

PEDRO NEGRO
Keeper of the Naughty List

A feature sci-fi thriller screenplay
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FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

A brilliant full moon slightly above the horizon provides limited eerie illumination on an otherwise pitch-black night. A lone Mexican Wolf saunters to the ridge of a sand dune, overlooking a field of large rock outcroppings, cactus, tumbleweeds. The wolf searching the distance.

THUD. A heavy, deep sinking, can be heard. The wolf jumps slightly as the thud is felt reverberating through the earth.

The wolf's ears perk, zeroing toward the source of the noise, and emits a single howl. The wolf trots towards the largest of the rocks, a house-sized boulder, searching, sniffing, for something in the ground. The wolf scrutinizing a flat patch of earth, decides, then feverously begins clawing at the ground beneath. The wolf pauses, two quick howls, then resumes digging. The soft sand giving easily to the wolf's claws.

Another wolf appears, and joins, the two digging in unison. Now, two more wolves arrived hurriedly join in the digging. There are several wolves, quickly a dozen, a PACK, digging with purpose, as a team. In seconds, the hole becomes a trench, nearly four feet deep.

A sharp deep crack of rock breaking far beneath the trench. The wolves pause, cease their efforts, and backtrack to the outer edge of the trench, and warily observe.

NOW, the sand in the CENTER OF THE TRENCH, rising slightly, almost lifelike, sand at the middle sliding down the sloped sides. The wolves anxiously exchanging glances, taking skittish steps backwards.

The WHOOSH of large wings flapping in the wind. An abnormally large RAVEN LANDING atop the largest boulder. The raven is aged and scarred, missing patches of feathers.

The CENTER OF THE TRENCH RISING, the sound of underground rocks sliding against one another travels through the sand,

a hulking object takes shape just beneath the surface. Only shadows are seen. The wolves circling, fretfully whimper. A second LARGE RAVEN joins the first. The two LARGE RAVENS share a glance, then a DEEP UNNATURAL CACKLE.

The shadowy figure RISES from the trench. The air is filled with the sound of heavy gravel and pouring sand streaming into the earth. As the gravel and sand fall, more of the figure's hulking shape is revealed. The sound of falling gravel dissipates.

Out of the pack, steps an Alpha wolf, considerably larger than the others, bearing numerous scars from battles won. The Alpha wolf growls, low and intense, as it approaches the figure, sand and gravel crunch under its heavy paws.

From a safe distance, two juvenile Alpha wolves observe and scrutinize. A dozen common ravens land, wings whip the air as they perch, few cackles of curiosity. The Alpha wolf growls louder, closes the distance, postures, then the ALPHA WOLF LEAPS.

BEAT

An UMPH and a Yelp! Air from the Alpha wolf's lungs forced outwards from an unseen impact. The AIR SIZZLES, as the Alpha wolf's body sails, BAM, slams hard into a rock, DEAD. The pack panicking, quickly retreating to a safe distance, and disappearing in the darkness. The two juvenile Alpha wolves watch the others retreat, share a glance, then join the retreat. Dozens of common ravens have landed, and cackle in an excited rising chorus.

CAMERA CLOSE-UP on a gigantic, dark black eye, reflecting moonlight, as it is looking towards the TWO LARGE RAVENS. A SINGLE RUMBLING WORD carries through the desert night dwarfing the cackles.

VOICE

VETE.

The TWO LARGE RAVENS UNDERSTAND, taking flight, SQAWKING. Hundreds of common ravens converging, backlit by the moon,

heading WEST. As the CONSPIRACY flies higher, its separating into smaller groups, traveling west.

WE HEAR HEAVY FOOTSTEPS - DRAG and THUD, DRAG and THUD. O/S - Humming of a creepy Christmas carol with a scare fragment of a word, entirely out of tune, mixed with a dust-induced cough and throat-clear.

PEDRO NEGRO

Oh. You better watch out, you cry,
because Pedro, venido a su pueblo.

BLACKOUT!

BEGIN MAIN TITLES

FADE IN:

EXT. EL PASO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

A school playground, recess, kids playing. A boy walking, alone, he is--

OTTO, 10, heavy set, permanent scowl,
unkempt hair, eyes like a jackal.

Otto WALKING slowly across the basketball court, ignoring the ongoing game of noticeably smaller children. The BOYS PLAYING AROUND Otto as Otto traverses, cautious to avoid confrontation. OTTO STOPPING near the center of the court and scanning the entire playground. A boy dribbling the basketball a little too close, draws Otto's glare.

BOY

Sorry Otto.

OTTO

(Warns)
Better be.

OTTO PROWLING, SPOTS something of interest.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A school playground jungle gym, slides and swings. Seated on a pile of wood chips, are Boy 2 and Boy 3, huddled in terse negotiations, an age-old exchange of bubble gum for baseball cards.

BOY 2

No, that's no fair. You don't get a David Justice for five Doubles and a Spangenberg.

BOY 3

How about 10 pieces of Double Bubble?

DARKNESS. A shadow passing over the boys as Otto's figure obscures the daylight. O/S some RAVENS CACKLE almost unnoticeable in the distance.

OTTO

I'll take that.

OTTO LEANS IN and takes the handful of gum in one hand, unconcerned as a few pieces fall. Otto, callously, takes the two baseball cards in hand, bending the cards as he clutches them. Both boys sit in silence, saddened, but matter of fact, not upset, as fate has interrupted their trade. O/S a nearby RAVEN CACKLES excitedly.

INT. OFFICE - POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

A police department's office, wooden furniture, stacks of folders, 1980's wooden chairs for guests, cop photos on the wall, high-back leather chair for a man, he is -

CHIEF BOWEN - 50's, stern, angry all the time.

--Chief Bowen, in uniform, under pressure, and He is agitated. There are two soft knocks.

CHIEF

Enter.

The door opens, in walks a man in a cheap suit, bad haircut, staring at a phone in his hand as he clumsily negotiates the doorway, while texting one-handed, he is-

DETECTIVE JOHN KELLY - is Hispanic, 30-40's, thin build, clean-cut, well-spoken, easy-going.

JOHN

Sorry chief. I'm-

CHIEF

--late. As usual.

(States)

Admin said you need to take three weeks of vacation.

John begins to slide out a chair to sit, pauses to get permission.

JOHN

Seat?

CHIEF

No. You can stand. We're done.

John, leaning to sit, surprised, uncomfortable reverts to stand. John stares in pause, then pleads.

JOHN

What do I do? Not work?

CHIEF

I can't make you stay home.

John scoffs, short smile, quick glance at his phone.

CHIEF

(Continues)

You can come to work, but I can't pay you.

John freezes, looks up, smile gone as worry sets in.

JOHN

Chief, I was hoping for overtime.
I could kind of use the money.

CHIEF

You. Me. And the taxpayers. Guess
who wins? Your money problems are
Exactly That. Divorced twice.
Twice. I just can't wrap my mind
around that. Ever think you're
going about it the wrong way?
Maybe you're just a sucker?

JOHN

I. I.

John's phone chirps, it's a text. John instinctively
forgets the chief, raises his phone up to see. It's a text
from Sara, with her sleezy photo, reads "Hi, yourself."
John smiles.

CHIEF

Hey!

John jumps.

CHIEF

(Continues)

Can you get your head out of your
ass for a minute? Put that damn
thing away.

Chief calms down and John is attentive.

CHIEF

I've cut you a lot of slack.
Since, you shot that guy. Steele--

JOHN

--it was a good shoot.

CHIEF

Perhaps. You came out clean. But
that doesn't mean shacking up with
his widow was a good. Right?

John shrugs in agreement, concedes.

JOHN

Right. Bad Idea, Chief.

CHIEF

And second. You're a detective. Detectives solve crimes. You Detect crime. Get it, the word De-tect-ive. One who detects. How many ways can I say it? How many cases have you solved this year?

John looks skyward and taps his fingers on each other, counting. The chief is impatient.

CHIEF

Two. Two. Every other detective is over 10. What gives? Are you telling me Crime doesn't exist on your shift?

JOHN

No. Of course no. It's just, a lot of these folks, deserve a second chance.

CHIEF

Second chance! You don't decide who gets a Second Chance! That's for the judge and jury, and maybe God Almighty to decide, not John.

JOHN

Yes, Chief.

John's phone chirps, he retrieves it from his pocket, then realizes the chief is staring at him, perplexed, and returns the phone to his pocket.

CHIEF

Until God himself, or the Angel of Death, shows up on the courthouse

steps, you will bring your findings to the District Attorney, like everyone else. Understood?

JOHN

Got it, chief.

INT. EL PASO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

A school classroom, rows of desks, large teacher desk in front. OTTO ENTERING CLASS LATE, as the teacher is mid-sentence. A sign on the wall reads "No Cell Phone zone" with a picture of a cell phone with a red circle and a bar through it. A basket on the teacher's desk filled with phones. Otto eyes the basket.

Otto intentionally bumps into a student's desk as the student is writing, sending the pencil scraping across the sheet. Otto lumbering to his chair and sits. Otto's desktop is empty; the other children's desks are covered with books, notepaper, or pencils.

TEACHER

Class, there's a week until Winter Break. It's a great time to focus. Especially for those of you who want to be on Santa's List.

Classroom giggles.

TEACHER

Final on Friday.

The kids offering a textbook sigh in unison.

OTTO SEES a classmate's backpack on the floor, nearby. The familiar corner of a cell phone is in view, in a pouch. OTTO STARES LONG, the child notices the heavy gaze. The child sheepishly leans over, tucks the cell phone in further, zippers the pouch, pulls the backpack closer, and unnaturally looks straight ahead.

OTTO - LOST OPPORTUNITY.

Otto looks at the basket of phones on the teacher's desk. The teacher sees Otto's gaze, Otto notices, slides the basket away from the edge of the desk. Strike two.

WE SEE, through the classroom window, in the trees, two ravens scrutinizing Otto's interactions.

END SCENE

INT. OTTO RESIDENCE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A living room, couch, TV, dark except light the TV and from the window. Otto sitting entirely too close to the TV, playing Fortnite, Save the World Mode, on PS4, wearing a gaming headset. On the TV, Otto's avatar and Player 1's avatar are in an open field.

Through the window a raven flies past and squawks.

OTTO

(Trite)

Are you a scammer? I'm not. I know someone who got scammed once.

PLAYER 1

(O/S)

No, I'm not a scammer. What do you have to trade?

OTTO

I'll show you what I have. I have building materials too.

Otto expertly constructs a trading hut.

OTTO

Just go behind the wall, I'll look through the window and see what you have.

PLAYER 1

(O/S)

You won't scam me, right?

Player 1 moves his avatar behind the wall, and dropping a dozen shiny weapons.

PLAYER 1

(O/S)

I have a SMG, a couple Kingslayer,
a legendary potato gun...

Otto toggles the screen options and hovers the mouse above the "Kick Player" option.

OTTO

Bye, bye.

PLAYER 1

(O/S)

What?

Otto clicks and kicks the player. Player 1 avatar disappearing, and the cache of weapons remain. Otto's avatar quickly edits the trade hut walls out of the way, and gathers the loot.

CUT TO

INT. LIVING ROOM - PLAYER 1 HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A living room, couch, TV, gaming chair. Family members peacefully reading books, watching tablets, Player 1, 8-year-old boy, wearing a headset, staring at the large TV.

PLAYER 1

Nooooooooooooo!

Family members freeze and look up in shock. Player 1 screaming and in tears, angry, throws his headset and gaming control, yelling at the TV.

CUT BACK

INT. OTTO RESIDENCE LIVING ROOM - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Otto smiling, momentarily satisfied. Otto standing, dropping the headset and controller to the floor and walks O/S. On the way O/S Otto passing by a window. Outside the

window, on a tree branch, watching Otto with an unusual level of attentively, sits TWO RAVENS which began squawking a conversation, as Otto passes.

INT. OTTO RESIDENCE BEDROOM - EVENING - SAME DAY

A child's bedroom, a disheveled mess, filled with laundry, wooden sticks, empty cans, candy wrappers, shoes, the bed is unmade. The window blinds were broken long ago and hang in disrepair.

Otto in bed, reaching to the lamp, CLICK, the lights are off. All is dark.

CUT TO

INT. EL PASO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

A school cafeteria during lunch. The cafeteria is fabulously bright like a hospital surgical room. Beyond five feet, everything appears blurred and fuzzy.

WE SEE FROM OTTO'S POV - Otto is sitting next to two of the prettiest girls in school. Otto's head shudders and lips move; no words are heard. Otto's hands are shown jutting about in sync with his anecdote, both girls are smiling and staring, intrigued, as OTTO IS ODDLY CHARMING. The girl's laughter can be heard, but distorted as through a tunnel and filter. The girls continue staring at Otto as his amazing story continues.

BEAT

The brightly lit room quickly overcast, and darkens. The smiles on the girls' faces fading to terror, Otto SENSING the shadow cast over his face. A rancid smell hits, the girls' noses bunch, they lean far back. A FLASH. The girls screaming in terror but unheard. A looming God-like voice with a deep Spanish accent drowning out everything.

