EXT: MOUNTAIN – DUSK

Brisk mountain top. Ranger TONY, tall unkempt shave with wrinkled uniform, speaks to family of five.

TONY
OK, welcome and congratulations. Before we ascend I have to ask you—
(pointing)
To remove your hat. We don't want your hat to fly off and you after it. It's even windier up there than it is down here.
(removes hat)
You go up first and I'll trail. When you get to the top be sure to leave room for the next person coming up. And always—always hold onto the handrail.

TOP— MAJESTIC SETTING SUN.

TONY (CONT'D)
You see over there.

Pointing up hands kid binoculars.

TONY (CONT'D)
That's a Golden Eagle surveying the land for rabbit, rodents, reptiles, birds and even the red fox. They've been known to hunt in pairs. So keep a sharp eye out, you might catch the other.

KID (scanning with binoculars)
I see the other! I see it! Look—look!

The parents revel in son's enjoyment, take pictures and soak in mountain air.

TIME ELAPSES:

TONY
This time going down, I'll go first and follow one at a time. Be careful and hold onto what?
(points to girl)

LITTLE GIRL (Smiling)
Handrail.

TONY
Good memory tiger.

The father, last, observes pictures of boy taped to tower.
TOWER BOTTOM:

MOTHER
What do you say?

Kids hug Tony.

KIDS (in unison)
Thanks ranger Tony.

They head off down mountain waving. Tony's phone beeps.

PHONE (out loud)
T.L. we have an emergency.

TONY (pushes button)
On my way.

Tony grabs gear.

MOUNTAIN BOTTOM:

Off he goes in beat-up compact yellow Toyota.

EXT. FLATBED OF PICKUP TRUCK -- EVENING

Dead wolf wearing radio-collar shot through eye lies in flatbed of state truck, emergency lights flash. Tony approaches MIKE, a short meticulously groomed bulky man in uniform. They pensively shake and look down at wolf.

TONY (taps pencil on teeth)
Big male around one twenty, one twenty-five.

Tony removes measuring tape, Mike writing pad.

TONY (CONT'D)
Thirty-three point eight at shoulder, nose to tail, fifty-five point two.

MIKE (writing)
Age?

TONY
Scars, teeth, muzzle color; three the oldest.

With gloves they roll wolf and snarl in disgust.

MIKE
Oh man, sorry Tone.

TONY (hangs head)
Me too.

(beat)
Wow, damn.
Tony maternally strokes wolf. Mike puts hand on his shoulder.

    TONY (CONT'D)
    Let's get to work.

INT. TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

Mike adroitly navigates winding dirt roads. Tony, vacuous, stares off. Tony snaps to and turns AM radio off.

    TONY
    You know, it's not normal its remained untouched this long, something's up.

    MIKE (turns to Tony)
    Aside from the cold slow decay?

    TONY
    Could be other forces at work, sinister ones.

    MIKE
    Poison?

Tony turns radio back on, secret tears well in eyes.

INT. VETERINARIAN HOSPITAL -- DAY

Mike studies a wall poster of exotic birds, deliberately avoiding the animal dissection.

FREDERICK, a bearded 60 year old veterinarian wizard, carefully performs an autopsy on the wolf carcass.

Tony looks on, engrossed. Frederick fishes inside animal corpse and tweezes out a slug. He holds it to eye.

    FREDERICK
    30-06, common as the day is long.

He continues searching and pulls out a round metal shot ball, drops it in a metal dish with a clang.

    FREDERICK (CONT'D)
    Not seen one of these in a coons' age. Black powder. Hand made. Not how they come from the hardware store.

Tony picks up the slug, almost admiring, smells it and recoils. Tosses it to Fred.

    TONY
    Smell.

Fred smells the shot and nods.
FREDERICK
Bitter almonds. You've still got it.

TONY
Who the hell makes their own shot and poisons it?

FREDERICK
I'm just a vet. Maybe Red Riding Hood's dad.

Mike chuckles. Tony stays firm. They head for exit. Tony stops and turns.

TONY
Hey Fred, shouldn't he have smelled the poison?

FREDERICK
Some people can't.

Tony walks back. Mike picks up slugs from dish and sniffs.

TONY
But...

MIKE (interrupting)
...I don't smell anything.

Tony squints at Mike, rolls head to Fred who raises eyebrows.

FREDERICK (whispering)
Eureka!

TONY
But they detect 6,000 more smells.?

FREDERICK
True, but what if a defect blocked that one particular receptor for Canus lupis?

(beat)
I'll look into it, see if I can find some closure for us.

TONY
Thanks doc. Good looking out.

FREDERICK
We'll find the creep.

EXT. VETERINARIAN HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS

Tony and Mike huddle with purpose by car.
TONY
You know, that slug, where the wolf
was found and the heinousness of the
crime points to somebody.

MIKE
I put it together before, rotten
scoundrel.

TONY
I think it's time I pay-um' a visit.

EXT. RANCH -- AFTERNOON

Tony sits in car, eyes closed, breathes with purpose. He
removes a letter from his visor.

DOORSTEP. Tony inhales then knocks. Door opens. STACY,
petite with big brown eyes and toothpaste commercial teeth,
holds baby in her arms.

TONY
Stacy.

STACY
Whoa? Is this a mirage or am I seeing
a ghost?

TONY (knodding head)
Neither. She's cute.
(awkward pause)
Um, I wanted to see Kyle.

STACY
See and?

TONY
Whadaya' mean and?

STACY
You appear once in a harvest moon
like everything's fine. What makes
you think he wants to see you!?

TONY
Listen, I'm not here to fight. I
just wanted to say hi and touch base.
I miss him.

STACY
Sure you do. People who miss people
don't let months go by without a
call, email, letter...suttn'. Spare
me the care routine. The only thing
you care about is wolves and your
damn self!
Steps back.

TONY
I had that coming. I understand you're mad.

STACY
Not me, him- yes. I couldn't give a rat's-tail about your pathetic life.

TONY
Can I see him?

STACY
He's not here. He's out with Peter, a real father and man.

TONY (voice escalates)
Real man huh? So a real man dominates his wife, kills animals for sport and corrupts his stepson's head!?

Door slams. He steps back and slouches. Knocks again, no answer. Removes letter titled KYLE and puts it in mail-slot.

INT. RANCH HOUSE -- EVENING


PETER (reading)
In short son, I'm sorry for causing anyone grief. I've been rather aloof lately and hope the damage and anger you feel is not earepreable'.

STACY
What?

PETER (accenting wrong syllable)
Ear-a-pair-a-bel', look.

Hands her the letter.

STACY (correcting him)
Irreparable.

Snatches letter from her.

PETER (reading)
That's what I said!
(pause)
If you do decide to forgive me and accompany me on a fishing trip, my gratitude will know no boundaries.

(MORE)
PETER (reading) (CONT'D)
We'll have a blast. Sorry again. I love you and give my love to your family.
(mumbles)
Dad, XOXOXO...blah-blah-blah. You believe this?

STACY
He might have turned over a new leaf.

Kyle and Peter both shoot her a look.

PETER AND KYLE (in unison)
What?!

STACY (meekly)
Nothin', nothing.

PETER
I got it. Go with the tree-hugging biological loser so-called father and tell him once and for all you don't want to see him...ever, problem solved.

He gets up, crumples letter, tosses it in trash on way out.

EXT. RANCH -- DAWN

Little yellow Corolla parks, poles poke out window. Tony saunters to house. Door opens. KYLE his son, grungy with long blonde hair, storms out carrying knapsack, .22 rifle, Ipod blares as he texts. Stacy appears with child, Peter looms behind her.

TONY (to Kyle)
Hey bud, need help?

Kyle rolls eyes and passes. Tony, uncomfortable, shuffles at step bottom. Stacy and Peter glare down. He looks up.

TONY (CONT'D)
OK, so, I'll have him back by noon Sunday. Thanks again.

PETER
Be on time. We have somewhere to be.

MOTHER
Make sure he's in bed by 11:00 and be careful in that car.

TONY
Yeah, OK, bye-bye.
Kyle already seated. Tony gets in.

PETER (under breath)

S.O.B.

MOTHER
Still driving same death box.

INT. CAR -- LATER

Ipod blasts death metal. Kyle avoids eye contact.

TONY
So, you're not talking to me?

Kyle, unresponsive, rolls window down.

TONY (CONT'D)
Maybe you can turn that down a bit, (beat)
OK?

Tony turns radio on.

TONY (CONT'D)
Donovan, ah'-right.
(singing)
Any-trick-in-the-book
....dun...dun..dun, that'll-be-fine.

Tony turns it up. Kyle removes earphones.

KYLE
Where the hell' we going?

TONY
It speaks.

KYLE
Well?

TONY
My buddy has a place near Bear Lake.
I figure we'll hit there then hike
to lag creek. How's that sound?

KYLE (sarcastic)
Yippee.

TONY
What's going on...let's have it.

KYLE (interrupting)
Let's have what? I don't even know you Tony.
TONY
That's not fair man and it's dad.

Kyle places headphones back on.

TONY (CONT'D)
I'm your father and always will be.

He rips headphones off.

KYLE
No, you're not. Dad-dad...Peter is.

TONY
He's your stepfather. I'm your father.

KYLE
You know what you are?

TONY
What am I son?

KYLE
You're a tree-hugging drunk hermit who needs grandpa and grandma to pay his child support.

TONY
Really?

KYLE
I'm not done.

TONY
Oh?

KYLE
Yeah, who sits in a tower playing ranger for some BS five thousand foot-peak which nobody climbs! You know what they say about you?

TONY
Tell me.

KYLE
You're a yellow-belly drunk who's dumb causes are screwing business up!

TONY
Watch your tongue!

KYLE
Or what, what-a-ya' gonna' do?
Tony down shifts hard and pulls car over. They both get out. Doors slam.

TONY
Stop! OK, stop. Who's putting this into your head!? I'm mad.

KYLE
Ooohh, so scared.

TONY
I can't believe my own flesh-and-blood feels so much misplaced hatred.

KYLE
Misplaced hate...ha, that's a real kick. I'm glad you're happy Dada!

Tony takes deep breath and walks halfway around car.

KYLE (escalating voice) (CONT'D)
Well I'm not! How's this for hate? Mom, or should I say Stacy, you remember her. She says she's sorry she ever met you.

Tony marches with intent around car and confronts him.

TONY
Then you wouldn't be here smart guy!

KYLE (yelling)
I know!

Kyle storms down the road. Tony gets back in car, cools off and rolls along side him.

TONY (out of passenger window)
You're right Kyle, I am. I did some stuff I'm not proud of, but I'm trying. Give me that at least. I'm trying. Can you come inside, please?

Kyle keeps walking. Cars whiz past honking.

TONY (CONT'D)
What do you want me to say, I'm useless, no good, abandoned you? I did and I am. I want to start anew. Please Kyle, get in.

Kyle stops, lifts shirt sleeve and observes bird feces. He looks to Tony and smirks.

TONY (laughing) (CONT'D)
Now that's an omen. What are you listening too?
KYLE
Sabbath.

TONY
Good band.

KYLE (smiles)
What's an omen?

TONY
The car Gods want you in. Let's get to the house then ignore me all you want.

Kyle capitulates and enters car slow and drained.

EXT. FRIENDS HOUSE -- LATER


KYLE
What's wrong Tony?

His father shoots him a look. Kyle smiles demurely.

TONY (palms up to sky)
Why?

INT. STATE LAND- FISHING -- MORNING

They find comfort amongst large rocks and tinker with poles.

TONY
So what have you been up to?

KYLE
About five foot eight.

TONY
Funny. Really though, what have you been doing with yourself?

KYLE
Well last night, we were at the airport really-really late...

TONY
Oh yeah, dropping or picking?

KYLE
We dropped Jack-off.

TONY
Jack-off, who's that?
Kyle laughs.

TONY (CONT'D)
That's two.

KYLE
What-'v' you been doing Tony?

TONY
Watching two packs we've tagged.

KYLE
Why?

TONY
Because they're threatened round' here.

KYLE
Why?

TONY
Because people are idiots.

Kyle returns to Sidekick. Tony senses his dejection.

TONY (CONT'D)
The wolf plays a huge role in keeping harmony. It's like this...

PRIMITIVE ATARI GRAPHICS MONTAGE:
1. WOLVES POP AND DISAPPEAR 2. MOOSE POP UP. 3. MOOSE EAT TINY TREES 4. CANOPY THINS, LIGHT BREAKS THROUGH. 5. TREE-DWELLERS FALL WITH NO MORE COVER. 6. ANIMALS EMACIATED.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's a complicated web and the wolf's a keystone species.

Kyle uses phone camera to zoom into Tony's hairy ear. Tony realizes and covers ear.

KYLE (unimpressed)
That's great. But the question was why were they hunted?

TONY
Oh, it's a tough question that doesn't lend itself to an easy answer. You wouldn't understand.

KYLE
Understand, please, dad would tell me.
TONY
Your stepfather would tell you his opinion.

KYLE
So aren't you?

TONY
I guess. Well then you decide to believe me or not.

KYLE
I will.

TONY
Good.

KYLE
Not believe you.

Tony's phone rings. He answers.

TONY
OK, yes. I know where. Thanks Ellen.

He hangs up.

TONY (CONT'D)
We have to go.

EXT. ROAD-KILL. MOMENTS LATER

Accident scene. Tony and Kyle stand silent rooted over two dead deer on a two lane stretch of highway. Mike pulls up in pickup truck, gets out and targets Kyle.

MIKE
You don't remember me, do you?

Kyle does not answer.

MIKE (CONT'D)
I knew you when you when you were this tall.

Lifts hand about two feet.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Your dad and me' took you hiking a few times.

KYLE
You and Tony must really like each other.

MIKE
Sure.
KYLE
That's cute.

Mike looks to Tony who shrugs. They resume business searching up the road. Kyle stays back.

MIKE (pointing)
Another!

TONY
That's three...jeez Louise.

MIKE
No maggots or larvae, just happened. Whatever hit em didn't stop.

Kyle pretends not to care, but sidles up.

TONY
Looks like a family.

MIKE
Most I've seen at one accident.

TONY (looking at Mike)
Still very fresh.

MIKE
Sure Tone. Get em in the back. Leave your car.

They pack in. Kyle pressed to window. Tony in middle.

EXT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Dilapidated CABIN tucked deep in woods. Four children play ages 4-8. Mike exits. Kyle just stares at cabin.

TONY (to Kyle)
Door, please?

KYLE
Go out that side. These people scare me.

Kyle's father shakes head and exits via drivers side.

TONY (over shoulder to Kyle)
Where do you get this from?

Tony exits.

MOMENTS LATER

Shaking hands with tattered older man.
OLDER MAN
I can't thank-ya nuff' fer' dis'
Tone.

TONY
Please.

OLDER MAN
Times tough, but them deer will hold
us. Meknows' not one scrap will be
wasted.

The kids wave bye.

KIDS
Bye Tony. Thank you!

TONY
Well, I'll see you when I see you.

OLDER MAN
That ya' will.

Tony and Mike head for the pick-up. Kyle opens his door and
scoots to the middle.

TONY (furtively looks to Mike)
Thanks.

Mike winks to Tony behind Kyle's back.

INT. STATE PARK HIKING - ESTABLISHING

Toads leap beaten trail, wild flowers blossom, mushrooms
sprout, lichens grab trees, cheeps abound as birds swoop
tree to tree. Kyle and Tony trek. Tony picks up a plastic
six pack holder. He cuts it up with tiny buck knife.

KYLE
New decoration for your ugly home?

