

THE POTE

Written by

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OVER BLACK

Muffled UP-BEAT POP MUSIC is nearly drowned out by a reverberating CAR ENGINE.

SUPERIMPOSE: Vernon Grove Hills, Ohio.

Strained BREATHING as someone SHUFFLES about. This continues for a few moments, then --

The SQUEAL of poorly maintained brakes, just before both the ENGINE and MUSIC shut off.

FADE IN:

INT. CAR TRUNK - PARKED - NIGHT

WILLIAM'S P.O.V.

It's pitch black. Zero visibility. Our BREATHING intensifies.

A car door OPENS and CLOSES, then FOOTSTEPS draw near.

More FOOTSTEPS approach from a different direction.

RICK (O.S.)
You'd better have a damn good
reason for draggin' my ass out
here. I was working on, like, the
ultimate hangover.

A beat.

TRAVIS (O.S.)
The Whitmore's are gonna perform
the ritual. Tonight.

RICK (O.S.)
This again!? Fuck, Travis. I
already told you, I checked --

TRAVIS
You're wrong.

Another beat.

RICK (O.S.)
(annoyed)
Okay. I'm all ears.

TRAVIS (O.S.)
I'll let him do the talking.

A latch UNLOCKS, then the trunk lid is lifted up.

Two MEN, one very large and one of average build, stand over us, silhouetted by harsh red moonlight behind them.

The big one, TRAVIS LILLARD, (38), has muscles on his muscles, stares down at us with a stern look on his face.

The other one, RICK SPEARS, (45), about as physically intimidating as his receding hairline, looks at us with wide eyes. He recoils in disgust, turns to Travis.

RICK
Fuckin' hell, Travis! Have you lost
your shit!?

Travis doesn't respond, keeps his eyes focused on us.

Rick slowly looks back to us, repulsed.

RICK
Is he... ?

Travis doesn't blink. His eyes seem to pierce through us.

TRAVIS
He's alive. And conscious.

RICK
(disgusted)
Fuck.

TRAVIS
(to us)
Remember, the pain ends once you
tell my friend here what you told
me, and not a moment sooner.

WILLIAM (O.S.)
(weak, in pain)
O-okay...

Rick leans in closer, frowns. He takes a deep breath, sickened by what he sees.

Travis watches on, unblinking.

END P.O.V.

TIGHT SHOT of WILLIAM WHITMORE, (59), beaten to a bloody pulp, stuffed awkwardly into the trunk.

His arms and legs have all been twisted and broken so that his body can fit into the tight space. Swollen eyes stare up at the two men standing over the open trunk.

WILLIAM
M-my brother... Hid his y-youngest
son from you... Otis... He's e-
eighteen...
(looks at Rick)
You fucked up...

WILLIAM'S P.O.V.

Rick straightens up, takes another deep breath.

Travis still stares daggers at us. The man does not blink.

RICK
Well, shit.

Rick slowly turns to Travis, embarrassed.

RICK
My bad.

Travis doesn't respond.

Rick turns back to us, lets out a nervous chuckle.

RICK
Alright, then. Where's your brother
now? Where's Lon?

We SPIT a huge nasty glob of bloody mucus directly into Rick's face.

Disgusted, Rick scrambles away from the trunk, gags as he wipes the bloody bile from his eyes.

RICK
(gagging)
Argh! What the fuck!?!... Fuck!

Travis pulls out a handgun, chambers a round, aims it at us.

TRAVIS
(to US)
Lights out.

He cracks a smug smile, squeezes the trigger. BANG!

SMASH TO:

BLACK

The GUNSHOT echoes over the --

TITLE CARD -- THE POTEM

FADE IN:**EXT. HILLS - NIGHT**

From the cloudless sky, a waxing crescent blood moon casts an ominous red glow over the trees below.

A massive lake rests at the base of the hills.

LAUGHTER carries through the night air.

EXT. LAKESIDE

A naked curvy blond, AMY, (26), is chased into the lake by her equally naked buff boyfriend, KURT, (26).

She giggles as he picks her up, spins her around, and tosses her further into the water.

In the grassy flats beside the lake stands DEBBIE, (26), a thin red-head, and PAUL, (26), tall and fit, wears glasses. Both are fully dressed and equipped with flashlights.

Behind them, a trail leads into a vast sea of dark woods, gradually elevating to the hills beyond.

They watch as Kurt and Amy goof off in the lake.

Amy playfully splashes at Kurt, who grabs her breasts.

AMY

Quit it, you big dildo!

Kurt turns to Debbie and Paul. He motions for them to get into the water.

KURT

C'mon, fuckers. Get in! The water feels great!

Debbie nods towards Amy's hard nipples.

DEBBIE

Looks a little chilly to me.

Kurt reaches over, flicks one of Amy's nipples.

She gleefully splashes him in retaliation.

AMY

Ouch! That's my titty, dickhead!

Paul wraps his arm around Debbie, pulls her in close.

PAUL

Ya' know, I'm beginning to think that our friends are total idiots.

DEBBIE

Took you this long to realize that?

PAUL

Heh. Whatever. It's good to have dumb friends though. Makes us seem smarter in comparison. Besides... You know you've missed this.

DEBBIE

Yeah, I guess I kinda did.

Debbie smirks at Paul, then turns her attention to the blood moon high up above them.

DEBBIE

I still can't believe how red everything is. It really looks insane out here.

Paul follows her gaze, soaks in the glowing red sky. It truly is a majestic sight.

PAUL

Yeah. Pretty wicked, huh?

Debbie stares at the blood moon. There's a look of unease on her face.

DEBBIE

Pretty creepy. And I swear that was a gun shot I heard earlier.

Paul shrugs.

PAUL

It definitely was. You're not in the suburbs anymore, Debbie. Back in the sticks. What, you didn't forget how crazy people are around here, did you?

DEBBIE
Bunch of hicks and perverts.

PAUL
Hey! I'm not a hick.

Debbie gives him the side eye.

DEBBIE
I don't believe you.

He flashes a shit-eating grin.

They share a laugh.

EXT. WOODS - HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Harsh red moonlight shines through the thick tree tops, down onto the uneven terrain below.

Various clusters of thin trees cast sinister shadows throughout the area.

Something moves in the darkness.

OTIS WHITMORE, (18), very tall and broad-shouldered, with innocent eyes, stumbles out of the shadows and down the hill as fast as he can.

He's dressed in ragged overalls and covered in sweat and dirt. His hands are bound before him with duct tape, his mouth gagged with a dirty rag.

CLOSE ON his wide, scared eyes as they dart back and forth.

A branch SNAPS somewhere in the darkness.

Otis peeks over his shoulder, back up the dark hillside.

Nothing but a bunch of trees.

He continues down the hill, picks up the pace.

A tree root catches his shoe, sends him careening into a tree stump. He bounces off of the stump, spins awkwardly around, lands hard on his side.

Otis grunts as he stands up on wobbly legs. He looks back up the hill.

Still nothing.

He turns, moves farther down into the darkness below.

EXT. LAKESIDE - NIGHT

Amy floats on her back in the dark lake water, eyes closed and totally relaxed.

Debbie and Paul sit together on the grassy lake shore, caress each other's hands.

All smiles, Kurt splashes out of the lake, steps right in front of Debbie and Paul. Totally naked.

