MURDERHORN

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FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Halloween.

This is the rich neighborhood where parents drop their kids off for trick or treating. It starts to rain.

- A pack of costumed children ring a doorbell and wait.
- Two girls with full bags of candy climb into a waiting car.
- A porch light turns off.

DANIEL ROBERTS (11), a shy boy in a homemade superhero outfit made of tight-fitting pajamas and colored briefs, fast walks down the hill.

A pillowcase full of sweet loot slows him down.

    DANIEL
    Alex, wait up!

ALEX ROBERTS (15), wearing an old army coat, helmet and a face covered in gory makeup, ignores Daniel. Walks onto a bridge over a forested stream.

Daniel stops by a trail entrance that follows the stream downhill through the trees.

    DANIEL
    Mom said to be home by eight.

Alex turns around.

    ALEX
    She said you have to be home by eight.

Alex walks away.

    DANIEL
    Come on, please?

Daniel is left alone. The festive Halloween activity on the street behind him seems remote. The forest trail is like a black hole.

He enters...
EXT. FOREST PATH - NIGHT

Daniel is just a tiny splash of color among dark, towering trees.

He walks quietly, ears tuned to the trickle of the stream and the rustle of branches swaying in the wind.

WEREWOLF
(Whisper)
Daniel.


This time, a disembodied laugh.

Daniel spins around. No one.

DANIEL
Alex?

No answer.

Daniel continues down the path. Faster. Frightened.

He walks right into a tall figure. A teen dressed in a WEREWOLF costume.

Three others step out of the darkness, each wearing frightening masks. DEMON. STITCH MOUTH. BURN VICTIM.

The Werewolf shoves Daniel to the ground. Kicks Daniel’s candy stuffed pillowcase aside. Treats scatter across the dirt.

Daniel scrambles back. Calls for help.

DANIEL
Alex!

The teens laugh.

WEREWOLF
No one can hear you.

The forest is dead silent. Even the trickle of the stream has stopped.

Daniel jumps up and tries to run from The Werewolf, but the others surround him. They laugh as they push him around.

Daniel is terrified. The masks seem more and more real.
He bumps into The Werewolf and all activity stops. The Werewolf growls and smacks Daniel across the face.


The masked teens circle around. Staring silently.

The Werewolf pulls out a hunting knife. Nods to the others.

Stitch Mouth and Burn Victim grab Daniel’s arms and pin them behind his back.

The Werewolf runs the knife lightly down Daniel’s cheek.

A tear rolls down Daniel’s face.

The Werewolf cocks his head. Catches the tear with the blade.

WEREWOLF
What’s this?

The Werewolf lifts the bottom of his mask. Licks the blade.

The others laugh.

WEREWOLF
Mmm. Superhero tears are so sweet.

The laughter grows louder. The Werewolf tilts his head back and lets out a long howl.

Stops. Looks down at Daniel. Everyone goes silent. With a flick of the knife he draws blood from Daniel’s cheek.

Daniel gasps. Tears run across the cut, mixing with the blood.

Stitch Mouth and Burn Victim let go of Daniel’s arm and step back.

STITCH MOUTH
I thought you just wanted to scare him.

WEREWOLF
Shut up.

The Werewolf cuts Daniel’s other cheek.

DANIEL
Please. Please stop!
The Werewolf holds the knife to Daniel’s throat. Leans in close.

WEREWOLF

What are you going to do?

Daniel squeezes his eyes shut. Snot, blood and tears stream down his face. He mouths a silent prayer.


The bullies back away.

The Werewolf looks down. A red stain spreads from a hole in his chest. An unseen force launches him through the air. His back cracks against a tree and he goes limp.

Behind Daniel, Stitch Mouth screeches. His body shakes violently back and forth like a toy in a dog’s mouth. He is thrown into the air. Disappears into the dark sky.

An invisible force decapitates Burn Victim. His body crumples to the ground.

Demon runs. He is lifted off the ground and tossed into the canopy. He impales on a broken branch, high in a tree.

A drop of blood lands on Daniel’s arm. More drops appear. It becomes a downpour of blood rain.

The world shakes...

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SLAM!

Daniel wakes up. Not in his bed... under it.

He holds a stuffed horse tight and shrinks back into a rat’s nest of blankets and pillows.

Hard rain beats against the window.

Music plays somewhere in the house.

BAM! The muffled sound of bottles falling off a table filters in from another room, followed by indistinguishable shouting.

Daniel crawls out of his cozy cave. Wraps a blanket around his shoulders and hugs his horse.

He opens the bedroom door.
INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Daniel groggily stumbles down the hallway to...

LIVING ROOM

Blinks his eyes in the light.

LEE ROBERTS (late 30s), a once strong man, now soft with drinking, wrestles with JIMMY, a scrawny and unshaven drug dealer of roughly the same age.

Daniel steps back out of sight, peeks around the corner.

Despite a slight limp from an old knee injury, Lee maneuvers Jimmy into a headlock, shoves his face against the wall.

LEE
Say it.

JIMMY
Screw you.

Lee applies more pressure.

Jimmy cringes in pain.

JIMMY
Okay, okay. What do you want me to say?

LEE
I like big cocks.

JIMMY
Thought so.

Jimmy punches Lee’s knee with his fist. Lee lets go and stumbles back in pain.

LEE
Shit!

Jimmy smiles, baring the rotting teeth of a meth user.

Lee limps back to the couch. Sits and rubs his knee.

JIMMY
The old war wound still hurts?

LEE
It does now, you dick.
JIMMY
When are you getting the surgery?

LEE
Really? I don’t have insurance. I can barely even pay my rent. As soon as they legalize, I’m screwed.

JIMMY
I keep telling you, there’s no money in pot.

LEE
I’m not touching that other crap.

JIMMY
Just saying.

Lee cracks open a can of beer. Spots Daniel peeking around the corner. Covers up a few bags of pot with a newspaper.

LEE
What’s up?

DANIEL
You woke me up.

JIMMY
We’re just fucking around.

Jimmy smiles.

Lee glares at him. Turns back to Daniel.

LEE
Go back to sleep.

DANIEL
I had a bad dream.

LEE
Can’t you see I’m busy? Go tell your mom.

Daniel turns to leave.

Lee’s face softens.

LEE
Hey. Make sure she takes her medicine. I’ll come check on you in a bit.
DANIEL
‘Kay.

Daniel shuffles down the hall to...

MOM’S BEDROOM

Daniel enters quietly and approaches the bed.
The light is on, but MOM is asleep. Her Bible lies open on the bed next to a bag of blue pills and an ashtray.

Daniel shakes her shoulder.

She turns over. Blinks in the light, her eyes are red. She quickly sweeps the pills into the drawer of the bedside table and closes it.

MOM
What’s wrong, kiddo?

DANIEL
I can’t sleep.

Mom lifts the sheets for Daniel to climb in. He cuddles up next to her. She strokes his hair.

DANIEL
I hate Dad.

Mom is shocked.

MOM
Daniel! Why would you say that?

DANIEL
He’s always mad at me.

Daniel’s face flushes red. He tries not to cry.

MOM
You know that’s not true. It’s not easy for him, taking care of a whole family. You’ve got to be more forgiving--

Mom breaks out into a coughing fit. Lies back, sweating.

Daniel stares past her at a framed picture next to his dad’s side of the bed. It’s a photo of Mom sitting on a park swing, wearing a sundress. Back when she was healthy.
Daniel strokes damp strands of hair from her forehead. Her hair is thinner and duller than in her picture.

Daniel starts to sob. Buries his head in the pillow.

MOM
What’s really wrong?

DANIEL
I want you to get better.

MOM
Oh sweetie...

Mom hugs Daniel. Kisses his head. Daniel looks up.

MOM
We don’t know what’s going to happen. And you know we can’t control everything in life. Whatever happens, God’s going to take care of you.

DANIEL
Can I sleep in here tonight?

MOM
I wish you could, but I need my rest. And you’re like a little tornado in the bed.

She tickles him. Daniel laughs through his tears.

DANIEL
Can I have that picture of you?

MOM
That’s your dad’s. You’ll have to ask him.

DANIEL
But I can’t sleep. It will help me.

MOM
Here...

Mom reaches over, grabs a lighter and one of a few small candles from the bedside table. Turns off the lamp. The room goes dark.

She lights the candle. It casts a warm light across the bed. They lie together and watch as it flickers.
MOM
See that? Light always beats the darkness. If you get worried you can watch the candle for a minute and know that I’m right here. Just make sure to blow it out before you sleep.

She hands the candle to Daniel.

MOM
Get some rest. Don’t forget to say your prayers.

Daniel kisses his mom’s cheek.

HALLWAY
Daniel quietly closes the door behind him and heads back toward his room.

He passes his brother’s bedroom. Loud music pounds through the closed door. Daniel turns back and opens it.

ALEX’S BEDROOM

Three teens lounge on an old couch surrounded by clutter.

In the middle sits CHLOE (15), her teenaged rebellion manifests as a partially shaved head and a small, fresh butterfly tattoo on her shoulder.

She takes a puff on a joint.

SHANE NELSON (16), an alpha male in an unwashed tank top, plays tug of war over a chew bone with his pit bull, Rex.

Alex, long hair, acne and bloodshot eyes, concentrates on a racing video game. His car crashes into a barrier.

ALEX
Ever hear of knocking?

DANIEL
I can’t sleep with your music blasting.

ALEX
It’s not even loud. Shut the door.
DANIEL
I bet Dad’ll tell you it’s too loud.

ALEX
Yeah? You’re going to bug him with Jimmy here? Let me know how that goes.

Daniel glances down the hall.

DANIEL
Dad!

ALEX
You little--

Shane coughs as he takes a drag off the joint. Laughs at Daniel. He’s baked.

Chloe smiles.

CHLOE
Hey, come in here.

Daniel enters the room. Uncomfortably aware of wearing his pajamas in front of Alex’s friends.

Chloe points to a beanbag chair.

CHLOE
Sit down. I won’t bite.

Shane kicks some old clothes off the beanbag.

Daniel sits.

Shane takes Daniel’s lighter and uses it to light the joint as he tokes. Offers the joint to Daniel.

Alex rolls his eyes, annoyed.

ALEX
Dude, he’s eleven.

SHANE
That’s when I started.

CHLOE
I think he’s cute. Like a little innocent version of Alex.

SHANE
What’s this?
Shane reaches over. Grabs the stuffed horse from Daniel.

**DANIEL**
Hey, give it back.

**SHANE**
I just want to help you out. You’re too old for stuffed animals. Here you go Rex.

He holds the horse out to his dog. Rex grabs it and tries to wrestle it away. The horse rips.

Alex watches and laughs.

**DANIEL**
Stop it!

Shane lets go. The pit bull shakes the horse fiercely. Daniel tries to get it back, but that just makes Rex fight harder.

**SHANE**
Better be careful. It’s his now. He gets protective of his toys.

**DANIEL**
Let go!

Daniel hits Rex.

Shane leaps off the couch and pins Daniel to the wall.

**SHANE**
What the fuck?!

Daniel panics, trapped.

Alex jumps up and tries to calm Shane.

**ALEX**
Whoa. Whoa. Rex is fine.

Rex chews on the horse like nothing happened.

**SHANE**
You ever touch my dog again, I’ll kill you!

Shane lets go.

Daniel hyperventilates. His face is flush. Eyes glisten with tears.
ALEX
Now will you get out of my room?

Chloe pets Rex and takes the horse away. Gives Daniel his horse and lighter. Puts her arm around him and walks him to the door.

CHLOE
Sorry about Shane. You going to be okay?

Daniel nods and sniffs. Looks at his torn horse.

CHLOE
We'll turn the music down.

She glares back at Shane.

Shane pets his dog and shrugs. Turns the music down.

Chloe turns back to Daniel and smiles. She gives him a kiss on the cheek.

CHLOE
Good night.

Daniel’s face flushes red.

Alex glares. Jealous and irritated.

Chloe shuts the door behind Daniel.

DANIEL’S BEDROOM

Daniel rushes into his dark room and shuts the door. The muffled music turns back up. Laughter.

Daniel kneels at the window and looks out. The backyard is dark and rainy.