TONY
These malignancies are the blight of
our beautiful state park.

KYLE
In English.

TONY
These inconsiderate punks who just
throw their junk everywhere need a
lesson in etiquette.

KYLE
And you're going to teach that lesson?
TONY
Damn right! It makes me sick—and
don't let me catch you littering.

KYLE
Whatever.

MOMENTS LATER - TRACKS
Tony stays back and observes his son.

TONY
Why do you have that riffle?

KYLE
Whatever.

Kyle's father stops and bends at the knees.

TONY
Come here.

Kyle keeps walking.

TONY (CONT'D)
Come here.

KYLE
If you are going to lecture me on
guns forget it, you're too late.

TONY
Just come here will you?

Kyle feigns disinterest, but gets there swiftly. His father
points to the tracks.

TONY (CONT'D)
Coyote, or coy dog.

KYLE (animated)
Well, maybe it's the great wolf!

TONY
No, tracks are too small, surprised
you didn't know that.

KYLE
What does that mean?

TONY
I thought you, having Peter the Great
for a teacher, would have know that.

Kyle takes a deep breath.
KYLE
So answer me this, how come everyone and their mother hates the wolf?

TONY (clears throat)
Um—again, that's a mighty big question here. In a nutshell?

KYLE
Yeah nutshell, whatever the hell that means?

TONY
To the point, small enough to fit in a nutshell.

KYLE
The story?

TONY (imitating Jack Nicholson)
The story, you can't handle the story!

KYLE (bobbing head)
Really?

TONY
Really.

KYLE (angered)
Well tell me something at least I CAN UNDERSTAND!

Kyle increases pace and stretches distance between them.

TONY
I don't mean it like that, come here.

KYLE
Whatever man.

Tony double times to catch up.

TONY
They were shot, trapped, poisoned and slaughtered because of folklore, nothing more.

KYLE
Sucks to be a wolf. Just like it sucks to be

(makes quote signs)
Your son.

TONY
Forget me, just look at the wolf.
KYLE
You've been forgotten.

TONY
Seriously Kyle, think about it man.

MONTAGE OF ACTUAL SHOTS, PICTURES AND NEWSPRINTS:

1. BOY WHO CRIED WOLF; ILLUSTRATIONS FROM AESOP'S FABLES.
2. LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD; CARTOON CLIP.
3. A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING; NEW TESTAMENT (7:15-16).
4. HUNGRY LIKE A WOLF; DURAN-DURAN VIDEO.
5. CRY WOLF; BLOWN-UP BREWER'S DICTIONARY OF FABLE.
6. VICIOUS PICTURES OF WOLF'S TEETH.

EXT. WALKING TRAIL -- CONTINUOUS
Kyle and Tony now walk shoulder-to-shoulder.

KYLE
Why though?

TONY
Most of it stems from irate, angry, farmers thinking the wolf was killing their livestock. When really...

KYLE (interrupting)
...Really what?

INT. FARM -- NIGHT

1900's farmhouse. Farmer blows lantern out then hears noise outside. Grabs shotgun leaning by door and two shells from suspender chest pockets, loads and quietly opens door.

EXT. FARM PORCH -- CONTINUOUS

Full moon dimly lights his pasture surrounded by thick woods. His cows are on edge, heads up and circling. Demonic noises from right of barn startle farmer who trains his shotgun in that direction and aims high, blasts two shots scaring all. Bordering woods eerily shimmer moments later.

MOMENTS LATER:

Farmer walks with lantern in one hand and shotgun in other. He closes on area of noise. A cow lays dead.

FARMER (shaking head)
Damn wolves!
He holds up lantern, peers property perimeter and advances to woods.

INT. WOODS -- CONTINUOUS

Eyes shine and the wild pack of DOGS retreat with his advance.

EXT. STATE PARK TRAIL -- CONTINUOUS

Tony stops and examines an area off the beaten trail.

KYLE
So it was dogs then?

Tony looks closer at area in question then nears it.

TONY (over shoulder)
Yup, and coyotes probably.

Tony gets to spot of interest and goes to knee. He studies the foliage. Kyle follows to his side.

TONY (CONT'D)
What do you see here Kyle?

KYLE
Um, leaves.

TONY
Take a step back and look closer.

Kyle gets to feet, steps back and studies area.

KYLE
Oh wait, it looks like something went through there.

TONY (smiles)
Indeed. But what?

KYLE
Deer maybe.

TONY (pointing high)
Look here.

KYLE
OK, maybe a brown bear.

TONY
If it walks on two feet.

Tony stands.

TONY (CONT'D)
Let's go.
INT. WOODS -- CONTINUOUS

They break through woods grabbing trees for stability high stepping natural debris. Twigs snap, leaves crunch beneath feet. Tony holds branches from snapping back on Kyle.

    TONY (loud)
    You see, wolves hunt and strengthen family bonds through hunting.

    KYLE (winded)
    Like an exercise.

    TONY (loud)
    Yeah, an exercise in family. Now if times are tough they may take a sheep or cow, but this is rare.

    KYLE
    That doesn't seem so bad.

    TONY
    I agree.

Tony slows. Kyle lifts head and gets breath.

    KYLE
    What?

Tony closes in on a camouflaged trap.

    TONY
    Unless your bear has taken to fur trapping, I think we know what made this trail.

    KYLE
    Human. What kind is it?

Tony picks up the wire snare trap and hands it to Kyle.

    TONY
    Snare trap. Any animal that steps into that loop gets caught. The more they struggle the tighter it becomes. Luckily this one has not yet claimed a victim.

Kyle tries to disable it but the wire proves to strong for him. Tony takes it and dismantles it.

    TONY (carrying trap) (CONT'D)
    Let's get back or your mother will kill us. And watch where you step, there might be more, potentially dangerous, traps.
INT. CAR -- ESTABLISHING

Kyle and Tony driving. Kyle does not have his rifle.

TONY (flexes bicepts)
And mighty hunters consider them a macho kill. You know, shooting through a scope 2 football fields away after tracking them in an all-terrain vehicle is such a manly, macho dangerous feat.

KYLE
So what's the point?

TONY
The point is their reputation is undeserved.

KYLE
 Doesn't make sense. They're beautiful, strong and we love dogs which are like the children of wolves.

TONY
I know. Except, and this's a stretch, but the only negative thing I can think of that made the wolf so hated?

KYLE
What?

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- DAY

Christian crusaders maraud a post battlefield of death looking for spoils. Their dogs scavenge alongside them. The cross is held high as soldiers strip the dead of their valuables. Dogs sprint yonder and spot a wolf with blood around its muzzle and chest hair. A soldier yells and shoots a longbow at the wolf missing but pinging armor beside it startling dogs giving wolf chance to escape. It runs off.

SOLDIER
Insidious filthy creature eating our dead.

SOLDIER #2
To think we respected them.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Tony raises his hands and voice escalates.

TONY
But something amazing happened!
KYLE
What?

TONY
A certain placid wo...

KYLE (interrupting)
...Placid?

TONY
Calm wolf chose us and that calm
wolf became the...

KYLE (interrupting)
Dog!

STATE PARK FISHING SITE- MOMENTS LATER

Arriving back at their undisturbed sanctuary, they drop their
backpacks, chug water and assume position on rocks. They
check lines, bate is gone.

TONY
Got a nibble or two, or three.

KYLE
I hope so. It's been a day.

TONY
 Doesn't seem it.

KYLE
Time flies when you're having fun.

TONY (coyly smiles)
True.

KYLE
So the wolf is the dog? Or the dog
the wolf?

EXT. CAMP -- DUSK

Nomadic times; a small settlement of 15-20 families carves
living deep in woods. They throw bones and trash into "dump".

Wolves cautiously watch from a far. When coast is clear of
humans they strike taking scraps from the garbage heap.

This routine is continued until one day a camp settlers goes
to through his garbage and they run, except one. The man
throws this wolf a piece of meat.

DAYS TURN TO MONTHS:

The wolf sleeps outside his shanty and guards him. In return
the wolf is rewarded with food scraps.
EXT. STATE LAND -- MOMENTS LATER

They carry a canoe on their heads.

TONY
It is simply the fight or flight response. The ones that didn't run became dogs. The ones that ran became a symbol for independence, the wolf.

Out of the wilderness darts a deer. Startled, they stand and peer into woods for another glimpse.

TONY (CONT'D)
What if I tell you a story about death, trust, persecution, honor, battles and heroes?

Kyle stops and they put the canoe down.

KYLE
I would say you have some story Tony.

TONY
Dad...and I do. It's time you know.

ACT TWO

EXT. DEN. ESTABLISHING

Under a fallen oak a den slopes down then up again to avoid flooding. On high ground a mother wolf lies on her side. She nurses 7 blind deaf wolf pups. With only six milk-producing teats, one pup jockeys for position. This pup, the darkest of the bunch, gets perpetually rebuffed and met with severe resistance from the litter. Ostracized, KAITLYN crawls in defeat to lowest corner. Her mother senses this, extends tail and warms her tiny girl.

EXT. DEN. ESTABLISHING

Two good-sized gray wolves relax overlooking a ravine.

ALPHA FEMALE
I am worried about Kaitlyn.

ALF. MALE
Not this again. This has been the natural order of things for eons. If she's meant for Omega, then Omega it shall be.

ALPHA FEMALE
Not just that, I'm worried she might not make it. She is frail, timid and too reclusive.
ALF. MALE
Oh sweetie, this's not the first
time we ran this course...and remember
how good Angus faired.

A wolf, on the heels of his words,gallops past. A stick
bigger than him hangs from mouth. Others in hot pursuit
follow.

ALF. MALE (CONT'D)
Right on cue. Just look at him.
He's fine-suited to his role, playing
his part in this family of ours.
Everyone has their part.

ALPHA FEMALE
Such a tough life she has in store.

Angus drops the stick and peeks in the den. The other young
wolves loose interest and gather around den.

INT. DEN -- CONTINUOUS

The older wolves get first look inside. Six pups huddle
together. KAITLYN, jet black with a half moon white-blotch,
shivers alone in the opposite corner.

NEALA (V.O.)
Look at that odd marking developing
on Kaitlyn.

ARDALA (V.O.)
Weird.

DICCAS (V.O.)
Not just weird, creepy. Givin' me
the willies.

TOM
Be nice, you weren't exactly the
prize coat either.

DICCAS (BROWS ARCH DOWN)
What!

TOM
You heard me. Calm down- will ya'.

DICCAS
No I won't Mr. I'm too stupid to
know when to cross the human trail!

TOM (LIP CURLS A BIT)
For the last time, I couldn't see
the lights because of the bend,
couldn't feel the vibrations because
(MORE)
TOM (LIP CURLS A BIT) (CONT'D)
of the damn wet leaf pile I was
standing on. And didn't hear it
because...
    (progressively louder)
    ...It...Was...ELECTRIC!

They circle one another. At the height of tension, Angus
nips Tom on the ear.

    ANGUS
    You're it!

    TOM
    You're on!

They chase one another inciting a massive game of manhunt.

INT. DEN -- AFTERNOON

Tom returns to den and regurgitates carrion. The pups with
bright blue eyes, vocal and mobile, surround the food and
fight for a bite. Kaitlyn tries for a morsel but is pounced
by NEALA. She yelps and rolls over on back. Neala places
her paws on Kaitlyn's chest, dominant display. Kaitlyn averts
her stare and submits. Head down, tail between legs, Kaitlyn
crawls to her spot, lowest den corner and nervously chews
the tip of her tail.

INT. DEN -- NIGHT

Heavy rains, lightning and thunder breaks troposphere in
half. Storm rains flood den. Water rises. Pups mass
together on high dry ground. Kaitlyn cautiously maneuvers
herself to the last dry patch. Neala bites her ear and does
not let go. Kaitlyn yelps and slithers down into the puddle.
She coils into a cold, shaking, frightened fur-ball and chews
tail warily waiting with one eye open.

INT. DEN -- CONTINUOUS

The water level now covers half her body. Alpha Female enters
and moves Kaitlyn into the dry mass of pups, opposite Neala
where she remains under her mother's constant eye. Neala
whispers in her sisters ear. The phone game starts. It
makes its way to Tom.

    TOM (begrudgingly whispers)
    She can't protect you forever?
    (beat)
    Don't worry, things will get better.

EXT. LANDSCAPE SURVEY -- DAY

Visceral panoramic aerial shot from Kaitlyn's den across
terrain to distant location. Large clearings bustle with
logging.
Within dense woods pop sparse clearings of tucked away homes, secret creeks, baseball field, dazzling rock formations, then over snow-capped mountain a vast prairie land emerges.

FADE IN:

INT. MERCURLEN'S DEN -- DAY

A den with pups. Their colors vary from white to cinnamon to black. One male pup, MERCURLEN, larger than the others snow-white with half moon black-blotch on his lower back. He nudges fellow brother, K'LEB, to stand. The practice is repeated until K'Leb stands on shaky legs. Two older wolves stand guard outside den.

EXT. VALLEY THE HUNTING -- MOMENTS LATER

100 bison graze in valley. With massive heads, short horns heavy forequarters surmounted by large fleshy humps, they move as one. Downwind on the banks strategically positioned wolves eye their meal. They wait. A buffalo lifts head toward banks. The entire herd stops grazing as if instructed by megaphone and inspect area in question. A few anxious buffalos reposition themselves. The wolves stalk, lowering their large chests to ground and glide into position. The bison break off. The ground quakes.

ALPHA MALE

Go!

Wolves bolt! Bodies blast 0-40mph under three seconds, 16 ft. per bound all paws off ground. They fly along banks never breaking site of target. An older buffalo lags behind. Down the sides they funnel into valley and separate older buffalo. It cuts direction many times ripping chunks of earth and dirt clouds. With every cut the wolves cut in unison, cognizant of where buffalo heads before buffalo does. It tires. They surround. Snouts curl back to third of size as two inch canines switchblade out. Hairs stand on end. A menacing site and a formidable opponent. The bison circles dizzily, chasing its tail, not allowing a clear shot.

ALPHA MALE (CONT'D)

Now!

They methodically attack biting and clutching bucking beast. It tosses them like rag dolls. They are unrelenting taking chunks of flesh and hide. Bloods stains chin and chest hair of lighter wolves. Bloodied and wounded, buffalo takes a last mercy knee and gives itself to the ferocity of the pack. They howl, surround and rip it limb-to-limb engulfing heaps of buffalo every tear. The old buffalo bellows one last roar.

DISTANT HERD. One turns in silent reverie, then lopes away.
EXT. DEN #2 -- CONTINUOUS

The adults and yearling return and vomit catch before eager pups. All eat their fill, not without hierarchal struggles. Snow white wolf MERCURLEN eats in peace. Deformed pup (one asymmetrical ear and feet with no webbing) K'LEB gets snubbed. Another member arrives vomits in proximity of shaky K'Leb. Mercuren guards his struggling brother from hungry mouths, none dare challenge. All senior members takes turns feeding pups, all are responsible for safety and health of pac.

EXT. DAD (TONY) AND SON (KYLE) FISHING -- CONTINUOUS

Peter comes to a screeching halt with his SUV.

    PETER (out window)
    Let's go!

    KYLE
    I still have three hours.

    PETER
    Now you don't. Something came up. Get in.

    KYLE
    OK
    (turns to Tony)
    Bye.

Tony tries to hug Kyle. Kyle avoids him.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

    PETER
    Let me tell you something Kyle, they're destroying our cattle, our income...

    KYLE (interrupting)
    ...I know.

