my love, Papa Bear**

She returns to the photo, examining it, looking for some kind of clue.

ZOE

Hey Bucky, you know who this guy is?

She flashes the photo toward the bunny.

Zoe examines it again, places it and the letter in the box, blows out a long sigh.

EXT. LEON'S APARTMENT

Jackie parks in a nearly empty lot, exits the SUV, walks toward a two-story, ramshackle house.

The curtain of a window on the top floor twitches. An elderly lady looks out, scowls when she sees Jackie.

Jackie knocks on Leon's door. It creaks open.

JACKIE

Mr. Tippins?

She nudges the door open a few more inches.

A TV commercial plays loudly. She pushes the door open.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Leon?



INT. LEON'S APARTMENT

Jackie enters a dark room.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Call now for this amazing deal on  
Life Insurance...

Her eyes adjust to the darkness. Leon's stretched out on a saggy sofa, a pillow from the couch over his face.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
1 800 LIFE WAY..That's 1-800-5433-929

The stuffing from the pillow is scattered round the room. She approaches the couch.

The pillow over Leon's face has a neat round hole in it. Blood pools under the couch.

Jackie unholsters her gun, raises it to shoulder level swivels around the room.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Don't leave your loved ones in the  
lurch, call now-

A SIREN wails nearby. Jackie backs out of the apartment.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)  
Hands in the air!

Jackie stops in the doorway.

JACKIE  
(to herself)  
Fuck.

She raises her hands above her head.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)  
Gun! Gun!

Jackie sighs, closes her eyes.

EXT. DRIVEWAY OF CABIN

Zoe strolls down the narrow driveway, listening to the birds. Dappled sunlight breaks through the trees, highlighting her hair.

The crunching of wheels on gravel.

A pick-up truck crawls down the driveway towards her. Walter leans his head out.

WALTER  
Ice cream?

Zoe smiles, runs to the truck.

INT. WALTER'S TRUCK

WALTER  
Heading to Haller's, thought you  
might want to join.  
(pause)  
I brought some electric lanterns.  
Figured you could use 'em 'til you  
get the electricity hooked up.

Walter heads down the driveway.

ZOE  
We going back to the cabin?

WALTER  
Sometimes you gotta go back before  
you go forward.

ZOE  
Huh?

WALTER  
We're too far in to back out.

Zoe nods.

ZOE  
Reversing is hard.

She stretches her arm out the window, touches the branches  
and leaves as they drive by.

EXT. RIVER BANK

Zoe and Walter sit on a grassy bank eating ice cream cones.  
Below them the Allegheny River glistens in the sunlight.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
You getting on okay, out here?

ZOE  
Yes. It feels...good.

Walter nods.

WALTER  
The mountain runs through your blood.  
Just like your mother.

Zoe's surprised when her phone rings. She answers.

ZOE  
(on phone)  
Hello?

INT. ERICA'S KITCHEN

ERICA  
(on phone)  
Zoe! Thank god.

ZOE (V.O.)  
Hey Erica, how'd you get this number?

ERICA  
Jackie, said you knew Frank Gale got  
out. I think you should come home-

EXT. RIVER BANK

ZOE  
You remember going to the cabin with  
Mom and some guy when we were kids?  
Skinny guy, dark hair, grey eyes.

ERICA (V.O.)  
Frank?

Zoe sits in shocked silence.

ERICA (CONT'D) (V.O.)  
We used to go to the cabin on  
weekends, when Dad was working. Mom'd  
pick up Frank in Oil city, on the way  
to Tionesta.

Zoe watches the ice cream slowly drip onto her hand.

ERICA (CONT'D) (V.O.)  
Zoe?

WALTER  
You okay?

She tips the cone, the scoop of ice cream lands on the  
grass. Ants swarm toward it.

INT. OIL CITY POLICE STATION

Jackie sits next to a tidy desk belonging to a short, bald  
man (LIEUTENANT SHREFFLER, 30s).

Laid out on it are Jackie's car keys, phone, gun and wallet,  
ballpoint pen, and the photo of Ace, Rooster and Guelcher.

Shreffler fans out her driving license and PI license.

SHREFFLER

Ms. Stone, to what do we owe the  
honour of your visit?

JACKIE

Heard Oil City has great pancakes.

Shreffler tents his hands on his desk, taps his thumbs  
together. He opens a Manila folder, reads something.

SHREFFLER (CONT'D)

You were dismissed from the  
Pittsburgh Police Department five  
years ago...

He refers to the documents in the folder again.

SHREFFLER (CONT'D)

...for planting evidence.

He gazes steadily at Jackie. She doesn't respond.

SHREFFLER (CONT'D)

Shame Kingsley was released when that  
came to light. He raped and killed  
two more teenagers after that.

Jackie's eyelid twitches.