He sets the candle on the sill. The night disappears behind the flame’s bright reflection on the glass. He gazes into the light. Its warmth glows on his face.

He sighs a shuddering deep breath.

Daniel clasps his hands to pray. Just as he mouths the first words, lightning flashes.

He catches sight of a black UNICORN standing in the middle of the yard with its head hanging low.
Daniel quickly blows out the candle and sets it aside. Cups his hands and looks out window. He can barely make out the dark silhouette of the Unicorn.

    DANIEL
    Whoa.

It stares at Daniel. Turns and limps toward the forest.

Daniel slaps the window.

    DANIEL
    Wait!

EXT. BACKYARD – NIGHT

The window opens. Daniel climbs outside.

Zips a jacket over his pajamas and pulls the hood over his head to protect against the rain.

He runs across the yard to the edge of the forest.

Daniel inspects dark drops of blood on the leaves of a fern. They seem to shimmer in the faint light.

EXT. FOREST – NIGHT

The canopy of trees provides protection from the storm. Wind shakes the branches high above. Large raindrops splatter on the forest floor.

Daniel follows a trail of hoof tracks in the mud.

He finally reaches a gap between two large boulders. Daniel climbs through and finds a large pit in the ground left by a fallen monster of an ancient tree.

The black unicorn lies partially sheltered under the overhanging root system. Lifts its head weakly to look at Daniel, then slumps back down.

    DANIEL
    It’s okay...

Daniel climbs down. Carefully approaches with his hand out.

The unicorn is weak. Blood bubbles from its nostrils with each heavy breath.

Daniel gingerly pets the unicorn’s mane. Admires the sharp, obsidian-black horn on its forehead.
DANIEL

Wow.

Daniel runs his hand down to a sharp stick embedded in its shoulder.

Daniel removes his jacket and uses it to wipe away the thick blood around the wound.

DANIEL

We have to get this out.

The unicorn just sniffs.

Daniel takes a hold of the stick.

DANIEL

This will hurt. I’m sorry.

He pulls the stick out and quickly covers the hole with his jacket. The unicorn flinches, but stays quiet.

Daniel pets its neck.

A large gust of wind in the treetops sends a shower of raindrops down on them. Daniel shivers and looks up.

Lightning flashes.

DANIEL

It’s going to rain all night.

Daniel jumps up.

Gathers large branches and jams them between the ground and the root system, making a small shelter. He covers the makeshift roof with fern leaves.

He climbs into the shelter to finish up with more bracing. His hand slips as he tries to shove a stick into the ground.

DANIEL

Ow!

Blood flows from a cut on his forefinger.

Daniel holds his finger up and watches the blood drip down. He shows the unicorn.

DANIEL

Now we’re both wounded.

The unicorn lifts its head. Points its horn at Daniel’s finger.
DANIEL
Can you use magic on it?

Daniel slowly touches his finger to the tip of the horn.

Instead of healing, Daniel’s blood moves with a life of its own, flows onto the horn and up small grooves to little holes where it is absorbed.

Daniel watches in awe.

The unicorn closes its eyes. Its breathing settles to a steady, calm pace.

Daniel’s blood continues to flow.

His eyes drift closed.

LEE (O.S.)
(Distant)
Daniel!

Daniel opens his eyes. Pulls his finger back. Shakes his head and catches his bearings.

LEE (O.S.)
Daniel!

DANIEL
I... I have to go...

He checks under the jacket. The unicorn’s wound is still open, but has stopped bleeding.

Daniel stands unsteadily. He tries to climb out of the hole. Swoons. Slides back down in the mud.

EXT. BACKYARD – NIGHT

Lee leans out of Daniel’s window. He is drunk. Frantic. Rain beats down on his head.

LEE
Where are you?!?

He disappears back into the room.

A moment later the back door opens. Lee drags Alex outside.

LEE
If somebody took my boy, I’ll murder them.
Alex shivers in the rain. Unconcerned.

ALEX
Nobody took him, Dad. He’s probably just messing around. I just saw him like forty-five minutes ago.

LEE
What did you do to him?

ALEX
Wait, why’s this my fault?

Lee grabs Alex’s shoulders.

LEE
Get your ass out there and find your brother.

Lightning flashes. They spot Daniel standing at the edge of the forest. Hood over his head.

Lee rushes across the yard and hugs him.

LEE
Where have you been?

Daniel is in a daze.

Lee looks into his eyes. Shakes him.

LEE
Wake up.

Daniel blinks. His eyes refocus.

Lee sighs in relief.

LEE
You were sleep walking again. Come back inside.

Lee guides Daniel back to the house. Shoulders his way past Alex.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel climbs into the cozy cave under his bed as Lee shuts the window.

Alex stomps down the hallway to his own bedroom and slams the door. The music turns back on. His angry, muffled voice filters through the wall.
Lee kneels down to tuck Daniel in. He feels Daniel’s forehead.

LEE
You scared the crap out of me. You feeling okay, buddy?

Daniel nods.

Lee picks a towel off the floor and wipes the rain off Daniel’s face.

LEE
You’re not going to school tomorrow, all right? I don’t need you getting sick too.

EXT. BACKYARD – DAY

Daniel plays with army men in a sand pit.

He opens the nozzle on a hose. Water fills a reservoir then breaches a sand wall. A village floods. Army men sink as the sand buildings melt.

He turns off the water and surveys the destruction.

A gust of wind blows through the trees in the forest. Daniel looks up.

Shane and Alex approach.

Shane’s dog, Rex, strains at his leash.

ALEX
Hey! Nice work getting me in trouble last night.

DANIEL
Sorry.

SHANE
I thought you were supposed to be sick.

DANIEL
I’m feeling better.

Rex pulls hard, inches closer to Daniel.

Shane lets the leash loose for a second. The dog leaps forward. Shane catches the leash, stopping Rex mere inches from Daniel’s face.
Daniel falls back into the wet sand.

SHANE
Oops. I don’t think he likes you.

Rex barks angrily at Daniel. Gnashes his teeth.

Daniel looks at Alex for help. Alex just watches. Finally reaches over and taps Shane.

ALEX
Come on, let’s go.

SHANE
If you ever touch my dog again, I’ll let it tear you apart.

Shane strains to pull Rex back.

Bam, bam, BAM! Lee pounds on the back window from inside. Waves for Alex and Daniel to come in.

LEE
(Muffled)
Dinner!

ALEX
Crap. I’ll see you tomorrow.

SHANE
Later.

Shane tugs at Rex’s leash and walks away.

INT. KITCHEN – DAY

Daniel sits at the table.

Lee dishes up burnt toast and some spaghetti with a watery sauce.

Alex grabs a plate and heads toward the hallway.

LEE
We’re going to sit and eat like a family tonight.

Alex rolls his eyes. Sits at the table.

Mom walks in, still in her pajamas. She’s looking rough.

LEE
There’s my beauty. Just in time.
Lee limps over and places a plate of spaghetti at her spot on the table. She looks at it and cringes.

MOM
I’m not hungry tonight.

She grabs a glass and fills it with water from the tap.

LEE
You sure?

MOM
Yeah. Thanks for cooking though.

She gives him a hug.

Lee and the kids watch in silence as Mom heads back to her room.

ALEX
I bet she’d eat if you cooked something besides spaghetti.

LEE
Maybe we could afford better food if you got a god-damned job and helped out a little.

ALEX
A job like yours?

Dad slams his plate onto the table.

LEE
I’m supporting this family the only way I can!

Alex gets up.

LEE
Where are you going?

Alex stomps out of the room. Slams the door to his bedroom.

Lee sits, defeated. Buries his head in his hands.

Daniel picks at his toast. Stares out the window.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The lights are out. Daniel’s blanket nest is empty.
He quietly rummages through his closet. Stuffs a blanket into his backpack.

Opens his bedroom door and peeks into the dark hallway.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Daniel tiptoes through the dark kitchen toward the back door. Stops.

Opens the refrigerator and grabs a bag of carrots.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Daniel climbs to the edge of the pit and looks down into the shadows under the tree roots. It’s too dark to see.

   DANIEL
   Hey One Horn?

He hesitates for a moment. Then climbs down. Spots One Horn’s hind legs sticking out of the shelter.

Daniel sighs in relief. Drops his backpack down and digs through it. Holds up the bag of carrots.

   DANIEL
   I brought you some food.

One Horn lies still.

Daniel gently pokes its rump with a stick. No reaction. He inches closer, takes a deep breath and reaches out with his hand.

One Horn snorts. Daniel startles and falls back.

One Horn lifts its head and looks at Daniel. Its eyes are cloudy. Mouth crusted with blood.

Daniel pulls the blanket out of his backpack and covers One Horn with it.

He offers a carrot. One Horn takes a sniff. Snuffles and lies its head back down.

Daniel scoots closer. Pets the shiny black mane on its neck.

   DANIEL
   You should eat. I don’t want you to die.
Daniel runs his finger up the obsidian-black horn, tracing the grooves. He reaches the needle sharp tip. Carefully touches it.

One Horn nudges Daniel’s finger. Daniel flinches and pulls back.

    DANIEL
    Ouch!

Blood flows freely from his fingertip.

    DANIEL
    Why’d you do that?

One Horn sniffs the air. Daniel remembers...

    DANIEL
    You want blood?

One Horn lifts its head. Stares at Daniel with giant black eyes.

Daniel hesitantly holds his bloody finger out to One Horn’s lips. It doesn’t lick the wound.

Daniel remembers. Touches his finger to the tip of the horn. The blood flows across like it did the night before, moving on its own. Soaks into the tiny holes.

One Horn closes its eyes.

Daniel watches in awe as the wound on the unicorn’s shoulder slowly closes up.

Daniel’s eyes get heavy.

The world fades to black.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - DAY

Mom pulls the curtains open. Squints as the morning light floods the room. The window is wide open. She shivers and pulls her robe tight around her. Closes the window.

With a groan, she kneels down to look under the bed. Daniel sleeps buried in his nest of blankets and pillows.

    MOM
    You’re sure sleeping late.

She nudges him. He doesn't move.
She uncovers him. His face is pale, motionless. She pulls him out, cradles him.

MOM  
Sweetie, wake up!

She shakes him. Daniel opens his eyes and stares up at her.

DANIEL  
Hi Mom.

MOM  
You look terrible.

DANIEL  
I’m fine.

She feels his forehead. He sits up weakly.

MOM  
You’re as cold as ice. How are you feeling?

DANIEL  
I’m just tired. I had bad dreams last night.

MOM  
I want you to stay in and rest today, got it? You’re coming down with something.

DANIEL  
Can I play in the yard?

MOM  
No. You need to learn to take care of yourself. Listen to what you’re body’s telling you.

DANIEL  
Okay Mom.

She kisses his forehead and stands up.

MOM  
Do you think you can eat some breakfast?

DANIEL  
I’m starving.

Daniel glances at the window as she leaves.
INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mom heads to the kitchen. Jimmy steps out of the bathroom in front of her. The toilet finishes flushing behind him.

Mom tries to step around, but he blocks the way.

He checks over his shoulder to make sure they’re alone. Smiles. It’s creepy.

MOM
Excuse me.

She tries to push past, but Jimmy moves in closer. Traps her against the wall between his arms.

JIMMY
What’s the hurry?

MOM
Let me past. I need to make breakfast.

JIMMY
I know what you really need.

Jimmy holds up a small bag of blue pills.

Mom reaches for the bag, but Jimmy pulls them away.

JIMMY
What do you say?

MOM
(Quietly)
Please.

JIMMY
What’s that? I can’t hear you.

Mom cringes in disgust as Jimmy leans in close.

MOM
I said, please may I have my medicine?

JIMMY
These aren’t easy to get, you know.

Jimmy runs a finger down the lapel of Mom’s bathrobe.

Jimmy catches Daniel watching from the bedroom door. Casually backs off. Puts the pills back in his pocket.
JIMMY
Think on it.

Mom rushes to the kitchen.

Jimmy stands tall, stares at Daniel.

JIMMY
Your parents ever teach you to mind your own business?

Jimmy turns and walks away.

LIVING ROOM

Daniel follows quietly. Watches Jimmy exit the front door. Daniel rushes to look out the front window.