    PETER
    And forget sponsored hunts, that was good money for your brother, sister and mother. By listening to that moron you're jeopardizing my livelihood. So understand who's the bad guy here. Got it!

    KYLE
    Yeah, sure.

INT. TONY'S CABIN -- DUSK

Place a mess laden with nature literature. Tony drinks strait bourbon.
Lawn chair positioned in front of a rabbit-ear TV playing static. Crooked cross hangs behind, empty bottle decor. He tries to pack pipe, spills on lap—dozes off.

EXT. RANCH. TONY PICKING KYLE UP-- MORNING

A three year old girl holds onto one leg and a toddler wobbles on the other as they grasp their mother's legs tight.

    TONY
    How is he doing with his studies?

    STACEY
    What studies?

    TONY
    I thought he made honor role?

    STACEY
    He did. With a 100 in gym and a 99 in art.

    TONY (Smiling)
    Shades of his mother.

Little girl pulls on Stacey's pant leg.

    LITTLE GIRL
    Mom. Mom.

    STACEY
    What sweetie?

She doesn't respond. Puts thumb in mouth. Stares at Tony.

    STACEY (yelling) (CONT'D)
    Kyle lets go! This kid. How long does it take to brush your teeth? He tries to squirm out of brushing and showering.

    TONY (interrupting)
    Shades of...

    STACEY (interrupting - faster.)
    ...of his father.

    TONY
    Ha.

Door opens. Peter puts head out.

    PETER
    Where's Max Jr.?

Stacey looks around.
PETER (CONT'D)
He's on the side of the house Stacey!

She goes to retrieve him. Kyle exits house minus gun, ipod and video game.

TONY
Hey.

KYLE
Hey.

They say good-byes, head to car.

TONY
I got poles, you ready?

Drive off.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Tony watches step father and mother in rear-view mirror.

TONY (V.O.)
He must have been watching us the entire time, cheeky bastard.

Kyle takes out a dirt-bike magazine and flips through.

TONY (CONT'D)
So where were we?

He closes magazine.

KYLE
You were telling me how the one pup, Mercuren was protecting his brother—K'Lie...

(beat)

...B or something.

TONY
Mercuren—right, so about a month later they were...

EXT. RUNNING UP THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN -- EVENING

The pack comes onto a pretty steep mountain side. They signal one another with howls and dash up, in and out of the tricky terrain. K'leb loses notable ground. It is dark. Mercuren has the presence of mind to search for him.

DAX (to Mercuren)
Where are you going?

MERCUREN
Where's K'Leb?
RANDOR
K'Leb the web...who cares?

Mercuren's piercing gaze tells Randor not acceptable response. He turns back, searches and hears faint whimper. Ears erect, he hones in. K'Leb lays down, paws cover his face.

MERCUREN
K'Leb, you OK?

K'LEB
I'm no wolf. I'm not even a rabbit Merc'.

Mercuren buries his snout below K'Leb and lifts his head.

MERCUREN
Look around, look up. You think the creator makes mistakes? No. You'll be fine.

K'LEB
It's one long horrible day that doesn't end. It's all the time.

MERCUREN
Look at my scars K'Leb. That is how I mark the time. No one can grasp time. And judging from your scars, you've done more than I'll ever do.

K'Leb lends a smile. They slowly make their way back down the mountain.

K'LEB
A lot of times I cry.

MERCUREN
Are you kidding? I cry every night, if I ain't cryin', I ain't livin'. You're a real wolf, don't forget that. Realer than these breeder wolves.

EXT. FISHING -- CONTINUOUS

Kyle and Tony sit on grass banks, cast into slow-moving river. Tony's binoculars hang from neck.

KYLE
OK, I get why they pick on K'Leb, but I still don't know why they pick on Kaitlyn?

TONY
It's normal.

(MORE)
TONY (CONT'D)
They're testing her to see where she
stands in the pac, top or bottom.

KYLE
It's obvious she's at the bottom and
not resisting, so why the test?

TONY
Good question. Let me go on with
the rest of their story and maybe
things will become clearer.

KYLE
Shoot.

TONY
Don't say that.

KYLE
Hit me don't shi...
(pauses)
..i take mushroom me?

TONY (Smiling)
Better, I think.

EXT. KAITLYN'S DEN -- DAWN

The pups, numbering six, twice as large starting to show
defined personalities. Kaitlyn has a slender female build
(exposed ribs), deep amber eyes, long gangly legs and a gentle
disposition. Mother returns, regurgitates and they hoard
and feed. Kaitlyn stays back and watches the rest eat.
Crows flock to tree-tops and squawk. Mother grooms and
attends them by licking and wrapping them in her cozy fur.
They fall asleep warm, stuffed. Kaitlyn grimaces with pangs
of hunger and dejection. Her body lowers. She tucks her
worn tail (no fur on tip) between legs and draws ears back.

EXT. PRAIRIE -- DAY

The young wolves, carefully flanked by pac, play hunt anything
that moves in the vicinity den.

DISTANT Kaitlyn plays alone. More than play, she needs to
catch something to eat, stomach rumbles. She ruffles bushes
and beats ground with paws sending a vole running. She
pounces, but misses. A flutter-by passes above. She jumps,
out of reach. A lizard sprints under nearby rock. Kaitlyn
uses muzzle to tip rock. Lizard jets, but catches it and
pins it under nails. Tiny morsel staves off immediate hunger.

CAMERA FALLS BACK.
DICCAS (to sister)
Look at her over there, eating some insect or grass I presume. Does she really think she'll ever mate? Who would want such a loser?

ARDALA
I know.

Alpha Male, Kaitlyn's father, raises head and howls. The pups innocuously join. Kaitlyn waits till last, joins howl-along. Diccas catches Kaitlyn from corner of eye. She stares penetratingly at Kaitlyn. Diccas snarls, fur bristles, crouches and beelines for clue less Kaitlyn. Right before impact Kaitlyn rolls on back, exposes vulnerable underbelly and throat, draws paws to body and whimper.

KAITLYN
Please...please, don't hurt me again.
I didn't mean anything.

DICCAS
Let this be a lesson to you!

Diccas chomps down on her front paw. Kaitlyn yelps. Hurt and humiliated she stays still in position until Diccas is safely away. Diccas returns to brothers and sisters.

DICCAS (CONT'D)
She won't dare howl with us anymore.

ARDALA
Good.

Kaitlyn limps off. Howling halts. Alpha female lopes to play area. All roll over on backs show submission. She targets Diccas and closes. Stiff-legged and towering, erect ears, taut tail, with one swat of paw she fastens Diccas to ground.

ALPHA FEMALE
Now see here Diccas. If I see that one more time you'll feel that back-a-my-paw and clutches of my jaw. Ya' hear me now?

DICCAS
Yes-yes, sorry mommy.

Alpha releases her. No other wolf dare make eye contact as she strolls off. Diccas shoots furtive glance at Kaitlyn. Kaitlyn curls into fetal position and chews tail, stripping further fur.
EXT. FIELD-DAY

Alpha mother watching, youngsters stage Olympic like events
to test courage and athleticism. First, ditch jumping 12
feet across 3 feet deep. In ranks they create a runway before
the leap. One after another they come up short, paws barely
touching other side or backing out completely. Diccas finally
makes it over cleanly. Last to go is Kaitlyn.

ARDALA
This should be funny.

DICCAS (out of breath)
I can't believe mom's letting her do
this.

ZANDRA
She'll chicken out too.

They remain in ranks as Kaitlyn bolts to a sprint. She
springs 2 feet before ditch, clears it by 3. Adult males
take notice.

ARDALA
Luck.

EXT. FIELD-DAY SPRINT - CONTINUING

Next event. A tree-line to tree-line sprint across a lush
clearing. Six line up shoulder to shoulder. Kaitlyn tries
to join, but rebuffed with snarls. She stays well back from
the starting line. Adults, brim with anticipation, wait at
finish. Pups battle for pole position, posturing and
vocalizing as tensions mount. Old Max, 3rd generation, stands
in middle of clearing.

MAX (yelling)
OK. It's going to be on your mark.
Get set. Then I will say go, and go
on go.
(chuckling)
OK?

100 yards. Alpha male stage right, watches from highest
vantage point.

MAX (yelling) (CONT'D)
On your mark. Get-set. GO!

They're off! Neck-n-neck for first few gallops. All of a
sudden Kaitlyn springs to feet and joins race. Midway point,
just past stunned Max, she catches tail of last place. Alpha
male lifts head with interest. Just 20 yds left, she catches
back of Diccas then passes her. 10 yards to go and a body
length ahead, closing on first place finish, Diccas trips
her back leg. She stumbles and tumbles across finish line
in heaping ball of black fur, not before losing to Diccas.
Kaitlyn gets up, licks wounds and lags to next event.

        DICCAS (yelling in jest)
        It was an accident...swear...I'll take an oath!

Alpha male and female walk side-by-side.

        ALPHA MALE
        And to think you were worried about her.

        ALPHA FEMALE
        I have to admit, she's something.

        ALF. MALE
        I'd worry about the other females in the pac, she is one fine specimen.
        I haven't seen that agility or speed since, well, since you.

        ALPHA FEMALE (smiles)
        Hmm.

She slows a bit allowing him lead. A quizzical look washes over her.

EXT. HIDDEN FEMALE CONSPIRE - CONTINUING

Alpha female and another adult female lightly converse as kids prepare for next event.

        ALPHA FEMALE
        I wonder what he meant by that?

        ADULT FEMALE
        Oh don't worry. Us gray wolves mate for life. You have sole breeding rights. She posses no threat to you. And you're gorgeous.

        ALPHA FEMALE
        True, thank you, but still.

HURDLES

Kids line up parallel 5 yards apart to form wolf-hurdles.

        MAX
        These are the hurdles.
        (beat)
        Go!

Each leaps sibling before them all the way down to end. Diccas clears first five, but deliberately hits Kaitlyn in ribs on last jump. Kaitlyn drops to knees and tries to catch her breath. She stands.
DICCAS (yells in passing)
Accident, sorry Kaitlyn.

MAX
Your turn Kaitlyn.

Kaitlyn limps to the front passing Diccas.

DICCAS (whispering)
You better fail.

Hurt, hampered and nervous she waits for Max.

MAX
Go!

She clears the first two in a single bound, never done before. Then three, four and right before Ardala, Ardala arches back higher. She clears Ardala with ease, but backs out at Neala the last one.

DICCAS
Ha! Told you!

PAN IN:

EXT. BOULDER DARE MERCUREN'S PACK -DUSK

K'Leb stands on boulder, kin surround him at bottom. 20 feet high he readies. At rock base tails wag with anticipation. K'Leb frightened, tail parallel to ground, hair straight up braces himself. Mercuren runs to a skid.

MERCUREN (looking up)
What the hell 'you doing!?

K'LEB
Jumping?

MERCUREN
And why pray-tell may I ask?

K'LEB
They dared me.

Mercuren shoots crowd of gapers a freeze-time look. They roll over and submit.

MERCUREN (to K'Leb)
What the hell's wrong with you?

K'LEB
They dared me.
MERCUREN
Hey numbskull, if I dared you to crawl into a cougar's den you gonna do it? No!

K'LEB (speaking softly)
I know it's just you know they also say I can't do stuff because of my deformed ear n' paws, you know...

MERCUREN (interrupting)
...Get down!

K'leb acquiesces cautiously comes down to jeers and malicious snickers. He confronts Mercuren.

K'LEB (2-foot voice)
I just want to prove to them I can.

MERCUREN
Listen, they're using you for their own amusement. Do you think they give a moose turd if you break your legs?

K'LEB
I think so, they're my brother's and sis...

MERCUREN (interrupting)
...First off, it's rhetorical, don't answer-listen.
(beat)
Second, you're not one month anymore. Mom and the pac aren't going to care for us forever. You need to grow up and be a bit more responsible or we'll end up howling over ya' bones.

K'LEB
I understand bro. You've been good to me. Sorry I let you down. I just get so mad when they don't treat me as equal. I'm as much gray as any.

MERCUREN
They're a bunch of coyotes. I have a good mind to give them a sharp bite on the hide.

K'Leb watches girls huddle and whisper. He hangs head.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
Look at me. I need your eyes here. Do me this favor.
(MORE)
MERCUREN (CONT'D)
If I'm not around, OK, think before you react. Think if I would want you to do it or not. If the answer's no, don't do it. K?

K'LEB
K.

MERCUREN
Let's go bro. PS., being different isn't always a bad thing. There's reasons you were born this way. We've just got to figure them out.

They stroll off, past earshot of Mercuren's female admirers.

FEMALE
He's so dreamy. A true leader. I hope he notices me.

FEMALE 2
I know. He's a natural. Our pac future is in good paws.

FEMALE (pouting lips)
I'd like to be in his paws.

FEMALE 2
You're terrible.

EXT. PATROLLING BORDER -- DAWN
Alpha male patrols territory, circa 200 sq. miles, spraying urine spurts along way. One spot he circles frantically sniffing. He stops plops stool, urinates to boot.

ALF. MALE (ominously)
Mercuren.

EXT. CONVERSATION OF TREPIDATION -- EVENING
Alpha male and female sit highest viewpoint watch pac play.

ALPHA MALE
Did you know he scent-marked our border?

ALPHA FEMALE
Who?

ALPHA MALE
You know who...Mercuren.

ALPHA FEMALE
Really? I didn't know that.
ALPHA MALE
Who does he think he is?

ALPHA FEMALE
He's just imitating you and trying to help out.

ALPHA MALE
Trying to help out. This is an outrage! He does not have the authority, nor ability to patrol our borders. It is the job of the elders.

ALPHA FEMALE
Well, like I said, I don't know if he did it. But I have no problem if he did.

ALPHA MALE
This is not the way of the pac. He'll shame the family. What if the rivals new of this? They would laugh out loud knowing we have a kid protecting our borders. Sensing weakness they'll surely attack.

ALPHA FEMALE
Sweetheart, you have nothing to fear. He's just doing what comes natural.

ALPHA MALE
That is precisely what I do fear. He needs to be put in his place.

ALPHA FEMALE (eyebrows lift)
No, he does not.

ALPHA MALE
I beg to differ.

ALPHA FEMALE
Beg all you desire. He, listen to me closely, poses no threat to you or your fragile ego.

ALPHA MALE
Wha...

ALPHA FEMALE (cutting off)
...He. Is going to make a great pac leader one day, a pac of his own.

ALPHA MALE
So he's gaining favor with everyone, even my lovely bride.
(looks up)
How in the world, on my watch?
ALPHA FEMALE
He's our son, our blood. If the
time comes for him to find a stake
of land and brood of his own, we'll
make sure the transition is delicate.

ALPHA MALE
Will we now?

ALPHA FEMALE
Oh yes, we will.

ALPHA MALE
Am I not the one who won rights to
this family fang over jaw? Who wooed
you, loved you, and would die at the
behest of you and the children?

ALPHA FEMALE
Yes darling, it is you indeed.

ALPHA MALE
So why are you taking his side over
mine?

ALPHA FEMALE
It's not about sides. You just don't
get it. Let's leave it at that and
agree to disagree.

She walks off. He remains bewildered and troubled. He
surveys pac below finds Mercuren gazing in his direction.

ALPHA MALE
Look at me do ya'? I got my eye on
you.

EXT. THE HOWL CHALLENGE - ESTABLISHING

The pac lounges after feast, licking and mingling. A brisk
autumn day. First flurries begin gentle descent. The
youngsters, mesmerized and unsure, carefully observe elders
who frolic and howl with delight, a howl-along ensues. Alpha
male and Mercuren no more than 15yds apart.