KURT
It really is cold in there!

With a grimace, Debbie turns away.

DEBBIE
(disgusted)
Oh, come on! Kurt!

Paul can't look away, completely stunned. He bursts into a hysterical laughter.

PAUL
You really did it!? You actually
pierced your pecker!? I thought you
were just joking with me!

Kurt smiles and nods, proud of what he has to offer.

KURT
Hell nah, dude! I wouldn't joke
about my love stick! Pierced him
myself! Only took me four tries.

Debbie shoots Paul a look.

DEBBIE
(under her breath)
Our friends are total idiots.

As Kurt walks over to his clothes a few feet away, Debbie stands up and stretches.

DEBBIE
I'm gonna head back, check and see
if Eric's called.

PAUL
Want me to tag along?

Debbie motions over to Kurt, who falls over while trying to put his pants back on.

Still floating on her back in the water, Amy laughs.

AMY
You clumsy bitch!

Debbie turns back to Paul, cracks a grin.

DEBBIE
I think you should probably hang
back and keep an eye on the
gruesome-twosome.

Paul smirks back, nods in agreement. Debbie blows him a quick
kiss, then heads towards the lake trail.

PAUL
Hey, throw some wood on the fire,
would ya?

DEBBIE
Yep. Will do.

EXT. WOODS - LAKE TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER

The light from Debbie's flashlight bounces along the beaten
path, guides her as she walks through the darkness.

An Owl HOOTS. Crickets CHIRP.

As Debbie walks along the path, she looks up.

The moon is just visible through the tree canopies.

She looks back to the path before her, slows to a stop.
Paranoid, she glances around.

It's completely silent. No owls. No crickets. Nothing.

Debbie shines her light into the darkness around her. Nothing
but trees and bushes.

She exhales a deep breath, releases a nervous chuckle.

EXT. WOODS - BRUSH - NIGHT

Dirty shoes pound against the ground as Otis runs wildly into
the darkness.

Branches claw and scrape at his face and arms as he moves
through the thick brush.

A woman CACKLES somewhere in the woods. She sounds close.

Otis freezes in his tracks. Sweat beads up on his brow.

Something in the distance catches his eyes. He squints.

It's a flickering light. A campfire?

Otis' eyes light up with hope just as a tree branch SMASHES across his face. He groans as he collapses onto his back.

SARA WHITMORE, (32), and CLAY WHITMORE, (36), step into view, stand over Otis. They wear matching red hooded robes.

The dirty rag stuffed in Otis' mouth overfills with blood, which oozes out onto his cheeks and chin.

Trembling, he looks up at the two hooded figures.

Sara clenches a thick tree branch tight in her hands, snarls down at Otis.

SARA

You look scared... That means you
ain't a total idiot.

She spits on the cowering Otis.

SARA

Pig.

Clay squats down, observes Otis' busted face.

CLAY

She got ya pretty good, huh? That
looks nasty!

He stands back up, looks to Sara. A sinister grin spreads across both of their faces.

With pleading eyes, Otis looks back and forth between the two. He raises his hands, begs for mercy.

Clay kisses his teeth, shakes his head.

CLAY

Sorry, Otis. Ya know... I actually
used to be jealous of you... The
chosen one... Ya got a raw deal,
cousin... It's a shame. Maybe if ya
hadn't run away from us, this
wouldn't have to be so painful.
But, unfortunately, you ran... So --

SARA

Pain!

Clay lifts his boot high, brings it down on Otis' face. It lands with a brutal CRUNCH.

Blood gushes out of Otis' smashed nose. Both of his eyes fill with blood as he struggles to sit up.

Sara lets out a maniacal cackle.

SARA
Shit, Clay! He's still up!

Frustrated, Clay brings his boot back up, STOMPS down on Otis's mangled face.

CLOSE ON Sara as a few drops of blood speckle her pale face. Her lips curve into a crazed grin. She licks the blood.

SARA
Much better.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Two tents, one considerably larger than the other, are pitched just beside a large oak tree in the middle of a grassy clearing. A perfect spot to camp.

Between the two tents is a lit campfire, with lawn chairs positioned around it.

The campsite is surrounded on all sides by dark woods.

Debbie jogs out of the shadows, heads over to the smaller tent, unzips the door flap, reaches inside and pulls out a cellphone. She checks it.

There's one bar.

DEBBIE
(surprised)
Hot damn! Hell must be freezing over or something.

Debbie dials a number, holds the cellphone to her ear. It RINGS for a beat, then --

ERIC (V.O.)
(cuts in and out)
Yo, Deb!

DEBBIE
Eric, hey! My signal is shit out here, so I might lose you. Are you guys getting close?

ERIC (V.O.)
Yeah, crossing the river now.
Should be there in about --

The line goes dead. Debbie looks at her cellphone, frowns.

No signal.

INT. SUV - TRAVELING

ERIC MINER, (28), very fit and attractive, sits in the driver's seat with one hand on the wheel and a cellphone pressed to his ear with his other hand.

In the passenger seat is GWEN JONES, (28), a voluptuous blonde with a perfect smile. She watches through her window as dark woods blur by.

ERIC
Hello? Debbie?

He pulls the cellphone from his ear, looks at it.

GWEN
You lose the signal?

ERIC
No. I've got full bars here. Must
be on her end.

In the backseat are HALEY KING, (28), pale and petite artsy-type, and JACKIE MILLER, (29), an edgy bad-boy dressed in all black, who appears to be asleep.

Haley leans forward, holds up a small digital camera and snaps a picture of Eric and Gwen.

HALEY
(sarcastic)
Are we there yet?

Eric scoffs, keeps his eyes on the road.

ERIC
Seriously!?

Gwen and Haley exchange grins.

Eric shakes his head.

Haley leans back, looks over at Jackie, who sits with his head leaned back and his eyes closed. She holds up her camera, snaps a picture of him.

Jackie opens one of his eyes, smirks at Haley.

EXT. HILLS - CLEARING - NIGHT

A wide circle of lit torches brighten the area. Animal bones are scattered between the torches.

In the center of the massive circle stands LON WHITMORE, (62), a mean looking, skinny old bastard. He leans on a cane that appears to have been carved from bone.

Beside him is MARGRET WHITMORE, (50), even meaner and uglier than her husband. They're both dressed in red hooded robes.

Lon lets out an annoyed grunt.

LON
Where in the fuck is William?

Margret shakes her head, spits on the ground.

MARGRET
Idiot probably got himself lost!

LON
This is turning into a shit show,
real fast! Those two idiots had
better not let Otis get away!

MARGRET
There will be hell to pay if they
do, that's for --

Approaching FOOTSTEPS draws their attention. They both turn to see --

Clay and Sara carry a barely conscious Otis out of the woods by his arms, drag him into the center of the circle.

They drop Otis to his knees before Lon and Margret.

CLAY
(with a smirk)
He ain't runnin' away again.

Otis sobs as he cowers before his parents.

Margret looks down at Otis, disgusted. She turns to Clay and Sara, seethes with anger.

MARGRET
Ya' were supposed to just nab him,
not beat him half to death!

Lon scowls at Clay and Sara.

LON
What the fuck is wrong with you
two? Are you brain dead? Or are you
actually trying to fuck this up!?

Sara cowardly lowers her head, can't bring herself to look
Lon in the eyes.