Jimmy reaches his old muscle car just as Lee pulls up on his bicycle.

Jimmy checks to make sure no one is watching, reaches in through his car window and pulls out a brown paper bag. Lee hands him an envelope in exchange.

Jimmy gets in his car and drives away.

Lee enters the front door. Heads to the kitchen.

MOM
I don’t want Jimmy here when you’re not around.

LEE
I asked him to meet me here. I just ran a little late.

MOM
He came right into the house.

LEE
Yeah well, he’s never been much for manners.

Dad puts his arm around her waist. She shrugs him off. Finishes buttering some toast.

LEE
Hey, I’m sorry. Next time I’ll be here when he comes.

MOM
I don’t like him.
LEE
No one likes Jimmy. He’s a prick.
Lee tries to kiss her. Mom ignores him. Puts the plate of toast on the table.

MOM
Daniel, come get your breakfast!
Lee watches her walk back to the bedroom.

EXT. FOREST — NIGHT
Daniel peers down into the pit. The moonlight shines on the spot where the unicorn used to lie.

DANIEL
(Loud whisper)
One Horn? Where are you?

Daniel searches the surrounding trees. It’s a quiet night. Not even a cricket makes a sound.
He gives up. Heads back down the trail.
Leaves rustle in the forest. Daniel stops, alert. Listens carefully. Picks up his pace.
He becomes aware of something following him.
Soft breathing behind him.
He spins around. Nothing but darkness.

DANIEL
I can hear you... I know what you want.

Daniel pulls a kitchen knife out of his backpack. Holds it over the top of his forearm.

DANIEL
I can give you more blood if you want me to.

Silence.

DANIEL
One Horn?
Daniel turns back to the trail.
Two eyes flash in the darkness. Rex steps into the light. Growls. Sharp white teeth shine.

Daniel steps back, knife held out in front of him.

Rex moves closer. Threatening. Its gaze shifts to something behind Daniel. Backs up with its hackles raised.

Daniel turns to see One Horn limp up from behind. It lowers its horn toward the dog.

Rex circles them. Looks for an opening. Then lunges!

One Horn tries to fend the dog off with its horn, but stumbles on its weak leg. Misses.

Rex gets a bite in. Rips a gash above One Horn’s ankle. Circles again, gaining confidence.

Rex leaps for the boy.

One Horn nudges Daniel out of the way, knocking him onto the ground. Manages to nick Rex with its horn this time.

Rex tumbles across the ground, and then recovers. Gnashes at One Horn’s hind leg. Big mistake. One Horn bucks, hurling Rex against a tree.

One Horn limps up to the panting dog. Slices with its horn, over and over as Rex yelps. It finally plunges its horn into Rex’s side and bleeds him out, leaving a dry husk of a dog.

One Horn straightens up, shakes its head and walks over to Daniel without a limp. The gash above his ankle has already healed. Lowers its head.

Daniel grabs a hold of its neck and is lifted back to his feet.

Daniel drags Rex’s corpse into the forest.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Shane sits on a playground structure with his head in his hands.

Alex lights a joint. Looks on jealously as Chloe rubs Shane’s back.

Daniel rides up on his bike.

DANIEL
Dad wants you home early tonight.
ALEX
What for?

DANIEL
He wants your help with the car.

ALEX
Such bullshit. He’s never going to get that thing running.

Daniel nods toward Shane.

DANIEL
What’s wrong with him?

Shane looks up. Eyes red.

SHANE
None of your freaking business.

CHLOE
Rex is missing. Dug his way out of the back yard last night.

ALEX
Probably went out looking for a bone.

DANIEL
Hah.

Shane glares at Daniel.

SHANE
What the hell are you laughing about?

DANIEL
Nothing.

SHANE
My dog is missing. You think that’s funny?

DANIEL
What? He said it!

Shane stands up, threatening. Daniel hangs his head.

DANIEL
(Mutters)
Sorry.
Shane shoves Daniel off his bike and into the rocks by the path. Alex jumps up, but doesn’t intervene.

**SHANE**
What? I couldn’t hear you, retard.

Daniel scoots back through the rocks. Looks to Alex for help.

**CHLOE**
Leave him alone.

Chloe tries to hold Shane back, but Shane pushes her away. She trips and falls.

Shane steps closer. Kicks Daniel’s foot.

**DANIEL**
Stop it.

Shane kicks Daniel’s leg harder. And again.

**SHANE**
What are you going to do? Go crying to your mommy?

Daniel grabs a rock. Throws it. Nails Shane in the forehead, knocking him back.

**SHANE**
Ah! Shit!

Blood runs down from Shane’s forehead. He holds his head in pain.

**ALEX**
Daniel!

Daniel glares at Shane, breathing heavily. His face is red. He picks up another rock.

Chloe reaches out to check the cut on Shane’s forehead. He angrily shoves her hand away.

**SHANE**
Leave me alone!

Shane turns back to Daniel. Face red, eyes watering.

**SHANE**
Next time I see you, you’re dead!

He turns and leaves.
Chloe looks back at Daniel with an expression of shock and disappointment. Runs to catch up with Shane.

ALEX
What is wrong with you?

Daniel bursts into tears.

EXT. DANIEL’S HOUSE – DAY
Alex and Daniel approach the house.

Lee’s legs stick out from underneath the old rusted Camaro on blocks in the yard. He reaches out and grabs a screwdriver.

Daniel tries to wipe away his tears.

DANIEL
Are you going to tell Dad?

As they reach the yard, a pickup truck squeals around the corner of the street. Rips up to the driveway and skids to a stop.

KEN NELSON (40s), a fat, burly looking dude straight off a construction site, jumps out. Furious. Walks up to Daniel.

KEN
Hey, Danny!

Ken stops Daniel roughly with a hand to the chest.

Alex doesn’t intervene; he just takes a step back. Intimidated by Ken.

Daniel’s eyes plead for help.

Lee jumps up from underneath the car. Grabs a tire iron.

LEE
Hey! What’s your problem?

KEN
I want you to keep your piece of shit kids away from my son.

LEE
Why don’t you calm down, Ken?

KEN
Shane’s at home with a bloody towel wrapped around his head. I’m not going to calm down.
LEE
(To Daniel)
What’s this about?

DANIEL
Shane pushed me first.

KEN
So you tried to kill him? If you go anywhere near my son again you’re going to regret it.

Lee steps forward with the crowbar.

LEE
You’re threatening my family?

KEN
What are you going to do about it? Assault me?

LEE
I’ll do whatever I need to do.

KEN
Go ahead, then we can finally get you off this street. No one wants you here. Look at this place. You’re whole family is trash. I know how you make your money, you know.

LEE
If you know so much about me, you’ll know to get off my lawn right now.

They step up, ready to fight.

WHOOP! A siren yelps, reds and blues flash. A cop car pulls up to the curb.

Lee drops the crowbar into the grass. Spreads his hands in an innocent pose.

OFFICER WATKINS jumps out of the car. Hand on the gun in his holster.

OFFICER WATKINS
We have a problem here?

LEE
Not on my end.
Ken struggles to control himself. Watkins waits for a response. 


KEN
I’m done. Just stay away from my son. 

Ken gets into his truck and takes off. 

Watkins relaxes slightly. Sighs. 

WATKINS
I won’t have to come back here again, will I, Lee? 

LEE
Nah, we’re all good. Ken’s just a drunk. 

Watkins gets back into his cruiser. Speaks into the radio while looking at Lee. 

Puts the car in gear and takes off. Lee waves goodbye. 

LEE
What the hell were you two thinking? 

ALEX
It wasn’t my-- 

LEE
I don’t want to hear it! We don’t need the cops around here. Whatever crap you just pulled does not help. Got it? Alex, you were really going to let him shove your brother around? We’re a family, we look out for each other. 

ALEX
But he-- 

LEE
I don’t want to hear it! Smarten up! 

Lee storms off into the house. Slams the door. 

ALEX
Way to go. Thanks for getting me in trouble.
Daniel starts to cry.

    ALEX
    Seriously?

Daniel runs around to the back of the house.

EXT. FOREST - DAY
Daniel furiously throws rocks at a tree.

    DANIEL
    Push me again! Go ahead!

One Horn stalks around behind him. Snorting and pawing at the ground.

    DANIEL
    I hate you!

Daniel throws another rock. Bark chips off the trunk.

    DANIEL
    Where’s your dog, Shane! What’s the matter? Are you crying?

Daniel rushes the tree. Hacks at it with a sharp rock, gouging a hole into it.

He turns to One Horn.

    DANIEL
    Let’s really scare him.

EXT. CORNER STORE - NIGHT
Shane sits on a curb in the parking lot of a 24/7 convenience store. He lights a cigarette.

Chloe exits with a coffee. Sits by Shane. Shivers in the night air.

He puts his arm around her, but she shrugs it off.

    SHANE
    What? I thought you were cold.

    CHLOE
    I’m fine.

    SHANE
    Why do you do that?
CHLOE
What?

SHANE
Tease me, then act like you don’t like me.

CHLOE
Are you serious? How do I tease you?

SHANE
Oh come on. You’re always hanging around, smiling at me.

CHLOE
Because we’re friends. What? Just because a girl smiles at someone it means she wants to sleep with them? I hang around Alex too.

SHANE
Alex is a pussy.

Chloe stands up.

CHLOE
Why are you being such a dick tonight? Screw this.

She starts to walk away.

SHANE
Where are you going?

CHLOE
Home.

Shane holds up the keys and shakes them.

SHANE
Too bad, I have the car.

CHLOE
Whatever, I’ll walk.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Daniel watches from the trees. He ducks back out of sight as Chloe steps onto the forest trail. He calmly pets One Horn’s neck as she walks past.

In the parking lot, Shane heads to his car. Opens the door to get in.
Daniel barks. Not very convincingly, but enough to grab Shane’s attention.

Daniel barks again. Makes a whimpering dog sound.

    SHANE
    Who’s out there?

Daniel ducks down as Shane approaches.

Shane steps onto the path. A rock lands on the ground in front of him and rolls to a stop. Shane looks pissed.

    SHANE
    I know it’s you, Danny boy. Come out here you little shit, I’m going to kick your ass.

There’s a burst of movement in the trees. Shane sees Daniel jump onto the trail and run. Shane gives chase.

Daniel turns off the path and runs down the hill.

Shane follows, chasing Daniel through the woods. He has trouble following in the dark, unfamiliar forest.

Daniel leaps over boulders and ducks under fallen logs.

Shane loses sight of Daniel. He skids to a stop in the dirt, inches from a ledge that drops steeply down to a rocky river below. Shane catches his breath. Looks around.

A branch snaps behind him. He spins around to find himself face to face with One Horn. One Horn rears up then stomps his feet. Snorts. Steam emits from his nostrils.

Daniel steps up on top of a boulder behind Shane. He holds a large rock over his head, ready to throw it. He smiles as Shane almost loses his balance at the edge of the cliff.

    DANIEL
    Who’s afraid now?

Daniel and One Horn step forward together.

    DANIEL
    Say you’re sorry.

    SHANE
    I’m not sorry for shit.

One Horn rears up again, towers over Shane.
DANIEL
No! Don’t!

One Horn comes down hard, smashes Shane’s face. Shane collapses on the edge of the cliff.

Daniel stares down in disbelief. Shock sets in. He begins to shake.

DANIEL
I just wanted to scare him...

Daniel kneels down and shakes Shane. Shane is unresponsive, no longer breathing.

DANIEL
No, no, no... You killed him. How am I supposed to--?

Daniel turns around. One Horn is nowhere to be seen.

Daniel looks over the edge. He takes a deep breath, then shoves Shane’s body off the edge. It lands on the rocks below with a sickening thud.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel shuts his door. Out of breath. He rushes to the window and looks out into the backyard.

One Horn stares back at him from the edge of the forest.

Daniel ducks down. Notices smudges of blood on the windowsill. He looks at his hands. They are covered in blood.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Daniel runs his hands under the water. Blood washes down the sink drain. He scrubs hard until all the blood is gone.

He splashes water onto the bloody faucet handle. Frantically washes away every speck of red he can find.

Looks at the door handle. More blood.

Grabs a washcloth.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel scrubs at the windowsill with the washcloth. Dips it in a cup of water and wipes a few remaining drops away.
He looks out the window again. It’s raining. One Horn is gone.