MERCUREN (holwing)
This is fantastic!

Basking in "new" flakes, Mercuren head high, drifts aimlessly
within 4ft of Alpha male who raises head higher. Chin-to-
chin, Mercuren elevates head to grab wandering flakes wafting
in air. Others gape the unfolding competition. Unbeknownst
to Mercuren, his actions are a direct challenge. Mercuren's
snout inches out Alpha's. Alpha's lip curls back and lunges
for Mercuren. He pins Mercuren to ground. Mercuren rolls
on side, not showing complete submission.
How dare you! You insubordinate traitor! I ought to tear the fur from your throat!

Alpha female gets wind of situation and quickly moves.

Stop it! He didn't know.

 Didn't know that holding his head higher than me is a challenge to my thrown?

No. Did you Mercuren?

He does not respond, just remains on his side transfixed on the perpendicular horizon.

Don't you dare look at me.

Did you Mercuren?

No. I didn't.

See, it was an honest mistake.

Maybe a mistake a one week old makes, not a pathetic excuse for a teenager.

Get you son in order mother. I'm warning both of you.

Other wolves watch in periphery.

Three inches of snow dusts ground. K'Leb and Mercuren wallow beneath the pines. A Kite (bird) perches high in tree and listens. They notice and keep quiet.

I'm just so sick of him singling me out. He thinks I want his life, this life? I don't. I just do what comes natural K'Leb.

He's obviously threatened by you.
MERCUREN
Why?

K'LEB
You're the one with the answers.

MERCUREN
Come on K, help me out here.

K'LEB
It's because all the females adore you, because you're the brightest and strongest amongst us and you comfort all around you. I guess what I'm trying to say is you're a leader whether you like it or not.

MERCUREN
Well I don't. I didn't ask for this. I purposely choose not to voice my opinion and steer clear of attention. I just want to be left alone. You hear me?

K'LEB
I have an idea.

MERCUREN
What?

K'LEB
Why don't you tell him what you just told me. We both know a blind wolf could see he's threatened and feels his control slipping around you. Maybe if you just tell him the truth that you're not looking to rule this pac. He'll lay off...right?

MERCUREN
You know K'Leb, maybe you're right. Thanks for listening and for just being a pal.

K'LEB
Thank you for covering my tail. I know the others see me as a freak and a weak link, but you treat me as an equal.

MERCUREN
BS K, they don't feel that way.

K'LEB
You don't have to humor me. I'm no pup now.

(MORE)
K'LEB (CONT'D)
I know I'll probably never get a
girl, or start a family of my own,
or even participate in a hunt. I
can live with that. You know why?

MERCUREN
Why?

K'LEB
Because like you said, nature has
other plans for me. I'll eventually
discover why I'm this way and carry
on knowing I have a friend like you.

They joust with necks and cuddle. K'Leb throws snow with
his tail onto Mercure. Mercure jumps and bites hanging
branch. The Kite flies off sending snow covering K'Leb.
They are off and running.

EXT. KAITLYN HUMILIATED -- DAY

Snow covered ground gives Diccas opportunity she has been
longing. Kaitlyn effaced from group sees Neala, Ardala and
Diccas running for her. She rolls over. They take this
opportunity to force her head beneath snow for dangerously
lengthy time. TOM, low ranking wolf, who might help is
nowhere to be found. Alpha sprints over hill. They release
Kaitlyn and run.

EXT. MERCUREN AND ALPHA MALE STANDOFF -- ESTABLISHING

Deep snow and intense play. They jump, dig, dive and bury
themselves within it. K'Leb digs deep and furious. He
captures attention of others who circle around.

RANDOR
What is it?

JORAX
What do you have, the remains of a
deer?

DAX
The hide of a steer?

RANDOR
A brand new ear?

They laugh minus Mercure who gives Randor hard look. Tension
mounts. K'Leb continues to dig. Randor rolls over and
submits to Mercure. Mercure shakes head and breaks silence
with a chuckle. They all share a hardy laugh. K'Leb emerges
from snow with black leather belt with a shiny silver buckle.

MERCUREN
Wow.
DAX
What is it?

Randor snatches from the clutches of K'leb's jaw.

RANDOR (running off)
Mine now.

K'leb looks at Mercuren who shrugs. Off running they go, but K'leb loses notable ground do to defective paw.

DAX
K'Leb will never catch Randor.

MERCUREN
I know, he can't get the traction in the snow without these bad-pups.

Mercuren spreads toes and displays his big webbed feet.

DAX
Those are huge, nice.

They watch the chase.

DAX (CONT'D)
I can catch him.

He glances over shoulder at Mercuren.

MERCUREN
Go for yours.

Dax smiles and darts off. Alpha male strolls by urinating on Mercuren's feet.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
Hey, watch it.

ALPHA MALE
Yeah?

MERCUREN
Can we please not butt heads for once, please...you win.

ALPHA MALE
Why aren't you playing with your brother's and sister's, are you too good for them?

MERCUREN
No, I'm about to.

Mercuren trots off slow, moves into horizontal ball of white lightening blasting through snow. Alpha watches with disdain.
EXT. ROTTEN MEAT (KAITLYN PACK)-- ESTABLISHING

The pack surround a rotten badger corpse.

ARDALA
What do you think?

DICCAS
Not quite sure, seems fishy.

ALPHA MALE
Hold off. Nobody touch it.

Alpha male begins howling. After brief moment Kaitlyn limps though tree line looking more gaunt. On her white-blotch bloodied laceration and many more unseen wounds.

KAITLYN
Yes father?

ALPHA MALE
Eat it and test if it is poisoned or not.

KAITLYN
But what if?

ALPHA MALE (interrupting)
But nothing. That is your duty. Now eat.

Kaitlyn gently nibbles a tiny morsel. They wait. Time elapses, thunder cracks horizon. They dig in and consume in hierarchal order. Kaitlyn thrust out of feeding frenzy limps away head down. An owl watches from above. They finish carcass and lick bone clean.

DICCAS (in passing licking lips)
Hey, there's a nice pile of moose crap over there for your loyalty to the family. It's all yours. Enjoy.

Kaitlyn, starved, limps to feces pile, nibbles in disgust.

EXT. COUGAR SCENE (MERCUREN'S PACK)-- EVENING

Mercuren approaches three females.

FEMALE
He's coming. How do I look?

FEMALE 2
Cheap and not as good as me.

FEMALE
Ha-ha, dream on.
FEMALE 3
Oh my God, look at his trot and those muscles. Isn't he dreamy?

FEMALE
Muscles, trot and oh what a coat. I so want to get some of that color into my brood.

FEMALE 2
He's getting closer.

Female 2 puffs her gorgeous coat.

FEMALE 2 (CONT'D)
Here he is. Here he is.

FEMALE (BATTING EYELASHES)
Hey Mercuren. What's up honey?

MERCUREN
Not much. Um, do you by any...

FEMALE 2 (cutting off)
...Yes Mercuren?

MERCUREN
Know where K'Leb is?

FEMALE 3
Haven't seen him for a while.

FEMALE
We'll help you look.

MERCUREN
Thanks.

TIME ELAPSES

Mercuren stops, ears point up, spots something in far distance. Crouching downwind he closes with stealth. A cougar with two distinct stripes runs back. Cougar spots Mercuren. They freeze, lock eyes and exchange menacing looks. Cougar takes off. Mercuren follows breakneck speed back bowing and stretching with each gallop. The cougar loses him. On his travels back.

MERCUREN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This is bad. Something's a miss.

A lonely howl. He hones in. There lie K'Leb, bloodied gasping for breath. Mercuren rushes to him. His stomach is surgically open, guts hang out, gaping wound licked clean of all fur. They look into one another's eyes.
MERCUREN (choked up) (CONT'D)
Hold on brother.

K'LEB
So this was..
    (gasp)
My purpose?

MERCUREN
I love you.

K'Lerb takes his last breath. Mercuren howls past the stars, beyond the Milky Way into the darkest depths of the universe.

EXT. GRIEVING -- CONTINUOUS
All surround his body howl a haunting cry. Sulking, they disperse. Mercuren lingers behind. An ELDER remains.

MERCUREN
So this is it, nothing to show he lived?

ELDER
The just needs no memorial, for his deeds are his monument.

Mercuren turns, Elder sauntered out of earshot. Far away he spots Alpha glaring him with penetrating ferocity.

EXT. CONFRONTATION -- LATER
Alpha and Mercuren square off.

ALPHA MALE
He's dead because of you.

MERCUREN
Me!

ALPHA MALE
Yes-you, you selfish coydog-subwolf-pathetic excuse for a brother!

MERCUREN
I can't believe you. No...I can.

ALPHA MALE
You think I don't know about your little trips across the border? Taking your brother places that weren't safe?

MERCUREN
This happened on our territory.
ALPHA MALE
Our? Listen to hot stuff here, our?
No, mine. This land, pac and the
rights to breed are mine and mine
alone. Don't let that escape your
pee-brain.

MERCUREN (under breath)
And I'm selfish?

ALPHA MALE
What?! Say that louder.

MERCUREN
You say I'm selfish. The reason he
was all alone is because he couldn't
handle being called and treated like
a deaf, web-less weirdo by your pac!
You and you alone Daddy are the reason
he's dead and don't you forget that!

Alpha lunges for Mercuren's throat. They battle. Fur and
furry, blood flies, fangs lash, lips curl, eyes point, brows
drop, hairs up. The fight stuns pac. The end position favors
Mercuren with his bite clasping Alpha males head/ear area.

MERCUREN (gargled) (CONT'D)
I should bite your head off!

Mercuren lets go and sprints away teary-eyed. All others
remain still as rocks.

EXT. HEART TO HEART -- LATER

Mother and Mercuren speak softly.

MOTHER
I know you're upset and probably
hate me.

MERCUREN (visibly shaken)
Mom don't say that.

MOTHER
I could have done more to protect
you from your father, but I didn't.
His ways at times seem unwolfable'
even to me, but that's the way of
the pac. It has been for millions
of years and will continue so long
as Mother Earth deems it providing
we follow HER formula: two leaders;
husband and wife with responsibility
trickling down to Omega. But remember
we are all equally important and
function as one. However, sometimes,
and it's not that uncommon..
MERCUREN (interrupting)
What?

MOTHER
Two leaders are born into the same pac.

MERCUREN
Mom, I don't want to lead, nor do I want to fight dad for it. I'm done with this. I mean it mom.

MOTHER
That is precisely what makes you best qualified to lead.

MERCUREN (eyes well)
I miss K'Leb.

MOTHER
Me too baby. Me too.
(pregnant pause)
No wolf dies before his time.

EXT. MERCUREN ELDER ADVICE -- CONTINUING

Elder lounges in shade. Mercuren meanders to him.

MERCUREN
Hello.

ELDER
Hello lad.

MERCUREN
So how are you holding up?

ELDER
Good for seven years young.

MERCUREN
That's good, glad to hear that. Is there anything you need?

ELDER
A back rub wouldn't be so bad?

MERCUREN
Consider it done.

Begins to scratch his back with front paws.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
You like your position here within the pac?
ELDER
I do and don't. Depends on time in question. My younger days, fine. My teens, terrible. My mid-years, tolerable. Mid-life was stable. Now, happy and productive.

Mercuren scratches his back, remains silent.

ELDER (CONT'D)
Stop skirting Mercuren and come forth with it.

MERCUREN
That obvious, huh?

ELDER
I'm old, not dumb and blind.

MERCUREN
Here it is. I know my role is to ensure our place in the food chain. I know I like the girls in our pac, but don't feel a strong desire. I mean, they practically throw themselves at me and I don't care. (pause)
Elder, what's my purpose?

ELDER
Is it because you're afraid of the H.W.I.C.?

MERCUREN
H.W.I.C.?

ELDER
Head wolf in charge?

MERCUREN
Nah, aw...you know, I'm not really sure, I'm not. And I don't want a girl to want me because of my status within the pac. I want to be loved for who not what I am.

ELDER
It appears you have two choices. Stay and see if your feelings change with time. Or take the much more difficult route.

MERCUREN
Which is?
ELDER
Become a lone-wolf and follow the wind.

MERCUREN
What do you think?

ELDER
If one can survive on their own it is surely you.

MERCUREN
Mean that?

Elder shifts halting back rub, pulls head back, eyes Mercuren with raised eyebrow.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
You always mean what you say.

ELDER
If you decide to go remember this:
If you get up one more time than you fall, you will make it through.

EXT. KAITLYN HURT BAD (OTHER PACK) -- EVENING

Kaitlyn far worse than before, state of emergency condition. Alpha father finds her in distant reaches of their territory and licks her wounds. Kaitlyn's eyes are closed.

ALPHA FATHER
This is bad. I thought I knew your future and you'd turn out like Angus. I'm a fool to have believed that. I should have been more vigilant and alert. I totally dropped the stick here. Kaitlyn, forgive me, please.

He looks Kaitlyn over. She struggles to breath.

ALPHA FATHER (CONT'D)
Oh-no this is not good, not good at all. From the looks and sounds of it, you've punctured a lung and broke ribs. I'm so sorry Kaitlyn

KAITLYN (opens eyes- wheezing)
Help me.

ALPHA FATHER
Listen to me darling, over there, in the night sky, Polaris, the North Star, you see it?

She slowly nods yes.
.legend has it that beneath the North Star a lone-wolf will find its purpose and true meaning. The journey, which will take two fortnight from here, will brim with perilous challenge. Once Polaris is highest in the night sky, all your questions will be answered.

Kaitlyn's tail wags twice, a tinge of life.

It's risky and you're in no condition to go and maybe you won't be. If you stay here, I promise to get the rest of the pac in line and take mercy on you.

She struggles to speak. Father places head by her ear.

KAITLYN (gasping between words)
Here, I will never, find love. Here, I will always be, made fun of. Here, is nothing. Here, I have, no life.

Her mother sidles up, goes to knees.

MOTHER
Oh my baby. I'm so-so sorry. I know this sound's harsh, but leave here.

(looks to father)
We can't protect her.

(to Kaitlyn)
I'm sorry baby.

Her mother walks away in tears.

KAITLYN
I'll be all right dad.

ALPHA FATHER
And we'll always be here waiting for you if and when you decide to come home.

KAITLYN (V.O.)
Home, right.

INT. THICK WOODS -- MOMENTS LATER

Kaitlyn limps dejected, ribs and backbone protrude. She's knocking on death's door. A branch ruffles, startled she jumps, freezes and waits. A little chipmunk zips branch-to-branch out of reach. She carries on listless.
KAITLYN (V.O.)
What am I gonna do? I can't make it on my own. Maybe, if I get healthy.
No, I can't do it.

CUT TO:

EXT. KYLE AND TONY -- CONTINUOUS

KYLE
What's gonna happen now?

TONY
Next time, next time I'll tell you how they did.

KYLE (high voice)
Tell me now.

TONY
I have to get back or your mother will kill me. Not to mention...
(stops mid sentence)

Takes binoculars from around neck and focuses them high up in a conifer tree.

KYLE
What do you see!

TONY
I think, it just might be. Yes, a pileated woodpecker. Get my book.

Snaps fingers and points to a knapsack on ground never taking binoculars off bird. Son rummages through it.

KYLE (holding guide book)
This?

TONY (quick glance)
Yeah, that's it. Now look up pileated woodpecker.

Kyle searches book.

TONY (CONT'D)
It's broken down by category of bird, find woodpeckers.

Kyle searches but loses patience. He drops book prompting dad to release binoculars, they dangle around neck.