PEDRO NEGRO

BE NICE

OTTO TURNING his head in slow motion as the spoken words reverberate. In his peripherals, Otto seeing a dark immense shape, very near. Uncontrollable fear sets in. Otto turning his head to see the shape, and--

CUT BACK

INT. OTTO RESIDENCE BEDROOM - EVENING

Otto AWAKING from the NIGHTMARE, covered in sweat, GASPING. He is still in bed and the room is dark but through the window are hints of daybreak soon coming. Otto scanning the room and sees nothing. Otto continues panicked breaths. As Otto calms, he's STARING out at the window, and does not notice the figurine, a --

BURRO - A small crudely carved bone figurine that poorly resembles a donkey. The bone is yellowish red as it was from a fresh kill, often fringes have flesh attached, the carves are made from gnawing, not an edged instrument, no fine details. The flesh and saliva attract dust which manifests as mud and black stains, the smell is of rancid flesh, and attracts flies.

--BURRO now resting on the window sill.

Otto laying back down in bed.

CUT BACK

It's morning. Otto rising from bed with unusual vigor. Otto doing his best to make his bed, picking up clothing on the bedroom floor, and stuffing it into his drawers.

As Otto walks past, unnoticing, on the window sill, a HOUSEFLY LANDS on the BURRO.

INT. OTTO RESIDENCE KITCHEN - DAY

Kitchen, tiny and cramped, with small circular wooden table and two chairs. Moving from the counter area to the table, placing a cereal box, is a woman, she is --

Alicestair, 40's, a perpetual fidgety, frantic but caring voice.

Alicestair, noticing, but not looking as Otto entering the kitchen. Otto walking pace brisker than usual. Otto neatly pulling back a chair, sitting, and instead of his usual frown, trying hard to smile at Alicestair, and be attentive. Alicestair not noticing and does not look at Otto at all, consumed with her morning tasks. Otto's hair is brushed, his clothing proper, he looks, civil.

There is a box of generic crisped rice on the table next to a bowl and stirring spoon.

ALICESTAIR

Sorry dear. No milk. Momma's gonna have to try to make it to the store after work. I should be home by 10 - please be in bed.

Otto sighing, the smile fades, but he forces it to return.

OTTO

That's alright.

Alicestair drops a SACKED LUNCH on the table as she continues to arrange her purse, grab coffee, eat toast, and fix her hair, ALL AT THE SAME TIME.

OTTO

What's--

Alicestair cutting him off midsentence.

ALICESTAIR

--Sorry, its baloney. I know you hate it, but it's what we have. Please dear. I can't afford to buy you school lunch yet - I promise I'll get the forms to them. Just have to print them. We just need printer toner. Okay? Love you.

Alicestair kissing her hand and taps it on Otto's head. Alicestair picking up her purse, car keys, and coffee and

exits. Otto looking straight ahead, glances once at the cereal box, around the kitchen, then looks down as his grumbling stomach.

Otto standing and walks O/S, OTTO LEAVES the SACKED LUNCH behind. Otto is not yet wearing his typical scowl, but the smile is gone.

EXT. EL PASO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

OTTO WALKING to school alone. OTTO WAVES, awkwardly, at a group of kids who don't wave back, but move quickly to avoid him. A RAVEN WATCHING from a nearby tree in silence.

EXT. EL PASO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The teacher standing at the doorway, stern expression, arm extended, pointing down the hallway towards the atypical principal's office.

TEACHER

Eventually, you'll remember. Van
Berth, principal's office.

Otto forgot his homework, again.

INT. EL PASO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

It's lunch time, kids eating and chatter. Otto sitting alone. Otto looks down at his stomach as it grumbles in hunger. Otto's scowl returns. The dream, nightmare, the warning is forgotten. Otto scans for prey, and zeros in on a smaller kid, alone, eating pizza and drinking a Coke. Otto stands.

CUT TO

OTTO SITS. Otto raises a slice of pizza and takes too large of a bite, starts to chew, half swallows, and raises up, and sips from his newly obtained Coke. Otto sighs.

EXT. OTTO RESIDENCE- NIGHT

CAMERA pans wide angled of the OTTO RESIDENCE, the TREES, surrounding darkness and a starless night. A wind gust through the trees, the tiny sound of crickets. A distant wolf howl. The only light is from a single bulb in the bathroom, which spills out upon two Ravens sitting on a tree branch WATCHING OTTO. The crickets go quiet. A pause. Suddenly, both RAVENS begin squawking, flapping, and glaring at something O/S, on the ground below. The ravens screech and fly away in a panic. All goes quiet.

INT. OTTO RESIDENCE BEDROOM - NIGHT

OTTO SLEEPING. THUD. Otto IS immediately wide-eyed as a heavy but quiet thud carries throughout the room. OTTO is STILL.

PEDRO NEGRO is 3 feet tall, weighs 250lbs, powerful, staunch creature, with Rhino thickness embodied on a dwarf, with a broad forehead, dark black skin mixed with matte and shiny oily splotches, with short course curly hair which appears like a scrub pad, short ram horns about 3" long and run flat along his skull, black eyes with red outlines, teeth are black and jagged, wide chest, absurdly powerful legs and arms, wide palms with three fingers on each hand, fingers are short tree trunk fingers with pencil thick fingernails more indicative of talons, wears a shredded burlap sack as a loincloth, no shoes.

Pedro Negro's face hovers 6 inches atop Otto's. Pedro Negro staring for a moment, STUDYING, only to confirm this is Otto, ignorant of Otto's awakening. Otto is petrified.

BEAT

Pedro Negro's hand locks onto Otto's ankle like a VICE, the clasping the bedsheets in the grip. Pedro Negro turns and effortlessly pulls Otto from the bed onto the floor with a THUD. Otto is panicking, grabbing and whimpering as Pedro Negro drags him down the hall. Otto grabs a nightstand leg which trails and then falls, the lamp on top crashes and breaks, and flickers on, providing dampened light, as Otto is dragged to the bathroom door. Pedro Negro stops, releases Otto's ankle, and Otto begins to scream, only for a fraction of a second, as Pedro Negro begins to encircle Otto's neck with the bedsheet. Pedro Negro is on top of Otto wrapping the sheet, using one hand deep in Otto's hair to lift Otto's head off the floor, while the other hand wraps the sheet. Otto's face is RED and he's gasping with his tongue out. Otto's hand and feet kick against Pedro Negro but each strike lands with a minimal thud and no recourse. Otto is barely conscious. Pedro Negro flips the sheet atop the shower head and in one pull, winches Otto airborne, hanging by his neck. Pedro Negro WRAPS the other end of the sheet around the faucet. Pedro Negro doesn't stay to watch the end. The moment the sheet is fastened to the faucet, Pedro Negro turns and in a step is O/S.

OTTO'S POV is a blurred Pedro stepping into the darkness, fading, as Otto is dying.

INT. LIVING ROOM - HOLLYS APARTMENT - DAY

A small apartment living room with windows overlooking a street, neat, wooden furniture, a credenza with a laptop and chair many folders and books, a couch and a TV. There is a woman seated in the chair, she is -

HOLLY - female, African American, 30-40 years old, medium build, conventionally attractive, intelligence.

Holly, and she looks out the window in reflection, nibbling on a pencil, then turns back to the laptop. A folder rests next to the laptop, the title page reads "Doctorate Thesis: Impact of Socio Empaths on Adolescent Development" and beneath is RED WRITING. Another folder is labeled "Vegas presentation."

The laptop is open to Gmail. Holly moves the mouse cursor across the Sender and Subjects: Kim-NY "Double doctorate? - why not a double-date?, Mom - "plan for Christmas," X4rd "Russian brides love you." Holly clicks Delete for the Bride email, then hurriedly clicks delete on ALL THE MESSAGES, and sighs pleasantly. Holly picks up the folder and examines the RED WRITING, "Truly great work, deep clinical research, need to bolster with real-word examples, not lab-grown results. Using 1990's case studies is not relevant to issues faced by today's youth, why by the way, are not all precious snowflakes. Get out in the field! Dr. Walsh."

Holly sighs, rests the folder upon her laptop. A police siren is heard outside, passing down the street. Door slams. Holly looks out the window and sees a small crowd of pedestrians down the street, a few cop cars, and a police officer stringing police tape in front of a neighbor's home. Holly is intrigued, glances at the folder, sighs and pauses, grabs her jacket, and exits.

INT. OTTO RESIDENCE BEDROOM - DAY

Police detectives and uniformed officers meandering about, in the bedroom and the bathroom, some with notepads, another taking photos of THE SHOWER. Otto's CORPSE is on the floor, under a sheet. A gurney is waiting in the hallway.

DETECTIVE ARNY - 50's, slow moving,
ungainly.

Alicestair, in tears, distraught, looking for someone to protect her, as Arny badgers.

ARNY

Anything else? There must be
something else. A detail.
Something he said.

ALICESTAIR

Anything else! Like what? Like I
said, nothing out of the usual. He

was a happy kid. Yes, there were some issues at school, but nothing, there's nothing I could do. Nothing that may be think this. This... I mean, his dad is gone, I mean, I work two jobs.

Holly entering, scans, taking it all in, but is quick to recognize Arny's persistent badgering, shaking her head in disgust as she approaches.

HOLLY

Hi, officer. Officer. I think she's had enough. Alright?

Arny pauses. He has a job to do, and has been interrupted a few times in the past.

ARNY

It's Detective. Who are you? Family?

HOLLY

No, no I'm not family.

ARNY

Well then you shouldn't be here.

Arny shaking his head, motioning towards the door and a to nearby officer, looking for an escort - GET HER OUT.

ARNY

It's a CRIME scene. You'll have to leave.

John approaches Holly from behind, readying for his grand entrance, anticipating gratitude. In his final step, John sees Alicestair, pauses with uncertainty, and advances cautiously. Alicestair spots John, they make eye-contact. Alicestair's face, already a mess, is awash with anger. John squeamishly withdraws eye contact.

JOHN

(To Alicestair)
Hi, Alice. I'm so. Sorry.

John nods somberly to Alicestair, steps in close, looks to see if Holly is watching. Holly is watching. John commits to a sympathetic hug. Alicestair resists John quickly, and awkwardly settles for a quick hand squeeze of her shoulder. Holly notices the strange interaction. John quickly pivots to Army, motions to Holly.

JOHN
No, no. She's okay. She's with me.

John leans in and whispers in Army's ear.

JOHN
I'm sorry, I called. We don't have anyone on staff. She's a neighbor. A clinical psychiatrist, or psychologist. Err. I checked her creds. I thought she may help.

Army contemplating, stern but unconvinced.

JOHN
By the way. Your fly is down.

ARNY
Uhh. Okay.

Army distracted, looking down, seeing his fly is Not Down, disgusted with John. John triumphantly smiles at his accomplishment, stepping to a sidebar with Army under his arm. John nodding to Holly to continue.

HOLLY
Hello, maam. I'm Holly. I'm a--

Holly and Alicestair stand a foot apart and Holly continues in very comforting tone. John and Army take a few steps away, and audio cuts to John and Army.

ARNY

(Rhetorical)
John, always a douche.
(Nods to Holly)
--Anything helps. But it seems
pretty straightforward. Principal
said the kid was troubled.

JOHN
And Alice?

ARNY
You mean the mom?

ARNY
The usual. Thinks the kid is a
Student-of-the-year candidate.

BEAT

ARNY
What brings you out here? I
thought you had time off coming.

JOHN
My leave starts today. I. I know
these people. Knew, the kid, sort
of. You remember the OIS I had six
or seven years ago?

ARNY
Uhhh.

JOHN
Steele's warehouse. The robbery.

ARNY
Yeah, yeah. You got 60 days' desk
duty, after you shot the owner,
bad guy got away. Somehow ruled a
good shoot.

JOHN
It Was a good shoot.

(Rolls eyes)
I guess.
(Pause)
It was THIS kid's dad.

ARNY
Shit. Right. Didn't you date the
mom afterwards? You scoundrel.

JOHN
Yeah. Victimless crime. Right?
Bullshit. I meant to check on the
kid. Otto. Just so busy.

John looks disgusted; Arny doesn't like the news either.

ARNY
Yeah, you mean someone better came
along. You're sure just So busy.
(Pause)
You got to wonder. If you didn't
shoot the guy, would the kid still
off-himself? Would you still nail
the mom?

JOHN
Alright. Alright. Damn.

BEAT

ARNY
What you doing with your time off?

JOHN
I got nothing. It was use or lose,
and the chief won't let me cash
out. Better to sit at home than to
sit in the office, maybe? Right?

ARNY
I dunno. Some days. Sticking
around?

JOHN

Just for a little. Gonna hear what she's got to say. Make sure she's ok.

John nodding towards Holly who continues to speak cordially to Otto's mother, slowly creating more distance as Holly is tapering off the conversation. John looking interested in Holly more than what she's saying.

ARNY

(Sarcasm)
Yeah, yeah, sure you're gonna!
That one's out of your league.
Unless she has a glass eye or a
peg leg. Good luck.

JOHN

Thanks!

John doesn't catch Arny's sarcasm.

ARNY

It's a good time of year to enjoy
your days off. Merry Christmas, if
I don't see you, don't be
surprised if you get Coal in your
Stocking.

JOHN

Yeah, thanks.

Holly and the Alicestair hugging briefly, Alicestair walking O/S, Holly turning towards the bed, staring.

John turning and seeing Holly. John rehearsing a smile for her like it's the introduction at a first date; Holly doesn't notice; she's engrossed in the scene.

BEAT

CAMERA on Holly as she stands at the front of Otto's bed, staring blankly somewhere in space. John watches. Holly's

eyes water. John takes a step towards her, Arny watches. Holly awakes with the John's movement and begins to use her hand to wipe her eyes, while the other hand fishes in her purse for a tissue.