He picks up the cup and crosses the room. Quietly opens the door and looks out into the hallway. The house is dark except for a light under the crack of Alex’s door.

He sneaks over to the...

BATHROOM

The bathroom fan turns on with the light. Daniel shuts the door behind him.

Empties the glass of bloody water into the sink.

Rinses the washcloth and rings it out. Despite his best efforts the red tint didn’t fully wash out. He buries the cloth under some trash in the garbage can.

Daniel leans in and stares at his reflection in the mirror, angry with himself. Breath from his nostrils condensates on the mirror.

Daniel turns off the light.

HALLWAY

Daniel opens the door and checks the hall again. He quietly steps out. The floor squeaks.

Mom calls from her bedroom.

          MOM (O.S.)
          Daniel?

Daniel cringes.

          DANIEL
          Yeah Mom?

          MOM (O.S.)
          Come here a minute.

MOM’S BEDROOM

The room is dark. Mom lies in bed, alone.

Daniel climbs in next to her.
MOM
(Sleepily)
I heard you going in and out of the bathroom. Are you feeling okay?

DANIEL
My stomach just hurts a little.
Where’s Dad?

Mom is silent for a moment.

MOM
He’s out with Jimmy.

Daniel strokes her hair. She closes her eyes.

MOM
That feels nice.

Daniel looks across the bed at the photo of his mom. He straightens her messy hair. Tucks it behind her ear to match the photo.

Smiles. Closes his eyes too.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY
Frantic knocking at the front door.

More knocking. Louder. It echoes through the quiet house.

INT. MOM’S BEDROOM - DAY
Dim, grey early morning light enters the window.

Daniel stirs in the bed next to his mom. Opens his eyes and listens to more knocking, muffled by the closed door.

Daniel looks over at his mom. She’s sound asleep. Checks the other side, no dad.

He hears Alex’s bedroom door open. Footsteps recede down the hallway.

ALEX (O.S.)
Hang on!

Daniel strains to listen. It’s Chloe, frantic, but unintelligible.

Daniel climbs out of the bed and crosses to the door.
Quietly opens it a crack and listens.

CHLOE (O.S.)
I don’t know! The cops are at the store, looking all around, like a crime scene.

ALEX (O.S.)
He’s probably fine. If I had a dad like his I wouldn’t go home either.

CHLOE (O.S.)
But his car is still there! It’s not even locked. He’s just gone.

ALEX (O.S.)
Alright, Alright. Let me get dressed, I’ll be right out.

Daniel quickly sneaks across the hallway to his bedroom before Alex comes back.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - DAY

Daniel grabs his jacket. Opens his window and climbs outside.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Daniel drops to the ground from his window. It’s a grey morning. A heavy blanket of fog hangs over the yard. Everything is wet from mist.

Daniel sneaks around the side of the house. Peeks around the corner.

Alex exits the front door, heads down the street with Chloe.

As soon as they are out of sight Daniel runs to the detached garage.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Daniel is surprised to walk in on his dad rummaging for tools on a messy workbench. The garage is full of junk.

LEE
Hey buddy. You’re up early. You must be feeling better.

DANIEL
Yeah. I wanted to ride my bike.
Lee looks out the window at the morning fog.

LEE
In this fog? You'll get run over.
Help me find my utility knife.

Daniel glances back outside. Anxious to follow Alex and Chloe.

He steps over to the bench next to his dad and starts shuffling through a pile of tools.

LEE
What were you doing in my bed last night? More bad dreams?

DANIEL
Yeah.

LEE
I didn’t want to wake you up. Slept on the couch.

Lee triumphantly holds up a rusty old utility knife.

LEE
Found it!

DANIEL
Can I ride my bike now?

LEE
Why don’t you help me with the car? It’s good for you to learn this stuff. Come on.

Lee opens the garage door. Grabs a moving blanket.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

The warm light from the garage glows in the early morning fog. Lee walks over to the car.

Daniel follows.

Lee drops the blanket onto the wet grass and shoves it under the front of the car. Lies down and slides under.

LEE
Jimmy gave me this fuel pump. It’s a piece of junk, but it might work.
Daniel shivers. Zips up his jacket and shoves his hands in his pockets.

DANIEL
What does it do?

LEE
What do you think it does?

Daniel shrugs.

DANIEL
Pumps fuel?

Underneath the car, Lee smiles. Uses the utility knife to shorten a length of black hose.

LEE
Smart kid. Yeah, it pumps the fuel from the gas tank to the carburetor. Problem is, I’m still not getting enough fuel to start the engine. That’s why I’m trying a bigger hose.

He shoves the new hose onto a nozzle and tightens a clamp.

LEE
Okay, let’s see if works. The key’s in the ignition. Go turn it on, but don’t start the car.

Daniel looks confused. He sits in the drivers seat. Turns the key.

Underneath the car the fuel pump starts to whine. Lee squeezes the tube to check the pressure.

The engine turns over and roars to life. Smoke pours out, choking Lee.

LEE
Whoa. Shit! Turn it off.

He scrambles out from under the car.

LEE
I said don’t start it!

Daniel goes white.

DANIEL
I... I’m sorry...
Daniel gets out. Afraid of the car. Afraid of Lee.

Lee looks at the car. The engine runs roughly, but it runs. The smoke starts clearing. He looks at his frightened son. Calms himself down. Puts his arm around Daniel’s shoulder.

LEE
Look at that. We did it. It’s alive!

Daniel looks up, unsure. Lee smiles.

LEE
You scared the crap out of me.

DANIEL
You said to turn the key--

LEE
Don’t worry about it. I screw up too. All the time. Just learn from it and move on, all right? This car hasn’t run years.

DANIEL
Okay.

LEE
Hey, listen. I know you and Alex butt heads once and a while, but I’m serious about sticking together. We’re family and we need to look out for each other, all right?

Daniel nods his head.

DANIEL
Can I ride my bike now?

Lee looks at the sky. The morning light has begun to filter through the haze. The fog has begun to lift.

LEE
Sure. Knock yourself out.

Daniel eagerly grabs his bike and rides off.

Lee watches after him.
EXT. CORNER STORE - DAY

The fog has lifted, but it’s still a grey and cloudy morning. Flashing red and blue lights from two police cars reflect off the wet pavement of the parking lot.

Daniel rides up on his bike and stops to observe the scene.

An officer searches the ground by Shane’s car.

Alex and Chloe sit with their backs against the wall of the store. Alex has his arm around her shoulders and comforts her as she cries.

Officer Watkins towers above them.

OFFICER WATKINS
Do you remember what time you left?

CHLOE
I don’t know. I was supposed to be home by midnight, so I probably started walking home at about eleven thirty?

OFFICER WATKINS
You walked home alone? Your boyfriend wouldn’t give you a ride in the middle of the night?

Chloe stiffens up. Defensive.

CHLOE
He’s not my boyfriend. We had an argument so I left. It was nothing. That’s the last time I saw him. I should have stayed.

Chloe wipes tears away with her sleeve.

OFFICER WATKINS
Look, I don’t want you to worry. We’ll find him. Chances are he’s at a friend’s house.

CHLOE
Don’t worry about it?! We are his only friends. There’s nowhere else he would have gone.

ALEX
I know he wouldn’t just leave his car here. Did you check--?
OFFICER WATKINS
You can leave the investigating to me. This is my job. Why don’t you two go home and I’ll let you know if I have any more questions. All right?

Officer Watkins stands up. Spots Daniel watching.

Daniel turns his bike around and rides off.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Daniel rides down the quiet streets. Without purpose.

He crosses the bridge. Turns left and right onto side streets, searching the gaps between the houses, the dark spots in the trees.

He stops and looks at the imposing forest at the side of the road. Steps off his bike. Walks it across the ditch and up the hill into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Daniel pushes his bike up through fallen limbs and onto the forest path. He looks around to make sure he’s alone.

Mounts his bike and rides the trail.

Daniel turns off the trail and dismounts. He hides his bike behind a fallen log and climbs down to the cliff where he last saw Shane.

Daniel peers over the edge. Shane’s body still lays below. Shane’s jacket is a splash of blue on the grey rocks.

The squelch of a police radio echoes through the forest, followed by a garbled radio voice. Daniel ducks behind a boulder and looks up the hill.

He catches a blimps of two officers as they walk past.

As soon as they are gone, Daniel runs back up the hill to grab his bike. He rides away.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Daniel stops at the playground structure where he and Shane had had the fight. Parks his bike.
He sits on the structure to catch his breath.
Stares into the forest. Wipes his nose on his sleeve.

EXT. DANIEL’S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

Jimmy rushes out the front door. Followed by Mom who is screaming at him. She holds a plastic bag up with white powder in it.

MOM
What did you give him?!

Jimmy looks around at the neighbor’s houses, paranoid. Holds his hand out to quiet her down.

JIMMY
Relax, it was just a sample. He’ll come down in a couple of hours.

MOM
Keep your drugs away from here.

Mom throws the bag at Jimmy. Some powder spills out onto the grass. Jimmy scrambles to pick it and hides the bag.

JIMMY
You don’t seem to have a problem when I bring your Oxys.

Jimmy stands up, shoves the bag in his pocket. He grabs his crotch.

JIMMY
So how are you doing without your little pills?

MOM
Stay away from this house. You hear me?

JIMMY
I don’t think that’s up to you. Last I heard, Lee pays the rent, while you just lay in bed all day.

Mom slams the door.

Jimmy climbs into his car and peels off down the street.

Daniel watches him drive away from across the street. As soon as Jimmy turns the corner, Daniel rides his bike to the house and dumps it in the yard.
INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lee shivers under a blanket on the couch, his eyes closed.

Mom sits on the floor next to him and wipes the sweat from his forehead.

She looks up as Daniel opens the front door.

MOM
Go on back out to play, okay?

She coughs. The situation has taken its toll. She’s exhausted and in pain. Daniel approaches.

DANIEL
You need to get back in bed, Mom.

MOM
Dad’s not feeling well. I have to--

DANIEL
Mom. It’s okay, he’s sleeping.

Lee lies. Trembles with little shivers.

DANIEL
I’ll come get you when he wakes up. Come on.

Daniel takes her arm and assists her back to her bedroom.

INT. MOM’S BEDROOM - DAY

Mom climbs into bed, exhausted.

Daniel steps out for a moment. Returns with a glass of water.

MOM
Thank you, sweetie.

Daniel leans down to hug her.

MOM
I wish you never had to deal with any of this. You’re such a brave kid.

DANIEL
I love you, Mom.

Mom turns on her side and covers her eyes with a pillow.
As she falls asleep Daniel states at the youthful photo of her by the bed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
The room is dim. The last light of the day barely makes it through the thick clouds and past the curtains.

Daniel stares down at his dad like a statue. He could have been standing in that spot all day.

Lee snores away.

Daniel turns slowly at the sound of a neigh outside. He walks to the window and looks out. One Horn is in the front yard. Pawing at the ground.

Daniel puts on a pair of Crocs and walks outside.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT
One Horn limps down the empty streets with Daniel on his back. Both of their heads hang low. Daniel’s hood is pulled up to protect against a cold drizzling rain.

One Horn stops.

Daniel turns his head and spies Jimmy’s car parked in the driveway of a rundown house. A single light is on inside.

One Horn kneels down for Daniel to climb off.

Daniel and One Horn walk through tall grass around the side of the house. Peeking into dark windows.

They reach...

JIMMY’S BACKYARD
Daniel tries the back door. It opens.

INT. JIMMY’S HOUSE - NIGHT
Daniel stares down a dark hallway. Dim light comes from a room at the end. Thrash metal music plays.

Daniel steps inside. Walks silently down the hall. The music gets louder with each step.
JIMMY’S LIVING ROOM

Jimmy concentrates on a video game. Yells at his television screen.

JIMMY
Come on bitch! You suck!

Jimmy takes a quick swig of beer then resumes mashing buttons on the controller.

He looks to his left.

JIMMY
What the hell are you doing here?

He stands up and takes step toward Daniel, then freezes. A look of confusion spreads across his face. He falters backward.

In a blur of movement, One Horn slams into Jimmy.

