

INT. GOODE FARMHOUSE - DAY

The cracked hands of BEN GOODE, 60, clutch a business letter addressed to him from the Oak Street Bank, the word "FORECLOSURE" stamped across the top. The hands match his weathered face. He has the giant forearms and tree trunk neck of a Midwestern farmer.

ROB (O.S.)
I'm sorry Ben.

BEN
I'm ruined Rob.

ROB (O.S.)
It's been six months since the bank's received a payment.

BEN
You told me to take out that loan!
(Mimicking)
"All the farmers are going to auto pilot combines, Ben." "Nine percent higher crop yield, Ben."

ROB (O.S.)
How could I know you'd get hit with the blight?

Ben swallows his rage. He's seething.

BEN
You can't take what can't be owned.
My family's worked this land forever.

ROBERT BERMAN, 40, sits directly across the country kitchen table from Ben. Bookish and fit, Rob's Brooks Brothers and heavy starch practically mock Ben's Levis and heavy soil.

ROB
Listen Ben, run your Halloween festival this weekend and see if you can scrape together the cash. Normally you'd only have seven days but I'm giving you a month.

Ben rolls his eyes. Rob doubles his attempt to be sincere.

ROB (CONT'D)
Harvest all you can. Take everything that land has to give.

BEN
 Everything, huh?
 (A haunting whisper)
 You generosity is...touching.

Rob packs his briefcase and slithers toward the door.

ROB
 Call me if you anything changes.
 Otherwise...

Rob's voice trails off as he leaves.

EXT. GOODE BARN - DAY

Rob doesn't look at the high-tech combine he passes on the way to his luxury SUV.

INT. GOODE FARMHOUSE - SAME

Ben's cracked hands crumple the letter and put it in the ashtray. They strike a match on the table and set it aflame.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

A dozen uniformed GIRL SCOUTS, 13, screech a dozen conversations as they clean up from their meeting. Cookie boxes abound. KELLY BERMAN, 13, and the other girls plod about indifferently, resentful of their overscheduled lives.

Cheery troop leader BETH BERMAN, 40, shouts to restore order.

BETH
 Girls! Girls! Remember we're
 camping Friday night at Goode Farm.

The scouts groan softly. Beth dials up the school spirit.

BETH (CONT'D)
 Saturday is SHOWTIME! Troop 113 has
 the cookie station from ten to
 twelve. This is prime time!

KELLY
 (to Scout #1)
 Why do we do put ourselves through
 this hell?

SCOUT #1
 The sexy outfits.
 (a beat)

Scout #1 looks around suspiciously and tucks a cookie box under her vest.

SCOUT #1 (CONT'D)
And the free Thin Mints.

INT. OAK ST. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Rob bounds through the hall and bumps into another BANKER staring at a giant sales incentive poster titled "Portfolio Clean-Up Island Trip" on the wall. Rob is in second place.

BANKER
Hey Rob! You planning another come from behind victory this year?

ROB
Are you kidding me? These trips are pure evil. They're crack for the family.

The banker looks surprised.

ROB (CONT'D)
One year they taste the Bahamas, the next year they're Jonesin' for the Virgin Islands.

BANKER
(confused)
Well, good luck.

Rob walks on.

BANKER (CONT'D)
For me.

EXT. BERMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Rob's luxury SUV pulls behind a large but undistinguished McMansion.

INT. BERMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beth and Kelly prepare dinner on the granite counter with LINDSAY BERMAN, 15, Gothic head to toe. Leaves and a cold breeze race across the Pergo as Rob enters from outside.

LINDSAY
Close the door Dad! It's colder than a witch's tit in a brass bra.

Beth shivers as she greets Rob with a kiss.

BETH
 Lindsay watch your mouth!
 (to Rob)
 Honey I need to go somewhere warm.
 (a beat)
 The doctor says I need more vitamin
 E.

Beth's plea borders on begging.

BETH (CONT'D)
 For crying out loud, I'm losing my
 tan!

Rob removes his coat, refusing to make eye contact.

BETH (CONT'D)
 Lila told me about this great spa
 on Tortola and I --

ROB
 Lila? Lila who? Lila my boss's
 wife Lila?

BETH
 That would be the Lila. She came
 by to pick up her cookie order and
 told me you're going to win the
 trip again.

The kitchen goes silent. The girls know what's at stake.

BETH (CONT'D)
 When can I make reservations?

BEN
 Sweetheart I don't even know if --

Rob's head drops, resigned to do whatever it takes to win.

ROB
 Tomorrow. Make 'em tomorrow.

The girls squeal with delight, smother Rob with hugs.