JOHN

You okay?

HOLLY

Yeah.

John checking his jacket pocket for a tissue. Holly anticipating. John's hand removing a crumpled receipt, coins and condom. John recognizing and quickly secretes as Holly also notices, and glances away.

JOHN

(To Officer)

Hey, got a tissue?

Officer 1 looking up, understands, and scans.

OFFICER 1

Yeah.

Officer 1 stepping into the bathroom, and pulls a few sheets of toilet paper, folds them. The handoff goes quickly to John, who quizzically examines the ball of toilet paper, then handing it to Holly, who reluctantly accepts.

HOLLY

Thanks.

Holly turns, scrutinizing at the ball for cleanliness, then patting around her eyes.

JOHN

You okay?

HOLLY

I'm alright. I just need a minute.

Holly walks towards the hallway O/S. John remains, concerned but with piqued interest, eyes following her exit. Arny noticing John's genuine interest and steps in.

ARNY

You, together?

It takes a second for the real question to sink in.

JOHN

Ahh. No. We just met.

ARNY

Just?

JOHN

Yeah. Outside. On my way in.

ARNY

I thought you called her in--

JOHN

(Smiles)

--No. No.

(Pause, recounts)

I'm walking up. Get to the police line. She's there, starts asking questions. She looks hot. I thought, maybe, she was looking to date a cop.

A raven flutters by the window.

ARNY

Well? You really think you need another one? What are you? A professional juggler? No wait. I've seen what happens after you drop the balls.

JOHN

(Laughs)

(Pause)

I guess she was just using me for my crime scene. It was either this or, show her my gun...
(Soft chuckle)

ARNY
(Joins chuckle)
They USE you for something. At least you know NOW, before it costs you half. By the way, what is half, of a half, of a half?

JOHN
Yeah. Yeah. Take care.

John walking O/S unnoticing the BURRO on the windowsill, with three houseflies circling.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

Local coffee shop. Not too busy, conversation conducive environment. Hollys sitting at a two-seat table in a corner, laptop out, studying something. John entering, sees Holly. As John approaches, he sees a familiar blue hue in Holly's eyes emitted from the laptop screen.

JOHN
Hey. What's new on The Book?

Holly smoothly looks up, nanosecond of eye contact, still ingesting whatever she was reading. John smartly takes his iPhone from his pocket, happily clicks on the Facebook icon- his homepage opens, fills with plentiful updates, photos of single women, chats, likes.

HOLLY
Huh?

JOHN
Facebook. What's your profile?

JOHN NODDING, PEERING at the side of her laptop. Holly's still unsure exactly what John's talking about, but remains cordial.

HOLLY
Facebook? Oh. I'm not on--

JOHN
(Disbelief)
--Oh.

John nodding towards the laptop.

JOHN
I thought you were ON.

HOLLY
(Clear speak)
No, this is the National
Institutes Health professional
portal.

Holly swivels the laptop for a quick moment to face John, then turns it back. John sees enough to know it's not Facebook.

JOHN
So, you're the ONE person not on?

HOLLY
Well--

JOHN - PLAYFUL, LIAR! AND I HAVE AN IN.

HOLLY
--I had.

Holly finally flustered.

HOLLY
I have an account, but I don't use
it. I mean, the occasional photo,
I share with my mom, and she

shares with her friends, or
rather, friend.

John lays the guilt on her and sings.

JOHN

Oh, ok. No worries. It's not like
being a Facebook friend is a real
commitment to anything.

John standing silently, transitions to a solely focusing on
his phone, Facebook messenger, scrolling. Holly, sincere
and unguarded, staring somewhere in space.

HOLLY

I don't get out much. Socially.

John misses her awkward admission. Holly, guard down
momentarily, quickly returns to the sanctuary of her
laptop. John scrolls through messages. WE SEE his messages,
"What, no call? Asshole!" followed by a different sender
message "You have some nerve!!" followed by a different
sender message "Ok, ok, I'll go out with you." John smiles,
his luck has changed.

John, satisfied, taking a seat across from Holly, clicks on
the last message and types a quick response. Holly is
intently focused on her laptop as if she's alone. John,
satisfied with his message, pockets his phone, sighs.

JOHN - now, Back to THE SHOW!

John is attentive to Holly in a first-date scenario, hands
open, leaning forward, smiling. Holly is neutral, still on
the laptop, diligent. John struggling with a way to get the
conversations started, thinking, tapping his fingers upon
the table. Ah-Ha, decides--

JOHN

Doctor. Thanks again for speaking
with her. I don't think any of our
detectives have the people skills
to handle that.

Holly pausing, half folds the laptop. John - Bingo!

HOLLY

I'm glad I can help. This is a big problem with a huge impact. I spend all my time researching, hoping to find ways to prevent, exactly this sort of thing. So often, the parents have no idea what going through their children's minds, the pressures of the real world, the--

Holly stares in worried contemplation; John wanting to lighten the tone.

JOHN

--So, what was the story here? Open and shut?

John hoping that Holly says Shut.

HOLLY

No, it's Never open and shut. You know, most youth suicides are preventable? There's indicators parents should lookout for. If we can find a better way to predict youth behavior, we can do a better job of helping those in need.

JOHN

Maybe launch a website, or toll-free hotline?

HOLLY

It isn't that simple. A large number of children never had school reported incidents, and many parents are unaware what constitutes a warning sign.

JOHN

Versus typical sadness or
misbehavior...

HOLLY

We know there are special
circumstances which trigger
thoughts of depression, known to
lead to suicide, such as the death
of a family member.

John gulping, avoids eye contact, and looks down.

JOHN

Did she, Alice, the mom, say
anything? About—

HOLLY

Alice. She's in shock. How dare
that detective harass her, with
what she's going through.

JOHN

He has a job to do.

Two ravens outside seen in the window, jumping from tree to
tree.

A man, Bill, 40, grumpy, sleazy looking, enters the coffee
shop, the bell on the door clangs at its flung open. Bill's
head and shoulders are splattered with fresh bird
droppings, he disgusted, and cursing. As the door closes--

--WE NOW HEAR A RADIO PLAYING HOLIDAY MUSIC SOFTLY IN THE
BACKGROUND.

BILL

(O/S)

Damn crows. Every year.

HOLLY

Peer pressure, poor self-image...
suicide is the 2nd leading cause of
death for youths.

JOHN

That's not the case here.

HOLLY

In retrospect, there are warning signs, but that's, again, in RETROPSECT. In most cases, none were significant to take Action. There were more than 400 youth suicides last year, nearly 60 kids were under 11. Identifying signs afterwards doesn't work. We just don't have the time and resources to commit to prevention.

JOHN

That's a problem right there, prevention. Not that El Paso is a garden spot. But with fewer resources, we had to get smart about how we deployed them. We, for years, kept TRAINING DOWN THE TUNNEL. Teaching new officers, the same old techniques we knew didn't work WELL ENOUGH. Crime prevention takes a couple officers. Cleaning up a crime scene and conducting investigations takes dozens.

Radio break between songs, the radio host voice for a second, sound recognizable at Pedro's.

RADIO

(O/S, gruffly)

Your next.

Holly and John freezing for a second, as they subconsciously hear Something recognizable as ominous and dank. Then the host clears his throat, speaks normal.

RADIO

O/S

Up next is another holiday favorite—
(trails off)

Holly resumes the conversation in stride.

HOLLY
So, what did you do?

JOHN
One of these MIT kids turned us on
to predictive modeling and geo-
mapping.

Now Holly is impressed, looks at John more favorably.

HOLLY
Fancy words. But THAT'S nothing
new.

JOHN
Well, wait. We started with that
and it worked okay, but not well
enough. We turned to a process,
analysis, built on the concept of
a Primary Event.

HOLLY
What's that?

JOHN
A Primary Event, a significant
event, pivotal, like a historical
shooting, an annual parade, a
holiday. It can be anything,
something, relevant to the
multitude, but not something we'd
typically consider. By looking at
historical patterns of incidents,
we can quickly use a variety of
possible Primary Events, to find
potential hot spots and
strategically deploy resources.

HOLLY

Like what?

JOHN

For example, the 4th of July, each year, same date, but different day of the week. Every year, preceded by the 3rd of July. We'd rather interdict the sales than respond to injuries. We looked at historic data, and found not only the volume of arrest and the location of arrests changed, depending if the 3rd fell on a weekday or weekend.

Most of OUR staffing focused on a day of the week, or a certain place, rather than time and place contingent upon a Primary Event. History tends to repeat itself. These patterns can't be found manually, but with enough data and computers, it was easy.

Bill walks past, attempts to use a napkin to clean the bird droppings across his entire shoulder, but smears the dropping worse. John noticing, grins, returns to Holly.

HOLLY

I follow. Seems convoluted.

At "convoluted" John looks puzzled and Holly notices.

HOLLY

Complex.

JOHN

Uh. I got it.

John smiles.

HOLLY

Not use to women using long words?

JOHN

Uh. No. Not particularly.

Holly smiles, relaxed. John blushes.

HOLLY

Funny you should mention the holidays, because it was the first thing I thought of after, you know, this morning.

JOHN

Yeah, Christmas is coming.

HOLLY

Well, that's a common misconception, that suicides increase around the holidays.

JOHN

Well, My work isn't holiday dependent. Guys call the these next few weeks the HOLIDAY-SHITSHOW. It's the busiest time of year, and I'm forced to take time off.

John's phone chirps. He reaches for it.

HOLLY

At least you'll get to spend time with your family, right?

JOHN

I've got nothing. No one. Maybe a deck of cards. Of course, my chief said I can come to work for free. Fat chance. Who knows.

John rising the phone to near table level, to see the message.

JOHN

Yeah, I know. It's tough to talk lunar cycles with cops. But the full moon does bring out the-

John's eyes go wide as he reads a text.
"I'm blocking you. You're fucking crazy!"
John returning the phone to his pocket as if it were hot.
Holly keying the computer.

JOHN

(continues)
--crazies.

HOLLY

Unique. But I don't think there's a Primary Event for these kids.

JOHN

I'm just saying, WHEN WHAT we were doing, which made sense, stopped working. We tried something that DIDN'T MAKE SENSE. It worked for us. Just look for a pattern around, maybe, around Christmas?

HOLLY

(Jests)
I have the data on my laptop. I don't think there is anything. Let's see. Let me just search the past five years of data, enter El Paso, 11 days before Christmas.

The laptop screen progress wheel spins for a few seconds.

HOLLY

--and Voila!
(Pause)
Whoa. I wasn't expecting that.

JOHN

What?

HOLLY

Well, according to this, for five years straight, there was a youth suicide in El Paso, exactly 11 days before. Christmas. That can't be right...

The door's bell jingles as Bill exits. Immediately the two ravens cackle overhead, diving towards Bill, he shrieks. John and Holly pause and stare at the debacle. Bill runs, hands guarding his face.

HOLLY

Shouldn't you, like do something?

JOHN

Uh. No. That's not detective work.

Passersby freeze and calmly observe. The man disappears O/S. John and Holly return to their conversation as if nothing amiss.

JOHN

Is that shocking? No? Right? Not that—

John nods toward Bill fleeing O/S.

JOHN

--the data?

HOLLY

Wait a minute. Let me just check a few other days. And...

(Pause)

There's nothing.

(Pause)

And... nothing again.

Holly looking confused. John smiles triumphantly as he successfully shared something of interest with the smarter woman. Holly sees John smile in the face of this disturbing

suicide pattern. John realizes he's enjoying this TOO MUCH and forces his smile away.

JOHN
(Baited breath)
Told you it works.

HOLLY
You're saying this boy committed suicide, today, has something to do with these other five children committing suicide?

JOHN
No, not at all. I'm saying the numbers don't lie.

HOLLY
(To herself)
THIS IS really something. I've got to look more closely.

Holly is staring at the computer model, tinkering with the numbers.

JOHN
Glad I could help. Any interest in grabbing dinner later? You know. Maybe less work talk? Maybe like... a date?

Holly is distracted, but smiles, and looks John in the eyes. Holly's first held eye-contact. John's phone chirps again, Holly hears it, looks dismayed.

HOLLY
I don't think I'm your type.

JOHN
What type is that?

HOLLY
A woman with more brain than bust.

JOHN

Funny. I thought the same thing. Dinner?

HOLLY

Perhaps. I haven't had dinner Out in a while.
Just don't call it a date.

JOHN

I won't. Did I do something. Wrong?

HOLLY

No. I'm just too busy to get involved. For a
relationship.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

A star lit night over a grassy field. Along the ridge we see foreboding silhouette of Pedro Negro walking. As Pedro Negro is walking, he is humming and singing. Raven conspiracies fly high overhead, few ravens playfully circle close to Pedro.

PEDRO NEGRO

He sees you cuando duerme. He
knows when you're awake. El sabi
si, usted mal or buen, y deci
Pedro a arreglarlo, so be good or
else Pedro breaks.

Pedro grumbles, then emits ominous laughter. Pedro's walk takes him over a small grassy dirt mound and a small town comes into view.

A raven lands at Pedro's feet, hopping about feverously and squawking until Pedro Negro makes eye contact. Pedro stops walking, gives the raven an audience. The raven squawks. Pedro, nods, turning towards the town, staring.

PEDRO NEGRO

Mustreme!