Jimmy smashes into the wall. Blood sputters from his mouth.

Jimmy weakly tries to push One Horn’s head away, but One Horn keeps him pinned with the horn through his chest. The color drains from Jimmy’s skin.

Jimmy looks over One Horn at Daniel, who watches as Jimmy’s life drains away. Jimmy finally slumps.

One Horn withdraws his horn and lets Jimmy’s body drop to the floor. He shakes his head. A mist of blood drops spatter across the walls and ceiling.

Daniel reaches into Jimmy’s pocket and finds the bag of blue pills for his mom. Turns and walks out.

INT. DANIEL’S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Daniel stares into the mirror. He uses his thumb to wipe a drop of blood from his cheek.

He turns on the faucet and washes his hands. Calmly this time. Like it’s normal. He turns off the faucet and dries his hands.

He hears the clink of a beer bottle falling in the living room. Turns off the light and peeks out the door. Ducks back as Lee stumbles down the hallway.
Lee enters his bedroom and shuts the door. Daniel listens as an argument begins between his mom and Lee. He can’t make out the words.

Daniel quietly rushes across the hallway to his bedroom.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT LOBBY - NIGHT

It’s late. The station is dead quiet except for the hum of a vending machine.

A receptionist leans back in a chair reading a magazine.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICE - NIGHT

Officer Watkins sits alone at his desk in front of his computer.

He plugs in a thumb drive. When the disk icon pops up on the screen he opens it and drags a folder named “Camera_03_20161101” to the desktop.

He opens the folder and double clicks the first .mov file.

A video window opens, showing rainy night footage of an empty parking lot. Watkins scrolls through until Shane’s car pulls in.

Officer Watkins sits back and watches.

INT. KEN’S TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Ken drinks from a bottle as he swerves down the road. He aims a flashlight at the passing trees.

KEN
Shane!

The trees sway gently in the wind.

Ken continues on down the road. Calling for his son.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel lies in bed, staring at the picture of his mom. He runs a finger down the glass as if stroking her hair.

He looks up and spots the candle his Mom gave him. Climbs out of his cave.
Daniel kneels by the window and looks out. The dark shape of One Horn is just barely visible at the edge of the woods.

Daniel lights a match. The flame licks the wick of the candle. As the candle lights up, his own reflection blocks out the night.

Daniel clasps his hands in prayer.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Officer Watkins takes a drink of his coffee. Sits up and watches the screen closely.

In the silent video, Shane steps up to the edge of the forest. He appears to be yelling at something. Then, just like that, he steps into the darkness and disappears.

Watkins scrolls the video forward. No more movement. That’s it.

Officer Watkins pauses the video and sits back. Disappointed. Nothing usable.

He scrolls back to the beginning of the video. Plays it again.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ken drives down the street. Stops the truck.

Takes a swig. Looks across at Daniel’s house.

INT. DANIEL’S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is dark.

Daniel’s parents sleep in their bed.

Alex snores in his room.

DANIEL’S BEDROOM

Daniel tosses in his nest. Sweat glistens on his forehead. He moans from a bad dream.

Loud knocks at the front door startle him awake. He stares at the bed above him, listening.

More pounding. Louder.
KEN (O.S.)
Where is he?!

Daniel climbs out of bed. Opens his door and walks toward...

LIVING ROOM
The pounding continues.

KEN (O.S.)
Get out here!

Lee bursts out of his room and rushes past Daniel.

LEE
Go back to bed.

EXT. DANIEL’S FRONT YARD - NIGHT
Ken’s powerful arm pounds on the door again. He drunkenly kicks over a planter.

KEN
I know you’re in there!

The porch light turns on. Lee bursts out of the house. Grabs Ken by the collar and shoves him into the yard.

LEE
The hell are you doing here, Ken?
It’s 3 AM.

Ken could easily pummel Lee, but he doesn’t. He crumbles and sobs.

KEN
I just need to know where he is.

LEE
What are you talking about?

KEN
Shane’s missing.

LEE
Yeah, I heard. I’m sure the police are--

KEN
The police aren’t going to do shit!
LEE
Calm down. What do you want from me?

Ken looks up to see Daniel and Alex watching from the door. He points at Daniel.

KEN
He knows. Where’s my son? I swear, I’ll beat it out of you if I have to.

Ken shoves Lee aside and staggers toward the house. Daniel shrinks back.

Lee pulls out a handgun and steps in front of Ken again. Aims the gun at Ken's face.

LEE
You’re not going to touch my kid.

Ken contemplates the barrel. Finally turns to stumble away.

KEN
He knows something.

Lee watches Ken climb back into his truck. Heads back to the house.

LIVING ROOM

Lee slams the door.

LEE
What was he talking about?

Daniel and Alex look at each other.

ALEX
Daniel attacked Shane at the park.

DANIEL
That’s not true! Shane pushed me. You always take his side.

ALEX
You hit him with a rock!

LEE
Enough! Do either of you know where he is?
They both shake their heads.

LEE
Good. Then stay out of it. If the police start asking questions, just tell them you don’t know anything and that’s it. Got it? We don’t need any attention. Get back to bed.

Alex stomps down the hall and slams his door.

DANIEL’S BEDROOM

Daniel climbs into his nest and holds his stuffed horse tight. He stares at the window.

Wind blows through the trees outside.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Watkins reclines in his chair and watches Shane and Chloe sit and chat silently on the monitor again. His eyes struggle to stay open. He takes a sip of coffee.

With a start, he sits up and hits the space bar. Coffee spills from the cup, but he doesn’t care. He’s transfixed.

In the corner of the video, a grainy pair feet stand at the edge of the forest. Frustratingly small and blurry.

He touches the screen with his finger, almost as if he could get more information by feeling the image.

He starts the video.

The feet move back out of sight. He rewinds and plays again. The feet step out of the shadow, and then disappear again, on screen for a total of no more than five seconds.

He sits back.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel’s eyes are closed. He mutters from a dream. His hand twitches and knocks his stuffed horse away.
EXT. FORESTED ROAD - NIGHT

Ken is parked by the side of the road. Stares at a bridge in front of him.

He gets out and stumbles down the street. The large trees in the forest sway as the wind picks up. He looks at water drops on his hand as rain starts to fall.

He turns to the forest and bellows.

KEN
Shane!

Ken empties the vodka bottle with one last drink. Throws it in the forest. The bottle smashes on a rock.

KEN
Where are you?!

Someone watches from the trees. A rock loosens and tumbles down a slope.

Ken listens.

KEN
Who’s there?

He shivers and pulls his jacket tighter.

Walks toward the bridge that spans a rocky creek. Nervously checks back over his shoulder.

Just before he reaches the relative warmth of a glowing streetlight, One Horn rushes out of the darkness. Its horn slashes across Ken’s back.

Ken gasps and stumbles to his knees.

He reaches back and feels the wetness. Looks at the blood on his hands. Scans the darkness for his attacker.

Ken struggles to his feet and staggers onto the dimly lit bridge. Stops in the middle. Unwilling and unable to continue, he leans against the railing.

Water rushes over the boulders beneath.

One Horn steps into the light. Walks toward Ken.

KEN
What are you doing here?
Ken weakens, too drunk and wounded to defend himself. He pitifully tries to hit One Horn. The blow is easily dodged.

One Horn lowers his head and aims his horn.

KEN
Please. Just tell me. Where’s my son?

One Horn jerks his head up. The sharp black horn stabs up through Ken’s jaw and into his brain. The life instantly leaves Ken’s eyes.

One Horn soaks up the blood, then withdraws.

Ken’s lifeless body tumbles over the edge and smashes on the rocks below.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM – DAY

Daniel wakes up with a gasp. Sweat beads on his forehead. He stares up, breathing heavily.

He pulls his hands out from under the covers and inspects them. They’re clean. He pulls his sheets all the way off. Dry pajamas.

Daniel takes a deep breath.

INT. KITCHEN – DAY

Mom, still in her bathrobe, preps breakfast while Alex eats cereal at the table.

Daniel emerges from his room, carrying his school backpack.

MOM
You’d better hurry or you’ll be late for school.

Daniel sits at the table by Alex.

Alex stands up angrily, puts his dish in the sink and walks out. Daniel watches him leave.

Mom places a plate of toast in front of him.

MOM
Eat quickly.
EXT. FORESTED ROAD - DAY

Daniel trudges down the street with his heavy backpack. Head hung. Eyes on the ground.

As Daniel passes Ken’s truck, he looks up and spots a police car and an ambulance.

Officer Watkins peers over the rail at the stream-bed. A paramedic climbs down the slope.

A crowd of children watches.

Daniel approaches a KID, roughly his same age.

   DANIEL  
   What happened?

   KID  
   There’s a body down there. Someone fell off the bridge last night.

   DANIEL  
   Do they know who it was?

   KID  
   Some old guy. I heard they found a vodka bottle. He was probably drunk.

Watkins scans the onlookers. Briefly makes eye contact with Daniel.

Daniel looks away. Nervous. When he looks back, Watkins has returned his attention to the activity below. Daniel searches the forest. Spots some movement deep in the trees.

   DANIEL  
   See you at school.

   KID  
   Yeah, see ya.

Daniel continues down the road in the same direction as the few other children on their way to school. When no one is looking he ducks off the road into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Daniel runs through the forest, scanning the trees. His heavy pack bounces on his back. Finally he stops and bends over to catch his breath, hands resting on his knees. Head down.
When he looks back up, One Horn stands tall in front of him. Majestic and powerful. Clouds of steam puff from its nostrils in the cool air.

DANIEL
Why did you kill him? He never hurt anyone.

One Horn stares Daniel in the eyes.

Daniel appears to be listening to One Horn.

DANIEL
No. He was just looking for his son. We can’t hurt anyone else. The police are going to find out.

One Horn turns and walks a slow circle around Daniel.

DANIEL
He was innocent!

One Horn paws at the ground. Snorts angrily.

DANIEL
No, go away! I don’t want you here anymore!

Daniel turns to leave. One Horn shakes his head and neighs.

DANIEL
Don’t follow me.

One Horn watches Daniel walk away.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Daniel follows a trail through the forest that opens up onto the school soccer field. The school parking lot is full but there are no kids anywhere, class has started.

Daniel hurries across the field past the high school, toward the middle school building. Turns the corner of a cement retaining wall...

Chloe sits on the ground with her back to the wall, her head buried in her arms. She looks up. Her face is red from crying.

Daniel shuffles on his feet, shyly.

DANIEL
Hey.
CHLOE
You’re late.

DANIEL
The police found a body. Down by the bridge.

CHLOE
I know. It was Shane’s dad.

DANIEL
Oh.

CHLOE
I can’t go in there. Shane’s missing, his dad is dead... and everyone’s still just going through the motions like nothing happened.

Daniel drops his backpack and sits next to Chloe.

DANIEL
Did you really like him?

Chloe looks at Daniel, angry. Then she softens.

CHLOE
I know Shane can be a dick, but if you got to know him you’d see his good side. I always knew he’d look out for me. It was like having a big brother.

DANIEL
Yeah? Well, having a big brother isn’t all that great.

CHLOE
Alex cares about you.

DANIEL
No. He doesn’t. He hates me.

Chloe leans back and sighs.

CHLOE
Yeah, he kind of does.

She looks at Daniel, then laughs and shakes her head.

CHLOE
How did our lives get so messed up?
DANIEL
My dad’s a drug dealer.

Chloe smiles, appreciating the open honesty.

CHLOE
Well my mom strips for random guys online.

Daniel shows a hint of a smile.

DANIEL
Gross.

Chloe stands up and grabs her backpack.

CHLOE
You’d better get to class before they send out a search party.

DANIEL
Aren’t you going in?

CHLOE
I can’t do it.

DANIEL
I can stay out here with you.

Chloe gives him a quick hug.

CHLOE
You’re sweet. Go in, this isn’t your problem.

She walks away.

Daniel stares after her.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY – DAY

Daniel enters the school. The hallway is quiet and empty. He shuffles quickly to his classroom. Head down. Lost in thought.

Daniel looks through the window into his room. Surprisingly, no one is there.

He walks by a couple more classrooms. All empty.

Daniels walks to the gym and pushes the door open.
INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM - DAY

The whole school is there.