INT. OAK ST. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Rob breezes past the incentive poster, still in second place.

INT. ROB'S OFFICE - DAY

Rob thumbs through a Virgin Islands tour book files on the desk. He dials the speaker phone.

EXT. GOODE BARN - DAY

Ben adjusts the blade of a high tech combine. He answers the phone without stopping.

ROB (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 Ben it's Rob Berman.
 (a beat)
 Listen our compliance folks didn't
 like me giving you a whole month.

BEN
 (into phone)
 Bastards, aren't they...

INTERCUT with Rob's Office.

ROB
 I know, blame the democrats.
 Anyway, long and short is you have
 til seven AM Saturday.

Ben freezes. He drops a wrench.

ROB (CONT'D)
 (a beat)
 Ben you there?

BEN
 Well, what's the old saying about
 the messenger?

Rob freezes, dropping the travel guide and startling himself in the process. Ben breaks the silence with polite laughter, Rob joins in nervously.

BEN (CONT'D)
 At least you had the courtesy to
 call. I appreciate that. Goodbye
 Rob.

ROB
 Thanks Ben, I wish I had 10
 customers just like you.

Ben hangs up the phone, disgusted.

BEN

Prick.

Rob hangs up, relieved.

ROB

Problem is, I have 20.

Rob eyes the poster, still in second place.

INT. BERMAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kelly and Lindsay clank silverware while Rob and Beth sit at the table.

ROB

I forgot to tell you, Jack from the Iron Curtain gave me his theater tickets Friday night. Dracula.

BETH

Oooh, I'm sorry honey but I'm taking Kelly's troop on an overnight, remember?

Beth puts on the school spirit.

BETH (CONT'D)

The Halloween festival? Troop one thirteen? Prime time?

ROB

Right.

LINDSAY

I'll take the tickets.

KELLY

You could be in the cast.

BETH

(to Lindsay)

You're coming camping with us, sweetheart.

LINDSAY

What?!? Are you kidding? I'd rather die.

BETH

Lindsay!

KELLY

Mom why does she have to come? I'm going to have friends there. She's embarrassing. Look at her.

LINDSAY

You'd better shut up cookie whore.

KELLY

Why don't you go haunt a house.

Rob pounds the table, annoyed.

ROB

Enough! You're both going. And you'd better sell some cookies!

Rob stands up and begins to cheer, embarrassing the girls.

ROB (CONT'D)

PRIME-TIME! ONE-THIR-TEEN!
PRIME-TIME! ONE-THIR-TEEN!

Beth joins in, marching around the kitchen, chanting. The girls pretend to puke in the double sinks.

EXT. BERMAN MINIVAN - DAY

Beth drives Kelly, the Scouts, and miserable Lindsay through the gates of Goode Farm. Pumpkins, people, and decorations are everywhere. The Halloween festival is underway.

EXT. GOODE FARM - CAMPGROUND - DUSK

The girls set up tents on the edge of a corn field. A combine combs the field in the very far distance.

BETH

Lindsay will you please find some sticks for marshmallows?

Lindsay throws the *are you out of your mind* look, then relents through the tall corn to a patch of trees.

EXT. GOODE FARM - TREE LINE - DUSK

Lindsay snaps a live branch off a small tree. A limb snaps back across her face, surprising her and drawing blood.

A haunting whisper emanates from the farm itself.

FARM
 (a haunting whisper)
 You'd rather die.

Lindsay turns to find the voice, but sees nothing.

She snaps another branch. The limbs come to life, grabbing her, squeezing her into the trunk, covering her mouth.

The tree pulls her to the ground and she disappears into the brush.

The combine rolls in the distance.

EXT. GOODE FARM - CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

The fire crackles as the girls giggle around it.

BETH
 (to Kelly)
 Where did your sister go?

SCOUT #1
 (sotto, to other scouts)
 She's probably summoning the dead.

KELLY
 I think she said something about
 going to smoke pot with old man
 Goode.

BETH
 Kelly!
 (to scouts)
 Girls will you help me find her
 please? Kelly keep an eye on the
 fire okay?

The scouts roll their eyes then split off into the tall corn in different directions.

EXT. GOODE FARM - CAMPGROUND - LATER

The fire burns lower than before. Stars are visible and crickets and frogs are all that can be heard.

Kelly, still alone, rises to roast a marshmallow but hears something and stops dead.

KELLY

Who's there?

(a beat)

This isn't funny who it is?!?

She turns her back to the fire, still roasting a marshmallow. Only a skunk tiptoeing across the campsite. She's a statue.

KELLY (CONT'D)

(To skunk)

Easy. Easy. That a girl.