TONY (CONT'D)
What seems to be the problem here?
KYLE
This takes too long, thing will be
gone by the time we find it.

Kyle removes a little hand-held PDF from his pocket, punches
a few keys. Tony looks on.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Can I have those.

Tony hands over the binoculars.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Where exactly is it?

TONY (pointing)
On top of that conifer, about two
football fields sticking out higher
than the rest. You see?

KYLE
Not yet.

Tony helps him focus.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Got it!

He checks the PDF.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Yup, it is, a male to be more precise.

TONY
Let me see that.

Son hands over PDF.

TONY (CONT'D)
Well I'll be damned.

KYLE
Here dad, let me show you what else
this can do.

Together they tinker with the PDF.

KYLE (pushing side buttons) (CONT'D)
You see; it has details, range maps,
coloring, habits and even this.

AUDIO of a pileated woodpecker emanates.

TONY
No way.
KYLE
Yes way.

They laugh.

TONY
OK then. The old adage you learn something new everyday. Well, it's getting late and...

KYLE (interrupting)
I know, I know. Mom will kill us.

TONY
There's always next week.

INT. CAR KYLE INTERROGATING TONY -- CONTINUOUS

Kyle lowers the radio.

KYLE
Dad?

TONY
Yes.

KYLE
Can I ask you something?

TONY
Not sure I like how this sounds.

KYLE
You still on drugs?

TONY
Wow, wow, wow, um, who...who told you that?

KYLE
Dad, well my step dad. He said you are and mom never denies it.

TONY
Well, they're right. I'm not proud of my past and I'm trying to rid myself of that poison. I haven't used in over a year.

KYLE
Is that a long time for you?

TONY
Longest for the last 20 years, except of the military stint I did.
KYLE
Are you happy?

TONY
Only when I am with you.

KYLE (Smiling)
Well, I'm glad you are trying to quit. I like you this way.

Dad, steering, pulls him under arm and kisses his head. Kyle blushes and pushes him away with a smirk.

INT. KYLE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Peter quietly lurks outside son's door.

KYLE (on phone)
Dude, it was great! We caught some stripers, a few catties', but the awesome part was seeing a pileated woodpecker! Thing was cool as hell man. Big-ass bird. I mean it was far away, but I could tell the thing was huge as hell.
(beat)
Yeah man, next week he said.
(beat)
What's the score?
(beat)
Damn. I'm gonna' put it on now. Later-on.

Peter enters room.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Hey.

PETER
What's next week?

KYLE
I'm going to a duck trap-n-tag with da...
(pause)
Tom.

PETER
Really? I wouldn't bet the farm on it.

Peter starts to walk out.

KYLE
Wait-what?
PETER
Dont' hold your breath or have we forgotten the great hike? Oh that's right, you didn't go because he didn't show. Ok-then, bye-bye now.

Step father exits with smarmy smile.

INT. RANCH BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Stacey, bed, watches TV. Peter paces readying for bed.

PETER
It just sucks, the whole thing.

STACEY
No it doesn't, he's trying to reconnect with him.

PETER
So he takes a ten year hiatus while I provide for his kid.

STACEY (disgusted)
His kid?

PETER
Did I stutter? And that's fine with you?

STACEY
You know you're really starting to sound like some jealous schmuck.

PETER
How can you lie there and allow this without being pissed off?

STACEY
What's pissing me off is you!

PETER
Me?

STACEY
Stop like you're Mr. Perfect. All right, stop the charade. You've never treated him like an equal. In fact, you verbally abuse him every damn chance you get. You should just stop talking to him altogether.

PETER
This is great. Get it all out now beautiful wife of mine. Take druggies side.
STACEY
You really want to do this now?

PETER
I do. I really-really do!

STACEY
Lower your voice loser.

He clenches fist and comes to her bedside.

STACEY (CONT'D)
Go ahead baldy. I'll call the cops so quick you'll be left with nothing but your damn stuffed heads.

PETER
I ought ring your neck and kick that thirteen year old jerk-off out of my house.

STACEY
Your house? This house will be mine. I dare you, please do.

PETER
You're still in love with the low-life drug addict, no child support paying, have an adoption, give the child away, paternity denying Mr. Wonderful. I don't know why I am surprised. You two belong together.

STACEY
Grow up.

INT. CABIN — CONTINUOUS

Tony pours glass of coke and heads picks up Jack Daniels. He stops mid twist, ponders then closes the J.D.. He grabs two ice cubes. One slips from hand breaking in two on counter top sending two pieces to floor. Cat-like reflexes, he catches both in midair and smiles.

EXT. KYLE EXITING CAR -- NIGHT

Stacey walks to car. Kyle leaves car; binoculars dangle from neck, a fancy measuring device, a hand-held scale, clipboard, guides, books, a PH measurer and some other naturalist gadgets. Tony follows.

KYLE (to Tony)
See you next week dad.

STACEY
Next week huh?
Kyle hugs and plants at her side.

    STACEY (to Kyle) (CONT'D)
    Have fun?

    KYLE
    Hell yeah! The most amazing thing ever. I got to toss three ducks.

    STACEY
    Toss?

    KYLE
    Yeah, chuck-em and they fly away like drunks back-and-forth whipping headfirst into high grass and bushes like kamikazes nose diving, they're so funny and...

Kyle drops the clipboard.

    KYLE (CONT'D)
    Whoa.

He bends to pick it up spots peter watching from window.

    STACEY
    And?

    KYLE
    Nothing. Um, I'm gonna try my new stuff out on Marbles.

    STACEY
    Oh no, that poor rabbit.

Tony and Stacey laugh together.

INTERFACE - Kyle heads around the back of the house avoiding his step father.

    TONY (watching him walk off)
    So yeah, I figured we'd hit the museum if it's all right with you?

    STACEY
    You kidding, I'm thrilled. Just make sure you show.

    TONY
    I know—I know, I'm trying here.

    STACEY
    I see that. And he seems to be happy and responding well with you.
TONY
Thanks, that means a lot.

STACEY
By the way, how much did all that stuff cost?

TONY
It's the least I could do considering I missed his birthday and all, plus most of it I had lying around. The only thing I bought was the duck guide at the tag. Figure I could get him started.

STACEY
Take after the old man?

TONY (Smiling)
Who you calling old woman?

INT. KYLE'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Clipboard in hand, Kyle paces around Marbles (bunny) who is plop-down center of puffy pillow. Marbles looks at him as if he's nuts. Kyle mimics Tony.

KYLE (tapping teeth with pencil)
Color? A marble complexion-check.
Size?

Measures with ruler.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Eight inches to shoulder and length sixteen. Interesting, twice as long as tall.
(to marbles)
Is that normal Marbles?

Frumpy Marbles just stares. Kyle unwraps large sheet of aluminum foil. He repeatedly folds it to gumlike size. He breaks point of pencil and etches date and address. Then wraps the foil around Marbles foot. Marbles does not budge.

KYLE (CONT'D)
OK Marbles, now it's time to fly away.

He picks up Marbles dead wait and holds him above the pillow.

KYLE (yelling) (CONT'D)
Fly!

He drops marbles plop back into same pillow groove. Silent.
INT. REFRIGERATOR INSULT -- CONTINUOUS

Kyle opens fridge. Peter enters and prepares sandwich.

    PETER
    So you think you'll find a job doing
    that crapolla?

Kyle ignores him and grabs milk.

    PETER (CONT'D)
    Answer me!

Stacey enters the kitchen area.

    STACEY
    Don't talk to him.

Kyle leaves kitchen. A verbal fight ensues behind him.

EXT. RANCH-- KYLE WAITING FOR DAD -- MORNING

Kyle reads a book of wolves as he sits on the stoop looking
down the dirt road. Door opens halfway.

    PETER
    Oh, you're still here? He didn't
    show. What a surprise.

Kyle winds watch. Stacey forces out brushing past peter.
She sits beside Kyle. They both keep their backs to him.

    STACEY (to step father, drained)
    Just go away, please.
    (to Kyle)
    Ignore him.

The door closes behind them, simultaneously look at watches.
She rubs Kyle's back. Down the road dirt billows. Smile
grows on Kyle.

INT. MUSEUM -- MOMENTS LATER

Tony and Kyle inspect gray wolf exhibit. They converse
without eye contact.

    KYLE
    You know I know this wolf story of
    yours is make believe.?

    TONY
    Is it now? You're certain?

    KYLE
    Yes. I'm not five anymore Dad.
TONY (smiles)
I know.

KYLE
But you're a good story teller, so
I'll allow this canard to continue.

TONY (laughing)
That's mighty kind of you.
(beat)
Canard eah'?

KYLE
Web-site word of day. And you know
I know where this story's going?

TONY
You're sure?

KYLE
Is Grand Theft Auto violent?

TONY
Ah-um, yeah?

KYLE
Bad example. Yes, they're going to
find each other and fall in love and
live happily ever after.

TONY
Who?

KYLE
Mercuren and Kaitlyn.

TONY (theatrically dragging words)
There...you...go.

Kyle laughs.

TONY (CONT'D)
Wait a second. Now I wouldn't be a
very good
(makes quotes)
"story teller" if you could figure
out the ending before I tell it, now
would I? Why not humor me and listen
like you have no idea what you're in
store for?

EXT. KAITLYN BEING NURSED BACK TO HEALTH -- AFTERNOON

Mother repeatedly brings choice deer parts, grooms and showers
her with attention. Her body fattens, ribs disappear and
strength reemerges. She jumps higher and runs faster. Her
envious brother's and sister's congregate from far and watch.
Kaitlyn's mother keeps them at bay.

**EXT. MERCUREN BEING SCENE OFF -- CONTINUOUS**

Pack has gathered at territorial border. Mercuren's alpha father is the only absent pac member.

**MOTHER**
So you know which way to head?

**MERCUREN**
I do.

**ELDER**
Remember what I told you.

**MERCUREN**
One path leads to paradise, but a thousand to hell.

Mercuren rubs noses with Elder.

**MOTHER**
Any time you want to return home, do not hesitate. We'll keep a spot open sweetie.

**MERCUREN**
Thanks Mom. Tell Dad, bye.

**MOTHER (sniffling)**
I will.

**FEMALE (all three at once)**
Bye Mercuren. We'll miss you!

They pac huddles and cuddles. He takes one last gander, smiles then swallowed by trees. They howl a languid howl.

**FEMALE 2**
There goes my one true love.

**FEMALE 3**
Your love, he's mine.

**FEMALE**
I hope he comes back.

**FEMALE 2**
You wish, he liked me more and he will return.

The sluggish pac mopes back to den area.

**CUT TO:**
EXT. GRAVE -- CONTINUOUS

Mercuren stops at place of K'Leb's death. He smells K'Leb's bones, digs up black leather belt and hooks it firm on tree branch above his grave.

MERCUREN
I got this back for you. I'll always love you friend. Good-bye.

Mercuren howls. Off he goes.

MERCUREN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You are a better wolf than me.

EXT. KAITLYN LEAVING TERRITORY -- AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn's mother and father voraciously lick her. Tom and Angus also show affection. The others stay back and collude.

ARDALA
Good riddance to her.

NEALA
You said it.

ARDALA
She won't make it.

DICCAS
She'll be dead in a week. What a loser.

NEALA
I know right.

MONTAGE SHOTS OF BOTH MERCUREN AND KAITLYN'S JOURNEY END EACH WITH VIEW OF POLARIS

1. CROSSING DANGEROUS RIVER
2. STRUGGLING OUT OF MUD PIT
3. HOWLING
4. NARROWLY AVOIDING A ROCK AVALANCHE
5. DRAGGING ROAD KILL TO SAFE AREA
6. HOWLING
7. CLIMBING SIDE OF MOUNTAIN
8. BEING CHASED BY A GRIZZLY BEAR
9. HOWLING
10. **CUTTING ACROSS A RANCH—LIGHT GOES ON—RUNNING FASTER**

11. **STEALING CHICKENS FROM A HEN HOUSE**

12. **HOWLING**

13. **DIVING FOR BEAVERS**

14. **BACKING OFF A BADGER PROTECTING ITS DEN**

15. **HOWLING**

16. **LEAPING FOR A SCARED TURKEY**

17. **DIGGING UP DIRT—STAR-NOSED MOLE POPS UP BEHIND—WHACK A MOLE FASHION. THEY POUNCE**

18. **TIGHTROPE A FALLEN TREE OVER A STEEP DROP**

19. **SCENT MARKING**

20. **BOTH IN SHELTER FROM SHEETS OF RAIN—PEER INTO STORM**

21. **HOWLING (SPLIT SCREEN)**

**EXT. KETTLE LAKE -- DAY**

Mercuren steps gingerly unfamiliar terrain. He snakes through high grass reaches clearing, hidden kettle of water. Dead silent, Mercuren perfectly still; frog croaks, another, locust begins clicking drone, crickets cheep, cacophony erupts. He navigates grass near water, fish plops in out. Pine cones decorate ground. Mercuren feeds on one. Finished, goes to lake outskirts and tongues the uninterrupted water. Horseshoe Ripples glide across lake to their fate. On third gulp, spots wasp two inches from nose flipped on its back struggling not to drown. Mercuren, deep breath, maneuvers snout under wasp. It latches on. He warily boats wasp across water.

**MERCUREN (quick and quiet)**

Don't bite me, don't bite me, don't bite me.

Gently places snout on hot rock. The skinny wet wasp wings pasted to back shakes legs dry. Then wasp uses large back legs, starting with head, to squeegee wings and body dry. It gives wings a few trial runs then zips away.

**PAN ACROSS LAKE FOLLOWING RIPPLE**

Ripples disrupt rock piercing water making it difficult for tiny insect to navigate. Ripples flood tiny rock haven over and over. Mercuren's attention interrupted by two large dragonflies attached together flying erratically along lake rim. Tall grass stalks poke through water reach for light.
TOP-FLY MALE (yelling)
Oh no. Look out—look out! Turn-turn-turn!

They zip past a stalk, in out of grass-cones, eventually rising high, Frisbee like catching updraft.

MALE TOP FLY
Down-down-down!

They sink just as fast.

MALE TOP FLY (CONT'D)
Whoa, whoa, whoa!
(pause)
Why don't you say anything? Say something please?

They hover over tall stalk, gently descend, land.

MALE TOP FLY (CONT'D)
Next time, I'm on the bottom.

BOTTOM FLY (female voice)
Keep it up and there just might not be a next time.

MALE TOP FLY (sexy voice)
We have this time though, right?

BOTTOM FLY
Pig.

They separate. She flies off. Mercuren goes to eat him. He tries to fly but too tired, collapses off stalk. On back. Mercuren leans over for a bite.

TOP FLY
Buddy-buddy, wait-wait-wait!

Mercuren stops.

MERCUREN
You talk?

TOP FLY
Duh?

MERCUREN
I never heard you talk.

TOP FLY
Because we don't have time to sit and chat when we're running or flying for our frigging lives!
MERCUREN
Hmm, interesting.

TOP FLY (mimicking)
Hmm, interesting.

Mercuren's eyebrows dip down and he licks his chops.

TOP FLY (CONT'D)
Wait-wait, sorry-sorry, hang on.

What?

TOP FLY
I know you.

MERCUREN
You do, how?

TOP FLY
You're with the pac sixty or so miles from here.

MERCUREN
I was with that pac, big deal. You probably flew over our territory once or twice and remembered my strange blotch. Not too impressive wise fly.

TOP FLY
True, but I also knew your brother.

MERCUREN
Which brother?

TOP FLY
K'Leb the Web.