The students are all seated on bleachers watching the school principal, Ms. Campbell, a middle aged woman who seems to be struggling between poise and a nervous breakdown.

Ms. Campbell waits nervously at the podium. Occasionally whispering to another teacher. Officer Watkins waits nearby.

Daniels edges awkwardly through a cluster of teachers.

He makes his way through quietly chattering students to a seat at the back of the bleachers.

Ms. Campbell leans into the microphone.

**MS. CAMPBELL**
Okay everyone. Quiet down. Quiet down. I know you are all aware of a couple of events that have occurred over the weekend.

Daniel listens in a daze. He glances over at a couple of kids snickering in the seats next to him. Daniel looks back at the principal.

**MS. CAMPBELL**
I’d like to introduce Officer Watkins, who has an important announcement. Please give him your undivided attention.

Officer Watkins steps up to the microphone.

**OFFICER WATKINS**
Thank you Ms. Campbell. On Saturday night at approximately eleven-thirty PM a high school student named Shane Nelson went missing from the Mountain Brook Road convenience store parking lot.

Daniel stares at Officer Watkins. Everything else in the auditorium fades away.

**OFFICER WATKINS**
At this time we have no evidence of foul play, but this disappearance is currently under active investigation. Anyone who has any information that might be related (MORE)
to this case should immediately contact the police department.

Officer Watkins’ eyes connect with Daniel’s briefly.

OFFICER WATKINS
If Shane is hurt or in danger, we need to find him as soon as possible. Early this morning, the body of Shane’s father, Ken Nelson was found after a fall from a bridge. There is no indication that this is anything other than a tragic accident, but again, please come forward with any information you might have.

Officer Watkins hands the microphone back to the Principle.

MS. NELSON
Even if these events don’t touch your lives personally, I know they can still be confusing and disturbing. I want you to know that our councilors are always available to talk. The school district has provided extra staff for the week to make sure--

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY - LATER

Noisy children file out of the auditorium past Ms. Nelson and Officer Watkins.

Daniel follows the crowd out. Head held down. Officer Watkins touches his shoulder as he passes.

OFFICER WATKINS
Hey, it’s “Daniel”, isn’t it?

Daniel stops and looks up. Shyly nods his head.

OFFICER WATKINS
Can I talk to you for a second?

Daniel nods again. They step out of the stream of exiting students.

Ms. Nelson joins them.

OFFICER WATKINS
I recall that last week Shane’s father came by your house.
DANIEL
My brother is friends with Shane.

OFFICER WATKINS
He was quite upset. Did something happen between you and Shane?

DANIEL
I... he was picking on me. I didn’t do--

Ms. Nelson looks concerned. Officer Watkins puts his hand on Daniel’s shoulder to calm him down.

OFFICER WATKINS
Look, I’m not accusing you of anything. I’m just trying to get a picture of who Shane is. Who his friends are.

Daniel shrugs his shoulders. Mumbles.

DANIEL
I don’t know. He just hangs out with my brother.

OFFICER WATKINS
I’ll make sure to talk to your brother later. Is there anything you can tell me? Do you know anyone who had a problem with Shane?

Daniel shrugs his shoulders. Looks at the floor.

MS. NELSON
Daniel, you can tell--

OFFICER WATKINS
It’s alright. These kids have had a lot to deal with for one weekend. Thanks for your help Daniel.

Daniel nods, and shuffles off with the crowd. Watkins watches him go.

INT. DANIEL’S HOUSE – DAY

The front door opens. Daniel rushes in. Calls out.

DANIEL
I’m home!

No one answers. The house is quiet.
Daniel sets his backpack down by the front door. He looks in the kitchen. No one. Heads to the hallway.

INT. PARENT’S BEDROOM – DAY

Daniel quietly opens the door and peaks in.

Mom is asleep in bed with a pillow covering her eyes.

Used dishes and glasses cover the side table. Unwashed laundry lay on the floor.

DANIEL

Mom?

Mom continues to breathe deeply in her sleep.

Daniel gathers up the laundry and puts it into a laundry basket. He picks up the cups and plates from the side table and leaves the room.

Mom barely stirs at the sound of dishes being put in the kitchen sink down the hall.

Daniel returns.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the bag of blue pills the he found at Jimmy’s house. Sets them on the table by the bed.

Daniel leans down and kisses his mom’s cheek.

He exits. Quietly closes the door behind him.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Daniel stops at Alex’s door. He listens carefully to make sure no one is in the house.

Pulls out a small screwdriver and sticks it into the hole in the doorknob. The standard bedroom lock turns easily.

Daniel looks up at a small piece of string that is pinched between the door and the frame. Reaches up and catches it as he opens the door.

Sets the string aside on a dresser by the door. He’s done this before.

Daniel heads straight to a pile of books by Alex’s bed. Pulls out a yearbook.
He sits and flips through the pages. Lands on a class photo of Chloe. She’s smiling. Daniel leans back and admires.

He flips through a few more pages until he reaches the photography club. She poses with a small group of students.

Daniel continues leafing through the yearbook, then discovers a photo booth strip. Chloe makes a series of faces for the camera.

Daniel perks up at the sound of the front door opening. It closes.

Daniel quickly shoves the photo strip into his pocket and snaps the yearbook shut. Sets it back on top of the stack.

He rushes to the door.

Grabs the string and holds it up to the frame as he quietly shuts the door. Near its original spot. No time to make it perfect.

He hears a cabinet closing in the kitchen. Rushes to his room and shuts the door just in time.

Alex’s footsteps march down the hall.

Daniel listens to Alex’s door open and close. He sighs relief.

Daniel pulls out the photo strip and shoves it into his drawer. Lays down under his bed and stares up. Breathes a deep breath to relax.

The door flies open. Alex storms in.

    ALEX
    Where is it?

    DANIEL
    What?

    ALEX
    I know you were in my room.

    DANIEL
    I wasn’t. I swear.

Alex starts rifling through Daniel’s possessions.

Daniel leaps from under the bed. Tries to stop Alex, but gets shoved away.
ALEX
You went through my yearbook. I know you took Chloe’s pictures.

Alex opens Daniels drawers.

DANIEL
Stop it. Get out of my room.

Daniel tries to grab Alex, but Alex holds him off with one arm. With his other hand, Alex reaches in and pulls out the photo strip. Holds it up.

ALEX
What were you doing with this, you little creep? Jerking off to my friend?

Alex shoves Daniel again.

DANIEL
You’re the one who’s obsessed with her. She’s not even your girlfriend.

Alex grabs Daniel by the collar.

ALEX
Well she definitely wouldn’t be interested in a little kid like you. Little freak.

Alex gets angrier, his grip tightens on Daniel’s collar.

Daniel’s face turns red.

DANIEL
Let me go.

ALEX
Just stay out of my life. Okay?

DANIEL
I don’t care about your life.

ALEX
You’re creeping on Chloe and you attacked my best friend!

DANIEL
He started it!
ALEX
No, you did by being so annoying.
He hates the way you’re always
hanging around.

DANIEL
Not anymore.

Alex pauses, then slams Daniel against the wall.

ALEX
What’s that supposed to mean?

Daniel coughs as Alex pushes hard against his neck.

DANIEL
Stop it... Or I’ll get mad.

ALEX
Where’s Shane?

DANIEL
I don’t know.

Daniel struggles, but he can’t get Alex’s hands loose. He
reaches down and grabs a hard toy. Slams it against Alex’s
head.

DANIEL
Leave me alone!

Alex stagger back in pain. Looks up at Daniel.

ALEX
You’re dead.

Daniel runs out of the bedroom.

INT. DANIEL’S HOUSE – DAY

Alex chases Daniel through the house...

EXT. BACKYARD – DAY

Daniel bursts out of the house and runs across the yard. Alex
follows.

ALEX
Get back here!

Daniel leaps over a log and plunges through the foliage into
the forest.
EXT. FOREST - DAY

Daniel knows every inch of the forest. He maintains a lead on his faster brother by weaving through boulders and logs.

Alex struggles to keep up.

    DANIEL
    Stop following me!

    ALEX
    You’re not getting away.

They turn onto a path. Daniel sprints, but he’s running out of steam. Alex begins to catch up.

    DANIEL
    I’m serious. I’m warning you.

Alex vents between labored breaths.

    ALEX
    You’re the one who should be worried... I have to take care of everything... You’re always causing problems...

Alex stops, out of breath.

    ALEX
    Even Mom can’t put up with you.

Daniel stops dead. Fury clouds his face.

Behind him Alex is swept off his feet by a dark blur. The forest is silent.

Daniel spins around, suddenly terrified.

    DANIEL
    Alex!

Daniel spins around frantically. Scans the forest for his brother.

    DANIEL
    No! Bring him back! Alex!

Daniel sinks to his knees.

Alone.

    DANIEL
    I’m sorry.
Two police cars and an ambulance are already parked in front of Jimmy’s house when Officer Watkins drives up.

Watkins walks to the house and is greeted by OFFICER MARCUM, a junior officer, with a book smart look. Chubbier. Glasses.

OFFICER MARCUM
Neighbors noticed the back door had been standing open since last night.

OFFICER WATKINS
Gotta love nosy neighbors.

They make their way around the side of the house to the back. The overgrown backyard is littered with trash.

OFFICER MARCUM
I think they were happy to have an excuse to call. Seems like our victim was a drug dealer.

They step inside. Officer Marcum guides Watkins to one side of a line of police tape that extends down the hall. He points to the ground.

OFFICER MARCUM
We found these muddy footprints.

Watkins kneels down and looks closely.

OFFICER WATKINS
I want to know the size and brand.

OFFICER MARCUM
Already on it. Forensics should know by tomorrow. I ordered an analysis on--

Watkins stands back up.

OFFICER WATKINS
Drug hit?

OFFICER MARCUM
Well... here’s the funny thing. The drugs and cash are still laying out in plain sight. But then there’s this.

Officer Marcum shows Watkins around the corner into the living room.
Jimmy’s emaciated body leans against the wall. His dead eyes stare straight ahead. A hole gapes in his chest.

Dried blood streaks run down from around the hole in the wall above him.

OFFICER WATKINS
Gunshot?

OFFICER MARCUM
Stab wound.

Watkins cocks his head in curiosity.

OFFICER WATKINS
Seriously? Did you find the weapon?

OFFICER MARCUM
No.

Watkins leans in to inspect the large hole in the wall.

OFFICER WATKINS
Odd.

Watkins puts on a rubber glove and leans down to the body. Carefully pulls Jimmy’s lip open.

OFFICER WATKINS
Meth user?

OFFICER MARCUM
Yeah. But that doesn’t completely explain his appearance. Forensics said he’s been almost entirely drained of blood. We’ll know more after an autopsy.

Watkins stands back up and look around.

OFFICER WATKINS
Hell of a weekend.

OFFICER MARCUM
Well, at least no one’s going to miss this guy.

EXT. JIMMY’S HOUSE – DAY

A black SUV with tinted windows drives slowly past the house.
INT. SUV - TRAVELING - DAY

A weathered looking bearded DRIVER (40s) looks past a younger BURLY GUY in the passenger seat.


The Driver casually accelerates to a normal speed and turns the corner.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Fog rolls across the forest floor.

Daniel keeps his eyes on his feet as they plod across the damp ground.

Daniel looks up as he approaches his backyard. His house appears gloomy. Despite the dimming daylight, not a single light is on.

Daniel’s pace slows.

INT. DANIEL’S KITCHEN - DAY

Daniel enters the back door and shuts it behind him. He crosses to the living room -

Lee steps out swiftly. Fully tense. Gun aimed.

Lee recognizes Daniel.

LEE
Daniel!

Lee instantly puts the gun away. Leans down and hugs Daniel tightly. Contact that Daniel isn’t used to.

LEE
Where’s Alex?

DANIEL
I don’t know.

LEE
Damnit.

DANIEL
What’s going on?
Lee ducks down and pulls Daniel aside so they can’t be seen from outside the front window. They hide behind the couch.

Lee peaks outside. Points.

LEE
There. See it?

Daniel looks out. Doesn’t see anything unusual.

DANIEL
What?

LEE
That black car. Down the block.

Daniel nods.

