

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

Stacy attends baby. Peter (stepfather), unfit and balding
with farmer's tan, reads note aloud. Kyle titters. Stuffed
heads create decor, ostentatious gun case defines back wall.

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, XOXOXOXO...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'l-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

Acres and acres of untouched land. Autumn is making way for
Winter. Kyle beelines to door and waits. Tony arduously
searches trunk for keys. Kyle fidgets with Sidekick.

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 biceps)
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 surround something voraciously barking.
Soldiers close in 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 MERCURLLEN 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. Mercurlen 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, Mercurlen was protecting his brother-K'Lie...

(beat)

...B or something.

TONY

Mercurlen-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)

..itake 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. Diccass catches Kaitlyn from corner of eye. She stares penetratingly at Kaitlyn. Diccass snarls, fur bristles, crouches and beelines for clueless Kaitlyn. Right before impact Kaitlyn rolls on back, exposes vulnerable underbelly and throat, draws paws to body and whimpers.

KAITLYN

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

DICCAS

Let this be a lesson to you!

Diccass chomps down on her front paw. Kaitlyn yelps. Hurt and humiliated she stays still in position until Diccass is safely away. Diccass 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 Diccass and closes. Stiff-legged and towering, erect ears, taut tail, with one swat of paw she fastens Diccass to ground.

ALPHA FEMALE

Now see here Diccass. If I see that one more time yul' feel tha' 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. Diccass 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. Diccass 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 Diccass then passes her. 10 yards to go and a body length ahead, closing on first place finish, Diccass trips her back leg. She stumbles and tumbles across finish line in heaping ball of black fur, not before losing to Diccass.

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 FEMALES 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 poses 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 Diccass.

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.

ALPHA MALE

How dare you! You insubordinate
traitor! I ought to tear the fur
from your throat!

Alpha female gets wind of situation and quickly moves.

ALPHA FEMALE

Stop it! He didn't know.

ALPHA MALE

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

ALPHA FEMALE (to Mercuren)

No. Did you Mercuren?

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

ALPHA MALE

Don't you dare look at me.

ALPHA FEMALE

Did you Mercuren?

MERCUREN (let's out air)

No. I didn't.

ALPHA FEMALE

See, it was an honest mistake.

ALPHA MALE

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

(to alpha mom)

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

Other wolves watch in periphery.

EXT. HEART TO HEART -- LATER

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.

MERCUREN (whispering)

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.

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 Mercuren. Mercuren 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 Mercuren who gives Randor hard look. Tension mounts. K'Leb continues to dig. Randor rolls over and submits to Mercuren. Mercuren 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'Leb 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 claspng 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.

ALPHA FATHER (CONT'D)

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.

ALPHA FATHER (CONT'D)

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 cattles', 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.
Sex? Male-check. Age? Two-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 its 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.

MERCUREN
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 pack 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 (juming 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 gingerly courses heavy brush. McGroom hops on back. He takes a step, out jumps a quail. Frightened Mercuren jumps, sends McGroom flying. Erratic quail jumps and flies 30 feet making lunatic sounds. Shroom McGroom lands on branch eye-level with Mercuren, laughs head off.

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 gratefully 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

Beauty. Gentle voice. Sweet words.
Wisdom. Trust and chastity.

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 unearths 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 breath
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

Anita, relaxed, lies in shade of den. Jittery Kaitlyn paces
back and forth in front of Anita.

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!

Shroom McGroom takes an areal attack. Cougar swats at the annoyance. Mercuren seizes opening, attacks gashing cougar neck with practiced canines. Cougar thrashes Mercuren knocking him for a loop. Mercuren bounces back, fang to fang, cougar gets favorable deadly position. Raging cougar gouges his neck, fur and blood fly. Then, an unseen force smashes cougar in rib cage, Anita. She clamps top of cougar's head. Mercuren rises and joins, biting his ear off. Together they shred cougar to bloody pulp. Anita gives pause. In shocked silence she watches Mercuren go overkill, bite after bloody bite.

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

Sorry-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 (stuggling 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 Kaitllyn)

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.

EXT. PATROL -- DAWN

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 and Kaitlyn dash literally neck-and-neck. Mercuren pulls off. Q.T. hovers and observes. She veers, eventually finding a steady gate.

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
heebiejeebies.

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.

The lights flick on. Mercuren takes firm look around. Man enters, kneels down by Mercuren's cage. Mercuren curls lip and strikes the metal bars. Man leaps back.

MAN
 Good healthy specimen.

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

MERCUREN (drifitng 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 Mercuren 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
 Mercuren 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 Mercuren.

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 dadudin'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 damndest.

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