The raven takes flight toward the town.

Atop a nearby hill, two juvenile Alpha wolves creep into view, and spy from a safe distance, without a noise. Pedro Negro turns to follow the raven, resuming his methodical march, humming and singing his broken carol, accompanied by his heavy distinct footsteps.

INT. TGIF RESTAURANT - NIGHT

John and Holly are seated at a TGIF table. John has clearly dressed smartly, fixed his hair. Holly is wearing the same outfit as earlier, has not cleaned up, and to John's disappointment, Holly brought her laptop. John is nearly done with his Jack and Coke while Holly's wine remains untouched. The menus are on the table. The waiter pauses at the table.

WAITER

Another Jack and Coke?

John waves him off, returns a flat gaze to Holly, then glances around the restaurant. Holly is staring at the laptop, moving her wireless mouse.

HOLLY

This is staggering.
There's a pattern within the
pattern. Moving West. A 100%
positive trend, shifting every
couple days.

An attractive waitress passes, and John callously stares way too long.

JOHN

A moving a pattern?

HOLLY

You said it. If there are
stationary trends, why can't there
be moving trends? I mean, it
doesn't make sense, but it's here.
Look?

Holly turns the laptop around to face John. The image is map of the South-Western U.S., with a daily timeline across the header, showing the CHRISTMAS MINUS X-DAYS, and a RED FUZZY CIRCLE over cities. As Holly scrolls, the RED FUZZY CIRCLE, starts in El Paso, moves from East to West.

JOHN

Moving to where?

HOLLY

I don't know. There's a lot to go through. But if this is correct. Over the last five years, the day after tomorrow, Saturday, there was a youth suicide in Tucson, AZ, exactly 8 days before Christmas. None the day before, none the day after.

JOHN

So, you are going to Tucson and going to tell all the kids at school NOT TO DO IT?

HOLLY

No, that's silly. But I'm scheduled to give a presentation at a Las Vegas elementary school next week. Tucson is on the way, sort of. Maybe I'll check in with the district. Goodwill visit.

JOHN

Goodwill... Why Vegas? I love Vegas!

John is noticeable excited about Vegas and grins wide.

HOLLY

We'll it's actually a school that was impacted by the mass shooting at Mandalay Bay.

John's giddiness fades and takes a more serious look. Again.

JOHN

I bet there's a spike afterwards..

HOLLY

Well... No. I called the district expecting. But there wasn't. Nevertheless, they asked me to give a series of speeches. You know, preventative measures.

JOHN

So, no spike?

CUT TO
MONTAGE

EXT. HOME - WINDOW - Raven's perched watching a little girl.

EXT. MOBILE HOME - PATIO - Raven's flying above a little boy.

EXT. APARTMENT - BALCONY - Raven's staring into a room, a boy seated reading.

HOLLY

(V.O.S.)

Well, a spike after a major event like the Mandalay would be appear equally across all age demographics in the immediate area and be evident for years. This was different, as no spike appeared.

(Pause)

But now, with this methodology.

RETURN TO

INT. TGIF RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Holly point to the laptop screen.

HOLLY

... when I pull the youth group out, there's a 5-year 100% trend, however, the other groups dropped,

which could be because of the mass casualties could have created a greater value of life in the survivors...

The spike is moving from East to West and... beyond Tucson, towards Vegas, but I don't have that data, yet.

Holly is looking in her purse, checks her phone, and partially closes her laptop. John feels like the conversation is too work centered, and looks around sadly for a distraction.

JOHN

(Sighs)

So, I guess dinner is out?

Holly finally makes real eye contact with John. John can finally see the something in her eyes. There's a moment.

HOLLY

This is real exciting. Maybe not dinner, tonight, I've got to spend a little more time on this. But, hey, you seem like a good guy, and besides that, you're not too creepy.

JOHN

(Scoffs)

Thanks...

HOLLY

Hey, that means a lot today. Well, if you don't have plans, you're welcome to come along.

JOHN

Really? Who wouldn't want a hot date and a paid trip to Vegas! As-

HOLLY

--professional associates.

JOHN

(A little less excited, but
happily)
Okay. I'm still in!

EXT. TUCSON AREA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

A BLOODY NOSE BOY, smaller than the others, well-dressed, lays on the ground in disbelief and shock, nose bloodied, dirt stains on his pant knees and elbows, hair in a mess. A circle of school children stands around, indistinct shouting. Two other boys separate from the circle, approach the bloody nose boy, squat down, and comfort him.

KYLE KENYON, boy, 10-years-old, lean, crew cut hair, tight T-shirt stained with rips, tight jean, work boots worn untied.

Kenyon with his chest puffed out, hands still clenched as fists, stands over the Bloody Nose Boy as two boys enter. Kenyon triumphantly walks through the circle of school children; the circle parts as Kenyon nears, how the same charged side of magnets repel.

In view at the edge of the field is a single large tree. Upon a tree branch sits two ravens quietly watching the ordeal, exchanging glances.

As Kenyon walks O/S, TWO RAVENS LEAVING their perch with a squawk, and follow Kenyon.

INT. KENYONS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Small apartment, cluttered. Complete darkness - silence.

BEAT

ERUPT PIERCING screaming. THUD, THUD, THUD, momentarily breaking the continuous indiscernible yelling. Shadows exist as the bedroom door is opened exposing little light. Kenyon is entangled in blankets, head to toe, and Pedro Negro's vice-like grip, has Kenyon's knee. PEDRO NEGRO

walks steadfast down a hallway towards the living room where two windows can be seen. Kenyon is fighting for his life, in violent twists and swings. Kenyon's face appears from within the blankets, and he uses the leverage of his gripped knee to pitch and swing at Pedro Negro's head, but the strike has no impact. Kenyon continues to kick and grab at ANYTHING, but nothing slows Pedro Negro's march.

The already open screened window leads to the fire escape. Pedro Negro hunches and pushes head and shoulder first, through the screen, dragging Kenyon up the knee wall and through the window. Kenyon is grabbing for anything, and get his hand on the window sill for a moment, as Pedro Negro continues forward, Kenyon doesn't have nearly the strength to slow Pedro Negro. Kenyon doesn't release his grip, and the skin on his fingers shreds. Kenyon grabs at the metal rails on the fire escape but his fingers are not strong enough. Pedro Negro doesn't strain, pause, or reflect, as he tosses Kenyon from the 5th floor balcony, into the street below. The blankets sit atop the fire escape.

INT. TUCSON POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Police office, large wooden desk complete with manila folders, a box computer, papers, aged leather chair and a few other unmatched seats, behind the desk sits-

DETECTIVE JACK BOX, 50's, heavy set, witty, collaborative.

--Box, leaning back, hands clasped behind his head. John and Holly sit across the desk. Box looks calm, and slightly bothered.

BOX

Ok, so you're an El Paso detective. And why YOU are here because?

JOHN

I'm with her. Business, unofficial.

Box shortly hears "business" and smiles slightly, but then realizes the prefix "un" with "official" and is unamused.

BOX

And you're a child psychiatrist?

HOLLY

No, a psychologist.

BOX

Whatever.

(Pause)

So what can I do for the two of you today?

HOLLY

We saw in the paper there was a suicide last night. A little boy. I just wanted to hear what you know.

BOX

Ok. There was one.

(Pause)

First, it's an ongoing investigation, so what's in the paper, is all we can share. And, until the coroner confirms cause of death, we refer to it as a Suspected suicide.

JOHN

So, is there another possible cause of death?

BOX

(Sharply)

Well, no.

It's just a formality.

(Condescending)

How long have you been a detective?

John gets asked that a lot and inhales, ready for a lengthy reply, but Holly cuts him off.

HOLLY

We'd just like to see what you have regarding the boy. We've found a disturbing trend and think your victim may be linked.

BOX

Whoa. Are you saying suicide isn't the cause of death?

JOHN

Well, no. Uhh.

BOX

What then?

JOHN

She's the one with the PHD, I'll let her explain.

HOLLY

In short, we think, well, our data shows, a moving area where suicides have consistently occurred, with predictability. In short, a pattern in the data indicated this suicide was likely to occur.

Box looks at Holly with uncertainty and minor suspicion.

BOX

Whatever. If you have something to prevent more of THIS happening. It's a tragedy. I wish you luck. Detective. She's with YOU. I'll share what I got with YOU. We can call it, some kind of cross-town collaboration.

Box sliding John the folder. John knows what it is.

HOLLY

What's this?

Holly's dumb question.

BOX

THIS. This stays in the office. No press. Don't to the family. No one. Got it?

JOHN

Understood, and appreciated.

HOLLY

(Quietly to John)

I knew it would be good to take you along.

JOHN

We make a good team.

John opening the folder as Holly looks over. There's handwriting notes, a draft report, and a stack of 8x10 black and white photographs. The photographs include Kenyon's body smashed on the pavement, the fire escape, the bedroom with THE BEDROOM WINDOW. In the picture, the BEDROOM WINDOW, on the sill, sits a BURRO. Neither John nor Holly notice the BURRO.

HOLLY

There's nothing in here about the boys preexisting conditions, or why he chose THIS day?

BOX

From my understanding, there were signs, lots of trouble at school, bullying, general bad attitude, but WHY, THIS day, nothing. He was suspended from school earlier in the week for an altercation, fight

of some kind, not his first
though.

HOLLY

I'm sorry. Are you suggesting the
victim Was the bully?

Holly dismayed, leans back in her chair.

EXT. WHITE TANK MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK - NIGHT

Rock outcroppings surrounding a small area of dirt. It's
nighttime and dark but first hints of sunrise can be seen
far to the east. White Tank mountain is in the distance and
the field of view is filled with sand dunes and rock
outcroppings.

A large HOLE is being dug/ The hole is two feet in
diameter, and descends at 45 degrees into complete
darkness. A six-foot-tall pile of the fill off to the side
of the hole entrance. Digging and grunting sounds can be
heard. In the near distance, the silhouette of an RV can be
seen.

An 80lb pit bull approaches the HOLE cautiously. The pit
bull standing at the entrance and growls. The noise of
digging stops. Scuffling sounds grow louder as Pedro Negro
crawling near to the hole entrance, just beyond view. The
pit bull growling and shows its teeth.

PEDRO NEGRO

Perro, Perro.
Good doggy.

The pit bull sprawling its legs out front and barking
feverously at the hole entrance.

Pedro Negro had coiled O/S and suddenly lunges, full bore,
on top of the pit bull. There's no fight. Pedro Negro
quickly overpowers the pit bull, a hand on the dog's neck
and the other grips the dog's thigh so tight, blood pours
from where the talon's broke skin. Pedro Negro doesn't rear
up, but smoothly, expertly, slides his head, and teeth down

on the dog's neck and bites deeply. The dog struggles for a moment, and dies. Pedro Negro drags the dog into the hole.

A moment later, in the distance, the RV light turns on. It's nearly dawn, and the owner voice O/S, calls out for the dog.

The LARGE HOLE opening is filled, and the earth slowly moves and reflects movement underneath.

Among the owner's calls, the sounds of Pedro Negro tearing the flesh and gnawing on the dog's bones, with intermittent creepy holiday song humming.

A field of nearby cacti is adorned with several dozen ravens, who begin to stir. As first light, the birds taking flight, headed west toward the dark horizon.

INT. LAS VEGAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

A school auditorium, rows of small plastic chairs lay before a raised podium, a projector screen. The room is filled with seated children, standing along the side of the podium are school staff, parents, and John. Holly, on the stage, carries a microphone, addresses the kids, gesturing to the screen. The screen shows the title topic "Cyber Bullying, Depression, and Awareness."

HOLLY

Popular television shows like "13 Reason Why" tend to sensationalize depression.

Holly pausing unusually long, gets John's attention. Holly is scanning the crowd, composing herself, a gasp, watery eyes. Holly speaks slowly, caring tone.

I wasn't always, as you know, an adult. When I was your age, I was depressed, alone. I had dark thoughts. Someone was there for me. Helped me realize there's a

wonderful world out there, and
that I should be part of it.

John staring in concern, for the first time in a while,
about someone else.

(Pause)

Your life is not a TV show. You
ARE NOT ALONE. Your parents care
about YOU, your teachers, and your
friends. We are all here to help.

(Pause)

I'll be here for a while
afterwards if there are questions.
I can also be reached by email, on
Instagram, or by phone.

(Pause)

Thank you very much for having me.

PRINCIPAL KAY - 40'S, female Hispanic,
keen and intelligent.

Kay, wearing a dress suit, leading the applause and closing
of ceremony. The children erupt in haphazard clapping which
reverts to indiscernible banter.

INT. LAS VEGAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

In the auditorium, side of the stage. Kay, Holly and John
are standing in circle.

KAY

Thanks again for coming. I like
the inclusion of the Cyber
Bullying, it's increasingly been
an issue.

HOLLY

Yes, especially with the girls.

KAY

They're get cattier, younger.

HOLLY

Well, thanks again.

Kay walks O/S.

JOHN

(To Holly)

You were great up there! I feel like the kids really connect with you.

Holly proudly blushes. John notices the compliment was well received.

HOLLY

Thanks. I really believe the message needs to be shared in person. The rest of the mediums just fall flat with today's kids.

SAMANTHA BIRCH, 10-years-old, petite, well dressed, make-up is perfect, hair is perfect, just looks a little off today, something deeply bothering her she's unaccustomed to.