SHREFFLER (CONT'D)

You here to exact your brand of  
justice, Ms. Stone?

JACKIE

Check the GPS, I wasn't here when  
Leon was killed.

An officer with spiky red hair going grey (BOBBY, 50s) stops  
at Shreffler's desk, his back to Jackie.

BOBBY

(to Shreffler)

B and E on Elm.

Shreffler stands.

SHREFFLER

Put her in a holding cell til we  
confirm her whereabouts. And check  
the glove box, see if she's got a  
concealed carry permit.

Shreffler leaves, Bobby turns toward Jackie. She sees his name tag: **R Kowalczy**.

INT. WALTER'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Walter whistles a tune as he drives on Church Hill Road.

Zoe looks at him, hesitates.

ZOE  
Did you know Frank Gale?

WALTER  
Never met him. Heard he was the quiet type, taught art at the community college.

They pass the old church.

WALTER (CONT'D)  
But you can be sure, whoever he was before he went to prison, he's gonna be a changed man now.

He stops at the turn-off to the driveway, Zoe hops out. Walter waves, drives away in a cloud of dust.

EXT. CABIN AND CLEARING

Zoe kicks pebbles as she walks down the driveway.

She spots something on the ground ahead of her, picks it up: it's Jackie's notebook.

She flips through it, pauses on a page. She bites her lip.

She taps a number into her phone.

Zoe takes a deep breath, tries to calm her nerves.

She hits the call button.

MIKE (V.O.)  
Hello?

ZOE  
(on phone)  
Hey, hello. Is Frank there?

INT. MIKE'S KITCHEN

Mike leans against the fridge, handset of the land-line pressed against his ear.

MIKE  
Who's this?

ZOE (V.O.)  
(clears throat)  
Zoe.

Mike searches his memory.

MIKE  
Zoe?

ZOE (V.O.)  
Zoe Cardinal. Lillian's daugh-

Mike scowls. Frank reaches for the phone, Mike hangs up. Frank's eyes flash with anger.

EXT. CABIN AND CLEARING

Zoe stares at the terminated call on the screen, frowns.

INT. MIKE'S KITCHEN

MIKE  
Best you leave that family be.

FRANK  
You don't understand, you weren't around-

MIKE  
Else I would have knocked some sense into you! Taking up with a married woman, Jesus, Frank.

FRANK  
I need to know what she saw. If she remembers me.

MIKE  
No good will come from digging up the past.

Frank looks out the window, thinking.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Lillian kept a diary. It might be in the cabin. Maybe something in there-

MIKE  
Cabin? You're not going to any-

MIKE JUNIOR (O.S.)  
Uncle Frank!

Mike Junior (13) bursts into the room. Frank waves him over, they hug.

FRANK  
You got big.

Mike Junior nods.

MIKE JUNIOR  
We should do somethin' to celebrate  
you gettin' outta the slammer.

MIKE JUNIOR  
Mikey-

Frank laughs.

FRANK  
We could go see the rattler at  
Haller's, get ice cream.

Frank raises his eyebrows at Mike.

MIKE  
Alright, we'll go after dinner.

Frank and Mike Junior smile.

INT. OIL CITY POLICE STATION

Bobby examines the Hickory Creek photo, stares at Jackie.

BOBBY  
Let's go.

Jackie stands, eyes the ball-point pen.

A JUNIOR OFFICER (early 20s) gives Bobby a print out of a map showing Jackie's route from Tionesta. Bobby studies it.

Jackie turns so her hands are closer to the desk. She snags the PEN, pushes it up her jacket sleeve.

Bobby scoops up the photo, her keys and phone.

He escorts her through the station, past the holding cell, toward the exit at the back. The Junior Officer looks questioningly at Bobby as they pass.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Gonna go back to the site, see if it  
jogs her memory.

Jackie and Bobby leave.

INT. DIVE BAR

Archie drinks a bottle of beer, leans against the bar.

A young woman stumbles by, giggling, he follows her.

His phone rings. He answers it.

ARCHIE

(on phone, listening)

A PI? No idea how she got it. Doesn't prove anything, anyway.

(pause)

Do what you want, I'm busy.

Archie ends the call, follows the woman.

EXT. CABIN'S BACKYARD

Zoe walks through the back yard, steering well clear of the forest. She scans the ground for something.

She finds the hole with the bird skeleton.

She kneels, stares at the skeleton, frowns. She fills the hole with earth, stops, her fingers claw the dirt.

ZOE'S VISIONEXT. CABIN'S BACKYARD - DAY

*Young Zoe cups a dead bird in both hands.*

ZOE

*I found her in the woods.*

LILLIAN (O.S.)

*Honey, we can't fix her.*

*Zoe cries, quietly.*

LILLIAN (O.S.)