CLAY
Cut us some slack, Lon. He's still
alive. Hell, he's even still awake.

Lon glares at Clay.

LON
You wanna swallow your fuckin'
teeth, boy?

Clay bites his tongue, shakes his head.

LON
Yeah. That's what I thought.

Sara looks around, confused.

SARA
Hey, where's Pa at!?

LON
Fuck if I know. The fool ain't
here, and we ain't waiting for him.

Margret kneels next to Otis, caresses his trembling cheek
with the back of her hand.

MARGRET
I've always told you... You are
special. You were born with an
amazing purpose.

She grabs a hold of the bloody rag lodged in Otis' mouth,
yanks it out. Blood pours down his chin as he coughs up a
handful of shattered teeth.

Margret rises to her feet, rubs blood onto her forehead, then
holds the rag out to Lon.

MARGRET
This is your purpose. Your innocent
blood... In exchange for passage.

Lon grabs the rag, smears blood on his forehead. He then tosses the rag to Clay and Sara, who each proceed to mark themselves the same way.

Otis looks up at his mother, terrified and bewildered. He opens his bloody mouth to speak, but only a pathetic, garbled mumble comes out.

OTIS
(barely intelligible)
P-passage!?

Margret smiles down at her son.

MARGRET
Passage to somewhere better. Thanks
to you.

With the help of his cane, Lon steps before Otis. He looks skyward, at the moon.

LON
Finally!... We can complete the
Potem!

Sara shoots Clay an excited grin.

Margret steps back, watches Lon with pride in her eyes.

LON
Finally...

Lon's eyes fall until they meet Otis'. An evil smile forms on his face as he reaches out with the bloody rag and draws a crude infinity sign on Otis' pale, sweaty forehead.

LON (CONT'D)
Transcendence!

He unsheathes a hidden ritualistic dagger from the top of his cane, then thrusts the dagger deep into Otis' heart!

Lon rips the blade out of Otis' chest.

A fountain of blood erupts out of the savage wound as Otis falls back to the ground.

More blood pumps out of the wide-eyed young man. Dark red human juice leaks out and spreads like it has a mind of its own, forms a bloody circle on the ground.

Otis seizes. He gasps for air as the life leaves his body.

Clay and Sara exchange excited glances.

Lon takes a moment to look at Otis' corpse, then points the ritualistic dagger to the sky. Crimson moonlight gleams off the blade.

Dead silence.

Lon holds his position for a long, awkward beat.

SARA
Did it work?

LON
Wait.

Clay steps forward, shoots a look of confusion up at the blood moon. He turns to Lon, frustrated.

CLAY
What the Hell!? Why aren't we
gettin' beamed up or somethin'!? We
did everything right! Ain't no one
more innocent or pure than Otis! We
made damn sure of that! I know we --

With the dagger still held toward the blood moon, Lon holds a finger up, silences Clay.

LON
Shut up!

The blood circle begins to shimmer red light, which Otis' body absorbs. Thick red fog seeps out from the ground, quickly engulfs Otis' corpse.

Lon takes a cautious step back while the others stand and stare, awe-struck.

SARA
What's happening!? I don't
understand!

MARGRET
Sara, quiet!

Margret moves closer, watches as a strange red light flashes from within the fog. She stares at it, thinks.

Discretely, Lon takes another step backwards.

MARGRET
(under her breath)
This isn't transcendence...

Then, Otis' corpse swiftly rises out of the fog, almost as if it were lifted up by an invisible puppeteer. His dead eyes pop open. Claw-like bones push out through his fingertips.

Margret falls back on her ass, lets out a surprised shriek.

Stunned, Sara claps a hand over her mouth.

Clay hurries to Margret's side, helps her back to her feet. They both stare with wide-eyed disbelief at the corpse that stands only a few feet from them.

MARGRET

Otis?

Very slowly, Otis shakes his head. "No."

Clay shudders.

Otis' lips curl into a slight grin.

With a sudden burst of excitement, Sara pushes between Margret and Clay, steps right up to Otis. She smiles wide.

SARA

So... It worked then!? The Potem-
thing actually worked!?

Otis doesn't respond. He just stands with a blank look behind his dead, dark eyes.

Clay hesitantly inches closer.

CLAY

(to Sara)

I'm not so certain...

Sara turns away from Otis, faces Clay and Margret. She cracks an excited grin.

SARA

We're gonna be rewarded now! We're
gonna transcend!

Otis' eyes suddenly lock onto Sara. He snarls, reveals rows of wicked, sharp teeth just behind grimy lips.

Sara spins back to face Otis.

SARA

I wanna go first! Let me --

Otis viciously lunges out and thrusts one of his clawed hands straight through Sara's torso!

Blood splashes Margret's face. She screams out in terror.

Clay rushes forward, desperate to help his sister, who chokes on her own blood.

CLAY

SARA!?

Farther back, Lon quietly flees into the dark woods as fast as his old legs will allow him to.

EXT. CAMPSITE

Debbie, Paul, Kurt, and Amy, sit in the lawn chairs around the campfire. They all have open beer cans in their hands.

A boombox stereo sits on a cooler beside the larger tent. CLASSIC ROCK MUSIC blasts through the speakers.

Kurt chokes on his beer, punches himself in the chest and gasps for air.

KURT

Went down the wrong pipe!

Paul and Amy laugh.

Debbie sets her drink down, stands, and steps away from the campfire. Concerned, she stares out into the woods.

PAUL

Debbie? You alright?

DEBBIE

Do you guys hear that?

PAUL

Hear what?

DEBBIE

Listen.

Debbie steps over to the cooler, switches off the stereo.

Clay and Margret's tortured SCREAMS echo through the woods.

Paul, Kurt, and Amy, all set their drinks down, stand to their feet. Debbie steps beside Paul, grabs his hand.

Pure dread falls over all of their faces as they listen to the CHAOS in the woods.

DEBBIE

Paul? What's happening out there?

PAUL

Some sort of joke or something...
Has to be... Right?

AMY

Doesn't sound like a joke to me.

Kurt puts his arm around Amy, squeezes her tight, looks to Paul and Debbie.

KURT

Hey, let's not be fuckin' stupid
and let's get out of here. Like,
right fuckin' now.

Paul nods in agreement.

PAUL

Yeah. We gotta' get --

Just then, a DEMONIC ROAR echoes through the woods.

Without hesitation, a horrified Debbie turns and sprints off in the opposite direction of the DEMONIC ROAR.

PAUL

Shit!

He points to Kurt.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Grab the keys from my bag! I'll go
grab her! We'll be right back! Wait
for us!

Paul runs off after Debbie.

Amy and Kurt shoot each other looks of bewilderment.

AMY

What, we're supposed to just sit
here and wait for them!? Fuck that!

KURT

Right!?

EXT. HILLS - CLEARING

OTIS' P.O.V.

Red fog surrounds us as we stand tall over the decimated corpses of Clay and Margret.

A bloody mess of mutilated flesh.

One of our blood spattered hands reaches into view.

We slide a claw into Margret's gaping mouth, push it awkwardly down her throat. Her dead eyes stare back at us.

PAUL (O.S.)
(barely audible)
Debbie, come back!

Our view snaps towards Paul's voice. Without hesitation, we rush off in that direction.