Samantha walking up, approaching Holly, carrying an iPhone in hand, with an air about her.

SAMANTHA

(Smitten)

Hello.

HOLLY

Hi. What a pretty girl.

Samantha has heard this before and is unamused and thankless. Holly frowns at the cold reception. Samantha continues with her cold-open.

SAMANTHA

I sometimes text my friend's things about the other kids. You know, the kids with no phones. Is it my fault? You can't blame me if THEY show the phoneless kids what I posted, right?

HOLLY

(As talking to a teen)
Well, you must be a little concerned, as you asked. Is it something you'd tell them to their face?

SAMANTHA

(Scoffs)
No! But I shared it *privately*.

HOLLY

So, it wasn't nice.

SAMANTHA

No, but it was our private conversation. I'm not the one who shared it.

HOLLY

(As talking to an adult)
But it was shared, and you said things. Try to think how it made the other person feel.

SAMANTHA

(Upset with the answer)
You don't get it. I didn't tell that vintage thrift shop dressed loser anything. So, it shouldn't be my fault she cries in class.

HOLLY

Maybe finds something else to discuss with your friends? Boy bands, make-up--

Samantha wildly rolling her eyes.

SAMANTHA

--stupid.
(Pause)
(Concerned)
There's no such thing as monsters, right?

Holly, on the defensive with Samantha's hostile tone, now shares a quizzical glance with John.

HOLLY

Uhh. No. Not the last time I checked.

Samantha takes a noticeable breath, shrugs her shoulders, and signs relief.

SAMANTHA

Uhh. Ok. You can have this. I don't know where it came from. It reeks.

Samantha taking a PLASTIC BAG, folded in half, from insider her purse. Samantha unfolding the bag, and inside there's a BURRO. Samantha placing the bag upon the stage next to Holly and walking off.

Samantha walking away, wiping her finger with a Sani-Wipe. Samantha taking out her phone, texting, plowing shoulder first into another child, and berating the child. John sees Samantha's exit.

JOHN

She's the only monster around here.

HOLLY

What a wretched little-

JOHN

Whoa, now. Doc.
Where the compassion?
(Pause).

HOLLY

Sorry. She was just despicable.
Utterly horrid. How--

JOHN

--Reminds me of the kid this girl
I was ban--
(stops self)
-seeing. No one to teach them, no
one to learn from.
(Pause)

HOLLY

No role model. Or rather, the
wrong role model. Then what?

JOHN

I dunno. What do you think she
meant by Monster?

HOLLY

I think she was referring to the
Mandalay Bay shooter.

John leaning over, picking up the plastic bag, opens and removes the BURRO from the bag. Holly watching John. John and Holly both looking at the BURRO. John bringing the BURRO close to his nose for a smell. John jumping at the rancid smells.

JOHN

What the fuck! Whoa. That horrid!

John flick-dropping the BURRO to the floor and it bounces several feet away. John smelling his fingers and his face wildly contorts.

BEAT

A woman stepping forward toward the dropped BURRO, she is-

ABUELA - is Hispanic, 60-70 years old, short, slow moving and wise, clear spoken, neatly dressed in aged but clean apparel.

--Abuela. Abuela slowly bending down, and picking up BURRO.

JOHN

Miss. Don't touch that...it smells like sh--

Abuela holding BURRO up to eye level.

ABUELA

--a donkey.

JOHN

Like that too.

ABUELA

No, it's a Burro. Spanish for donkey.

JOHN

You mean, it smells like a donkey?

ABUELA

No. It's a juguete, a carving for children, like a toy.

JOHN

Who'd want a toy like that?

ABUELA

Well, no one. Actually. Well, at least not this kind of juguete.

HOLLY

Why?

JOHN

Yeah, why, besides the obvious, it smells, must have fallen in feces.

ABUELA

No, the smell is decaying flesh. This was made from vaca.

Abuela point at a sliver of blackish red stain along the side of the BURRO.

ABUELA

The bone of a cow. See, there's still flesh. This was made recently.

JOHN

Why the heck would someone carve a kid's toy from a cow bone?

ABUELA

It's not exactly a kid's toy. It's more like a WARNING to children.

HOLLY

A warning? How so?

ABUELA

Have you heard of Pedro Negro?

JOHN

No. Peter of the Black?

John smiling somewhat proud of his limited Gringo Spanish translation.

ABUELA

Black Peter.

JOHN

No.

(To Holly)

You?

HOLLY

Uhh. No. Mexican folklore?

ABUELA

Well, you know. Every folk tale contains some truth.

HOLLY

I guess.

ABUELA

Well, everyone knows Christmas. And everyone knows Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas. Right? And everyone knows the Elves, and Rudolph the Reindeer ...

John looking around impatiently with Abuela's drawn out apparent rambling.

HOLLY

Of course.

ABUELA

(Slow and methodic)

Everyone knows the happy side of Christmas. All the little boys and girls get excited about Christmas. Santa makes his list, he checks it twice, he's gonna.

JOHN

(Speedily)

..Find out who's naughty or nice...

And?

ABUELA

No one ever liked to talk about the OTHER LIST. The list of naughty kids.

JOHN

They get the coal, right? And in some cities, where coal is pricey, they get a stinky flesh covered donkey instead?

John laughs a little and Abuela ignores his joke and turns to Holly.

ABUELA

Long ago the Moors campaigned far and wide, and their battle victories nearly left them in control of the entire world, leaving death and destruction in their path, everywhere they went. The Moore's even traveled to the North Pole.

JOHN

You know there's no such thing as Santa? North pole. Fantasy. Right?

John looks to Holly for comic relief, but Holly is interested, steps closer to Abuela.

CUT TO

INT. DARK HOLE - DAY

WE SEE DARKNESS and shadows of a huddled Pedro inside his lair. Pedro humming a creepy holiday song, giant hands and shark like teeth carefully gnawing a Burro shape from a cow's femur bone.

ABUELA

(V.O.S.)

Well, Santa and the Elves rebuilt,
 and the Moore's impact was felt
 long after they left. Little Peter
 was born, and as he was half
 Moore, his skin was dark like
 night, for that reason he was
 called Pedro Negro. The other
 elves didn't treat Little Peter
 well. The elves didn't include
 Pedro in their games, or let him
 go over toy lists, sing songs, or
 play with the reindeer. When Santa
 learned of this, he became very,
 very upset. Santa told the Elves
 "Be Nice" and gave them a stern
 warning. But once Santa was away,
 the elves continued to taunt and
 tease Pedro. Pedro became callous,
 and distant, and began to spend
 more and more time, alone, in a
 hole he dug, where he slept,
 singing by himself and carving...
 juguete, from reindeer bones.
 Pedro loved Santa, and Santa loved
 Pedro.

RETURN TO

INT. LAS VEGAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

John now moves closer and looks engaged in Abuela's tale.

ABUELA

Santa knew he couldn't make the
 Elves LIKE Pedro. Santa was sooo
 very busy with the NICE LIST and
 rewarding good behavior. Santa
 decided to put Pedro in charge of
 the NAUGHTLY LIST and... encouraging
 these boy and girls to, be,
 better, nicer, so they could
 return to the NICE LIST.
 (Pause)

Santa gave Pedro the strength to handle the task. When the other elves learned Pedro was in charge, they were furious. But Pedro didn't care. The other elves no longer concerned him.

JOHN

This is a creepy story. So Santa gave Pedro a list. What next?

ABUELA

Once Santa gave Pedro the list of naughty children, Pedro would need to watch them. Since the other elves were too busy to help Pedro, he asked birds to help. If Pedro learned the children were in fact, misbehaving, he'd visit them, ask them to be better people, and leave a burro, like this...

Abuela holds up BURRO.

ABUELA

...as a reminder, a warning, that Santa Claus AND Pedro Negro were watching.

JOHN

What happened to the kids who, you know, didn't act nice? Counseling? Group therapy?

ABUELA

Pedro Negro would stuff them into a burlap sack and beat them to death.

JOHN

Ohh. GEEZ! Happy ending.

HOLLY

Wow. That's some story. I guess
it's typical of folklore. Like the
lumberjack poem...

JOHN

The one where the lumberjack cuts
the children's head off?

HOLLY

Yeah, that one. Always cheery.

ABUELA

The lumberjack was a real person
too. Folklore has its truth.

(Pause)

Where did you get the burro?

HOLLY

A girl.

Holly looks around the auditorium but doesn't see her.

ABUELA

(Disbelief)

Here?

HOLLY

One of the students. She was just
here.

ABUELA

Oh.

Abuella's face turns to deep concern and sadness.

ABUELA

Ohhhh... My grandson goes here. I
hope it's not one of his friends.

EXT. LAS VEGAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

A field and walkway outside the auditorium. Samantha exiting the auditorium. Samantha, with a sinister smile, walks over to two other girls, who were quietly having a serious conversation.

SAMANTHA

(Bragging)

Hey! You should have seen the look
in Kimmie's eyes when I told her
off!!

Both girls looking away from Samantha.

SAMANTHA

What's gotten into you? You are no
fun. I'll find new friends if
you're gonna be sticks in the mud!

Samantha walks away. The two girls resume their serious conversation.

Six Ravens in a tree appearing to watch the scene unfold. As Samantha walks O/S, two Ravens leave their perch, and appear to follow Samantha. The four Ravens linger in the tree, watching the two girls. The Ravens glance at the two girls, and then look around in a lack of interest. In a distant tree, on the far side of the playground, another boy walks, and kicks a softball far over the fence, to the dismay of other children playing with the ball. The boy walks O/S, and two ravens take flight and follow him.

INT. SAMANTHA BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's night time and dark. Samantha's room is preppy, spacious, with Pottery Barn matching furniture, and she has an attached bathroom. Classical music is playing quietly on her iPhone which sits on the nightstand in a rocker. Samantha is in One-zy pajamas, hair in a bun, as she sleeps in bed. The lamp on, as she's still a little spooked from her previous night's imaginary visitor.

At the SAME MOMENT, the music turns off, the lamp cuts off, and there's a heavy, deep, bass filled THUMP. Samantha awakes, startled. Samantha sits up and peers into the darkness. The glow from her iPhone doesn't carry very far, just Samantha's silhouette, and a few feet further, where there's a clearly DARKER area within the DARKNESS.

PEDRO NEGRO

(Deep grumble)

Hola quirida.

(Closer, a foot away, with clarity)

Hello my dear.

SAMANTHA

(Screams)

Ahhhhhhhh.

INT./EXT. MARRIOTT HOTEL - DAY

John is seated on the couch, inside the Marriott room, living room area, watching Family Guy on the TV. There's a sharp banging on the door, BANG, BANG, BANG! Followed by Holly's calls.

HOLLY

(O/S)

John, John! Hey. Open up!

John hurriedly arises, looks alert, walks to the door and opens it. Holly is red-faced, panic stricken.

JOHN

What? What is it?

HOLLY

Principal Kay just called me.

JOHN

What for?

HOLLY

There was a suicide last night.

Holly looks at John, waiting, but he suspects.

JOHN

The girl?

Holly continues looking into John's eyes and he understands and now knows, shaking his head.

INT. SAMANTHA RESIDENCE - DAY

A two-story single-family home. John and Holly entering Samantha's residence via the front door. The home is impeccable decorated with everything in its place. Near the interior entrance, Samantha's mother and father sit, tears abating, and another individual consoles them. Uniformed police slowly meander about. A uniformed police officer gives John a look and John flashes his badge and continues upstairs.

John and Holly are upstairs, just outside Samantha's room and scan the area. Inside there are two uniformed police officers talking.

OFFICER 1

Just a crappy way to start shift.

OFFICER 2

Heck, I was RESPONDER. Got the call about five hours ago. You missed clean-up. A real mess.

OFFICER 1

Yeah, there's BS everywhere. She must of slit her wrist than ran around like a chicken.

OFFICER 2

I've seen suicides before. Not like this. I mean, the tear in her wrist didn't look like it was made from no knife.

OFFICER 1

You've worked a suicide before?
When?

OFFICER 2

Last year, just... around this time.
Remember that kid who jumped from
his roof?

OFFICER 1

That don't make you no expert.
Heck, apples and orangutans.

OFFICER 2

You're suddenly an expert? You
take online courses for crime
scene investigation?

OFFICER 2

I know this much. Sideways for
attention, and vertical for
results.

Officer 2 motions with his hands. John and Holly slowly
walk into the room, eyeing Officer 2 as he spoke. Officer 1
hasn't yet seen them enter.

OFFICER 1

She sure got results!

Officer 1 notices John and Holly, looks embarrassed.

OFFICER 1

Sorry folks. You are?

JOHN

Detective Kelly. You guys mind
acting like this is a crime scene?

HOLLY

(Whispers)
Suddenly, you're the mature one.

OFFICER 2

Sir, yes. It's pretty clear cut.
Err. Bad word choice. I mean, just

waiting for the official word from the coroner.

JOHN

Why you so sure? Shouldn't you take a little more time?

OFFICER 2

Well, the house alarm was set. The only folks here were the parents. They seem pretty shook up over it. I don't think they had no part. Mom, called 911 in hysterics at 7 a.m. when she found the deceased, came in to wake her up.

JOHN

What'd she use? You know.

John motions slicing his arm.

OFFICER 1

We don't know. I mean we're not sure. There's a razor, had some blood on it. But the cut on her arm looks like it was made with a sword, a dull sword, or something.

