

Survive

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EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Two figures slink along a game trail, lit only by a patchwork of moonlight.

ALEX (20, trans, half-shaved head, plaid shirt, dark jeans, hiking boots, backpack) approaches a creek cautiously. They motion to GAIL (16, ponytail, dark hoodie, dark jeans, combat boots) who sweeps the area with her bow. Satisfied, she relaxes the drawstring.

Without speaking, they both quietly unscrew thermoses and fill them with cold running water.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Alex sits against a tree eating cold beans out of the can. They pour a little water into the can, swish it around, and gulp the remnants down.

Gail lies asleep on the ground at their feet, cocooned in a blanket, bow and single arrow by her side.

EXT. FOREST - EVENING

SNAP! Alex's eyes fly open and they sit up, alert. Gail has the arrow ready to loose, aimed towards the creek.

A doe emerges from the brush. Gail relaxes.

ALEX

Good sign. Means no hounds nearby.

(beat)

You let me sleep too long.

GAIL

I tried to wake you. Twice.

Alex rolls the blanket up. They shove it into their backpack, straightening a "THEY/THEM" pin attached to it.

GAIL

How much further?

ALEX

Couple of days.

GAIL

We were supposed to be there by now.

ALEX

The bridge was out. Were we supposed to fly across?

Gail swallows a retort and slings her pack on. She notches the arrow and follows Alex away.

EXT. DERELICT FARM - DAWN

A collapsing barn and a dilapidated farmhouse missing a front door sit waiting to be overcome by the wild field.

ALEX

We'll stop there for the day.

Gail shrugs. Alex steps onto a steep rocky slope bordering the field. Their boots slip but hold long enough to make it to the bottom. They look up at Gail.

Gail approaches the slope. She crouches and tests her weight on one boot. It holds. She brings her other foot forward and slides, skidding down the slope and sending a loud shower of rocks down with her.

Alex heaves her upright at the bottom.

ALEX

You okay?

Gail dusts herself off, giving them a thumbs up.

A howl erupts from the top of the ridge, deep, powerful, and unnatural. Alex grabs her hand and pulls her towards the derelict farmhouse as three more howls answer.

A "hound" crests the ridge. Hairless, wrinkled skin covers a sinewy, agile body with powerful front limbs and a bulbous head. It follows the running siblings with jet black eyes, wet bat-like snout sniffing anxiously, overly-wide tooth-filled jaws quivering in anticipation.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Alex and Gail frantically look about the empty house. Gail rushes to a closet door and heaves. It doesn't budge. Alex joins her, but the wood is swollen in place.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BATHROOM - DAWN

Alex and Gail dash inside. They try to close the door but it refuses to fit into the frame and groans back open.

Alex hops into the heavy clawfoot bathtub, pulling the blanket out of their pack. Gail hesitates, afraid, then climbs in next to Alex. They lie down together and spread the blanket over themselves.

Floorboards creak. Claws click on wood. A huffing sound approaches, husky, like breath drawn through drool.

Alex holds their breath. Gail does the same. They grasp hands and squeeze their eyes shut.

Something bumps against the tub. The huffing draws closer, more rapid. The blanket moves as something presses against Alex. A deep growl builds.

Alex throws the blanket off and leaps after it, covering the beast's head. It bucks beneath them, claws digging into the wood floor as it tries to shake free.

ALEX

Run! Gail, run!

Gail dashes out the door and skids to a stop. She leaps back into the bathtub an instant before another beast slams into the doorframe, jaws snapping at air.

Gail draws and fires the arrow in one smooth motion, catching the beast in the throat. It yelps, then gurgles and collapses, black ichor oozing from its maw.

Two more beasts approach and sniff at their dead companion. They growl menacingly.

CRACK! A rifle shot catches one of the growling beasts in the hind quarters. It yelps and limps around to face the new threat. A second shot blows the top of its head off.

The other beast charges the unseen attacker and another shot rings out, followed by a scream. Alex, clinging to the bucking beast, draws a hunting knife from their boot, but it's poorly timed. The beast sends Alex and the blanket sailing against the door. The beast pounces--

Gail catches it across the neck with her bow, pulling with all her strength to keep it from biting Alex. Claws sink into Alex's chest and they cry out in pain.

GAIL

Alex!

Alex thrusts the knife into the beast's side over and over. The beast yelps and whines as black blood spills onto Alex, and then it collapses, dead.

Alex winces and gasps as they and Gail shove the beast off. Alex clutches their chest, pulling the blood-soaked plaid shirt open, revealing a thick chest binder. They feel into the holes made by the claws and nod, relieved.

Gail helps them to their feet, then smacks their arm, fighting back tears.

GAIL
When it had you, I thought...first
Dad, then--

ALEX
Shut up. I'm fine, see? The binder
took the worst of it.

Gail sniffs. Alex strokes her hair, then playfully smacks her head. She almost suppresses a smile.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

The fourth beast lies in the front doorway, dead. As they approach they see the body of a woman beneath it, face and neck shred to ribbons, blood turning the dirt on the floor to mud.

GAIL
She saved us.

Alex picks up the rifle and hands it to Gail.

ALEX
It's not safe here now. We'll have
to keep moving.

EXT. FOREST - LATE AFTERNOON

Alex, wearing a different plaid shirt, points to two trees crossing one another. They smile at Gail and start running down the long slope into a valley.

EXT. BUNKER - DUSK

The slope ends at an old creek bed. Between a large boulder and a massive fallen tree stands a heavy steel door built into the slope.

ALEX
Never thought I'd come back to the
crazy bunker lady.

GAIL

She gets to say I told you so.

INT. BUNKER - DARK

The door swings open. Pitch black inside, no sound except their breathing. Gail peers into the dark.

GAIL

Mom? We made it.

Alex flicks a switch and protected lightbulbs flick on, the stark light revealing a well equipped bunker. Steel shelves laden labeled bins, canned goods, and gallons of water. Workbenches with tools laid out, shelves of books, and a steel locker of weapons and ammo. Four cots with sub-zero sleeping bags, one showing signs of use.

Alex moves to the rear, knocking on the bathroom door.

ALEX

Mom?

They open the door and peer inside. Gail spots a note on a workbench and picks it up.

GAIL

She went looking for us. She says to wait here.

Alex nods and slips their backpack off. Gail opens the weapons locker and sets the rifle in the only empty spot. It's identical to the three other rifles.

Gail stares at the rifles and begins to cry. Alex moves to console her, not understanding at first. They see the other rifles.

GAIL

Mom saved us. It was Mom.

They collapse together, overwhelmed by grief and their ordeal. They sob into each other for a long moment.

GAIL

What do we do now?

ALEX

I don't know. Survive, I guess.
For as long as we can.

Neither looks very hopeful as they hug again.