MERCUREN
Don't call him that. His name was K'Leb.

TOP FLY
OK. Well, he didn't mind because that's how he introduced himself to me right before.

He stops.

MERCUREN
Before what!?

TOP FLY (meekly)
His untimely death.
MERCUREN
You saw the attack!

TOP FLY
Yes. And I know where the cougar roams and where her den is, at least for the past 3 years.

MERCUREN
You haven't been alive long enough to know that.

TOP FLY
Very good Sherlock, you're not as dumb as you look.

Mercuren leans over, snout pulls back, canines grow.

TOP FLY (CONT'D)
Kidding...kidding, but we do pass on knowledge. In our tight-knit community we know not to forage where the cougar cubs are because they eat anything that moves, even worse than you guys.

MERCUREN
Which way?

TOP FLY
Wait a sec, what's in it for me?

MERCUREN
Your life.

TOP FLY
Fair enough.

Using wing the fly points North.

MERCUREN
That's the way I'm heading.

TOP FLY
I'll show you the way. In exchange, you don't eat me, allow me to hitch a ride in your coat and protect me.

MERCUREN
That's a lot of demands for a fly in your position.

TOP FLY
I'm not a fly. I'm a dragon damn it!
MERCUREN
Whatever you say chief. You're not carrying anything? Not gonna infect my skin with some parasite? Is your brain hijacked by some deadly pathogen? Are you going to insert eggs into my bloodstream that travel to my brain and hatch?

TOP FLY
Ewe, that's gross. You've been listening to too many horror stories.

MERCUREN
OK, but I'm not responsible for you.

TOP FLY
Deal. Now let's go back to your pack, get some back-up and kick some cougar butt!

MERCUREN
Settle down small-fry, it's just me.

TOP FLY
Au contraire mon frere', this is suicide. You can't take on a cougar by yourself. Heck, even with your entire pac it wouldn't be a sure win.

MERCUREN
I repeat, just me buddy, you getting or going?

Dragonfly crawls up leg toward tail area.

TOP FLY
Suicide man. Suicide, remember I'm not eating maggots from your corpse.

MERCUREN
Swell, good looking out and not so close to my rump will ya. Back to the neck area chiefy.

TOP FLY
Name is Shroom McGroom.

MERCUREN
OK S.M., just stay cool and enjoy the journey.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Will do.
EXT. DRAGONFLY AND MERCUREN MAKING HEADWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

SHROOM MCGROOM
So you got a girl?

MERCUREN
No, but that's what I'm looking for.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Sounds righteous.

EXT. KAITLYN FORAGING -- AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn, battered, unearths roots, chews away. A scent lifts her head. She follows it to tree. Up trunk a large nest too high to reach, scans ways of climbing, feebly tries climbing crashing back down. A clever solution, she shakes the tree. A soon as the tree starts to wobble, a hawk swoops down with talons drawn. Kaitlyn ducks. It skims her head and lands above waiting to strike. Kaitlyn walks away dejected.

KAITLYN (O.S.)
I'm going to die hungry and alone out here. What was I thinking? Creator help me.

EXT. MERCUREN HUNTS FOR MUSHROOMS -- MOMENTS LATER

Shroom McGroom sleeps comfortably in Mercuren's thick coat. Mercuren gets wind of scent and releases ripping howl!

SHROOM MCGROOM (jumping up)
What...What! What is it...what's wrong?

MERCUREN
Nothing, why?

SHROOM MCGROOM
What the hell are you yelling like that for wolf?

MERCUREN
Just searching for love.

SHROOM MCGROOM (V.O.)
Is he serious?

Mercuren sniffs around thick dew laden forest. Shroom gives directions and orders.

SHROOM MCGROOM (pointing with wing) (CONT'D)
Over there, I bet. I just know it.

MERCUREN
OK.
Mercuren treks the direction.

SHROOM MCGROOM
You see, the beauty is in the time fungi decide to reveal themselves. The mushroom is the flower of a vast network of underground labyrinths, simply delectable. Mm, I can taste them now.

MERCUREN
S.M. buddy-pal, whatcha' love mushrooms so much for?

SHROOM MCGROOM
Duh, not the mushrooms. I'm a dragonfly. I like the insects they bring.

MERCUREN
That's right. Well, my family liked special mushrooms. My father, the jerk, told us special mushrooms were the catalyst to wolf consciousness.

SHROOM MCGROOM (raises one eyebrow)
Um, yeah...OK.

MERCUREN
Well, think about it. In low doses you get better eye-sight and increased libido which equals more kids. And then higher doses you have Creator-like insights seeing energies all about.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Oh-OK, yeah, let's make tracks. The cougar den is North. That way.

They carry on.

SHROOM MCGROOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This guy's nuts.

MERCUREN (looking over shoulde)
It's gonna' be cold little guy.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Well, I'll go as long as I can, then bail when it's no longer fun. (under breath)
Or when you snap.

MERCUREN
What?
SHROOM MCGROOM (Smiling)

Nothing.

MERCUREN

You got it.

(under breath)

Sissy.

SHROOM MCGROOM

What?

MERCUREN (Smiling)

Nothing.

EXT. KAITLYN FINDING A TRAP -- DUSK

Kaitlyn comes to shiny bear trap, cautiously sniffs around it. She moves it a little with paw then feigns a in the middle. She stops deciding against it. She finds thick stick, touches center disk. It sets off! Steel jaws smash shut snapping branch into shards of wood. She leaps back, runs off, slight hitch disappears into woods.

EXT. HOWLING -- EVENING

Mercuren howls.

SHROOM MCGROOM

Every night?

MERCUREN

So?

SHROOM MCGROOM

I mean at what point do you let go?

MERCUREN

What do you mean by let go S.M.?

SHROOM MCGROOM

I don't know. I'm not knocking it. In fact, sometimes I find myself wishing I had your timeless howl.

MERCUREN

Thanks, I won't stop till my howl is answered by a female, one with heart, courage and purpose. I need to find her and start a family that will last hundreds of thousands of years.

SHROOM MCGROOM (rolls eyes)

Oh that's it, sounds simple.

MERCUREN

Ha, funny.
SHROOM MCGROOM
But seriously, there are other ways to start a family.

MERCUREN
How?

SHROOM MCGROOM
Invade a pack and fight for supremacy.

MERCUREN
That's really not my style.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Fellow animal, I find it hard to believe you're scared.

MERCUREN
You should. I'm not scared, I just believe my soul mate is drifting like me. She wouldn't stay with her pack, rather break out.

SHROOM MCGROOM
That's some faith man.

MERCUREN
No more than believing in The Creator.

SHROOM MCGROOM
I guess, but I think your faith will be the death of you.

MERCUREN
Well, leave then. I'm lighter without you.

SHROOM MCGROOM
I wasn't being rude, just questioning your logic...sorry, so touchy. If you want me to leave, I will.

MERCUREN
My faith will either kill me or guide me to loving arms. Call me a hopeless romantic will ya?

SHROOM MCGROOM
How about a hapless fanatic. Now let's find some fungi.

MERCUREN
Um, OK.

EXT. QUAIL -- EVENING

Shroom McGroom returns and hovers by Mercuren ear.
MERCUREN
Anything ahead?

SHROOM MCGROOM
Looks okay.


MERCUREN (to Shroom)
Real funny.

He keeps laughing. Mercuren shows his teeth. McGroom tries hard to suppress his laugh.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
You're the scout champ. You dropped the stick my fly.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Wait-wait, are you kidding?

MERCUREN
Whatever, let's keep going.

SHROOM MCGROOM
I'll alert you to anything that breaths, how's that?

MERCUREN
Very well. Then do it.

They head toward the quail perched high in tree top. McGroom lands back on Mercuren.

MALE QUAIL (yelling)
You almost stepped on me!

They ignore him and keep on trekking. Quail turns on branch.

MALE QUAIL (CONT'D)
I know you.

They stop.

MERCUREN AND SHROOM (together)
Who?

MALE QUAIL
The wolf.

MERCUREN
How?
MALE QUAIL
A month ago your sister's were closing in on my hiding spot. When you came they followed you away, saving my eggs and tail feathers. I owe you one.

MERCUREN
It wasn't deliberate or anything. (looks to McGroom) It wasn't.

QUAIL
You sniffed them.

MERCUREN
OH
McGroom gratingly itches wing behind neck.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
Well, I hope your kids are doing fine.

QUAIL
Not, dead...damn cougar ate my eggs.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Sorry.

MERCUREN
Sorry too.

They start off again. Quail flies to ear of Shroom McGroom and whispers in flight. They whisper back and forth. Mercuren turns behind to Shroom.

MERCUREN (to Shroom) (CONT'D)
What did he say?

SHROOM MCGROOM
His name is Q.T. and he's bored and wants revenge on the cougar too.

MERCUREN
And?

SHROOM MCGROOM
I invited him along.

MERCUREN
Why you schmuck?

SHROOM MCGROOM
I thought the more the merrier.
MERCUREN
You know how loud and clumsy that thing is. He'll blow our cover in a second.

SHROOM MCGROOM
His name is Q.T., he'll be quiet.

QT flies down and lands on Mercuren's back.

Q.T.
This is going to be awesome traveling with you guys and all, telling stories, I've been bored to death.

MERCUREN
Where are your brethren?

Q.T.
I lost them. They'll migrate back in about three months or so. I got time.

MERCUREN (sarcastic)
Just great.

FULL SHOT KAITLYN FINDING PUP -- NIGHT
Kaitlyn tentatively navigates wooded area. Moon is full, eerie cries of distress ring out. Kaitlyn, weary as always, flanks the cries, finds strategic position to assess curiosity. She spots a helpless blind female wolf pup. It cries for attention. Kaitlyn waits, still no sign of help. She circles pup looking for family. A scent freezes her.

KAITLYN (V.O.)
Grizzly!

Kaitlyn springs to action, grabs vulnerable pup by scruff, makes tracks.

INT. CLIFF SIDE HIDING PUP IN NEW DEN - MOMENTS LATER
Kaitlyn tucks female pup deep in limestone redoubt forged by running water. Behind den a gentle cliff.

MONTAGE:
1) Kaitlyn cuddling pup
2) Bringing food
3) Securing area
4) Licking and showing affection
5) Teaching
6) Girl pup out of den exploring surrounding cliff area.

EXT. MERCUREN AND THE GANG WALKING -- ESTABLISHING

Mercuren squints eyes and Shroom covers ears with his wings.

Q.T. (ranting)
...and she said I wasn't full enough and my color wasn't up to snuff, as she put it. And I'm asking myself well who does she think she is? Even though every quail wanted her, I wasn't too into her. I mean...I would have loved to nest with her, but I don't think that's what she wanted...I mean even if she did want that...

MERCUREN (interrupting)
..My Creator, stick a feather in it!

SHROOM MCGROOM
How did you get the name Q.T. if you never shut up?

Q.T.
What do you mean?

SHROOM MCGROOM
Q.T. means quiet tip, and you my friend, are not.

Q.T. (laughing)
No-no stupid. Q.T. means quick tongue, hello.

MERCUREN
That explains it. Now Q.T. shut up or I will eat you. Shroom, where's this cougar den? It's been two damn weeks now, I'm tired and hungry.

SHROOM MCGROOM (pointing)
Not much farther. Over that ridge.

Shroom and Q.T. shoot yikes looks at one another.

EXT. VALLEY- MEETING OF KAITLYN AND MERCUREN- ESTABLISHING

Kaitlyn, on other side, watches pup play and frolic about. Without provocation, she howls LOUDER than ever. Her adopted pup bolts in den. She waits. Then a distant howl of equal zest echoes back. She howls, he howls, she howls, he howls until finally they spot each other across the gentle cliff.

Mercuren and Kaitlyn transfixed. Kaitlyn coyly looks to den assesses any perceived danger to her pup given Mercuren's
proximity. She feels safe, prances, wags tail, and canters cliff away from her den. He follows along other side, tag wailing away. He lifts head and howls. She follows.

HOWLS SHAPE WISPS MEETING ON CANYON FLOOR. DUST DEVIL FORMS.

Laughing, Mercuren cranes neck searching for way down.

Q.T.
Easy big fella'. If you do this I'm getting off.

MERCUREN (turns to him)
Good bye.

SHROOM MCGROOM (flies off)
Later.

Q.T. (flies off)
Later.

Mercuren darts down dodging jagged areas gaining momentum bouncing back and forth. Kaitlyn full of nervous anticipation awaits wondrous moment. Bottom, across canyon floor, back up other side just as fast. He pops up. They delicately sniff neck and erogenous zones. Tickled, she pulls back.

KAITLYN
Are you OK?

MERCUREN
Never better.

Mercuren calmly waits for her move. They start a slow dance, a gracefully clockwise curl, then same moment flip instinctively counterclockwise. Muzzles rub as they gently whisker joust. Kaitlyn blushes, dances off. He follows, they roll, tumble and cuddle. Shroom flies over. Blissful Kaitlyn innately jumps for Shroom.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Get your lady in line Mercuren!

KAITLYN
I'm not his lady, yet.
(recovering)
It talks?

MERCUREN
Unfortunately.

SHROOM MCGROOM
I see how it is.

They start to play again.
SHROOM MCGROOM (CONT'D)

Hi, name's Shroom McGroom.

Overflowing elation, they ignore him and play.

EXT. UNDER TREE -- MOMENTS LATER

Tired, they sit in shade and overlook her den.

KAITLYN
Where're you heading?

MERCUREN (to Shroom)
We were looking for something.
(to Kaitlyn)
But now, just North.

KAITLYN
Me too!

MERCUREN
Really?

KAITLYN
Yup', Polaris.

MERCUREN
Let's go together!

KAITLYN
I would, but something came up.

INT. CLIFF DEN -- CONTINUOUS

All in den shower pup with love.

SHROOM MCGROOM
What's her name?

KAITLYN
Anita.

MERCUREN
So we'll wait till she's a bit older
then we'll all go north together.

KAITLYN
You'll wait for me?

MERCUREN
Are you kidding, I've been waiting
my whole life for you.

Eyes tenaciously lock, carnal licks of love ensue.

SHROOM MCGROOM
I'm outta here.
Q.T.
Wait for me.

As they fly out den, ANITA waddles behind.

EXT. DEN -- ESTABLISHING

Mercuren returns, bouquet of assorted wild flowers in mouth. Kaitlyn cleans den, turns, flowers are placed at her feet.

KAITLYN
Aw...how sweet, thank you baby.

MERCUREN
I know this is cliché and done in every love story, but the best part, they're all edible.

They devour the flowers.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
That color tastes the best to me.

KAITLYN
Me too.

They share yellow wild flower, each eats half.

MERCUREN
Where's the rowdy bunch?

KAITLYN
Behind, playing hide-n-seek.

MERCUREN
Nice, teaching her life skills.

They walk behind the den.

ANITA (running)
Hi mom! Hi Dad!

She jumps all over them sparking play wrestle.

MERCUREN
Where is he?

ANITA
I don't know, but I've been looking for like hours.

Q.T. buzzes Mercuren's leg.

MERCUREN (jumping)
Damn you Quail! You nearly gave me a heart attack.
Shroom McGroom hides in the periphery.

    SHROOM MCGROOM
    Ha-ha.

His laugh gives away his position. Anita jumps up and gently grabs Shroom with her lips.

    SHROOM MCGROOM (CONT'D)
    I taught her well.

She releases him. Q.T flutters back and lands on Mercuren's back.

    Q.T.
    I'm good.

No one answers him.

    Q.T. (CONT'D)
    Come on, now who's good?