END P.O.V.**EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER**

Debbie rushes through the shadows, moves past a cluster of trees. She slows to a stop, leans against a large tree, struggles to calm herself.

DEBBIE
This isn't real... You're
dreaming... Wake up!

From behind Debbie, a hand reaches out, grabs her shoulder. She spins around, comes face to face with Paul.

PAUL
Debbie, what are you doing!? We
have to stay together and get out
of here right now!

EXT. CAMPSITE

Amy stands just outside the larger tent, flashlight clutched tight in her shaky hands.

Far off behind her, just barely visible deep in the dark woods, red fog rolls through the trees and brush like a bloody tidal wave.

Amy is oblivious to the rapidly approaching fog.

While keeping watch on the woods, she calls to Kurt inside the tent.

AMY
Kurt!? You find those damn keys?

KURT (O.S.)
Fuck no! Why do they need so many
bags for a weekend camping trip!?
It's fuckin' retarded!

AMY
Focus and find those keys!

INT. LARGE TENT

Kurt digs through an open backpack, frantically searches for the keys. He grows frustrated.

The light from the campfire outside casts Amy's silhouette across the tent wall behind Kurt.

KURT
Fuck. Where are they!?

AMY (O.S.)
Just hurry up, Kurt!

EXT. WOODS - BRUSH

OTIS' P.O.V.

Surrounded by red fog, we run through the thick brush at an incredible speed, HEAVY FOOTSTEPS below us every step of the way. We burst out of the still expanding fog.

Twisted branches blur by us as we rush out of the brush and into the --

EXT. CAMPSITE

Up ahead, Amy stands beside the large tent, her back to us.

We rapidly pick up speed, charge towards Amy. Just as we're on her, she turns to us. Her eyes go wide with terror.

END P.O.V.

INT. LARGE TENT

In the blink of an eye, Amy's silhouette is TORN out of view! Blood spatters across the outside of the tent.

Kurt whips his head around, stares in horror as fresh blood drips down the outside of the tent wall.

A long beat. Silence.

KURT

A-Amy? You seriously better not be
fucking with me right now! Amy!?

Hesitantly, he moves for the unzipped tent door as red fog wafts in through the open door flap.

Very slowly and very carefully, Kurt peeks his head out.

KURT (O.S.)

Amy?

Suddenly, Kurt's body awkwardly JERKS AND TWISTS around before being violently RIPPED out of the tent.

WET SLASHING and CHOKED SCREAMS from just outside the tent fills the space as we HOLD ON the blood-drenched tent door.

EXT. WOODS

As Paul and Debbie hurry through the woods, Kurt's SCREAMS of agony echo through the trees.

White with terror, Debbie clutches onto Paul's arm.

DEBBIE

That's Kurt!

Paul runs his fingers through his sweaty hair, thinks hard. Then, he sees it.

In the distance, thick red fog pushes through the woods, moves in their direction. And it moves fast.

PAUL

Debbie, we need to run! Now!

He pulls her behind him as they run deeper into the woods.

Their shoes pound the dirt as they sprint as fast as they can. The fog closes in fast behind them.

Closer and closer.

Paul looks back just as the fog reaches and overtakes them.

They slow to a stop, unable to see more than a few feet ahead in the thick fog.

Afraid, Debbie grabs hold of Paul, hugs him tight.

DEBBIE

Paul, what are we going to do!?

PAUL

We have to keep moving. We have to get out of --

A DEMONIC CACKLE rings out, seems to come from all around the terrified couple.

Paul wraps his arms around Debbie, a desperate attempt to protect her. He whips his head around, searches for the source of the DEMONIC CACKLING.

Nothing but dark shapes in the fog.

The DEMONIC CACKLE grows louder.

Debbie's horrified eyes dart back and forth.

DEBBIE

Paul... I'm really scared! I don't want to die!

Paul grabs Debbie's face, forces her to look at him.

PAUL

I'm not going to let that happen, okay? We're gonna get out of here!

Debbie nods.

Paul attempts to look brave, forces a smile. Then --

Otis's face emerges from the fog directly behind Paul.

Eyes are black as death. Rows of wicked, sharp teeth. Pure fucking nightmare fuel.

Horrified, Debbie just watches as Otis lunges onto Paul and bites down on his neck. Blood splashes all over her as she screams and scrambles away.

Otis drags Paul to the ground, shakes his head, TEARS flesh.

Paul tries to scream, but chokes on blood instead.

ANGLE ON Debbie as she runs out of the fog and deeper into the woods.

PAN UP to the blood moon in the cloudless sky.

FADE TO:

EXT. BACK ROAD - NIGHT

The old dirt road cuts through a vast, grassy field. Beyond the field, thick fog blankets heavily wooded hills.

A beat up old sedan rounds a bend, speeds down the road.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)

(overlap)

If you folks haven't had a chance
to see the blood moon, get outside
and treat yourselves! It's
absolutely wicked looking. Never
seen one quite like it. It's
seriously killer looking!

INT. SEDAN - TRAVELING

Rick drives. He uses the rearview mirror to see as he cleans his face with a napkin.

Travis sits in the passenger seat. Focused and determined, he scans the area outside as they pass.

HAIR METAL MUSIC starts up through the speakers.

The Radio DJ continues over the intro of the song.

RADIO DJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(through stereo)

And don't worry! We've got some
good tunes to listen to while we
soak in all this crimson moonlight.
Remember, it's an eighties metal
weekend here on WBNE eighty-eight
FM. Vernon Grove, Rock.

Rick reaches in the glove box, pulls out a silver flask and takes a quick swig. With a wince, he twists the cap back on.

TRAVIS

Maybe not the best time to be
having a drink, know what I mean?

Rick lets loose a wet burp.

RICK
You can be a real buzz kill
sometimes, you know that?

Travis gives Rick the side eye.

TRAVIS
You'd better hope Lon Whitmore is
as incompetent as you claim he is.
This goes tits up, Ada's gonna
blame you.

Rick smirks.

RICK
Lon is a total dumb shit. Whatever
he's got planned, he's gonna fuck
it up. And he'll probably shit his
pants in the process.

Travis doesn't seem so convinced. Then, his eyes light up. He
points at something up ahead.

TRAVIS
There! That's their van, right?

A shit eating grin spreads across Rick's face.

RICK
Yep! Sure is! Dumbass couldn't even
hide his camper well. Told you that
he'd fuck up!

Travis rolls his eyes.

EXT. BACK ROAD

The sedan slows, pulls off onto the grassy field beside the
dirt road. It stops behind a parked old camper van.

The engine shuts off, then Rick and Travis step out.

Without closing his door, Rick walks from his sedan, around
to the side of the camper van.

Travis waits by the sedan.

Rick peers in through the camper van's windows.

Nothing of any interest.

RICK
(under his breath)
Yep, this is definitely Lon's. What
a fuckin' loser.
(to Travis)
They're not here.

TRAVIS
Yeah, figured that much.

Travis steps away from the sedan, moves farther into the field. He glares out at the fog covered hills beyond.

CLOSE ON his intense eyes.

TRAVIS
(under his breath)
They're really gonna do it. Those
crazy bastards.

RICK (O.S.)
So... We're just gonna kill them
all, right?

Travis looks back to Rick, who moves back to his sedan and reaches inside the open driver's door.