JOHN

A sword?
(Under his breath)
Idiot.

OFFICER 1

Well, not a sword, but not a razor either. The cut was jagged, ran like almost a foot top to bottom. Between the pain, the immediate blood loss, heck. She was 100% committed to this one.

John sees a fingernail embedded in the spacing of the floor boards, trailed by scratch marks. John stoops, motions to both officers and Holly.

JOHN

You guys even consider foul play?

OFFICER 2

Like he said. Alarm was ON. No sign of forced entry. Loving parents story checked out.

John standing and looking at Holly. Holly has tears in her eyes, a hand up at her mouth, staring at the bathroom, where blood stains and droplets are in view. The officers step into the bathroom and continue to talk, voices muted. John hugs Holly as she cries.

JOHN

It's okay.

HOLLY

It's not that.

JOHN

What?

HOLLY

I'm really scared.

INT. STARBUCKS COFFEE SHOP - DAY

John and Holly sit across from each other, staring blankly into the distance.

Detective Kurt - 50's, wearing a suit, clean-cut, average guy, wants to be helpful.

KURT

Hi, John. Holly?

John stands up. John and Kurt shakes hands.

JOHN

John. Thanks for taking the time.
This is Dr. Underwerth.

HOLLY

Hello.

KURT

Maam.

Holly slides into the booth a little further, and John motions for Kurt to take a seat.

KURT

Thanks for meeting me along the way. Busy day. So I understand you had some questions about yesterday's suicide? I'm not how much I can tell you that you don't already know. You were at the scene, right?

JOHN

Yes, yes, but just for a little while.

KURT

Horrible, horrible... Kids sometimes, just don't realize there's light ahead. I just don't know. Such a tragedy, so much of life ahead.

HOLLY

It's..

John cuts Holly off.

JOHN

Just we wanted to know what the coroner declared?

Kurt looks slightly puzzled but answers candidly.

KURT

Suicide, but the ink's not yet dry
so nothing's official.
Why? You think the parents--

JOHN

No, no. We have no reason to
suspect the parents of anything.
Ahhh. Yesterday, we heard the
officers discuss the wound, the
unusual RIP instead of a clean
laceration. We thought that was
strange.

KURT

Well, those two... officers, usually
work traffic, and for a reason
too. I wouldn't give them too much
concern.

HOLLY

Was the item she used to make the
cut recovered?

KURT

Yes, I believe it was. A razor
blade.

HOLLY

Do you think a razor blade made a
tear, a rip, like that?

KURT

To be honest, I didn't look at the
razor, nor the wound. But I'd
recon, if I were a little kid, and
I really wanted to move in that
direction, I don't think I'd be
thinking SURGICAL...

JOHN

So. This is closed?

KURT

Our work is done for the most part. The family is grieving. Funeral is coming up in a few days. We gonna lay her to rest. Hopefully you can do the same. We good?

John's phone chirps. Holly hears it, looks and waits for John to retrieve it. John doesn't hear the chirp, or ignores it, John is more interested in the conversation and Holly notices.

JOHN

Hey. I heard that last year there was a boy who... committed suicide.

KURT

Ahh. Yeah, the Jessup boy. Jumped to his death.

JOHN

No, not that one.

KURT

That was it.

JOHN

How about nearby?

KURT

There was, around a few days later, I remember cause it was the day of the Jessep funeral, there's another kid, a girl, a little ways down the road, in Pahrump. Her name was Stump... Kimmie, or Kemi? You can call Sheriff Brown. He and I went to elementary school together - stay in touch around the holidays. He'll talk to you. Folks, I need to get going.

HOLLY
Thanks detective.

JOHN
Thank you.

Detective Kurt stands, and walks away. Holly and John sit quietly for a moment.

JOHN
What are you thinking?

HOLLY
If it's okay with you, I think we need to go West.

JOHN
Pahrump it is. Follow the pattern?
For the first time in a while, I really want to solve a case.

HOLLY
Let's follow the pattern.

INT./EXT HOLLYS CAR ON HIGHWAY 160 - DAY - MOVING

An endless stretch of desert highway. It's hot and the pavement on the horizon appears to boil in the morning light. There is nothing for miles but dessert, hills, cactus, and Joshua Trees. Holly is driving 65 mph and John in the passenger seat. The road has a gradual curve. John is staring at the lines of shrubs in the distance just to the side of the road, which are short, barren, sparse. Holly is staring straight ahead. There is no traffic at all. John looks down at his phone, One Bar for signal strength. John sees his Facebook icon has updates, decides not to click on them, and returns to the map.

The car radio plays dull static which gels with the light noise from the tires speeding along on the non-skid pavement. John looks down at his iPhone which shows 70

miles, and 1 hour 15 minutes until Pahrump. Now the phone shows No Signal.

JOHN

Thank goodness for GPS.

HOLLY

Why? No signal.

JOHN

No cell coverage. But the iPhone maps still function on GPS. Well, if you have the maps stored in cache.

HOLLY

Impressive. A man of many talents. I guess with No Signal, you'll be unable to get updates from all your little girlfriends.

John is a deer in the headlights.

JOHN

Pardon?

Holly nodding to the phone for a quick second, then returning her eyes to the road.

HOLLY

You're like a teenager with that thing. Is it really that important? All those. Women?

JOHN

Well. I. Don't know.

HOLLY

Does it make you happy?

JOHN

I guess. Well. Not really.

John contemplates quickly.

JOHN

No. It's kind of like watching the same bad movie, over and over again. I can't say I enjoy it. Maybe I need to watch a new movie. Maybe on a different channel?

John smiles sadly, reflects, staring off into the distance. Holly, analytical point made, has already moved on. John looking ahead and sees a large dark lumpy shadow, atop a sand dune, just off the road.

BEAT

John recognizing the SHADOW as out of place and his eyes hone it on it as he sits a little more upright.

JOHN

Hey, slow down. SLOW!

HOLLY

What?

Holly slows the car and looks for what John has alerted her to. John is now looking back over his shoulder.

JOHN

Pull over! Just pull over HERE!

John points to a widest, closest part of the road shoulder. Holly pulls over elsewhere, to a narrower section, the car partially onto the shoulder; part of the car unavoidably blocks the lane. John's hand hangs, still pointing to the wide section of road, as he playfully turns towards Holly. John shakes his head. As the car jolts to a complete stop, John jumps out. Holly, leaves the car and Drive, opens her door, as the car lunges forward. Holly puts the car in park, exits the car, leaving her door open.

EXT. ROADSIDE HIGHWAY 160 - DAY

John briskly walks, then jogs on the paved road, toward the SHADOW, alert and cautious as he approaches.

John slows his jog as he enters the brush, about 20 feet from the road, then, 10 feet from the shadow, John stops, realizing the SHADOW, is a--

SHADOW is a full-sized cow, dead, recently. The cow's hind quarter is missing and dark blood fades as it's further from the missing limb, there are pockets of torn flesh where the Raven's pecked through, the Raven's ate the cow's eyes first.

--dead cow. A dozen ravens are upon, and immediately next to the cow. John continues to stare as Holly footsteps approach. The ravens show no fear, and loiter, barely acknowledging the visitors.

HOLLY

Holy--cow.

JOHN

What's left of it.

HOLLY

Was it, hit by a car, or truck or..

JOHN

I don't think so. Look right there.

John points to the missing leg.

HOLLY

What?

JOHN

There's supposed to be a leg..

John raises his arm and slowly points a waving finger.

JOHN

..there.

HOLLY

Ahhh.

JOHN

It's ripped off.

HOLLY

Maybe it was knocked off by the impact. Though, this is pretty far from the highway.

JOHN

Yeah, that's a no-go. A car didn't do this. Knock a 1000lb cow 30 feet, cause its leg to disappear. Heck, the rest of the cow is intact, except for what the crows ate. I don't think the crows got together, flew off with the leg...

HOLLY

Ravens.

JOHN

What?

HOLLY

They are ravens. Not crows.

JOHN

Same thing.

HOLLY

Well, no. They are completely different. I spent a few summers studying ornithology with the Audubon society, before I decided to study psych. Ravens are - usually - larger, as much as twice the size of crows, they have thicker bills, and shaggy throat feathers, crows don't.

JOHN

I guess if you had a crow in your purse, we could line them up side by side, I'd get what you're saying...

(Pause)

Still doesn't explain where the cow's leg went. Maybe coyotes?

HOLLY

Coyote's don't attack fully grown cows either. Even if... they wouldn't just attack a single leg and leave...I don't know.

Holly and John stand looking over the dead cow, ravens squawk nearby. A hot breeze whips loudly through the desert plain.

JOHN

What were the birds we saw back in Vegas? Crows or ravens?

HOLLY

I didn't see. But in Vegas, they should be ravens. Back in El Paso, we have the American Crow and the Chihuahuan Raven and the Common Raven. For whatever reason, crows DON'T GO west of El Paso, NOR to Vegas. They don't come out this way either... even in migration

JOHN

But they go everywhere else?

HOLLY

Yes, they do.

JOHN

Pretty freakin bizarre.

INT. HOLLYS CAR - DAY - MOVING

John is driving and Holly has her laptop open and punches in a bunch of keys. The car drives past a BROWN sign DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK and neither notice. Holly hits TAB and a map of the South West U.S. opens up which shows the series of circles surrounding the historic hot-spots, with the most west circle being Las Vegas, NV. Holly points at the screen.

HOLLY

So, we started here in El Paso.
Then here. Then Vegas. Now almost
to here. Pahrump. Let me see.

Holly types in the geo-location of Pahrump with the five-year data set. The laptop hour glass icon is working. John smiles and rhymes.

JOHN

Kimmie Stump from Pa-h-rump.

John laughs at his elementary school rhyme as Hollys face shows serious concern and a furled brow.

HOLLY

Oh my god. This tiny town, of
36,000 people, had a youth
suicide, on December 23rd, for the
last five years. The week of--

JOHN

--Christmas. Hopefully today was
different. Just days before
Christmas... Man, I hate to even
imagine...

Holly looking serious at John.

HOLLY

I really hope.

JOHN

We should make our way to the sheriff's office.

Just to check in?

HOLLY

Right.

EXT. PAHRUMP SHERIFFS STATION - DAY

The Pahrump Sheriff's station is a small store front at the end of a strip mall, dusty windows, a few older model police cars are parked out front, showing the limited resources.

Holly and John exiting the store front. Holly has the laptop open, in her hand, as they exit. A raven is on the rooftop, another in a nearby tree, there a few distant squawks.

HOLLY

How, just how?

JOHN

Small station, small problems.
It's funny what some zeros and ones can do. You show someone data, they can see the connection. Otherwise, life is a timeline of innocuous events.

HOLLY

They didn't even realize it was five years in a row.

JOHN

Well, now six.

Holly's expression of anger subsides to sadness.

HOLLY

Do you think if we got here yesterday, we could have done something?

JOHN

To stop it? No. Do what? He still doesn't understand what we are trying to do, talking about.

HOLLY

I don't know. Something.

JOHN

Listen. There's something here. Something going on. And it isn't just coincidence, or seasonal depression, too much Internet, or too few YouTube subscribers.. whatever

John motioning to the Sheriff's substation.

JOHN

That guy is saying.. There's a real problem here. Now, get back on that laptop, and tell me where the pattern moves next.

HOLLY

I... don't know. Christmas is in two days.

JOHN

I don't have anyone in El Paso to run back to just for Christmas. At least anyone that's not worth saving some kid's life over. Do you?

HOLLY

Ahh. No.

Holly flipping open the laptop atop the car hood. The sun's glare obscures the screen image. Holly moves the cursor over the map. The map shows a green circle over Pahrump. Holly moves the cursor and draws a large rectangle over an area west of Pahrump, hits search, and waits. The message prompt reads "Insufficient data." Holly looks at John with

a puzzled look. Several ravens line the roof top of the plaza, and squawk intermittently.

HOLLY

I may not have the data needed to run the query. I know, let me expand the dataset first, then parse it down again.

Holly moves the cursor, expands the rectangle all the way to Fresno, and hits enter. There's a pause. Then the same message reappears.

HOLLY

Let me expand the date range to a week.

Holly moves the cursor, makes the change, and the same message recurs.

JOHN

Maybe it's the software?

HOLLY

No, no. It's Palantir. Very high end, nothing better. They donated it, free of cost.

JOHN

Well, what it is then?

HOLLY

I don't know. Let me back up a bit and expand.

Holly makes the square include Fresno to Pahrump, for all of December, for the past five years. There's a pause, then six points on the map appear.

JOHN

What's this mean?

HOLLY

If this is right, aside from these five, six including today, suicides in Pahrump, the only other youth suicide was in Fresno, three years ago.

JOHN
The pattern STOPS.

HOLLY
It just ENDS. HERE.

John looks around at the distant dessert to the west. Holly follows his glance.

JOHN
Or maybe, whatever is happening, just ends out here, but there just isn't anything out there.

HOLLY
Just snakes and cactus.

A flock of 25-40 ravens flying overhead, headed west, squawking. John looks around the town. There are ravens just about everywhere. John looks to the distant sky and sees flocks of ravens from several different distant cities appearing to converge in a POINT WEST, in the far distance.

JOHN
And RAVENS.

John nods to the direction of POINT WEST.

JOHN
What's out that way? Before Fresno.

HOLLY
Out there? Nothing. Just Death Valley.

JOHN
Just Death Valley. How...