*Her spirit's already free, flying higher and faster than she ever did before.*

*Zoe looks at her Mom, sniffles.*

LILLIAN (O.S.)

*We'll bury her later, put flowers on her grave, give her a sweet goodbye. But we have to get a wiggle on now.*

*Zoe nods, smiles through the drying tears.*



*PRE-LAP: The snapping of branches.*

EXT. CABIN'S BACKYARD

The sound breaks Zoe out of her trance.

Something's moving fast through the forest. She looks up, sees a flash of ginger-red in the dappled sunlight.

A doe stands at the edge of the forest, ears rotating, nose twitching.

Zoe smiles, tears running down her face, a strange mix of happiness and grief.

The doe leaps back into the woods in the direction of the path Zoe was too terrified to take.

INT. JACKIE'S SUV - REMOTE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Jackie's shifts uncomfortably in the passenger seat, still handcuffed as Bobby drives down a rural road.

INT./EXT. JACKIE'S SUV - CORNFIELD

Bobby pulls into the empty parking lot of Leon's apartment, keeps driving along a dirt track at the back of the house.

The track ends in a cornfield. Bobby drives into the field, knocking down stalks as high as the SUV.

Ahead of them, an oil well, the beam of the pumpjack rising and falling accompanied by the droning of its engine and the rhythmic CLACK, THUNK. CLACK, THUNK of the arm.

Bobby gets out, opens the passenger door, motions for Jackie to exit. She hops down.

BOBBY

What you doin' so far from the big city?

JACKIE

The usual, fishing, hunting-

In a split second he closes the distance between them, punches her in the gut.

She grunts, doubles over.

BOBBY

Don't fuck with me bitch.

He spins her so she's facing the car, pins her against it. He takes her phone out, unlocks the screen with her thumb.

He skims through the messages, sees an unread voice mail from Zoe. He steps back from Jackie, she turns to face him.

She slips the pen from her sleeve, holds it so the cap points forward, towards Bobby, but not so he can see it.

He puts her cell on speaker-phone.

ZOE (V.O., RECORDED)  
Jackie, uh, it's Zoe. I found your notebook, in case you were looking for it.

Jackie struggles to keep her face neutral.

ZOE (V.O., RECORDED)  
Let me know if you found Leon, and if he remembers the cop. I'm going to call my Dad, once I get his number, ask who the Rooster guy is, in case that helps.  
(pause)  
Okay. Hurry back. Bye.

Jackie's defeated. Bobby smiles.

BOBBY  
Cock-a-doodle doo!

He takes out his phone, makes a call.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
(on phone)  
Zoe hired the PI, she's at the cabin. Find out what she knows, Ace.  
(glaring at Jackie)  
I got something to take care of here.

He ends the call.

JACKIE  
Zoe doesn't know about you making the deal with Leon, you don't have to-

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Don't care. She's a loose end.

Bobby lays his hand on his pistol.

JACKIE  
You gonna shoot a cop, a handcuffed cop? I mean you look stupid, but I didn't think you'd be that-

He takes a menacing step toward her, she flinches, he smiles.

BOBBY

I'm gonna shoot a big city ex-cop who promised to cooperate fully, show me exactly what happened when she arrived on scene. I'm gonna shoot a murder suspect who assaulted me after I uncuffed her, who drove into the field to escape, but didn't make it far 'cause I shot out a tire.

(spits on ground)

I'm gonna kill a disgraced ex-cop when she went for my gun.

JACKIE

I know about Gallus Enterprises.

Bobby's momentarily surprised, he recovers, smiles.

BOBBY

You been a busy beaver! My accountant recommended opening an offshore account, more tax efficient.

Jackie's thinking fast, trying to find a way to delay, distract him, while planning her next move.

JACKIE

Look, we want the same thing. To finish what you and Archie and Guelcher started.

His eyes narrow, he grips the butt of his gun.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Put Frank away for good. You know he did it, just like I knew Kingsley raped those girls and dumped them in the Monongahela!

(pause)

I did what I had to do, and I'd do it again in a heartbeat. So you tell me what to do and I'll do it. Your hands are clean, Frank gets what he deserves. Win win.

Bobby tilts his head, thinks.

BOBBY

I'm sure Frank feels real sorry about what he did. Remorseful, you know?

Jackie nods, she knows.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

First, Lillian, the woman who spurned him, then Leon, the man who ratted on him. Then Zoe, for getting in the way. He might feel so bad, after all that, he doesn't want to go on any longer.

He unholsters his gun, leans into Jackie, so close he's breathing on her face.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You know that feeling, I can tell-

She knees him in the groin.

He grunts, stumbles back.

She kicks the gun loose, considers trying to pick it up, but her hands are behind her back and Bobby is recovering.

Jackie runs into the cornfield.