RICK
Lon and his family. They have to
die. Right?

Rick grabs a pistol and a flashlight out of the sedan. He holsters his pistol, closes the car door.

Travis nods as he unclips a flashlight from his belt.

TRAVIS
What they are trying to do is
unforgivable. Evil.
(beat)
Yes. All of them have to die.

RICK
You know, Travis, you don't have to
do this. You've done more than
enough. This is my mess. I can
clean this up myself.

TRAVIS
We'll clean this up together.
Then... You're gonna owe me.

RICK
(smirks)
Fair enough. Alright. Let's boogie
then. Clock's tickin'!

TRAVIS
(under his breath)
Assuming we're not already too
late...

Rick steps away from his sedan, leads Travis through the
grassy field, towards the foggy woods beyond.

Two men on a mission.

FADE TO:

EXT. WOODS - HIKING TRAIL - NIGHT

The beaten path snakes through the leafy undergrowth. Fog
fills the space.

Harsh red moonlight shines down through the tree canopies.

Eric uses a flashlight to see as he strides around a bend in
the trail. A backpack is strapped to his back.

He slows to a stop, looks ahead at the trail before him,
smiles from ear to ear. It's a beautiful, scenic view.

Girls GIGGLE behind him.

Eric glances back over his shoulder, sees another flashlight
farther down the trail.

ERIC
Yo, watch your step. This trail is
a real bitch. And this damn fog
ain't helping one bit.

Gwen and Haley walk side by side around the bend.

They laugh as they approach Eric. Gwen holds a flashlight.

GWEN
(to Haley)
That's not even the best part.

Haley tinkers with a bulky digital camera that hangs from a
strap around her neck.

HALEY

What could possibly be better than
Eric getting crapped on?

Gwen smirks, looks ahead to Eric, who frowns.

GWEN

After it shit all over him, it bit
his ear and wouldn't let go. He was
screaming and shaking his head,
trying so hard to get it off. It
was hilarious!

Haley laughs harder.

Eric rubs his earlobe.

ERIC

Hey, fuck your brother's bird.

The girls reach Eric.

Gwen grabs his hand, pulls him in for a quick kiss.

GWEN

You're such a fucking wimp.

ERIC

That shit gave me a phobia of
birds. That's a thing, right?

Eric jokingly swats away at an invisible bird.

Gwen chuckles.

GWEN

I love you, goofball.

She plants another kiss on his lips.

HALEY

(to Eric)

Have you tried calling your cousin
back?

Eric shakes his head.

ERIC

No point. There's no signal all the
way out here.

HALEY

How are we gonna find them then?

ERIC

She said they'd be setting up their
camp near our old swimming spot.
Don't worry, Haley. I've got this.

HALEY

If you say so.

Haley holds her camera up to her eye, snaps a picture of the
woods. She lowers the camera, takes in the view for herself.

HALEY

It really is amazing out here. I
don't know what's cooler... The fog
or all this red moonlight?

GWEN

Told ya you'd love it out here.

Haley smirks.

HALEY

(sarcastic)

If it looked this cool out here
every night, I think I'd become an
outdoorsman. Outdoorsperson?

Gwen lets out another laugh.

GWEN

Whatever.

Haley smirks again, then aims her camera skywards, snaps a
picture of the dark red sky beyond the tree tops.

Eric steps behind Gwen, wraps his arms around her waist.

ERIC

(to Haley)

Pretty sweet, huh?

Haley snaps another picture of the woods.

HALEY

I love this so much. I've never
seen anything like this. It's so
red! Must be a ton of dust in the
Earth's atmosphere.

GWEN

Shut up, science nerd.

HALEY

Screw you, slut.

Gwen and Haley both giggle.

Eric just grins, shakes his head.

JACKIE (O.S.)
Hey! Hold up. Damn!

They all turn to Jackie as he staggers around the bend. He's drenched in sweat, completely worn out.

Haley holds back laughter as she rushes back to him.

Eric leans closer to Gwen.

ERIC
(under his breath)
I honestly forgot all about him.

Gwen playfully nudges him to keep quiet.

GWEN
(under her breath)
Stop it!
(beat)
What's his name again?

Eric snickers.

Haley reaches Jackie just as he dramatically flops down on his ass. She crouches down next to him.

HALEY
You okay?

JACKIE
Oh yeah. I'm fuckin' great. Just havin' a heat stroke... Not to mention my ankle is throbbing like an angry hemorrhoid.

HALEY
I told you we were hiking. You should have dressed appropriately.

JACKIE
Cut me some slack, will ya? This was spur of the moment and I've never even been hiking before. I'm wingin' this shit.

HALEY

Yeah, that's obvious, Jackie.
Still, I figured you'd know that
all black was a bad idea. Dark
colors retain more body heat.

Jackie snorts a laugh.

JACKIE

Nerd. Have you seen my wardrobe?

Gwen and Eric step beside Haley.

GWEN

(to Jackie)

You're not throwing in the towel
already, are you?

JACKIE

Nope. I'm fine. Just need a quick
break, that's all.

Eric takes his backpack off, sets it on the ground and begins
to dig through it. He pulls out water bottles, passes them
out to the group.

Jackie hesitantly accepts the bottle.

JACKIE

Got any beer in there?

ERIC

I do not. Just water, some towels
and... Some more water. Don't worry
though... My cousin and her friends
have got plenty of alcohol.

JACKIE

Can't fuckin' wait.

He chugs the bottle, squeezes what little bit is left out on
his head.

JACKIE

Oh, fuck yeah. That's fuckin
orgasmic.

Eric looks back to the trail.

ERIC

Not too much farther to the lake.

GWEN

I can't wait to see Debbie. Feels like it's been forever.

ERIC

It's been a few years since she last came up.

Jackie leans back, takes a deep breath.

JACKIE

I apologize ahead of time, but I'm totally skinny dipping when we get there. It's just... It's gonna fuckin' happen.

Haley lies down next to him.

HALEY

If you actually make it to the lake, I'll skinny dip with you.

She leans in and gives him a quick peck on the cheek.

Suddenly revitalized, Jackie jumps to his feet.

JACKIE

C'mon, stop dragging your asses! Let's get moving!

Gwen takes a drink from her bottle, then stuffs it back into Eric's backpack.

Haley stands up, brushes dirt off her butt.

HALEY

(to Jackie)

Not so fast, speed racer. I need to run to the girls room.

She looks to Gwen.

HALEY

You wanna come with? Light the way for me?

Gwen shines her light on Haley.

GWEN

Sure. I'm into watching. It's sorta my thing.

Haley giggles.

HALEY

Weirdo.

Gwen follows Haley off the trail, into the foggy woods.

Jackie turns to Eric, who takes a drink from his bottle.

JACKIE

Why do chicks always go in pairs?

Eric shrugs.

ERIC

Strength in numbers?

Jackie nods. He hadn't considered that before.

EXT. WOODS - CREEK - NIGHT

Water runs down the winding, rocky creek. Thick woods surround the water on either side. The fog is especially thick here.

With their flashlights in hand, Rick and Travis step out of the woods, stop at the creek.

Rick pulls out his flask, takes a quick swig, looks out at a bend farther down in the creek.

Something catches his eye.

RICK

Is that...?

CLOSE ON a pair of bloody, cracked glasses laying on a rock. They are Paul's.