LEE
Have you seen it around here before?

Daniel shakes his head.

LEE
Me either.

Daniel shrugs his shoulders. Not sure what this is about.

LEE
I went by Jimmy’s place earlier, but the cops were all over. Now this car’s been driving past all day. I don’t know if they’re Jimmy’s friends or police.

Daniel looks at the gun shaking in Lee’s hand.

Lee notices. Sits down, his back against the wall. Sets the gun by his side.

LEE
I’m sorry.

Daniel puts his hand on his dad’s.

DANIEL
It’s okay, Dad.

Lee shakes his head.

LEE
I’m not a bad guy. I’m just doing what I need to do to support the

(MORE)
family. Pot never hurt anyone. And I don’t deal with any of that other crap.

DANIEL
I know.

LEE
I was going to quit anyway. I just need enough money to take care of you and...

Lee tears up. He elbows the wall in frustration.

He checks outside again. The black car’s headlights turn on. It pulls back onto the road and slowly drives past.

Lee picks up the gun again and crouches at the window. Staring out.

LEE
I’ll wait for Alex. Go check on Mom.

DANIEL
Okay.

LEE
Keep the lights off.

INT. MOM’S BEDROOM – DAY

Daniel enters Mom’s dark room. Crosses to the bed and kneels. He gently shakes her.

DANIEL
Mom? Are you awake?

Mom stirs, turns over to look at Daniel. Her voice is groggy.

MOM
It’s dark. What time is it?

DANIEL
Almost eight.

MOM
Oh. I slept all day. Will you turn on the light?

DANIEL
Dad says we need to keep it off.
MOM
Why, what’s happening?

DANIEL
He’s worried about some people outside.

She struggles to sit up.

Daniel helps put a pillow behind her back for support.

Mom reaches over to the side table and feels for the lighter. She lights one of the candles, which casts a soft glow. Sits back with a groan. Just that simple effort was exhausting.

Mom sees the bag of blue pills that Daniel had taken from Jimmy sitting on the table.

MOM
Will you get me a glass of water?

Daniel steps out of the room.

Mom pulls a few pills out of the bag. When Daniel returns with the glass she swallows them with the water.

MOM
Where did these come from?

DANIEL
Jimmy changed his mind. Are you okay?

Mom leans her head back against the headboard. She swipes sweaty strands of hair off her face. Sighs.

MOM
Oh Daniel. I’ll tell you, being sick really sucks. So, what’s going on outside?

DANIEL
Nothing. Just some kids messing around.

MOM
Okay. I’m sorry I haven’t been much help lately. Thanks for being such a trooper. How’s Alex holding up?

DANIEL
He’s fine.

Mom smiles. She scoots back down into bed.
MOM
I’m just going to sleep a little longer. Hopefully the medicine helps a bit. I love you Kiddo.

DANIEL
I love you too, Mom.

Mom closes her eyes.

Daniel blows out the candle.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Daniel silently watches from the hallway.

Lee remains crouched by the window with the gun in his hand. Periodically scans the street.

Headlights from a turning car sweep across the front window. Lee tenses up. Takes a drink from a bottle of whisky.

Daniel quietly pads back to his room and shuts the door.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

The light from outside barely reaches into the room. The red numbers of his alarm clock read 11:43pm.

Daniel lies in his cozy cave. Stares at the silhouette of the unlit candle in front of the window.

A tapping sound comes from outside.

Daniel tenses up. He crawls out from under the bed and goes to the window. Crouches. Listens.

The tapping starts again. He searches the back yard, but can’t see anything. Opens the window and sticks his head out.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Chloe stands outside of Alex’s window. She knocks again. Calls in a hushed voice.

CHLOE
Alex. You in there? Open up, it’s cold out here.
DANIEL
(Whispers)
Chloe.

Chloe jumps. Turns to see Daniel watching from his bedroom window.

DANIEL
Shh. Come here.

Chloe does.

CHLOE
Where’s Alex?

Daniel hears a car engine drive down the street.

DANIEL
Come inside. Quickly.

He opens the window further and steps aside.

Chloe climbs through.

Daniel motions for her to be quiet. Daniel checks to make sure no one else is outside. Closes the window. They kneel on the floor.

CHLOE
Where is he?

DANIEL
(Whispers)
Shh. Wait here.

Daniel sneaks out into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Daniel tiptoes to the end of the hall and peaks around the corner.

Lee is slumped against the couch by the window. Asleep. The empty liquor bottle lays on the floor next to him.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel returns and quietly shuts the door.

DANIEL
Alex took off.
Chloe tries to keep her angry voice down.

CHLOE
What do you mean he took off? He was supposed to meet me at the park after dinner.

DANIEL
He didn’t want to see you.

CHLOE
What?!

Chloe stands up. Her voice gets louder.

CHLOE
What did he say? Why didn’t he want to see me?

DANIEL
Quiet, please... You’ll wake my dad up. I meant, Alex didn’t want to see anyone. He said he wanted to be alone.

CHLOE
It’s almost midnight. Shouldn’t he be home by now? What if he’s missing, like Shane?

Daniel reaches out and takes her hand. She accepts the gesture.

DANIEL
Why do you like Alex anyway? He’s so mean all the time.

CHLOE
He’s my friend.

DANIEL
Like Shane was?

Chloe pulls her hand away.

CHLOE
Yeah, like Shane is. And who I like is none of your business anyway.

DANIEL
Sorry. It’s just, you deserve someone who’d be nice to you.

Daniel tries to scoot closer.
Chloe scoffs.

    CHLOE
    You’ve got to be joking.

She gets up to leave.

    DANIEL
    What?

    CHLOE
    You’re just a kid.

Daniels face turns red.

    DANIEL
    You only like jerks. They’re bullies and they’re not good enough for you.

Daniels looks past Chloe and out the window. One Horn stalks the back yard behind the reflection of Daniel’s angry expression.

    CHLOE
    You don’t know anything about what’s good for me. You hardly even know me.

    DANIEL
    You’re just the same as them. You just pretend to be nice.

Outside, One Horn grows more agitated. Steam rises from his back as he paws at the ground.

    CHLOE
    Whatever. You know, you’re the jerk. All you can do is think about yourself.

Chloe reaches for the window. Unaware that One Horn is now standing just feet from her, horn pointed at the window.

    CHLOE
    Didn’t you ever think that your mom’s dying might be hard on him too?

Daniel’s jaw drops.

Chloe pauses.
CHLOE
Oh. Shit. You didn’t...

DANIEL
That’s not true.

CHLOE
I’m sorry.

DANIEL
You’re a liar. Take it back.

CHLOE
You’re right. What do I know? I...
I should just go.

Chloe opens the window.

DANIEL
Wait!

Daniel rushes to shut the window. He quickly fumbles to light the candle. The candlelight reflects on the window and blocks the view of the outside.

Daniel’s eyes water.

CHLOE
No one told you?

Daniel closes his eyes. Breathes deep to calm himself down.

Chloe gets impatient. Shifts her weight.

CHLOE
Daniel?

Daniel looks out into the yard. One Horn is gone for the moment.

DANIEL
You can leave now.

CHLOE
Friggin’ make up your mind. Do you want to talk about it or not?

DANIEL
Go. It’s not safe for you here.

CHLOE
What do you mean it’s not safe?
DANIEL
I said get out of here! Now. I
don’t want you here. Alex doesn’t
either.

CHLOE
Alex wouldn’t--

DANIEL
He hates you. He said you were
Shane’s slut.

Chloe turns red.

CHLOE
Bullshit.

DANIEL
Just leave. See if he ever calls
you again.

CHLOE
You’re a little asshole, you know
that?

Chloe opens the window and climbs out. She runs across the
yard.

Daniel sinks down to his knees and watches in relief as she
enters the forest trail.

One Horn steps out into the yard. Daniel gasps.

DANIEL
No.

One Horn starts to follow Chloe.

Daniel jumps up and climbs outside.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Daniel runs after One Horn.

DANIEL
Wait! Don’t hurt her! I’m not mad
anymore. I swear.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Daniel runs through the forest in his bare feet.
He stops when he spots One Horn, standing on a ridge about thirty feet ahead of him, looking taller and more powerful than ever.

One Horn stares downhill.

At the bottom of the steep slope, Chloe sits on a boulder by a stream. Knees to her chest. Head in her arms, crying.

Daniel pulls out a pocket knife.

One Horn takes a step toward her.

Daniel whisper-shouts, loud enough for One Horn to hear him.

    DANIEL
    Stop!

One Horn looks back at Daniel.

Daniel holds the knife out toward One Horn. Moves closer, threatening.

    DANIEL
    Leave her alone.

One Horn ignores him. Walks downhill toward Chloe.

Daniel lifts his arm and slices the knife across the top of his left forearm. His skin splits open. Blood spills out.

One Horn stumbles on his front leg. Lets out a cry of pain and anger.

Chloe lifts her head and listens. She looks around but doesn’t see anything. Pulls her jacket tight around herself and gets to her feet. Walks away quickly.

One Horn turns back toward Daniel.

    DANIEL
    Stop it. I don’t want any one else to get hurt.

Hot steam puffs from One Horn’s nostrils as he snorts. Blood runs down One Horn’s left front leg.

Daniel backs up, leading One Horn away from Chloe. Knife still held up to his arm, ready to cut himself again.

    DANIEL
    It’s all my fault. I get so mad...
    I wanted you to hurt them. But it’s wrong. I should have left you to
    (MORE)
One Horn shakes his head, furious. Aims his horn at Daniel. Daniel turns and runs. One Horn chases him through the forest.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Daniel bursts out of the tree line at a full sprint. Despite limping on his bleeding foreleg, One Horn closes the gap behind Daniel.

The back door stands open.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Daniel dives inside and slams the door behind him. Holds it shut.

BAM! The horn stabs through the door inches from Daniel’s head.

Daniel backs away. Crunch! He YELPS in pain and stumbles. Looks down. His bare foot bleeds from stepping on broken glass.

Daniel sits on the floor and painfully pulls a shard from the sole of his foot. He notices that the kitchen is a mess. A chair lays on the floor. There has been a struggle.

Daniel holds his knife out nervously. His attention split between the back door and the rest of the house.

He tries to stand up, but quickly takes the weight off his bleeding foot. He feels around for more glass.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

DANIEL (Quietly)

Dad?

INT. PARENT’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Driver from the black car waits at the closed bedroom door while the Burly Guy ties Lee to a chair. The Driver keeps a gun trained on Mom who lies tied and gagged in bed.
DRIVER
Hurry up.

Lee struggles against the restraints. He watches his wife struggle to breathe through the gag.

LEE
Can’t you see you’re killing her?
She can’t breathe!

BURLY GUY
Shut up!

Burly guy nails Lee in the jaw with the heel of his hand. Continues tying Lee’s hands behind his back with a sharp tug.

DRIVER
We’ll let both of you go as soon as you tell us what happened to Jimmy.

LEE
I told you, I don’t even know what--

DANIEL (O.S.)
Dad!

Daniel’s voice calls out from the kitchen. Lee tenses up.

DRIVER
Shh.

The Driver aims his gun at Lee. Burly guy pauses.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Dad, where are you? I need help.

The Driver motions for Burly Guy to go check it out.

LEE
Daniel, Run!

The Driver steps up and cracks Lee across the face with his gun.

The Burly Guy draws his own gun and runs out of the room.

The Driver and Lee listen to his footsteps run down the hallway.

CRASH! It sounds like furniture is being thrown about. There’s a brief, but surprisingly loud struggle.

Then silence.
The Driver glances at Lee. Cautiously exits the room with his gun raised.

Lee quickly struggles to get himself untied. The unfinished knot loosens slightly.

Screams erupt from the other room. BANG! BANG! Gunshots ring out. It sounds like chaos. Finally the noise subsides. The Driver’s screams cease.

Lee redoubles his efforts and finally frees his arms. Quickly unbinds his feet. Runs over to the bed and un-gags his wife.

MOM
Daniel...

LEE
Shh.

Lee tries to untie her hands.

MOM
Go find him.

Lee nods. Reaches under the bed and pulls out a hunting knife. Moves to the bedroom door and peaks out into the dark hallway.