INT. CABIN'S MAIN ROOM

Zoe sets up an easel and blank canvas. She stares at the white canvas, sighs, no inspiration comes.

She picks up a photo of Lillian, traces a finger over her mother, still nothing.

Zoe goes to the gramophone, studies the parts to figure how it works. She turns the hand crank, the turntable spins.

She opens the door of the cabinet. Stacked vertically inside, shellac 78s (records) in cardboard sleeves. She looks through them, most are from the 1950s - Elvis, Buddy Holly, Sam Cooke.

She selects a Sam Cooke record, places it on the turntable, turns the hand crank, drops the needle on the record. Sam sings 'The Great Pretender.'

RECORDING

*Oh-oh, yes, I'm the great pretender  
Pretending that I'm doing well  
My need is such I pretend too much  
I'm lonely, but no one can tell*

Zoe glances at the blank canvas, sighs.

She sees an oil painting on the wall - a doe and fawn in the forest. Her eyes glaze over, like she's imagining herself in that forest.

She goes to the blank canvas, squirts dark green paint on a palette. Her brush moves in quick zig-zag motions, a tree appears, then another.

EXT. CORNFIELD

Jackie breathes hard, weaving between the brittle stalks, making herself a hard target.

A SHOT rings out. Jackie grunts, falls.

EXT. PARKING LOT, HALLER'S GENERAL STORE

The door of the pick-up truck slams shut as Mike, Mike Junior and Frank walk toward the shop.

Frank stops at the snake enclosure, peers inside.

The snake's tongue flicks out, hitting Frank's reflection between the eyes.

INT. HALLER'S STORE

The brothers and Mike Junior wait in line for the ice cream.

FRANK  
Gonna hit the john.

INT. BATHROOM IN HALLER'S STORE/EXT. HALLER'S PARKING LOT

Frank finishes washing his hands. He looks at the WRISTWATCH for a long moment, brushes the face with his thumb.

He gazes out the bathroom window, to the forest.

He slips out the back door of Haller's, runs into the woods.

EXT. HALLER'S PARKING LOT

Mike holds two ice cream cones, looks around for Frank. Mike Junior eats his ice cream.

MIKE JUNIOR  
Where's Uncle Frank?

Mike frowns.

PRE-LAP: the sound of heavy breathing, boots crunching through the undergrowth.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Frank pants as he sprints uphill through a thick forest

EXT. CORNFIELD AND WOODS - NIGHT

Jackie struggles to stand, blood seeps from a wound on her arm. She orients herself, runs toward the woods.

She leans against a tree, sweating, panting.

She sits on the ground, grunts as she forces her handcuffed hands under her. She wiggles until her hands are under her thighs. She cries in relief.

Jackie loops her hands under and around her feet, rests them on her lap. She works the metal clip from the ballpoint pen into the lock on the handcuffs.

BOBBY (O.S.)  
(in the distance)  
Come out, come out, wherever you are.

She startles, drops the clip. Desperately searches for it in the leaves and dirt.

BOBBY (O.S.)  
(getting closer)  
You can run, but you can't hide.

She finds the clip, tries the lock again, her hands are sweaty, she drops it.

Bobby's footsteps get closer, louder.

She digs for it, can't find it.

Blood oozes from her upper arm, running down to her hands.

BOBBY (O.S.)  
(nearby)  
You're only making it worse.

She stands quietly, judges Bobby's position, runs back the way she came.

INT. CABIN'S MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Zoe adds ink-black paint to the palette, it shimmers in the lantern light, like an iridescent film on a puddle of oil.

*ZOE'S VISION*

INT./EXT. CABIN

*Young Zoe sleeps next to young Erica in the front bedroom of the cabin.*

*Zoe wakes, grabs her stuffed bunny rabbit and walks out the back-door. A nearly-full moon breaks through the clouds.*

*She gets a small trowel from the garden, starts digging a hole in the backyard. She retrieves the dead bird, places it in the hole, fills it.*

*She carries her bunny to the back-door, stops when she sees red liquid splattered on the concrete pad beneath the door. She reaches down to touch it.*

*A snapping of branches in the woods.*

ZOE

*Mommy?*

*She follows the sound.*

*Ahead of her a man drags something heavy wrapped in a blanket deeper into the woods.*

*He stops, wipes sweat from his brow.*

*The blanket falls open partially. Strawberry blonde hair escapes. He picks up the blanket and drags it farther into the woods.*

*PRE-LAP: The sound of a ring-tone.*

INT. CABIN'S MAIN ROOM

Zoe snaps out of the trance, goes to the kitchen to answer her phone.

ERICA (V.O.)

Zoe?

ZOE

(on phone)

Hey.

Zoe tries not to cry.

ERICA (V.O.)

What's wrong?

ZOE

Nothing.

ERICA

Zoe...