Rick picks up the glasses, looks them over. A look of guilt spreads across his face.

He turns to Travis, tries to appear confident.

RICK

Maybe it's nothing? Maybe someone just lost their glasses... Their bloody glasses... Most likely totally unrelated. Probably. Right?

Travis scoffs as he uses the flashlight to search the surrounding area.

The light falls over Paul's decapitated head, which is snagged on a fallen tree a little farther down in the creek.

TRAVIS
We're too late.

Rick sees the horrified expression frozen on Paul's partially submerged face.

RICK
Well fuck.

EXT. WOODS - HIKING TRAIL - NIGHT

Jackie lies shirtless on the ground, his shirt a makeshift pillow under his head. A lit joint hangs between his lips.

Eric sits a few feet away.

JACKIE
So... You and Gwen were, like, high school sweethearts, right?

ERIC
Grade school, actually.

JACKIE
That's weird, dude.

ERIC
Thanks, I guess...
(an awkward beat)
What about you? How'd you and Haley meet up again?

JACKIE
She shot one of our concerts. We just kind of clicked, ya know?

ERIC
Oh yeah, that's right. Gwen told me you're in a band. You play guitar, right?

JACKIE
Bass.

ERIC
Bass? Nice! I've never been very musically talented. More into sports. I did blow a mean trumpet in the seventh grade though!

Jackie chuckles.

Eric grabs his bag, digs through it.

Jackie holds the joint out, offers it to Eric.

JACKIE

You sure you don't wanna hit this,
dude? It's some killer bud.

Eric doesn't look away from his bag.

ERIC

No thanks. I'm good.

Jackie shrugs.

JACKIE

Suit yourself, dude. More for me.

He takes a long drag, holds it in, then exhales a huge cloud of smoke. What follows is the coughing fit of the century.

Jackie sits up as he practically coughs his lungs out. As he coughs, his wallet falls out of his back pocket, drops to the ground behind him.

Eric spots the open wallet, notices a picture of a PRETTY GIRL, (19), playfully posing in front of a fireplace.

Jackie finally starts to catch his breath.

JACKIE

Fuck, I'm fried.

Eric nods towards the photo.

ERIC

Ex-girlfriend?

Jackie notices his open wallet sitting on the ground behind him, quickly scoops it up, shoves it back into his pocket.

Eric scoffs, shakes his head.

ERIC

Like em' young, huh? Haley know you
got that picture in your wallet?

Jackie takes another drag off his joint, turns to Eric, exhales another cloud of smoke.

JACKIE

It's my little sister, Julie.

ERIC

Ah. My bad.

Jackie shrugs it off.

JACKIE
You're good, dude. She's...
(thinks for a moment)
She was in the accident that killed
my parents a few months back.

Eric is stunned, doesn't know what to say.

ERIC
Shit. That's... Awful. I had no
idea. I'm so sorry... Your sister?
Did she --

JACKIE
She survived, but... She's in a
coma. No way of knowing if she'll
ever wake up. The doctors don't
seem very hopeful...

Jackie turns to Eric, forces a smile.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
But I am. Have to be, ya know? She
wouldn't give up on me.

Eric just sits and takes it all in.

ERIC
(sincere)
Your sister sounds like she's lucky
to have you.
(shoots Jackie a warm
smile)
Haley, too.

Jackie nods, a silent "Thank you."

EXT. WOODS - BUSHES - NIGHT

Gwen leans against a tree while Haley squats in the bushes a few yards away.

GWEN
So... You like this one?

HALEY
Yeah. I do. He's sweet. He's funny.
And he's actually into me and my
photography, so that's a huge plus.

GWEN

Seems a bit overly edgy, know what I mean? It's like he's trying too hard.

HALEY

He's just out of his element. Give him a chance. He'll grow on you.

GWEN

Like a wart?

Haley rolls her eyes, laughs it off.

Gwen smirks.

GWEN

Well, if you like him that much he can't be all that bad.

Haley finishes up, pulls up her pants, steps next to Gwen.

HALEY

He's a keeper. You'll see.

(hushed voice)

So... Are we still doing this?

With a big grin, Gwen reaches into her pocket, pulls out an engagement-ring.

Haley's eyes light up.

HALEY

Oh my God! I can't believe you're actually gonna do it! I'm so excited!

Gwen laughs.

GWEN

Just get some good pictures.

(remembers)

And try to get the moon in some of the shots! Can't believe I'm gonna propose under the blood moon! Gonna be so rad!

Haley holds up her camera, smiles.

HALEY

You just focus up and I'll handle the pictures.

GWEN

If you get a picture of Eric
crying, I'll love you forever!

They both laugh some more.

HALEY

I still think it's weird that
you're the one proposing.

Gwen stuffs the ring back in her pocket.

GWEN

It's not weird. It's progressive.

HALEY

If you say so.

Haley squints as she looks past Gwen, into the foggy woods.

HALEY

Hey, what is that?

EXT. WOODS - HIKING TRAIL

Eric retrieves his cellphone out of his bag, holds it out
before him.

ERIC

(under his breath)
Nothing.

He adjusts his position, holds his cellphone up higher.

JACKIE (O.S.)

Still no signal?

Eric looks over, sees Jackie staring at him. He shoves his
cellphone back into his bag, nods at Jackie.

ERIC

Not surprising, out here.

GWEN (O.S.)

(panicked)
Eric! Come here!

Eric jumps to his feet, dashes into the woods, quickly
disappears into the fog.

Jackie shrugs.

JACKIE
(sarcastic)
No, don't worry about me. I'm
totally cool. I'll just hang back
here. Protect your bag and shit.

He takes another long drag off his joint.

JACKIE
(under his breath)
Fucker.

EXT. WOODS - BUSHES

Eric runs through a cluster of shrubs, spots Haley and Gwen up ahead in the fog.

They stand side by side, stare at something nearby. A mix of disgust and horror is plastered across their faces.

ERIC
What's wrong? You girls okay?

He steps beside the girls, finally sees what they see.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Holy shit!

About fifteen yards away, a baby deer hangs by its own intestines from a tree. Flies buzz around the poor animal's corpse as he slowly spins on its grotesque makeshift noose.

GWEN
That's a deer, right?

Stunned, Eric stares at the dead deer. He can't pull his eyes away from the disturbing sight.

ERIC
(deadpan)
That's what's left of a deer.

JACKIE (O.S.)
Hey, what's the big deal --

Jackie steps next to Haley, who grabs his arm. His eyes go wide at the sight of the dead deer.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Holy shit!

ERIC
(under his breath)
That's what I said.

GWEN
Do you think another animal did
that?

ERIC
No way.

Haley looks to Jackie with pleading eyes. She's scared.

HALEY
Jackie, let's go. I don't want to
be out here anymore.

Jackie nods, turns to Eric.

JACKIE
Yo, dude. Let's bail.

Eric still can't take his eyes away from the dead deer.

Jackie waves his hand, motions for Eric's attention.

JACKIE
Yo! Earth to Eric!

Eric snaps out of it..

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Let's get the fuck out of here!
Like, right the fuck now!

Gwen steps closer to Eric, squeezes his hand.

GWEN
They're right. Let's go!

Eric nods.

ERIC
Right. C'mon, follow me!

Practically pulling Gwen behind him, Eric leads the group
back toward the trail.