Steps out.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lee creeps toward the living room. He hesitates and he passes a spray of fresh blood on the wall.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lee enters. His knife held nervously in front of him, shaking.

Furniture is overturned, like a tornado just went through the room. Blood has been splashed across all of the walls.

Lee stares up at streaks of red on the ceiling. He looks down. His foot stands in a pool of blood forming from underneath the upside down couch.

Lee carefully lifts the end of the couch up and drops it to the side. Stares in shock.
He can only tell the Burly Guy’s body by its size and the jacket he was wearing. The head has been completely smashed in. Lee gasps.

LEE
(Whispers)
Dear God.

Lee stifles a gag. Carefully steps around the body, and toward the kitchen.

The Driver’s body lays across the threshold. His chest ripped open. Lee steps over it and into the trashed...

KITCHEN

Lee spots Daniel hiding underneath the table.

Daniel stares at the floor, shaking. He is covered head to toe in blood.

Lee kneels down and grabs Daniel’s shoulder.

LEE
Daniel! Are you okay?

Daniel looks at Lee and nods.

Lee hugs him in relief. He looks at Daniel’s injured foot. The cuts on his arms.

DANIEL
I want to see Mom.

LEE
Okay, okay. Come on.

Lee picks Daniel up and cradles his in his arms.

LEE
Close your eyes.

Daniel buries his face in his dad’s shoulder.

Lee steps over The Driver’s body and into the living room.

INT. BEDROOM – NIGHT

Lee carries the blood-covered Daniel into the room. Lays him in bed next to Mom.
MOM
Oh my god. What happened? Is he hurt?

LEE
He stepped on some glass, and his arm is cut up. The rest of the blood isn’t his.

MOM
Where are they?

LEE
Gone.

Lee uses his knife to cut the ropes from Moms wrists. As soon as her hands are free, Mom hugs Daniel close.

Lee steps out of the room.

Daniel reaches out to stroke her face. He cries.

DANIEL
I’m sorry.

Mom painfully props her self up. Examines his arm.

MOM
It’s not your fault, kiddo. None of this is.

Lee returns with a first aid kit. Rummages through little bandaids and aspirin packs.

MOM
You have to get him to the hospital, now.

LEE
I can take care of--

MOM
No! They’ll take him in the emergency room. They have to.

LEE
But the police--

MOM
This isn’t up for debate.

Lee hangs his head in shame. Nods.

Mom lies back exhausted.
LEE
Are you going to be--?

MOM
Just go.

Lee picks Daniel up.

Mom gives Daniel’s hand a last squeeze.

EXT. DANIEL’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lee carries Daniel to the car. He pulls the old creaky passenger door open and sets Daniel in. Slams the door and runs to the other side.

Lee jumps into the drivers seat and puts the keys into the ignition. The engine turns over but doesn’t start.

LEE
Come on, Damnit.

He tries again. And again...

Finally the car roars to life. Smoke pours out of the exhaust until the oil burns away.

LEE
Strap in.

Daniel pulls the seat belt over and locks it in place.

Lee looks at the blood soaked towel around Daniel’s foot, then up at his pale face. He leans over and feels Daniel’s cheek.

LEE
Hang in there, all right?

Lee pulls a dirty moving blanket out of the back seat and covers Daniel. Cranks up the heat.

DANIEL
What about your seatbelt?

Lee lifts up a torn strap.

LEE
Not my top concern right now.

He guns the engine. The car reverses out of the driveway. They peel away, leaving a cloud of tire smoke and exhaust.
INT. CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT

The car races down a dark forested road, passing the occasional house. Rips around a corner, fishtailing a bit before recovering and speeding off.

DANIEL
Are we speeding?

Lee laughs.

LEE
If we get pulled over, you just show the cops your foot.

DANIEL
Can we afford to go to the hospital?

LEE
The emergency room has to take you. I’ll just tell them good luck getting us to pay.

DANIEL
Why can’t we take Mom to the hospital and do the same thing?

Lee rubs his eyes. Looks away from Daniel.

LEE
It’s different.

DANIEL
Different how?

LEE
Look. Mom needs a lot more than one E.R. visit, okay?

DANIEL
But she’s getting sicker. Can’t you do anything?

LEE
I’m doing everything I can.

DANIEL
No you’re not! She needs help!

LEE
Calm down. I’m working my ass off to buy her medicine--
Daniels face turns red.

DANIEL
The medicine just makes her sleep. It doesn’t cure cancer. She needs a real doctor.

LEE
I told you we can’t afford--

DANIEL
Then sell this car. Sell the house! I don’t need anything, I just want her to get better!

Lee pounds the steering wheel.

LEE
You think I don’t! It won’t do any good! Okay?

Lee stares ahead at the road. Rain begins to pour. He turns on the wipers.

Daniel looks at him in shock.

DANIEL
What do you mean?

Lee shakes his head.

DANIEL
What do you mean?!

Lee sighs.

LEE
I mean there’s nothing we can do for her. The cancer has spread too far. She’s dying. She doesn’t have very long left.

Tears pour from Daniel’s eyes.

DANIEL
Turn around.

LEE
Look, we didn’t tell you because--

DANIEL
Turn around!
LEE
I’m taking you to the hospital first.

Daniel looks at the road ahead. One Horn stands in the middle of the lane, seconds away from the car plowing into him.

Daniel reaches over and grabs the steering wheel, jerks it hard.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

The car swerves across the wet pavement. The tires spin as the back end kicks out. One Horn doesn’t flinch as the tail of the car passes by, inches away.

The car slides sideways down the road until the tires grip just enough to send it tumbling. A chaos of sparks and debris and wrenching metal.

Finally it comes to rest, upside down in a ditch by the side of the road. The car groans as it settles in the mud. Steam rises from the engine.

Rain passes through the beams of the headlights.

Across a large yard, a light in the window of a nearby house turns on.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Daniel opens his eyes. He is hanging upside down, still strapped in.

Lee lies next to him, unconscious.

Daniel unlocks his seat belt and falls down.

DANIEL
Dad? Wake up.

Daniel shakes Lee. No response.

He squeezes out of the broken passenger side window into the muddy ditch.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Daniel slips as he climbs out. He cringes as pain shoots through his foot.
One Horn watches from the road.

DANIEL
This is all your fault! I hate you! I wish you would just die! You were supposed to help me. I just wanted someone who cared about me. Even my own mom is leaving me.

One Horn turns and starts walking down the road in the direction that they came from.

DANIEL
Where are you going? Wait! No, leave her alone!

The front door of the nearby house opens and the porch light turns on. An OLD MAN in a bathrobe steps out and squints toward the car. The Old Man calls out.

OLD MAN
Hello? Can you hear me?

Daniel rushes over to the other side of the car and kneels by the window.

He shakes Lee again. Urgently.

DANIEL
Come on, Dad.

Lee groans, but doesn’t open his eyes.

The Old Man’s wife comes to the door and hands him a flashlight and an umbrella. He sends her back inside, then steps off the porch.

Daniel shakes his dad again.

Lee mumbles something incomprehensible, but doesn’t open his eyes.

DANIEL
Some people are getting help. I have to go see Mom.

The Old Man makes his way across the yard. The bright light of the flashlight plays across the car.

Daniel ducks down to avoid being seen. He takes off in a limping run. The flashlight catches him.

OLD MAN
Hey! Wait, we’re calling for help!
Daniel doesn’t look back.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD ROAD - NIGHT

Rain pours down. Daniel pulls his jacket tight around him. His head hangs low as he limps along past a house. Pain and exhaustion slows him down, but he persists.

A distant siren approaches from ahead. When the flashing ambulance lights become visible, Daniel ducks out of sight behind a bush.

He watches the vehicle speed past, then emerges and hurries down the road again.

Daniel turns the corner onto his block. Sees his house ahead. The front door stands open. Daniel quickens his pace.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Daniel enters. He carefully makes his way past the overturned furniture and the dead bodies.

Daniel stops at the start of the hallway. Mom’s bedroom door is closed. A shifting pale blue light shines from the gap under the door.

Daniel cautiously walks down the hall.

He reaches out and slowly turns the knob.

INT. MOM’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel enters.

One Horn stands on the bed above Daniel’s mom.

A sharp pinpoint of harsh blue light shines on the tip of his horn. Rays of light play across the walls.

A candle glows on the bedside table. The warmth of the orange candlelight seems to shelter her from the cold blue rays.

Mom looks over at Daniel. She is pale and weak, but she smiles nonetheless.

Tears form in Daniel’s eyes. He takes a step toward the bed. He looks up at One Horn. His angry voice quivers.

    DANIEL
    Stay away from her.
One Horn eyes Daniel. The light from his horn freezes Daniel in his tracks. Daniel tries to push forward, but is held back by an invisible force.

**MOM**
Don’t be afraid.

**DANIEL**
I’m not afraid. I’m going to kill it.

**MOM**
You can’t stop this with anger, Daniel.

She reaches her hand out to him. The gesture seems to break through the barrier, allowing Daniel to approach.

Daniel takes her hand and kneels by the bed. One Horn stares down, unmoving.

**DANIEL**
How could you lie to me?

**MOM**
I never lied to you.

**DANIEL**
You said everything would be alright.

**MOM**
It will be. I’m not afraid, because I know I’m going to a better place, where there is no more pain.

**DANIEL**
But you can’t leave. I need you here.

**MOM**
You don’t need me anymore. You are strong. You just need to remember what I taught you. Stay in the light and you will become a light for others. Especially for your Dad. He needs your help so much.

One Horn leans his head down and points his horn at Mom.

Daniel jumps up. His hands ball into fists.
MOM
Daniel. Don’t be afraid anymore.
Don’t be angry. Be brave. Light
always beats the darkness.

Mom closes her eyes and raises her hand in the air. One Horn
touches the tips of her fingers with his horn.

Daniel watches in tears.

The blue light shimmers and grows brighter. Tendrils of light
climb down Mom’s arm, but as they do, a warmth begins to take
over from Mom. The tendrils of light start to turn orange.

One Horn begins to glow all over, as if it had been made of
the blue energy all along. As its form turns to light, it
begins to shrink.

The light is absorbed into Mom’s body.

It does not hurt her. It does not heal her.

Daniel shields his eyes from the intense light.

Mom smiles.

In a final brilliant flash of light, One Horn disappears and
Mom lies still. The ravages of the disease are gone. Her skin
is full and flush. She is finally at peace.

EXT. DANIEL’S HOUSE – NIGHT

The light in the bedroom window fades to darkness.

Two police cars rush down the street with lights flashing.
They pull to a stop in front of the house. A wailing
ambulance follows.

Officer Watkins jumps out of the driver’s seat and rushes
toward the open door of the house. Officer Marcum and a third
officer, BROOKS emerge from the other car and follow.

Watkins stops at the threshold. Draws his gun.

    OFFICER WATKINS
    Brooks, check around back.

Brooks heads around.

Watkins and Marcum cautiously enter the dark house.
INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Watkins turns on the overhead light. He motions toward the legs of Burly Guy behind the couch.

Marcum moves around the couch to look. Steps back in disgust.

Watkins approaches. His face hardens.

OFFICER WATKINS
The guy said his kid did this?

They look up at the sound of the back door opening in the kitchen.

BROOKS (O.S.)
Back’s clear.

The three officers meet at the body of The Driver in the entrance to the kitchen.

OFFICER MARCUM
You ever hear of a kid who could rip someone’s chest open?

OFFICER WATKINS
Keep the paramedics outside.

Brooks heads out front.

Watkins and Marcum step down the hallway with their guns ready.

The bedroom door is cracked open. Candlelight flickers around the edges. Watkins slowly pushes it open.

INT. MOM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Several candles burn on the bedside table.

Daniel lies in bed, cuddled next to his mom’s body. He’s still covered in blood.

Watkins and Marcum check the room to make sure no one else is there.

OFFICER WATKINS
Daniel?

Watkins motions for Marcum to check on Mom. Marcum kneels and checks for a pulse. Shakes his head.
OFFICER MARCUM
Is there anyone else in the house?

Daniel shakes his head again, no.

OFFICER WATKINS
Can you tell me what happened? Do you know where Shane is? Is your brother...?

The questions fade away...

Daniel smiles.

FADE OUT