Zoe shakes her head, snuffles, breaks into a sob.

ZOE  
I miss her.

EXT. FOREST/RURAL ROAD

Frank emerges from the forest, sees the steeple of the old church in the moonlight. He jogs down the cabin's driveway.

INT. CABIN'S MAIN ROOM

Zoe returns to the canvas, looks at what she's painted. It shows the cabin, and a path from the back of the cabin into the forest leading to a small clearing with a crumbling chimney and a yellowed patch of grass.

Above the chimney, a gibbous moon, shaped like a skull.

Her eyes roam over the picture, taking in each detail.

She calls Jackie, gets voicemail.

ZOE  
(on phone)  
Hey Jackie, me again. I painted something, the cabin that burnt down. I think it has something to do with my Mom's disappearance. Anyway, just checking when you'll be back. You are coming back?  
(pause)  
Okay, bye.

Zoe sighs. She finds the paper with Walter's number, dials it. The phone rings and rings. No answer, no option for voice mail.

She goes out the back-door, gazes in the direction of the overgrown path, shivers, returns to the room.

Zoe takes a deep breath, looks at the painting once more, picks up an electric lantern, leaves.

EXT. CORNFIELD/INT. JACKIE'S SUV

Jackie runs to her SUV, breathing hard, glancing behind her.

She reaches under the wheel well, removes a magnetic lock box, retrieves a key from it.

She gets in the SUV, closes the door quietly.

She puts the key in the ignition, switches off the running lights, turns the vehicle in an arc to get back to the road.



Ahead, Bobby blocks the path, gun aimed at her head. She ducks and yanks the wheel left.

The corn stalks THUMP against the bumper and undercarriage as she ploughs through them.

A SHOT. The rear window shatters.

The SUV swerves, loses speed, straightens out.

Jackie reaches the road, turns on the headlights, floors it.

She uses her knees to keep the wheel steady, grabs napkins from the centre console with her still-cuffed hands. She presses them to her injured arm. Blood stains them.

JACKIE

Fuck.

EXT. RURAL ROAD

Bobby watches the SUV recede in the distance. He looks both ways down the road, no cars.

He pulls out his phone.

BOBBY

(on phone)

Where are you?

(listening pause)

You're gonna have company, the PI.

(pause)

We can turn this in our favour.

Bobby sees headlights in the distance. He flags down the car, yanks the driver out, gets in.

EXT. CABIN AND TOOL SHED

The clouds obscure the moon. Zoe directs a lantern toward the door of a tool shed.

EXT. CABIN AND CLEARING

Frank pauses as he nears the clearing, watches as the lantern illuminates a shed and Zoe goes inside.

INT. SHED

Zoe sets the lantern down. The blades of two shovels glint in the light. She picks up one, turns to leave.

Frank blocks the exit. Zoe catches her breath.

He examines her closely.

FRANK  
 (hoarse)  
 You look just like her.

Zoe grips the handle of the shovel tighter. He raises his hands.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 I didn't know you'd be here.

Zoe scans him, tilts her head, like she's comparing Frank to a memory, seeing if he fits in the empty space.

Zoe notices the wristwatch.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 Your Mom gave it to me.

Frank unstraps the watch, holds it out.

Zoe steps toward his outstretched hand, wary. She snatches it quickly, steps back, reads the engraving.

Zoe tosses the watch back, he catches it, straps it on.

ZOE  
 What are you doing here?

FRANK  
 I'm not sure. Looking for answers, I guess.

Franks shifts uncomfortably.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 Do you want to go inside, talk?

Zoe shakes her head.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 Okay, well...

ZOE  
 You remember singing to me, when I was little?

FRANK  
 I'm not much of a singer. Harmonica's more my-

ZOE  
 You know the song, about the California Stars?

Frank furrows his brows.

FRANK  
The Woody Guthrie one?

ZOE  
How's it go?

Frank thinks, clears his throat.

FRANK  
(singing)  
*I'd like to rest my heavy head  
tonight/On a bed of California stars-*

Zoe listens intently, shakes her head.

ZOE  
You're right, you're not much of a  
singer.

Frank laughs, shrugs.

FRANK  
Yeah, well...

ZOE  
I have something to show you.

Zoe picks up the lantern, slips past him. Frank hesitates,  
follows.

INT. CABIN'S MAIN ROOM

Frank looks at Zoe's latest painting. She examines him  
closely, trying to determine if it looks familiar to him.

FRANK  
It's good. Lots of potential.

ZOE  
But what does it say to you?

Frank steps back, strokes his chin.

FRANK  
Well, there's a, certain ominous  
tone. But I think this speaks to a  
wider theme of isolation-

ZOE  
Do you recognise it? That place?

Frank steps closer to the canvas.

FRANK  
Could be where the Walker Lodge was.  
(MORE)

FRANK (cont'd)  
(pause)  
Why'd you paint it?