EXT. WOODS - HIKING TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Eric leads the group out of the woods, back onto the trail.

Looks of unease are spread across each of their faces.

ERIC

We're heading straight back to town
and we're getting the Sheriff.

Jackie grabs his shirt off the ground, pulls it on.

JACKIE

You guys can do whatever. I just
wanna get the fuck outta' here!

Gwen hands Eric his backpack. He gives her a quick,
comforting peck on the cheek.

ERIC

Alright, let's --

HALEY (O.S.)

(voice trembling)

Y-you g-guys...

Eric, Gwen, and Jackie turn to a totally petrified Haley,
follow her eyes along the trail, reveal a blood drenched
Debbie standing about fifteen yards up the path.

GWEN

Oh my God.

ERIC

Debbie!?

Debbie takes a weak step forward. Blood oozes out of multiple
vicious slash wounds on her torso, legs, and arms. Her left
eye is black and swollen to the size of a baseball.

Eric starts to run towards Debbie, but stops when she
suddenly throws up a hand.

It's not a plea for help. It's a warning to stay away.

Haley reflexively snaps a picture of the bloody girl.

Tears stream out of Debbie's good eye. Her lip quivers as she
opens her mouth to speak. Blood drips down her chin.

DEBBIE

(desperate)

RUN!

Just then, Debbie is YANKED off her feet! She lands hard on
her stomach, then is dragged SCREAMING off the path, into the
bushes beyond.

She continues to SCREAM as the bushes violently shake back
and forth. Blood splashes out of the bushes, onto the trail.

JACKIE
WHAT THE FUCK!?

Haley cries out in terror as she throws her arms around Jackie, buries her face in his chest. He squeezes her tight.

Gwen starts to run for Debbie, but Eric grabs her arm, pulls her back.

GWEN
What are you doing!? We have to
help her! We have to do --

ERIC
(hushed voice, scared)
We can't help her! We have to get
the Hell out of here! Now...
(nods towards the bushes)
While we still have a chance!

She stares into his pleading eyes, understands.

GWEN
Okay. Get us out of here, Eric.

Without hesitation, Eric grabs Gwen by the hand, leads her as he rushes back down the trail, back the way they came from.

ERIC
(to Jackie and Haley)
Stay on my ass and keep quiet.

Jackie and Haley follow close behind.

With tears welling up in her eyes, Haley shoots one last glance up the path, at the bushes Debbie was pulled into.

Debbie continues to SCREAM from the bushes.

The group hurries as quietly as they can along the foggy path. They quickly approach a bend in the trail.

Eric looks back to the others.

ERIC
We're cutting through!

JACKIE
You sure that's a good idea with
all this fuckin' fog? Shouldn't we
just stick to the trail?

But it's too late, Eric and Gwen have already ducked off the path, into the woods.

Jackie and Haley exchange worried looks, then quickly follow them off the path.

EXT. WOODS

Eric practically sprints through the heavily wooded area, with Gwen hot on his trail. The fog doesn't help visibility at all.

Haley and Jackie try to keep pace, but have started to fall behind. Jackie is clearly out of breath.

JACKIE
(to Eric and Gwen)
Hey! Wait up! Not all of us are
fuckin' athletes!

Eric and Gwen slow to a stop. They look back at Jackie, motion for him to keep quiet.

Jackie leans against a tree, struggles to catch his breath. He shrugs, "My bad."

HALEY (O.S.)
She needed our help... And we just
left her there...

Jackie turns to Haley, who stares back in the direction they just came from. She looks more sad than scared.

Eric and Gwen exchange guilty glances, but say nothing.

Jackie pulls Haley in for a hug, kisses her hard on the cheek. He doesn't know what to say.

HALEY
We left her there to die.

JACKIE
Haley... There's nothing we could
have done.

HALEY
How do you know? We didn't even try
to help her! We just ran!

JACKIE
Well, I mean, she did kinda tell us
to run, so...

Eric steps up to Haley, places a comforting hand on her shoulder. He forces an unconvincing smile.

ERIC
Hey, we're doing the right thing by
going for help. Okay?

Haley looks to her feet, gives a halfhearted nod.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Let's keep moving.

EXT. HILLS - CLEARING - NIGHT

Thick fog fills the space.

A wide circle of loose, uneven rubble is surrounded by eight unlit torches. The ritual site.

Sara's mutilated corpse is awkwardly propped up in the center of the circle. Both of her arms have been ripped off at the shoulders. A look of terror is stuck on her dead face.

Just beside the circle lies the gory remains of Clay and Margret. Only bits and pieces of them are recognizable.

With their guns drawn, Rick and Travis step out of the woods and into the foggy clearing. They approach the circle, look down at Sara's twisted corpse.

RICK
Well, that's just... Fucked.

TRAVIS
That's a massive understatement.

Rick looks over at the decimated corpses of Clay and Margret. He scowls, pulls out his flask, takes another swig.

RICK
This isn't all of them. I don't see
Lon. Or the son that they managed
to hide from me... Otis.

Travis remains vigilant, keeps his eyes on the woods that surround them.

TRAVIS
What's our next move?

RICK
We keep searching. We have to find
Lon and make sure he's dead.

As Rick starts to walk away, he glances back at the bloody remains of the Whitmore family.

RICK
Crazy fucking bastards.

With that, he turns and heads back into the foggy woods.

Travis follows after him.

EXT. WOODS - CREEK - NIGHT

Eric leads the way as the group quickly and quietly moves alongside the shallow, fog-covered creek.

Predictably, Jackie brings up the rear, totally out of breath and now moving with a slight limp. He stops, crouches down on a knee, shakes his head.

JACKIE
I'm sorry. But I have to catch my
breath. I'm fuckin' dying here.

ERIC
Seriously!? We can't keep stopping!

JACKIE
Then you're gonna just have to go
on without me. I've got a bum
ankle, dude. Broke it a couple
years back. It hurts like a son of
a bitch right now!

Haley kneels beside him, rubs his back.

HALEY
It's alright. Just, catch your
breath, okay?

Jackie nods as he sucks in air.

Eric and Gwen make their way back to Jack and Haley, kneel down beside them.

JACKIE
(to Eric)
How much farther?

ERIC
If we keep stopping every couple
minutes, it's gonna take us an
hour! We have to keep moving.

Haley pulls out her camera, starts to look through the photos she's taken.

JACKIE
We should have just stuck to the
fuckin' trail.

Frustrated, Eric shakes his head.

ERIC
The trail snakes back and forth.
You just have to trust me. I've
been coming out here since I was a
kid. This is the fastest way.

HALEY (O.S.)
(scared)
You guys... Look at this...

She holds out her camera so that everyone can see the photo
she took.

CLOSE ON the photo. In it, a bloodied Debbie weakly stands on
the path. Barely visible in the thick bushes behind her, a
blood-spattered Otis stands tall. Scary as fuck.

Jackie stands up, nervously paces back and forth. He pulls at
his hair.

JACKIE
Who the fuck is that!? What the
fuck is that!?

Eric motions for him to keep quiet.

ERIC
You have to stay calm, man.

Jackie scoffs, dramatically points to the photo.

JACKIE
Stay calm!? Are you fucking
serious!? Do you see that shit!?
Fucker looks like he just crawled
out a nightmare!