HOLLY

... predictable.

JOHN

I've never been there.

HOLLY

In the summer, it's the hottest places in the world, like the middle east.

JOHN

Thanks goodness it's winter.

HOLLY

So, we ARE going?

JOHN

I think we NEED to. We NEED TO understand this.

HOLLY

Whatever THIS is. Where do we go when we get there?

JOHN

Just follow the crows.

HOLLY

Ravens.

John smiles at his folly.

HOLLY

Do you know what a bunch of raven's flying together is called?

JOHN

Since you asked like that, I imagine it's not a flock, right? So, what are they called?

HOLLY

It's called an UNKINDNESS or a
CONSPIRACY.

JOHN

Unkindness? Well, that's fitting.
Rather, real UN-fitting.

JOHN looking at the map.

CAMERA from John's POV, on the map. ZOOMS to the SPOT ON
THE MAP just east of POINT WEST.

Time elapse - Suddenly, its--

CUT TO

EXT. GRASSY FIELD ABUT DESERT - NIGHT

-- night. The only light is from a nearly full moon and
stars. There's BARBED WIRE fenced in area. A small herd of
ANGUS COWS stand clustered together. The sound of an
intermittent MOO carries for miles.

A heavy footstep approaches, DRAG and THUD, DRAG and THUD.
An eerie holiday carol hummed out of tune.

A few of the cows begin to stir, looking around, largely
indifferent.

PEDRO NEGRO

Aqui Vaca.

(Pause)

Aqui. Oye Vaca.

As the footstep grow louder, most cows slowly move O/S, but
two remain, calm, looking bored.

PEDRO NEGRO

Buen Vaca.

Buen.

Two large hands grasping the sides of a 300lb rock. A
slight grunt is heard. A footstep. And another.

PEDRO NEGRO

BUEN.

WHOOSH. CRACK. THUD.

From overhead, Pedro Negro driving the large rock, SMASHING through the cow's head, driving it into the ground.

PEDRO NEGRO

(Sings)

Hecho un lista.

Pedro Negro is hunched over the carcass. RIPPING sounds as Pedro Negro tears the cows hind leg off.

PEDRO NEGRO

He lo checking dos veces.

Pedro Negro snaps the cow's femur to expose meat under skin.

PEDRO NEGRO

He's going to ask Pedro who's naughty or nice.

Pedro Negro gnaws at the leg. A mouthful of meat.

PEDRO NEGRO

(Almost unintelligible)

Santa Claus is coming to town.

Two juvenile Alpha wolves watch Pedro. An Alpha wolf licks his chops. The other Alpha wolf looks behind. The PACK is in mass, looming, silently.

Pedro stops mid-bite, scans the horizon. A piece of bloody meat free falls from his mouth upon his burlap outfit.

PEDRO NEGRO

(Laughs)

Loca lupe!

Pedro returns to his meal, resumes humming creepy chorus while eating.

INT./EXT. HOLLYS CAR - HIGHWAY 190, DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK - DAY - MOVING

Desert highway, a bend in the road. The sun is high in the sky. John is driving and continues to gleam into the sky following the increasingly regular Unkindness. Road curves left, Unkindness continue straight west as Highway 190 sharply turns south. John slows the car and pulls over. An off-road trail which generally heads west begins.

JOHN

Well?

HOLLY

We'll go until we get a flat. I have a spare.

JOHN

That's some spirit of an adventure for a book worm. What's up that way?

Holly smiles, sits a little straighter, enjoying the compliment. John nods up ahead.

HOLLY

According to the map, it's called Racetrack Playa.

EXT. DIRT TRAIL - DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK - DAY

An endless and perilous dirt road cluttered with jagged rocks. John and Holly are on foot, walking briskly, the car disappearing from view behind them. The sun is behind the mountain, leaving John and Holly in dusk shadows. John and Holly slowly approach the base of the mountain. There is frequent raven squawking high overhead. Both John and Holly exchanging looks skyward as they approach the Unkindness convergence in the sky above.

JOHN

So, what's at Racetrack Playa? A racetrack?

HOLLY

No. You ever heard of Sailing stones?

JOHN

No.

HOLLY

Also known as sliding rocks?

JOHN

Still no.

HOLLY

Well, it's a geographical phenomenon. Large 200lbs rocks move and leave tracks behind.

JOHN

Sorry? Self-moving rocks?

HOLLY

Well, underground ice sheets form in the winter, and in the summer, the ice breaks up, and moves these giant rocks.

John looking perplexed but is listening intently, and Holly appreciates his genuine interest. Two raven sit quietly upon a cactus watching them.

HOLLY

Really. The rocks move up to 5 meters a minute.

JOHN

(Shrugs and laughs)
Yeah, that's not bizarre.

HOLLY

You want to hear something stranger. People actually steal the rocks.

JOHN

Steals them? Who catches them? The rock police?

HOLLY

Well, no. No one catches them.

JOHN

How do you know the rocks were stolen?

HOLLY

Geologist fellows track certain rocks, visit every few weeks, and well, some went missing.

JOHN

Okay. 250lb rocks, in the desert, goes missing, and students think they are being stolen? That's far-fetched. Almost as far-fetched as ice moving them.

HOLLY

When you say it like that... but the ice does really move them.

JOHN

Yeah, maybe the Unkindness is moving and taking them. Like the cow's leg?

EXT. RACETRACK PLAYA, DEATH VALLEY - DAY

A desert plain surrounded by rocky hills, large bolder and outcroppings. Near dusk. Holly and John walk in pace.

HOLLY

We should turn back soon.

JOHN

I'm with you there. Wouldn't want to be out here when it gets dark.

HOLLY

With the coyotes and--

JOHN

--with The Whatever is out here.

There's a distant loud THUD. John and Holly stop walking as they felt the rumble in the ground, the raven's squawking silences for a few seconds, then resumes.

JOHN

Must have been one of your Sliding Stones. Sliding.

Holly and John resuming their walk, walk by a dilapidated wooden shed, ancient and falling.

JOHN

An outhouse?

HOLLY

Likely. There's lot of abandoned mines out here. Gold rush days.

JOHN

Like the 1850's gold rush?

HOLLY

Yes, that one.

Holly enjoyed the quip and shows teeth with her smile and John responds in kind. Holly and John pass around another large boulder and come across a blood trail which intersects their path, and appears to head into a downward crevasse. John stopping.

HOLLY

What. Is that blood?

JOHN
It's a blood trail.

HOLLY
Coyote?

JOHN
Too much blood for a coyote. Is that one of your
rocks?

John points to a SLIDING STONE, at the site of the
beginning of the blood rail. The SLIDING STONE has blood
and fur tufts sticking to an edge.

HOLLY
Stone. Sliding Stone. Yes, that
looks like one. Maybe someone
tripped over it?

JOHN
Tripped?

HOLLY
Maybe they're hurt?

JOHN
If they are hurt out here. They'll
need help. But the sand, see--

John motions to a broad drag mark which precedes the blood
trail.

JOHN
--almost like something, was
dragged. But there's no
footprints.

Several sets of paw prints travers the blood trail.

JOHN
Only those, paw prints going in
That direction.

HOLLY

Do we, follow the trail? That way?

John pointing toward the crevasse in the distance.

JOHN

That way. But if someone was hurt,
they'd want to find cover before
nightfall. Get shelter. Else those
coyotes might get an easy meal.

Holly cupping her hands around her mouth.

HOLLY

(Yells out)

HELL--

John swatting Holly's hands from her mouth. John clumsily
holding onto one of her hands; Holly not noticing.

JOHN

(Urges)

--Shhhhhh..

HOLLY

What? Coyotes are scared of
people.

JOHN

QUIETLY! It's not the coyotes I
give two shits about. We move
quietly. Could be a drug mule, a
smuggler, who knows? I'd rather
have surprise on my side. Okay?

HOLLY

Alright.

John reluctantly letting go of Holly's hand, fishes around
his waistband, then taking out his GUN, a S&W silver
pistol.

JOHN
(Showing off)
Do you know how to use one of these?

HOLLY
(Proudly)
Well, yes.

JOHN - DISAPPOINTED

HOLLY
(Continues)
I've read all about them--

JOHN
(Scoffs)
--Ok. I don't think that counts, but good to know.

John holding the gun sort of towards Holly as he looks down the trail. Holly beginning to reach for the gun as she thinks John is offering it to her. John turn his body where his head was looking, and retains the gun, pointed ahead. Holly looking up, puzzled, realizes John did not plan to give the gun to her. Holly let's John move out in front and she takes up pace a few steps behind.

Holly and John cautiously advancing, following the BLOOD TRAIL. The only sound are ravens squawking and slight noises from John and Holly's footsteps on sand and light rock. GROWL.

John and Holly stop in their tracks, and scan the area, seeing nothing.

JOHN
Did you hear? A dog?

HOLLY
Something. Maybe?

John and Holly vigilantly continue forward.

EXT. CREVASSE ENTRANCE - DAY

It's is dusk, and shadows are cast everywhere, and some pockets of complete darkness exist. John and Holly advance on towards the crevasse, following the BLOOD TRAIL, dwarfed by boulders which increase in size. Ravens continuous squawks can be heard in the near distance. As John and Holly rounds a corner, they spot a DEAD COW. The dead cow is intact, but the head was CRUSHED.

JOHN

This ain't making a lick of sense.

HOLLY

Oh my god!

JOHN HEARS a faint echo from the crevasse chamber ahead and stares, cocks his head, and takes a step forward. Holly eyes the DEAD COW.

JOHN

Do you hear that?

HOLLY

What? The birds.

JOHN

Ravens. But no. Something ahead.
Like singing. Shhh.

HOLLY

I don't hear anything.

John and Holly listen quietly, the ravens squawking continues and for a few seconds, becomes a little quieter, as the singing, still faint, becomes somewhat audible. Then the air goes eerily quiet except for the faint and distant echoes of singing.

PEDRO NEGRO

(O/S)

you better watch out, you better
not cry.. usted tenga cuidado ya

que digo por que... Santa Claus is
coming to town...

(Pause)

Y Pedro Tambien!

The carol fades into indiscernible echoes.

HOLLY

Did you hear that?

JOHN

Yeah, it sounds like Christmas
Carols.

HOLLY

Do you think?

JOHN

I don't know what to think.
Wait here. I don't know what is
going on.

HOLLY

I'm not waiting here alone, while
you leave with the gun!

JOHN

Okay, okay.

John digs into his pants pocket and pulls out a TINY POCKET
KNIFE. John unfolds the TINY POCKET KNIFE and hands it to
Holly.

JOHN

Take this.

HOLLY

What is this?

JOHN

A knife. Stay here. I'm going to
go check this out. I don't want
anything to happen to you. Ok.

HOLLY - REALLY?

Holly looking at him in disbelief and disgust but relents.

HOLLY

Ok.

John nervously wiping the sweat from his brow with the arm sleeve holding the gun. The ravens squawking resumed. John takes a few steps forward.

PEDRO NEGRO

(O/S, crazy person laughs)
Naughty!

John stopping and looks at Holly.

HOLLY

Let's just get out of here.

Holly looks at John, then toward the path followed to the crevasse, then back to John. John looks at Holly, his eyes lower, then towards the crevasse.

JOHN

I'd like to, but I can't. Besides, I haven't solved a case in six months.

CONTINUOUS

EXT. CREVASSE CHAMBER - DAY

A crevasse in the canyon, a winding and narrow footpath at the bottom of towering rock walls. The song becomes audible and fades again among the pitchy raven squawks and calls.

John continues walking forward as the path leads to an open chamber. A spacious chamber with tunnels and alcoves, towering walls, a few large boulders. At the top of the high cavern walls, ravens line every inch like spectators in a stadium, absurdly quiet.

John sees shadows which appear to move on all sides. John is breathing heavy as he steps forward, waving his gun when

he thinks he sees movement. John is afraid, but moving forward. John advances further into the chamber, eyeing several dark corners, and sees a HOLE in the corner, two DEAD COWS, and a large pile of Hole Fill.

PEDRO NEGRO

(O/S)

No Santa! Who dare? Hunginn,
Muninn a ver.

John is covered in sweat, hyperventilating, hearing echoes, and waving his gun as he spins wildly.

JOHN

Who's there? Come out! I'm a
police officer.

PEDRO NEGRO

(O/S)

Yes. Esta. John.

John's world shrinking as he hears his name.

JOHN

COME OUT! I don't want to shoot you.

PEDRO NEGRO

(O/S)

Claro. You believe. Cree a Pedro.

John spins around as the words circle him. Pedro Negro emerges from the hole in a flash as John is facing away. The ravens squawk, hop, and flap in fervor. Pedro Negro is upon John as John recognizes the attack and spins his GUN towards Pedro Negro. Pedro Negro tackles John to the ground in a quick, succinct, immediate swoop. The gun sails through the air. Pedro Negro is upon John, both on the ground, with a THUD. Pedro Negro is face to face with John and has bridged his legs so as not to crush John. The raven cries fade.

PEDRO NEGRO

Too old to believe.

No such thing as Santa. Stupid
 mortals.
 No creo' a Santa, you don't
 believe in Pedro, BUT YOU DO. YOU
 listened. NICE JOHN.

John's eyes widen further, mouth open wide, beyond shock as
 John recounts a childhood suppressed memory.