She picks up a lantern, opens the door, motions for Frank to leave. He walks out, she follows him.

EXT. WOODS, BURIAL SITE

An owl HOOTS.

Frank holds a lantern in one hand, a shovel in the other. Zoe follows behind him, also with a lantern and shovel.

They follow the overgrown path Zoe saw earlier but was too scared to explore.

They reach a small clearing in the woods. A crumbling stone chimney rests on a blackened concrete foundation where a cabin once stood.

Zoe stops, looks around, it's the same place she painted.

At her feet, the ground is slightly mounded. The plants around it are yellow, shrivelled.

Zoe takes a deep breath, digs. Frank joins. The soil crumbles easily under their shovels.

INT. ARCHIE'S JEEP

Archie sings along to a country tune on the radio. He drinks a can of beer, empties it, tosses it in the back-seat where it joins its siblings.

He passes the old church, turns into the driveway leading to the cabin.

INT. JACKIE'S SUV

Jackie passes Haller's, it's closed. She turns onto a dirt road, scanning the rear view mirror for any cars behind her.

EXT. WOODS, BURIAL SITE

The hole is three feet long, a foot deep.

THUNK. Frank's shovel hits something hard.

He drags the tip of the shovel along the earth, revealing the curve of a metal tank. Black oil oozes to the surface.

Zoe and Frank dig faster, exposing more of the damaged tank, until they can see inside it.

Something rises to the surface -- the curved expanse of a SKULL, and a strand of strawberry blonde hair.

Frank falls to his knees, reaches for the strand of hair. It disintegrates in his hands.

FRANK  
(crying)  
Lillian.

Zoe pales, drops the shovel, stumbles away.

EXT./INT. CABIN

Archie parks, exits the Jeep, stretches. His snakeskin boots crunch on the gravel as he walks toward the cabin.

Inside, by the light of an electric lantern, Archie examines Zoe's PAINTING. His eyes narrow.

He strides out, gets the stolen RIFLE from the Jeep, heads to the woods.

INT./EXT. JACKIE'S SUV ON THE DRIVEWAY

Jackie turns into the cabin's driveway.

The clouds part. In the rear-view mirror she sees the moon glint off the roof of a car following her, no headlights.

She takes her foot off the gas, lets the SUV coast.

INT./EXT. BOBBY'S CAR ON THE DRIVEWAY

Bobby sees the SUV, it's stopped moving, blocking the driveway.

He gets out, gun ready, approaches the driver-side door, ready to shoot.

He steps around the open door. Jackie's not there.

He backs out quickly, alert, listening. He hears something moving in the forest. He follows.

EXT. WOODS, BURIAL SITE

Archie stands over a still-kneeling Frank, rifle aimed between his eyes.

ARCHIE  
Frank fucking Gale!  
(laughs)  
You just made my job ten times  
easier-

FRANK  
She was gonna leave you. Is that why?

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
Lillian was a lying whore. May she  
rest in peace.

Archie spits on the grave. Frank squints at the gun.

FRANK  
You stole my rifle?

ZOE (O.S.)  
Dad?

Zoe shuffles toward him from the forest.

ARCHIE  
(to Zoe)  
You found her.

She nods weakly.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
That's my girl.

Archie lowers the rifle, nods toward the grave.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
Now we know where she is, he'll get  
what he deserves. And we can be a  
family again.

ZOE  
You put her there.

Zoe picks up a shovel.

ARCHIE  
No honey, you sleepwalked a lot,  
dreamed up all kinds of stuff.  
(pause)  
Frank did that.

Zoe's not sure who to believe, looking from Archie to Frank.

FRANK  
Zoe please, please remember-

ARCHIE  
He was obsessed with Lillian, when  
she refused to leave us, he-

FRANK  
(screaming)

No!

Frank lunges toward Archie. They wrestle for the rifle.

Zoe steps toward them, unsure what to do.

The rifle goes off with an echoing SHOT.

EXT. CABIN AND CLEARING

Jackie pants, runs, reaches the cabin. She looks behind her, doesn't see anyone. She goes inside, sees the painting.

A SHOT echoes through the woods, behind the cabin. Jackie runs toward the sound.

EXT. WOODS, BURIAL SITE

Frank gets to his feet, dusts himself off. Archie trains the rifle on him. Zoe looks from one to the other.

Jackie arrives, sweaty, out-of-breath, injured and still handcuffed. Relief washes over her when she sees Zoe, then wariness when she spots Frank, and Archie with a rifle.

Zoe half-smiles when she sees Jackie, goes to her, taking the shovel with her.

JACKIE  
I heard a shot, you okay?

Zoe sighs, motions to the grave site.

ZOE  
I found her.