    MERCUREN
    You are.

EXT. HUNT -- MOMENTS LATER

Mercuren spots odd looking nest adorned with purple beetle shells, purple wild flowers, even a purple ribbon.

    BOWERY BIRD (from above)
    Get away from my nest!

    MERCUREN
    Are there any tasty eggs in there?

    BOWERY BIRD
    No.

    MERCUREN
    What's with the purple obsession.

    BOWERY BIRD
    Purple is the color of my species choice. I decorate my nest to impress my soon to be lover. The best decorated finds the best mate.

    MERCUREN
    So the harder you work to fix up your nest shows you're the best choice?

    BOWERY BIRD (flies down)
    Well said. Have you found your true love?
MERCUREN
Yes, I believe I have.

BOWERY BIRD
How do you know?

MERCUREN
She has the six gifts of wowolfhood.

BOWERY BIRD
Wowolfhood? They are?

MERCUREN

BOWERY BIRD
Wow.

(flies off)
Remember, you can always do more.

Mercuren walks away pondering.

INT. DEN -- MOMENTS LATER

He drags remains of hare in. Anita eats first. Mercuren's ears pop up. He darts to light at mouth of den, scans surrounding terrain. A lumbering grizzly is in their vector.

MERCUREN
Shoot!

He zips back in.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
We have to go.

KAITLYN
Where?

MERCUREN
No time to explain. Let's go!

They all swiftly duck behind den disappearing into woods.

KAITLYN
What's going on?

MERCUREN
A grizzly. Before it hibernates, its hungry and takes risks like never before. We wouldn't have a chance to save our little girl or ourselves—trust me.

KAITLYN
I do. But where?
MERCUREN
Let's just go, we'll find something under the North star to call home.

INT. UNDER TREE -- NIGHT
Kaitlyn paces back and forth under a fallen tree ditch. Anita, sitting, watches nervous Kaitlyn yo-yo past.

ANITA
Where is he?

KAITLYN
I don't know. Hunting's bad with winter coming, but this is too long. (pregnant pause) I can't just wait here. Sweetie?

Q.T. (demure grin)
Yes?

ANITA (to quail)
Yes mom.

KAITLYN
Stay here do not move a muscle, remain as still as Q.T. Shroom, hover around the den and keep a sharp eye for trouble.

SHROOM MCGROOM
Will do.

Kaitlyn goes from a slow trot to run.

ANITA
Good luck.

KAITLYN (over shoulder)
If he comes back before me, tell him to stay put. I'm heading this way.

EXT. KAITLYN SEARCHING MEETS CHIPMUNK -- MOMENTS LATER
Kaitlyn presses nose to ground searching for Mercuren's scent.

CHIPMUNK (nearby)
Whoa-whoa, thief...thief!

Kaitlyn chases it up tree.

CHIPMUNK (up tree) (CONT'D)
Come on man- get your own nuts. That's my stash.
KAITLYN
I don't want your nuts. I'm looking for a wolf.

CHIPMUNK
Ugly fellow all white with a black blotch on his back.

KAITLYN
Yes! You've seen him?

CHIPMUNK
Nope, can't say I have.

KAITLYN (attempts to climb)
Why you little!

CHIPMUNK
Kidding-kidding, he went that way after hoarding most my nuts.

She heads in the direction the chipmunk suggested.

CHIPMUNK (CONT'D)
I want them back!

EXT. BEAR TRAP -- MOMENTS LATER

Kaitlyn scans from highest vantage point. She hears a howl, satellite-dish ears hone in. Off running down dangerous cliff clasping jagged rocks with her nails. Howl grows louder every bound. She comes to worn trail, slows lowering for scent. She spots Mercuren lying in fallen leaves and shrubs.

KAITLYN
Mercuren!

Slow-mo sprint to him. He is covered by leaves and bleeds bad. Before she gets there, he moves shaking leaf-litter from body revealing a CINNAMON not black patch, subtly sighs. Not Mercuren, Kaitlyn searches around the wolf and nudges him with her snout. The wolf howls in grave pain.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)
What's wrong? What can I do?

BUTCH (barely audible)
Caught.

He squirms exposing one crushed leg and paw caught in an insidious green steel bear trap camouflaged beneath leaves.

KAITLYN
Oh dear, oh no, what-what should I do?
BUTCH
Pain young lady...I'm going to die.

Kaitlyn digs unearthed chain attached to undeveloped tree. She chews chains in vain.

BUTCH (CONT'D)
Tried it already. It's too late.

KAITLYN
Don't you quit, OK. We're going to get you out of this. Just breathe and let's think together.

BUTCH
Did you even see my leg? Even if I get out, I'm dead.

KAITLYN
It's not true. I've been hurt real bad too.

BUTCH
This bad?

KAITLYN
Close.

Kaitlyn tugs lightly on chain. Butch howls in pain.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)
First we need to get you in a better position. Can you move at all?

BUTCH
A bit.

KAITLYN
What's your name?

BUTCH
Butch.

KAITLYN
I'm Kaitlyn Butch. Try not to speak too much, conserve your energy. We're going to need it.

Kaitlyn scans for potential tools or ideas.

BUTCH
I left a great family for this...to die?

KAITLYN
You're not dying here, not now!
Kaitlyn pries bear trap with teeth. He screams. She stops.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)
There's only one thing to do.

BUTCH
Die?

KAITLYN
No, topple this tree down.

BUTCH
Crazy lady.

Kaitlyn furiously digs roots to which bear trap is attached. Round and round she goes until roots are exposed. She lunges with front paws on the stump over and over with all her might, but the tree does not give, but shows vulnerability by budging. She keeps at it, over and over. Butch manages to crawl trunk and puts his dead wait on it, a feeble attempt to help Kaitlyn topple it. Together they push—nothing.

BUTCH (CONT'D)
Tell my family of my fate and that I love them.
(cries)
And I am so sorry that I failed them.

KAITLYN
Butch...this tree is coming down!

Kaitlyn takes hard deep breath, curls lips back to attack mode and strikes trunk over and over. Like a beaver she chews away a healthy sized gash. She continues to chew a cheese-wedge. She pushes again, it falls sending a cracking sound throughout the forest. Kaitlyn rejoices. Butch does not share her enthusiasm. She examines him closer, new blood is on his cinnamon patch. Then ANOTHER CRACK echoes out. A man emerges changing semiautomatic Ak-47 riffle clip, sprays entire forest. Kaitlyn dashes off, bullets whiz past. Panting hard, she finally makes a safe distance.

EXT. FUR TRAPPER KILL -- CONTINUOUS

A KID and old FUR TRAPPER stand over Butch.

FUR TRAPPER
Feisty bastard. You believe the will to survive?

KID (oddly looking at old man)
It's something.

FUR TRAPPER
Shoot it in the head.
KID
Really?

FUR TRAPPER
Let's go. We've got four more traps to check.

Butch stares into the heart of the young boy who is shaking. Butch then turns away and places his head in the dirt.

EXT. KAITLYN TERRIFIED -- CONTINUOUS
Kaitlyn, terrified, hears a single shot echo out.

EXT. FUR TRAPPER HIDE -- CONTINUOUS
Butch's hide hangs over the old man's back.

EXT. BUTCHES GRAVE -- MOMENTS LATER
Kaitlyn sneaks back to where Butch was tortured and slain. A furless fleshy body already fly-ridden is all that remains. She mourns with whimpers and circles what is left of Butch.

KAITLYN (V.O.)
Mercuren.

Off she goes.

EXT. KAITLYN RETURNING TO MAKESHIFT DEN -- NIGHT
Kaitlyn, tired and worn from searching far and wide, returns to den. Inside the group plays.

MERCUREN (exits den)
Where've you been?

KAITLYN (nervous wreck)
Looking for you! I thought something happened! Butch is dead and...

MERCUREN (interrupting)
...Who, what?, whoa, just-just come in sweetie. Calm down, let's talk.

She enters to a magical bed of black fur and feathers.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
Your berthing area.

Kaitlyn looks deep into his eyes, overwrought by an array of emotions, she tries to stifle tears. They snuggle.

KAITLYN (sniffling)
It's beautiful.
MERCUREN
The pups should like it too.

KAITLYN
Oh they will, yes they will.

MERCUREN
There is something I need to tell all of you. We're going to have to move further north.

Quail, Anita and Shroom listen up.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
When I was gathering for your bed, I detected a unmistakable warning. We're in a pac's territory and need to heed it.

KAITLYN
Anything, I trust your judgment.

Q.T.
I'm only around for another month or so. I got a family to get back to.

ANITA
Let's do it.

MERCUREN
Thank you. We'll stay tonight and find a safe place to have our kin. We leave tomorrow.

KAITLYN
Oh, only one night with the bed?

MERCUREN (smiles)
They'll be others. Now tell me about this Butch.

KAITLYN (lamenting)
He looked just like you from afar, but wasn't. He was caught...
(she fades out)

Mercuren rubs the webs between her toes.

EXT. DEN - AFTERNOON


KAITLYN
How much longer is he going to be?
ANITA
You know him. He's backtracking, doubling back, flanking finding and mapping the best route clear of any danger.

KAITLYN
I know. It's just taking so long.

ANITA
Patience mother, we'll be all right.

COUGAR STALKING - CONTINUOUS

Two intertwined trees 300 from den. COUGAR with two distinct marks eyes Kaitlyn and Anita. Cougar slithers down back of tangled trees: Stalks, slopes and darts.

Q.T. (out of nowhere)
Run!

Before Kaitlyn turns a swat breaks her in half. Single yelp, she falls and lay motionless. The cougar salivates then turns attention to Anita. They circle, Anita grows bigger with each breath. A branch snaps, cougar pinholes sound and turns. There stand a ferocious Mercuren.

MERCUREN
You!


MERCUREN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This is for K'leb.

One last bite decapitates the cougars head.

KAITLYN LAY LIFELESS

MERCUREN (out of breath) (CONT'D)
Let's...get her...inside.

Anita and Mercuren drag her dead weight inside den. They gently place her on bed.
MERCUREN (whispering) (CONT'D)
She's still breathing. Don't give up. Sweetie-sweetie, please don't leave us.

ANITA (voice cracks)
What are we gonna do?

MERCUREN
We must love her back to health. (pregnant pause)
We're not goin' to leave. We can't leave with her like this. I will kill...
(direct eye contact)
...anything-wolf that threatens our family! Now get food and water.

INT. DEN - MOMENTS LATER
Anita with fur drenched returns with juicy plants. She enters and lets water from her fur pool onto floor. Both Anita and Mercuren lap water into her mouth, place food by her nose.

MERCUREN
Her entire side is caved in here, but it's too early to tell if she broke her spine. (his eyes well)
Place heat by her injuries, lick them to stimulate area to heal. And listen, this's important, one of us always-always keep direct contact with her. We'll take shifts. (to Anita)
This means you're going to have to hunt bigger game.

ANITA
I will dad, whatever it takes.

MERCUREN
I know you will.

Anita affectionately rubs along Mercuren's body as he licks Kaitlyn's wounded areas. They hold back tears and look away from each other.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
Now go get more water.

She makes off.

MERCUREN (yelling) (CONT'D)
Anita?
ANITA (stops and turns)

Yeah dad.

MERCUREN

Thank you.

INT. KAITLYN TAKING BABY STEPS -- MORNING

Kaitlyn manages to nudge food to her mouth. Anita helps move it closer. Kaitlyn tries to eat, but food falls out. Mercuren enters, drops food, rubs belly with his snout.

ANITA

She tried to eat!

MERCUREN

Good-good, that's a great sign.

ANITA

Dad, can I talk to you outside?

MERCUREN

You know the rules.

ANITA

I'll keep contact with my tail.

MERCUREN

OK.

They stop at den entrance. Anita's tail contacts Kaitlyn.

ANITA

We haven't talked about this, but here it goes. What about the babies?

He drops head in paws and sighs.

MERCUREN

It's too early Anita. I don't know.

He trudges back inside the den. Anita looks away.

INT. DEN BIRTH -- EVENING

Kaitlyn looking much better, but still immobile pushes out stillborn after stillborn crying hysterically.

MERCUREN

It's OK darling. Please don't cry.

One more good push and two pink, barely moving, pups arrive.

ANITA

They're alive!
SHROOM MCGROOM
They are! They are!

Q.T.
I want to see!

Cries of joy fill the den.

INT. DEN ATTEMPTING TO GET UP -- AFTERNOON

Mercuren, an all too familiar situation, uses his nose to nudge Kaitlyn to prop against the wall.

KAITLYN (wincing)
Ouch. Ouch.

MERCUREN
I'm sorry, but you must get circulation back to your under-body.

They stay, his head propped under her legs like a crutch, for a long while. She leans on him and wall for support.

KAITLYN (struggling to speak)
My belly feels wet or something.

You can't see Mercuren's face buried under Kaitlyn, but hear sniffles.

MERCUREN (sniffling)
Reminds me of K'Leb when we were kids. He had a hard time standing at first, but fought. I find his strength in you.

KAITLYN (dragging words)
You..know..

MERCUREN
Don't speak, just listen. Before I met you my inner flame went out. Now flames burst inside. I want to thank you for rekindling my inner spirit. Thank you love.

Kaitlyn smiles and comfortably lowers eyelids.

INT. DEN WALKING -- AFTERNOON

Mercuren uses head to stabilize her on all fours. Caved in on one side, her damage is clear and permanent. Two black pups jockey for teat position.

MERCUREN (to Kaitlyn)
You're doing so much better.
KAITLYN
I feel better. Let's get out of the den a bit.

He guides her and they circle slowly. They try to switch direction, noticeably difficult going to her wounded side.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)
Not so fast. It's still too tender.

MERCUREN
You broke so many ribs, maybe all.

KAITLYN
Thanks.

MERCUREN
I didn't mean to discourage or...

KAITLYN (interrupting)
No-no, it's funny because, or sad depending how you look at it, but I broke ribs when I was younger on the opposite side.

MERCUREN
Really? And look how well you turned out.

They share a gentle chuckle.

KAITLYN (wincing)
Ouch...don't make me laugh.

INT. KAITLYN HOBBLING WITH A HITCH ON HER OWN -- DAY

Anita returns, vomits food for the cubs who are bigger.

MERCUREN
Anita, can I see you outside?

ANITA
Sure dad.

They walk out.

MERCUREN
I haven't told you how much you have meant to the survival of this family. You'll always be my number one. Don't forget that.

They rub and lick cheeks.
Mercuren spots strange wolf far away. They eye one another. Unknown wolf gingerly walks toward Mercuren. Mercuren sizes situation looking around for others. Mercuren's tail and hairs stand up, gums quiver back. He readies, waits. Unknown advances, 100 ft away, suddenly two more wolves flank. It stops 20 ft away. Mercuren stands ground.

WOLF STRANGER (loud)
Do not run or it will be your last.
Pay great mind to what I impart.

Mercuren cautiously closes gap between them.

WOLF STRANGER (CONT'D)
We know you killed the cougar. We thank you. He has been menacing our young far too long. It took great courage and we all applaud you.

MERCUREN
Thanks.

WOLF STRANGER
But you are on our turf which we've fought millennia protecting. Now we let you stay because of your situation.

MERCUREN
I understand and thank...

WOLF STRANGER (interrupting)
...But now, now it's been four months and you're family grows. This land does not have the resources for two overlapping packs. Food is scant since logging squandered our most fertile hunting ground.

The other two wolves, with Mercuren's knowledge, surround.

MERCUREN (looking at numbers)
I fully understand the code and if you could just give us two more months until my mate can travel, we'll be gone. We're heading north to Polaris.