A single flame from the fire rises inexplicably high, takes the form of a tongue, and licks the marshmallow, before eating it off the stick. Kelly doesn't notice.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Keep going.

As the skunk leaves, she takes two steps as if to follow. She hears the whisper and stops.

FARM

(a haunting whisper)

Haunt a house.

The flame reaches from the fire and wraps around Kelly's ankles, singeing her skin as she falls.

Face down and terrified, fingers clawing the dirt, the flame pulls her into the fire before she can scream. She melts into the red hot coals and disappears.

INT. OAK ST. BANK OFFICE - DAWN

Amidst steaming mugs of coffee, Rob and an ATTORNEY prepare closing documents on his desk. The wall clock reads 6:55.

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAWN

Disoriented and exhausted, Beth searches through seven foot corn stalks for her five foot kids. She exhales loud clouds into the crisp morning. In the far distance, the faint light and purr of a combine crawl across the farm.

BETH

Kelly! Lindsay!

Beth falls as though into a hole and shrieks in agony. Something's broken for sure. She regains composure, focusing. She pulls up her pant leg to see her injury. Silence.

A rustle, a beat, then four black rats attack her white leg. She flails about, beating them away. The smooth groan of the combine hums like a lullaby, closer.

EXT. OAK ST. BANK OFFICE - DAWN

A dusty old pickup truck screeches into the parking lot. Ben leaps out before the truck stops and races to the bank door.

INT. OAK ST. BANK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ben, panicked but smiling, bursts into the bank and follows the only light into Ben's office.

BEN

I've got it Rob! I've got it!

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAWN

Still tangled in the corn stalks, Beth tends to her leg, determined to march on. She struggles to rise, grimacing.

A fat black snake wraps around her injured leg.

INT. ROB'S OFFICE - DAWN

Rob beams - genuine delight. It's 6:59.

ROB

Really?!? That's fantastic news!
Where'd you come up with the money?

BEN

Lila's cousin. He said he'd take
the last harvest next month.

Rob's smile dims.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'll have the cash in a few weeks.

Rob deflates. There's no way he can wait.

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAWN

Beth struggles with three fat black snakes. One has bound her legs together. She wears another like a giant necklace. The combine's roar grows louder. Its head lamp begins to peek through the stalks.

INT. ROB'S OFFICE - DAWN

Ben is still smiling, knowing he can get an extension.

BEN

Rob, I know you said today's the
deadline, but you gotta cut me some
slack here.

Rob stands stone faced. Ben's optimism dies. He's enraged.

He reaches into his jacket pocket and marches toward Rob and the attorney who cower and brace for something horrible. Ben pulls out a piece of paper.

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAWN

Beth has no fight left. The snakes clamp tighter on her ankles and wrists. They squeeze her torso and neck relentlessly.

The combine is deafening and shakes the ground. The head lamp becomes a blinding spotlight on Beth's limp body.

INT. ROB'S OFFICE - DAWN

BEN

He faxed a letter to me this
morning. I have a commitment! I
have his word right here!

Rob doesn't even look at Ben's letter. He glances instead at the clock. 7:01. He looks Ben in the eye, then at the incentive poster - second place.

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAWN

Birds fly through the stalks, rats race across Beth, dust flies everywhere. It's a tornado as the combine bears down on Beth. The blades' screech rises above all the noise.

The driverless combine shaves a path inches from Beth's body. Then it stops.

It reverses along its freshly cleaned pass and stops, its mammoth blade inches from her face.

The snakes release as if by command. Beth breathes, but barely. Silence again.

INT. ROB'S OFFICE - DAWN

ROB
I am sorry, Ben.

Ben drops the letter on Rob's desk, turns, and slowly leaves out of the office, a defeated man. Rob and the attorney resume their signing and stamping and shuffling.

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAWN

Beth opens her eyes but still doesn't move. Her eyes dart as she tries to gain her bearings. A chorus of morning birds sing, then a whisper.

FARM
(a haunting whisper)
Prime time.

The grind of metal on metal pierces the moment as the feeder arm swings from the cab directly above Beth. The conveyor rolls and pummels her body with an avalanche of corn.

INT. ROB'S OFFICE - DAWN

Rob closes his briefcase and walks to the incentive poster. He puts his name in first place then walks out.

EXT. OAK ST. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Rob locks the door and walks to the SUV, cell phone cradled to his ear.

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAY

The embers of last night's campfire smolder. From a jacket pocket on a folding chair, a muffled cell phone rings a playful tune.

Across a half acre of tall stalks, a thirty foot pyramid of corn rests next to a driverless combine.

FADE OUT.