Jackie observes the mounds of earth beside the hole, looks sympathetically at Zoe.

Zoe notices the blood dripping from Jackie's cuffed hands.

JACKIE  
(overlapping)  
Why's Frank here?

ZOE  
(overlapping)  
Jackie, you're bleeding!

ARCHIE  
(overlapping)  
Who's she?

ZOE  
She's my friend, Dad.

JACKIE  
I found the...cop.

Jackie staggers, falls to the ground.

Bobby arrives, breathing hard. He sees Jackie, aims the gun at her. Zoe jumps between them, waves the shovel at Bobby.

ZOE  
No!

He laughs, steps back from the shovel's reach.

JACKIE  
He made the deal with Leon, to frame Frank.

BOBBY  
(to Zoe)  
Who's telling tall tales now? Young lady, you oughta know about her.  
(nods to Jackie)  
And why she was fired.

Zoe's uncertain, glances at Jackie, back to Bobby.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
She planted evidence! So who's the pot callin' the kettle black now?

ZOE  
Jackie?

Jackie glares at Bobby, turns to Zoe.

JACKIE  
It's...complicated.

BOBBY  
Don't believe a word comin' outta her mouth. You gotta trust your family, and law enforcement-

Jackie takes the pen from her pocket, presses a button.

THUMP, CLUNK. THUMP, CLUNK of the oil pump.

ZOE (V.O., RECORDED)  
Jackie, uh, it's Zoe. I found your notebook, in case you were looking for it.



Zoe glances at Jackie, sees the ballpoint-pen.

ZOE (CONT'D, V.O., RECORDED)  
 Let me know if you found Leon, and if  
 he remembers the cop. I'm going to  
 call my Dad, once I get his number,  
 ask who the Rooster guy is, in case  
 that helps.  
 (pause)  
 Okay. Hurry back. Bye.

BOBBY (V.O., RECORDING)  
 Cock-a-doodle doo!

Jackie struggles to sit upright, stay conscious.

BOBBY (CONT'D, V.O., RECORDING)  
 PI was hired by Zoe. She's at the  
 cabin. Find out what she knows, Ace.

Zoe looks to her father, not wanting to believe.

ZOE  
 Dad, why are you here?

ARCHIE  
 Erica told me where you were. I  
 wanted to make sure you're okay.

Zoe considers the plausibility.

JACKIE (V.O. - RECORDING)  
 ...we want the same thing. To finish  
 what you and Archie and Guelcher  
 started.

Bobby circles around Zoe, trying to get a clear shot on  
 Jackie. Zoe keeps between them.

ZOE  
 Dad, make him stop!

Bobby laughs.

BOBBY  
 Ace ain't even your fa-

A SHOT rings out. A red hole blooms on Bobby's chest.

Archie lowers the rifle.

ZOE  
 Oh my God!

Bobby's surprised, looks down at his chest, gurgles, wheezes. He drops to his knees, face plants on the ground.

Zoe's horrified as Bobby's blood seeps into the dirt.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
I didn't mean kill him!

Jackie eyes Bobby's gun, but she's grey, about to pass out.

ARCHIE  
He was gonna kill you.

ZOE  
Why would he do that?

ARCHIE  
Maybe your friend had something on him. He was a dirty cop.

JACKIE  
Rooster...

ZOE  
What did he mean, you're not my father?

Frank steps toward Zoe. Archie lifts the barrel of the rifle, aiming at Frank's midsection. Frank stops.

ARCHIE  
(to Frank)  
You keep outta this. This is family business.  
(to Zoe)  
I told you, we keep the family together, no matter what. These people here, they don't matter.

Jackie groans, passes out. Zoe kneels next to her.

ZOE  
Jackie? Jackie!

Zoe shakes Jackie, who mumbles incoherently.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
(to Archie)  
We have to call for help!

Archie ignores Zoe's pleading.

ZOE (CONT'D)  
Please!

Archie's closing on on Frank. Frank plants his feet, gets ready to charge Archie.

Zoe leaps up, goes toward the men. She sees Frank's shovel on the ground. Frank shakes his head.

FRANK  
Zoe, don't-

ARCHIE  
(to Frank)  
Shut it.

ZOE  
(to Archie)  
That night, when Mom disappeared. You found me in the woods.

Zoe picks up the shovel. She's a few feet from the men.

ARCHIE  
You were sleepwalking.

ZOE  
You carried me back to the cabin.

ARCHIE  
I'll always protect you.

Zoe gazes down at the grave, sees her mother's skull.

ZOE  
You sang a song, the one about the stars.

Archie smiles.

ARCHIE  
(singing)  
*I'd like to rest, my weary bones  
tonight-*

He aims the rifle at Frank's head.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
(singing)  
*On a bed of California-*

His finger starts to pull the trigger.