WOLF STRANGER
You have one.

All three wolves turn and leave, Mercuren wiped out.
EXT. DEN -- MOMENTS LATER

They huddle outside. The pups play. Q.T. and dragonfly on Mercuren's back. Anita and Kaitlyn lean on wall.

MERCUREN
We have one month.

KAITLYN
How are we, with me in my...?

MERCUREN (interrupting)
...Time to prepare. We need discipline and drilling. You will make it. Oh yes, you will.

EXT. DEN -- ESTABLISHING

Kaitlyn, sandwiched between Mercuren and Anita, tentatively trots.

KAITLYN
Ow...ouch.

Kaitlyn stops and struggles to breath.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)
My lungs, the pain.

MERCUREN
We'll rest and try again. Maybe faster this time?

Anita and Kaitlyn look to Mercuren.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
Yes, faster. You've got to get beyond the pain. Your spine is fine, ribs are healing and your hip...

Kaitlyn pays close attention.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
...will probably have a hitch for life, big whoop, who cares.

Kaitlyn's hangs her head.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
But we'll be together, with a family of our own. That's all that matters. I love you so much. You know that.

Kaitlyn takes a deep breath.

KAITLYN
Let's do it.
They trot back double time. She bounces between them. Anita and Mercuren tighten up like body cast and run even faster.

**EXT. DEN -- DAY**

They run, Kaitlyn sandwiched in the middle. Mercuren signals Anita. Anita pulls away a foot keeping stride. Kaitlyn runs, decent speed, with just Mercuren for support.

**EXT. DEN FULL SPEED AHEAD -- DAY**


MERCUREN (cheering)
You go...go!

Q.T. (yelling)
Yes...yes!

Like riding a bike, Kaitlyn picks up pace close to old form.

**EXT. LEAVING DEN - DAY**

The entire family huddles around Mercuren like the last play of the game, including Q.T. and Shroom.

MERCUREN
There's one speed, mine. So is everyone in?

SHROOM MCGROOM
Hell yeah! I can't wait to see what comes next.

MERCUREN
You do realize you are going to freeze to death?

SHROOM MCGROOM
Sure.

MERCUREN
OK.
(to quail)
Heading back to your family?

Q.T.
Ah, they left me. You're my family.

MERCUREN
It's going to be cold and I'm not sure you'll make it.
Q.T.
What are you saying? I'll tough it out.
(under breath)
Call me a wimp.

They lick their gangly pups now frisky with distinct markings.

EXT. TRAVELING -- EVENING

Sparse tree line and snow indicate higher latitude. Mercuren nudges Kaitlyn from behind up steep slope. At top, he stops near a crevice.

MERCUREN
Looks like a badger den. Start excavating this, all of you. I'll see if this area is safe.
(to quail and Shroom)
Get off.

Mercuren leaves on patrol.

EXT. CREVICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Mercuren returns. They look up. North star practically above them.

MERCUREN
Do you see that range of mountains over there, beyond this great lake?

KAITLYN
Yes.

MERCUREN
I say it's about a two week journey from here. That's our new home.

INT. CREVICE -- CONTINUOUS

That night they huddle together, Q.T. inside the mass of wolves, Shroom McGroom tucked warmly beneath Q.T.

EXT. MARCHING FORTH -- AFTERNOON

The plod through deep snow, unaffected, long legs and web-like feet make it effortless. Mercuren halts, satellite ears catch a sound.

ANITA
What?

SHROOM MCGROOM
What?
MERCUREN
You hear that?

KAITLYN
Yes.

ANITA
I'm scared.

A helicopter rises over mountains in their direction.

INT. HELICOPTER -- CONTINUOUS

Man hangs out strapped to a small two-man copter' aiming rifle wearing arctic gear, headdress and earphones. They fly past, bank back around.

MERCUREN (yelling)
They're coming back around!

KAITLYN
What are we gonna do!

MERCUREN
I'm running that way!
(to Kaitlyn)
You take everyone that way! Meet me at the spot. I'll see you there. I love you.

Before she utters a word, he bounds through snow leaving deep tracks. This draws helicopter's attention. It banks hard left after him. Kaitlyn and the rest huddle together and watch in horror. The copter lowers. Mercuren does not let up. A single shot and he rolls on ground like a furry snowball.

KAITLYN AND BUNCH HOWL

Copter hovers. Shooter claps hands, they land beside Mercuren. His body is heaved into Copter, they take off. Paralyzed by fear, Kaitlyn waits till its out sight and sound.

ANITA (to Kaitllyn)
What now!?

Kaitlyn does not answer.

ANITA (CONT'D)
Mom! What now?

KAITLYN (eyes well)
We go to our new home. We do what he said.

They sullenly make way toward rendezvous.
INT. CAGE -- ESTABLISHING

Pitch dark, groggy Mercuren awakes in a 8' by 8' cage.

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
Psst, you up man?

Mercuren jumps to right of cage.

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT (CONT'D)
It's hard at first. I remember my first day, still gives me the heebie-jeebies.

MERCUREN (eyes peel apart)
Where am I?

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
You're caught man, done, cooked, a fur wolf plant...it's all over now.

CAUGHT WOLF ON RIGHT
Ah...you don't know that. He don't know that.

Mercuren jumps left of cage.

CAUGHT WOLF ON RIGHT (CONT'D)
And stop saying that or maybe it will come true fool, like a self-prophecy of something.
(to Mercuren)
Don't listen to the fool.

MERCUREN
Where are we?

CAUGHT WOLF ON RIGHT
How should I know? I just know not to listen him...he's a fool and the reason we're in this mess.

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
There it is. Blame the older brother game. Three weeks of this crap now. I'm ready to donate...damn.

MERCUREN
Whoa, how long you guys been here?

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
About a month or two, I don't know too well. You lose track of time in the dark all day.
CAUGHT WOLF ON RIGHT
Don't listen to that fool. We've been here one week, tops.

MERCUREN
Why are they keeping us?

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
Fatten us up, more fur for the taken.

MERCUREN
Spare me, I'm leaving.

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
You might be spare ribs, but you ain't leavin'.

CAUGHT WOLF ON RIGHT
Stop scaring the lad fool! It ain't that bad, they feed us good and all.

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
Like I said, we're dead.


MAN
Good healthy specimen.

He proceeds to drop fresh fowl in cage. Mercureen spots a cast on his cell neighbor. Mercureen eats, becomes lethargic.

MERCUREN (drifting off)
I think I'm gonna take a knap.

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
Stay-up! Stay-up man!

CAUGHT WOLF ON RIGHT
He's done.

Two men remove Mercureen from cage, other wolves howl.

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
I told you, told you.

CAUGHT WOLF ON RIGHT
Told me what? Same damn thing happened to us.

EXT. PAC TRYING TO BRAVE THE WEATHER -- AFTERNOON

Pups, Kaitlyn, Anita, Quail and even Shroom scout baron tundra for hint of grass, roots, shrubs, i.e. anything edible.
They dig, pounce in snow hoping to rip roots up or scare hare. Life has hibernated.

KAITLYN
We need to seek shelter. Shroom can you look?

He doesn't answer.

KAITLYN (turns to backside) (CONT'D)
Shroom?

Frozen dead, he falls from her coat.

Q.T.
Well, we all go sometime?

ANITA
Should we?

KAITLYN
Eat him! No, bury him. We need to make a den quick. Night is coming and we'll freeze to death.

Kaitlyn leans down to grab shroom. Her warm breath rejuvenates life back to him.

SHROOM MCGROOM (to Anita and Kaitlyn)
Eat me huh? You ain't getting rid of me that quick. I got a few more ticks in the old clock. But seriously, I can't fly. I need to stay as close as possible or you will be burying me.

He tucks in Kaitlyn's fur.

INT. CAGE -- MOMENTS LATER

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
This is the worst place you've ever been?

MERCUREN
I don't want to talk about the worst.

CAUGHT WOLF ON RIGHT
What do you want to talk about?

CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT
What?

MERCUREN
I want to talk about the best. The best place I've ever been.
Mercuren lays on side and drifts to dreamland.

    CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT (excited)
    Well, let's have it!

    MERCUREN (softly speaks)
    It's lying in the belly of my true
    love, Kaitlyn, my queen.

    CAUGHT WOLF ON LEFT AND RIGHT
    (simultaneous)
    Aw....

Both brothers lean back and feel the moment.

INT. DUG BURROW IN GROUND -- EVENING

Young tucked deep in den. Anita and Kaitlyn guard a furtive entrance.

    Q.T.
    I don't want to be the one to say
    this, but...

    KAITLYN (interrupting)
    ...Then don't.

She turns to Shroom.

    KAITLYN (CONT'D)
    How you holding up little buddy?

    SHROOM MCGROOM (shivering)
    Not's so good.

    KAITLYN
    We're almost there. Two more days.
    Mercuren's waiting.

PAN across frozen lake.

    Q.T. (O.S.)
    If you say so.

    KAITLYN (O.S.)
    I do. He'll be there. Faith damn
    it!

EXT. PAC TRAVELING TOWARD LIGHTS ON THE HORIZON -- NIGHT

They drag as one through blizzard squinting from blistering
winds. Stall, look up at amazing light show aurora borealis,
norther lights fill nighttime sky.

    SHROOM MCGROOM (shivering)
    This is it. I've seen it all.
    (MORE)
SHROOM McGROOM (shivering) (CONT'D)
There's nothing left to see. Tell Mercurenen I love him.

He falls off and both Anita and Kaitlyn blow on him—nothing. Q.T. emerges from Kaitlyn's thick coat and flies down.

Q.T. (whispering)
Bye little guy. I'll miss you.

Q.T. buries him in a tiny patch of snow. They slog to wandering lights, braving roaring winds and intense drifts.

EXT. IN THE DISTANCE -- CONTINUOUS

From beneath the blue, green and purple lights emerges a shadowy figure. The pac livens up. Kaitlyn bursts through the snow like an arrow into the heart of Mercurenen.

MERCUREN
I missed you so much.

They cry.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
I knew you would do it. You're an alpha beyond my wildest dreams.

KAITLYN
Stop...sh, I just want to feel you.

MERCUREN
You're making me cry, turning me soft woman.

They hug, kiss, spin in ecstasy under Northern lights. Polaris sparkles above. They all peer up.

MERCUREN (CONT'D)
Close enough for you?

KAITLYN
Close enough for you?

MERCUREN
This is home, soon it will warm and a new season will bring new life to our growing family.

Anita and the others remain back in reverence.

KAITLYN
What's that around your neck? A collar?
MERCUREN
I'll tell you all about it, that's almost like a Butch story, but not so sad. Did we name our children yet?

KAITLYN
No.

They invitingly turn. Dashes of joy and merry cheeks swarm.

EXT. NIGHT SKY LIGHTS - MOMENTS LATER

Beneath spectacularly colorful northern lights wonderfully swirling...they're ALONE. Youngsters tucked in temporary coffin like dens.

Without warning nature goes calm. Battering winds slow as flake go to flurry. The lovers press bodies together and mesh as one. Mercuren's BLACK ON WHITE half moon and Kaitlyn's WHITE ON BLACK half moon form A HEART.

EXT. KYLE AND TONY HIKE-- DAY

Kyle feigns happiness and throws his knapsack on ground.

   KYLE
   I just knew it! I told you they live happily ever after. Who's the man! Who called it?

Tony does not answer.

   KYLE (CONT'D)
   Dad, did I not call it...come on?

Tony takes a deep breath.

   TONY
   Unfortunately, that's not where the story ends.

   KYLE (swallows)
   Oh?

   TONY
   About five months ago now maybe.

   KYLE
   Yeah-yeah?

   TONY
   Mercuren was shot through the eye twice. One gun was an old musket.

Tony looks to Kyle who rubs his head, clears throat and kicks stone.
KYLE
It all fucking sucks!

TONY
Something you want to tell me?

Kyle squats by creek. Tony sidles up, rubs his back.

TONY (CONT'D)
It's all right son. You made a mistake?

KYLE (tears well)
You knew...you knew all along and didn't say nuttin'?

Kyle storms off— but not far.

TONY (walks to him)
You're stepfather's the only one round' these parts who hates wolves so much he'd poison them and use a black-powder gun to finish.

Tony stops about 8 feet away.

TONY (CONT'D)
It's OK son, I love you no matter.

Kyle, spewing snot and tears, runs into Tony's arms.

KYLE
I didn't want to dad, I swear. He told me to finish him off.
(beat)
I...I...I didn't know, I didn't..

TONY
It's all right, breath and relax, things happen.

KYLE (pulling hair)
Oh my God I hate myself. You don't know. Mercuren squirmed in circles like with his eye hanging out and stuff making disgusting horrible noises. I puked. He called me weak.

TONY
He did did he?

KYLE (erupts in tears)
I couldn't do it. So he took his 30-06 and blasted Mercuren point blank. Right in the same place, in the same place dad.
TONY
I don't understand why'd you shoot him to begin with? Why Kyle?

He stands up and distances himself from his dad.

KYLE (sniffling)
Jackass said Mercuren was near our house and going to attack my little brother and sister, but it a five hour drive away.

TONY
Really?

KYLE (sniffling)
Yeah and he made me choose a gun. I chose the antique because I thought I would miss for sure...that's why! Two of his a-hole pals laced meat, injected stuff, I don't know. I hate him. I hate myself. I never thought I'd hit it, really.

Kyle further's himself from his dad.

KYLE (sniffling) (CONT'D)
I wanted to be accepted. So I woke up real early one morning, like 4:00am and took the musket. Saw Mercuren jumping after a quail. I was downwind. I closed my eyes and shot. I've felt sick ever since. I never want to be that person again.

TONY
Then you won't.

KYLE (sniffling)
I love you and need you in my life now more than ever. Is the past the past?

TONY
Listen to me closely Kyle. I know I never got to see you make a card house, or balance on your first bike. Hell, I've never seen you blow bubbles and for that, so I know what it's like to feel sick: Every day till we started talking again.

KYLE
So, the past is the past?

TONY
We'll try our damnedest.
KYLE (sniffling)
Now I need you to be there. I need to be able to talk to you whenever.
(beat)
And then you won't hate me, you'll see.

TONY
Hate you for what?

KYLE
For what I've done.

Dad quickly closes gap between them pulls Kyle to chest.

TONY
You kidding, I'm worried you hate me.

They manage a laugh through the sorrow.

TONY (CONT'D)
You're the strongest son of a gun in the world...you know that? The fact that you're letting me back in your life. I owe you. I mean that champ.

KYLE
But I killed Mercuren.

TONY
You didn't know any better. You were trying to impress you know who.

KYLE
I truly hate him.

TONY
Don't say that. Remember, he's provided for you and your mom when I couldn't. He's just misinformed. Cut him some slack for me, OK.

KYLE
OK.

They shake. Kyle erases tears with back of hand. He takes Tony's binoculars to break uneasy ice and feigns looking, but

A faint SILHOUETTE catches Kyle's eye, focuses binoculars.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Oh my god!

TONY
What—what?
From the cover of woods slithers a white wolf with black-blotch, KAITLYN.

KYLE
No...no way.

Anita follows with two little ones in tow. They disappear. MERCUREN not to be seen.

EXT. WOODS -- AFTERNOON

Kyle lays flowers at Mercuren's grave. Tony lingers in back.

KYLE (V.O.)
Sorry Mercuren. I'm so sorry for killing you. I made a terrible mistake. I thought I would miss. I promise from now on to protect and serve the wolf till the day I die. Please forgive me.

THE END