EXT. LITTLE JOHN BASKETBALL GAME - DAY - FLASHBACK

School gymnasium basketball court. There's a basketball
 game, red versus blue, and a boy has the ball, he is-

LITTLE JOHN - is 9 years old, smaller
 version of John.

Little John. Little John dribbles from one side of the
 court to the other, not passing to anyone, clearly the best
 player on the team, Little John takes the easy shot. On
 defense Little John steals the ball, takes another shot.

PLAYER 1
 John, here, pass.

Little John looks for a second at wide-open Player 1, then
 continues down the court, takes another shot. The coach
 looks disinterested, and shakes his head.

COACH
 Time!

The team huddles and the coach speaks. After a few seconds,
 the team calls "Break" and claps. The coach puts a hand on
 Little John's shoulder.

COACH
 John, you've got a team out there.
 You don't treat them well. You're.
 Like. A bully.

LITTLE JOHN
 They suck. They all suck. Do you
 want to win this? I do.

COACH

Just...Be Nice out there.

For a second Little John looks petrified from the comment "be nice." Something clicks. In a pivotal change of attitude, Little John REMEMBERS SOMETHING, looks down, then smiles, jogs onto the court.

LITTLE JOHN

(To team)

Let's go guys!

Little John passes the ball, and claps and smiles. Little John passes to Player 1, who misses an easy layup. Player 1 and Little John slap high-fives.

LITTLE JOHN

Nice try! Better luck next time!

Little John smiles and runs back on defense.

INT. LITTLE JOHNS BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK CONTINUE

Little John awakes from a nightmare SCREAMING, covered in sweat, in tears. He continues to sob, grabs his sheets and crawls under his bed. In the moonlit window, there's a silhouette of a BURRO.

RETURN TO

EXT. CREVASSE CHAMBER - DAY

John's mind returns from flashback. Pedro Negro is still on top of John, on the chamber floor. The ravens continue banter.

PEDRO NEGRO

Ohhh. You better watch out.

In a single smooth movement Pedro Negro rises from atop John. Pedro Negro grabbing a cow with a single vice-like grip, and tossing it into the hole, it hits with a THUD,

and slide inward. Pedro Negro continues to sing, as he grabs the second cow, repeats.

BEAT

John lays motionless, eyes open looking skyward, as ravens fill the sky, exchange perches along the cavern walls, and squawk in chorus. For a moment, John studies the birds, tranquil, forgetting his peril.

BEAT

Pedro Negro throws the second cow into the hole, without a grunt. The cow O/S slides into the hole with an audible dirt sliding sound, which continues for several seconds as the raven squawking changes from random chatter to excitement.

Pedro looks towards the sky, listening, then postures towards the crevasse entrance. The two juvenile Alpha wolves approach, stealthy, paw carefully creeping forward, with a pack of a dozen in tow, hoping for surprise on their side.

The Large Raven squawks fiercely, and an Alpha wolf looks towards it, growls, and continues.

John rolls to his side, hearing the growl, and is immediate aware of the danger. John rises to his feet, shuffling to the cavern wall, scanning for his Gun.

Pedro has not moved an inch. The wolf pack continue its march. The ravens, eerily quiet, take turns with intermittent squawks.

A chorus of wolf growls grows louder as they enter the cavern and fan out. The two juvenile Alphas, front and center, move towards the hole, and posture, blocking Pedro's possible escape. Another wolf eyes John for a moment, then focuses on Pedro, glancing back again at John. The wolf shares a growl with another wolf, which also looks at John. John understands he won't be forgotten.

A juvenile Alpha wolf moves menacingly towards Pedro, he doesn't flinch. The wolf growls louder, Pedro is unaffected and watches. The ravens are quiet. The Alpha wolf tactic is a distraction. A raven shrieks. Pedro turns his head as two

wolves attack him from the rear, biting his leg and upper shoulder. Pedro reaches over his shoulder, vice grip talon crushes the wolf's shoulder, WE HEAR THE BONES BREAK. Ravens are excited. Pedro pivots and drives his foot down on the head of the wolf biting his leg. The wolf's fangs are deep in Pedro's leg and tear his flesh on the way to impact with the earth. CRUNCH. Pedro's foot, on the wolf's neck, is an inch from the ground.

The juvenile Alpha wolf shares a glance at his peer, satisfied with blood drawn, and Pedro's perceived mortality. The wolf sneers again. The next wave attacks, four more wolves lunge, teeth exposed, diving at Pedro's extremities. Pedro stumbles under the onslaught, down on a knee. The juvenile Alpha wolves stand straight as victory is near. Pedro explodes, standing, launching two wolves skyward. A wolf turns at Pedro's feet, he grabs its neck, slams it into the ground, uses the other hand, drives it THROUGH the wolf's fur into its chest, and PEDRO PULLS out the wolf's beating heart, while the wolf continues to squirm. Pedro smashes the beating heart into his mouth, blood splatters across his face.

The juvenile Alpha wolves look deeply concerned, and take a few steps backwards.

A wolf comes close to Pedro and he grabs it by the neck, we instantly hear the sound of bones breaking, and Pedro uses the dead wolf as a CLUB, to smash another nearby wolf.

The juvenile Alpha wolves share a look. One remains vested in victory and steps toward Pedro, then glances at the other wolf, who pauses, then, across the chaos, spots John.

John, stick still, body pressed against the wall, observing Pedro, notices the junior Alpha wolf approach, eyes set upon him. John looks for the exit, blocked. John looks for his gun, and spots it beyond reach.

The juvenile Alpha wolf launches at Pedro. Pedro stumbles backwards, off balance, and falls, the wolf upon him, biting feverously. Pedro writhes. The wolf snaps.

The juvenile Alpha wolf closes in on John. John is sliding along the wall towards the exit. The wolf lunges hard as John ducks and dives for his gun. The wolf slams into the

wall, shakes its head, and reacquires John, just as John picks up his gun, and stands.

John aims in on the juvenile Alpha wolf as it launches at him. John misses the shot! The wolf careens into John, the gun sails towards the entrance. The wolf is upon John, snapping with its teeth. John is flailing with his arms, defending himself. John's forearm gets bit, the wolf shakes his head frantically. John screams in pain. John pulls his arm free from the wolf's mouth. The wolf rears up, mouth wide open, John defenseless, and—whoosh

The body of the other juvenile Alpha wolf crashes into it, knocking it into the wall.

Pedro Negro standing victorious, had just thrown the juvenile Alpha wolf. Pedro is bleeding from several wounds, but is alive. John stares at Pedro.

JOHN

Gracias.

PEDRO NEGRO

Feliz navidad. John.

Holly's distant voice can be heard calling. The ravens are largely quiet.

HOLLY

(O/S)

John! John?

John continues to lay still, slowly looking around. Pedro Negro approaches the pile of fill, bends at the waist and moves the mountain of fill, so it lay high above the hole. Pedro Negro crawls into the hole and pulls an armful of fill onto himself, to cover his burrow. A couple ravens squawk. Holly's voice is closer.

HOLLY

(O/S)

John, where are you?

John manages to sit up a little. The sounds of dirt and fill moving can be heard.

JOHN
I'm here. Over here.

HOLLY
(Louder O/S)
John, where?

Holly enters the cavern and sees John on the ground and rushes over, and squat beside him. John's skin is clammy and pale, face covered in scrapes, his forearm bloody. John is silent; his short breaths can be heard.

HOLLY
Are you ok? Did you fall?

Holly looks up at the cavern walls for a place John could have fallen from. There are 100 ravens, mostly quiet, lining the cavern walls; there's an eerie unnatural silence. Traces of the sound of SAND and ROCK moving can be heard. Holly looks for the noise, sees the FILLED IN HOLE, notices a dozen dead wolves, blood everywhere.

JOHN
I'm okay.

HOLLY
Oh my God! What's happened?

Holly looks the FILLED IN HOLE and sees it slightly bulge as something was moving just under the surface. Holly stands, and takes a step toward he FILLED IN HOLE. The cavern erupts with raven squawking loudly, and protectively.

Holly freezing in her steps. John making his way to his feet. Holly steps back and John grabbing her hand, and begins to tug her, DEAD WEIGHT towards the exit.

JOHN
We need to leave. Now.

HOLLY

What. What is it? What happened?
What did you see?

JOHN

We need to leave this place and
never come back.

John takes Holly's hand and begins to tug her towards the exit. Holly stares back at the FILLED IN HOLE. The FILLED IN HOLE surface moves a little. We hear a scratching noise O/S.

HOLLY

Did you see him?

JOHN

What?

HOLLY

Did you see Pedro Negro?

John looking into Holly's eyes, filled with sadness, recovering from shock, and horror. Holly understands John is a different person. John is about to speak.

BEAT

The juvenile Alpha wolf jumps John, knocking him to the ground, immediately snapping at John's jugular. John flailing for his life.

BAM! Holly shoots the wolf in the head. The wolf drops dead upon John. John pushes the wolf corpse to the side. Holly rushes to John, helping him to his feet.

JOHN

Jesus. Nice shot!

Holly waving the gun across John's face. John brushes the gun away from his face, and takes it out of her hand.

INT./EXT. HOLLYS CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Holly and John are inside the car, John is driving, GRIPPING the steering wheel with WHITE KNUCKLES, his

forearm wrapped in bandages, blood seeping through. John relaxes his grip on the steering wheel, tries to shake out his fingers. Holly notices.

The sky is purple, almost complete darkness, but the silhouette of hundreds, maybe thousands of ravens fill the sky. The raven squawking can be heard though the car windows are closed.

JOHN

I've never seen so many Crows, I mean RAVENS in one place.

HOLLY

They will return to Mexico for the winter. They will make their way north again next year, follow the food, mate. Repeat the whole thing every year.

JOHN

Repeat. Every. Year.
(Pause)
I saw him.

HOLLY

What?

JOHN

I saw Pedro Negro.

HOLLY

In the hole?

JOHN

Yes. Before he tackled me, threw two dead beef carcasses into his lair...

HOLLY

I... I can't believe. Are you sure?

JOHN

I don't just Believe. I'm sure. I know. I've seen him before. I just didn't realize.

HOLLY

What do you mean?

JOHN

When I was a kid, around 9, I wasn't a particularly good kid. I was, more of, a douchebag. I mean, I didn't treat anyone nice, not really a bully. But I picked a lot of fights, wasn't generally pleasant, seemed to get in a lot of trouble.

HOLLY

So, a bully?

JOHN

Okay. Maybe. But something changed. I really couldn't remember what. But I became one of the good kids. It, was, I don't know. Well, I didn't, or couldn't remember. It was Him. Pedro. The whole time.

HOLLY

He came to you?

JOHN

Well. Yes. In a dream or nightmare that I long forgot. Until now. Seeing him. Hearing that voice. I know now why I became what I turned out to be. A cop who believes bad people deserve second chances. Instead of god-knows-what.

HOLLY

So, Pedro Negro is out there.
Warning little children--

JOHN

--that they are on the NAUGHTY
LIST.

HOLLY

That's one way to put it. So,
these kids were not suicidal...

JOHN

So much for the naughty kids who
don't listen. I guess he ran out
of burlap...

HOLLY

What do we do?

JOHN

What do we do?

HOLLY

About your *imaginary* friend,
living underground, until next
holiday season...

JOHN

I know you'll hate to hear this.
But, you have to wonder how much
the boogeyman, the Slenderman, and
the rest of the folklore, really
impacts children... I mean when the
parents aren't raising them right...
Helps them.

HOLLY

Helps them? So?

JOHN

Think of the good?

HOLLY

Good?

JOHN

Nothing. We do nothing.

HOLLY

Nothing?

JOHN

Just nothing.

HOLLY

In all my life, that must be the craziest thing I've heard. Leave a child killing monster on the loose. Tell no one. Do nothing.

JOHN

So?

HOLLY

I'll have to get back to you on that. I'm-

JOHN

You Agree with me?

HOLLY

I. I. At the moment, I don't necessarily Disagree with you. Your methodology, may be.
(Pause)
Sound.

John smiles wildly and Holly blushes. John pulling his phone from his pocket, sees a Facebook messenger text from a potential future ex-girlfriend, accepting his advances. John pausing.

JOHN

Maybe, we can take this up. Over dinner? A Date.

HOLLY

Maybe. It's about time you date an educated woman. And I'll leave my laptop at home.

JOHN

Yeah. I promise it won't be boring.

HOLLY

After this, I could use Boring.

John swipes to delete the Facebook messenger text, and smiles again.

The car drives past sign "LEAVING DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, Population 0001" with TWO LARGE RAVENS sitting atop, watching the car drive past. The TWO LARGE RAVENS share a glance, as if to say GOODBYE to the passing car.

CAMERA FOLLOWS the car driving away, only headlights and brake lights can be seen, following the pavement into the distance.

JOHN

(VOS)
By the way.

HOLLY

(VOS)
Yeah.

JOHN

(VOS)
Merry Christmas.

EXT. CREVASSE CHAMBER - DAY

Nearly pitch black, even the shapes cast within the shadows are dark. On Pedro Negro's filled in hole.

CAMERA ZOOM IN

The FILLED IN HOLE is not moving. A faint sound can be heard of Christmas carol singing. As the CAMERA CLOSES UP in the sand, WE HEAR--

PEDRO NEGRO

(Sings)

I see you when you're sleeping, I
know when you're awake, I know if
you've been bad, so be good for
your own sake. Ohh..

CHORUS - ALL

FADE OUT