ZOE (O.S.)  
(scream of rage)

CLUNK! The sound of a metal shovel striking skull.

Archie grunts, staggers toward the grave, falls into it.

Zoe breathes hard, drops the shovel.

She collapses to her knees.

Zoe rocks back and forth, cries.

Frank kneels beside the grave, turns Archie onto his side.

Archie's face is covered in oil, he splutters, coughs, gasps. Beneath him, Lillian's skull shines in the moonlight.

Jackie stirs, sits up, sees Archie in the grave and Frank retrieving the rifle. He holds it loosely, pointing it at Archie, but Archie's not moving much.

Jackie crawls to Bobby, searches his pockets, finds the keys to the cuffs, unlocks them. Searches another pocket, finds her phone, makes a call.

Zoe turns toward Jackie when she hears her voice, smiles with relief. Jackie gives a 'thumbs-up'.

Frank sits next to Zoe. She stares at the grave, watching Lillian's skull sink below the oil. He slips a folded piece of paper from his pocket, hands it to her.

Zoe unfolds a sketch of Frank, Lillian and young Zoe.

FRANK

She loved you so much. Wanted to give you a better life.

(pause)

That night, she called, said she was going to leave Archie, file for sole custody.

Archie twitches, groans.

FRANK (CONT'D)

She asked me to meet her at the cabin in the morning, she was bringing the girls and we'd go to Erie, stay with her Aunt, until the dust settled.

(pause)

When I showed up, you and Erica were huddled together on the porch. You looked like you were off with the fairies in that imaginary world you created...Nandia

ZOE

Zandia.

Frank laughs.

FRANK

Zandia, right. Erica said Mum was missing, and that's when I heard Archie, in the cabin. I was thinking how I'd get you girls away when the police-

A siren wails faintly in the distance.

Zoe looks at the sketch, then to Frank.

ZOE

It's good, got a lot of potential.

Frank smiles.

MONTAGE OF EVENTS

-Archie in a hospital bed, handcuffed.

-Zoe cleaning the cabin, the electricity works (the lights are on) and there's running water.

-Jackie's arm in a sling, in the Oil City Police Station, Lieutenant Shreffler gives her gun back, shakes her hand.

-Frank teaches Zoe how to drive, Zoe reverses perfectly.

-Zoe paints simple but powerful portraits of country life: Walter fishing in a creek, Lily splashing in the river, Frank strolling down a logging trail.

-Zoe works as a cashier at Haller's.

-Zoe leaves Max's pawn shop with the small jewellery box, gets in a car and drives.

-Zoe's paintings depicting country life displayed at the Young Artist exhibition. Groups of people pointing excitedly to her work.

EXT. CABIN AND CLEARING - DAY

Erica, Zoe, Walter, Mike and Mike Junior sit at a picnic table in the clearing of the cabin. The table's loaded with potato salad, coleslaw, burgers and hot dogs. Nearby, Frank teaches Lily how to throw a ball.

Jackie's SUV emerges from the wooded driveway.

She parks, strides quickly past the Smoke House, sets a casserole dish of baked beans on the table, greets Mike and Mike Junior, hugs Zoe, Erica and Walter.

LILY  
 (to Jackie)  
 You wanna play?

Jackie smiles, joins in the game of catch.

Frank lobs the ball to Lily, she catches it, throws it back, it lands a few feet away from her.

LILY  
 Sorry.  
 (motions to cast)

ERICA  
 (to Lily)  
 Let's take a look, might be time to take it off.

Lily skips to Erica.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
 Hold still.

Erica removes the cast, slowly bends Lily's arm.

ERICA (CONT'D)  
 Any pain?

LILY  
 It's so pale!

Lily compares her arms, fascinated.

ZOE  
 It was under wraps for awhile.

Lily grabs the ball and throws it with her newly freed arm. It sails high and far. Frank catches it.

LILY  
 That was awesome AF!

Frank looks to Erica, who pinches the bridge of her nose, shakes her head. Jackie and Zoe laugh.

Zoe squeezes Erica's hand. Erica's surprised, delighted.

PRE-LAP: the CHIRPING of crickets

EXT. CABIN'S BACKYARD

Zoe leans against the cabin, listens to the crickets.

Faintly in the background, the sound of her loved ones talking and laughing in the cabin.

LILY (O.S.)  
The movie's starting soon, Aunt Zo!

ZOE  
Be right there.

Zoe walks to the back of the yard, where it borders the forest. She stops at a flat stone surrounded by wild flowers.

It's engraved:  
**Lillian McNichol Cardinal**  
**Beloved mother**  
**The mountain runs through her**

Zoe traces a finger over her mother's name.

A flash of ginger-red in the woods. Zoe looks up.

A few feet away a doe blinks at Zoe, the dappled sunlight highlighting its coat.

Zoe smiles.

THE END