Eric nods as he and the girls stand up.

ERIC
I see him. I don't know what his
deal is and, frankly, I don't wanna
wait around to find out. So catch
your breath, get your shit
together, and let's get out of
here. Fuck these woods.

Gwen looks at Haley, who trembles with fear.

GWEN

You look as scared as I feel.

Haley shakes it off.

HALEY

After we get out of here, I'm never going back in the woods again.

Gwen forces a smile, nods.

GWEN

Yeah, ditto.

Jackie pulls out another joint, sparks it up.

Eric shoots him a dumb look. "Seriously?"

Jackie responds with a shrug.

JACKIE

Hey, dude. My nerves are fuckin' shot right now! I need this shit.

Eric rolls his eyes. He turns, looks up past the tree canopies, at the red night sky beyond.

ERIC

We need to keep moving. We're sitting ducks here.

Jackie takes a long drag, then flicks the rest of the joint into the creek. He exhales a thick cloud.

JACKIE

Fine. Let's kick rocks.

CLOSE ON the joint as the creek water carries it away.

FADE TO:

EXT. WOODS - HIKING TRAIL - NIGHT

The blood moon casts its red glow down through the foggy tree canopies. In the distance, an owl HOOTS.

RICK (O.S.)

My guess... Their stupid Potem plans failed, they realized how fuckin' retarded they were for even thinking it might work, and then they all turned on each other.

FOOTSTEPS grow louder until --

Rick and Travis walk around a bend in the path.

TRAVIS

I'm not so sure it's that simple.

They slow to a stop.

Travis scans the area with his flashlight. He squints, spots something in the fog.

Blood on the path just a few meters ahead. Travis holds his flashlight on it, points it out to Rick.

TRAVIS

Go on. I'll cover you.

Rick readies his pistol, slowly approaches the blood.

He notices more blood splattered all over the bushes just beside the path.

RICK

Jesus Christ.

He steps right up to the puddle of blood, remains focused on the bloody bushes before him.

Travis watches from farther back, keeps his light on Rick.

TRAVIS

What is it? Another body?

With his pistol aimed at the bush, Rick reaches out with his free hand, pulls the bushes aside so that he can see what's behind them.

His eyes go wide. All the color drains from his face.

He pulls his arm away from the bushes, turns and pukes all over his boots.

As he uses his arm to wipe the bile from his chin, Rick looks back at Travis.

TRAVIS

Is it him? Is it Lon?

Rick shakes his head.

RICK

It's a young woman.

The expression on Rick's face changes from horrific disgust to seething anger.

RICK (CONT'D)
We've got to stop them, Travis.
Before anymore innocent people get
killed. I have to stop them!

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Eric continues to lead the group through the thick fog.

Jackie still brings up the rear. He stops for a quick breath, leans against a tree.

Haley notices that Jackie has stopped. She motions for him to hurry up.

HALEY
(hushed voice)
Jackie, we have to keep moving.
Eric said it's not much farther.

Jackie scoffs.

JACKIE
Yeah. He keeps saying that. "Not
much farther." Bullshit. He's
fuckin' lost. We should have stayed
on the damn trail!

Haley looks to Jackie with pleading eyes.

HALEY
Please... Just... Please trust
Eric. For me.

Jackie takes a deep breath, nods.

JACKIE
(sincere)
Alright. Yeah. Sorry.

He pushes himself off the tree, steps over to Haley, squeezes her hand.

They kiss.

ERIC (O.S.)
Guys! Over here!

Jackie and Haley exchange quick worried glances, then they hurry after Eric and Gwen.

EXT. CAMPSITE

It's Debbie and her friend's campsite from earlier, though now the place is totally trashed.

The larger tent has collapsed in on itself. Blood and gore covers practically everything.

Red fog fills the space.

Eric and Gwen stand at the tree line, stare on in horror at the grisly, surreal image.

Jackie and Haley come out of the woods, step beside Eric and Gwen. Both react with expressions of shock and disgust.

JACKIE

Ah, what the actual fuck, Eric!?
See, I knew we should have stuck to
the Goddamn trail! Fuck!

Haley squeezes Jackie's arm, struggles to keep her composure.

Eric continues to stare at the gory campsite, in total disbelief of what he sees.

ERIC

I don't understand... We must have
gotten turned around in the
woods...

Gwen steps closer to the campsite, away from the others. Her eyes laser-focused on something in the smoldering campfire.

CLOSE ON the campfire. In the center of the still smoking coals is Amy's charred, decapitated head!

As soon as Gwen realizes what she sees, she spins around and slaps her hands over her mouth, mortified.

Eric grabs her up in his arms, hugs her tight. He does his best to comfort her.

GWEN

(horrificed)
That's a head in the fire pit!
That's a fucking head... In the
fire pit.

Eric squeezes her tighter.

Jackie glares at Eric.

JACKIE
C'mon, dude! Do you know your way
through these fuckin' woods or
not!?

Frustrated, Eric shoots daggers back at Jackie. He takes a deep breath.

ERIC
(calmly)
Look. We have to stay calm. When
people freak out in emergency
situations, they make stupid
decisions. Stupid decisions get
people killed.

Jackie just shakes his head, continues to hug Haley.

JACKIE
(dismissive)
Yeah, that's real fuckin' poetic,
dude. Super helpful right now.

Eric turns back to Gwen, who looks as if she's seen a ghost.

ERIC
I want to check and see if there's
anything we can use. Maybe a gun?

Gwen nods, follows close behind as Eric approaches the still standing tent.

He bends down, grabs the zipper, pulls open the door flap, peers inside.

INSERT SHOT of the gore-caked interior of the tent.
Intestines literally hang from the roof.

Eric recoils in horror, covers his mouth as he gags.

ERIC
Oh, fuck!

Jackie steps away from Haley, moves over to the blood-splattered cooler.

Haley takes a deep breath, tries to shake off her nerves.

JACKIE
I need a fucking drink.

Eric and Gwen both shoot Jackie a dirty look.

GWEN
Seriously!?

ERIC
What's the matter with you, man!?

JACKIE
Yeah, seriously! I think a beer is
perfectly reasonable in this
situation!

Jackie opens the lid, reaches in and digs around, frowns.

JACKIE
What the Hell...

He pulls his hand out of the cooler, reveals a severed penis
and scrotum gripped tight between his fingers! The tip of the
penis is pierced, poorly, with a silver stud.

JACKIE
(revolted)
Fuck me!

Jackie instinctually flings the nasty severed appendage out
of his hand.

The severed penis and scrotum SHOOTs THROUGH THE AIR, smacks
Gwen square in the face. Blood spatters across her nose and
cheeks, leaving an odd mark.

This breaks something in Gwen, who releases a horrified
SCREAM, then blindly tears off into the woods.

ERIC
Gwen, stop! Come back!

In full freak out mode, Jackie jumps up and down as he rubs
the blood on his hand off onto his jeans.

He jumps in place like a scarred housewife, lands awkwardly
on his left ankle. SNAP!

Jackie crumples to the ground in immense pain.

JACKIE
(pure agony)
Oh, fuckin' shit! Are you fuckin'
serious!? Jesus fuckin' Christ!

Grimacing, he clutches at his ankle.

Haley hesitates for a beat, then rushes to Jackie's side, crouches beside him. She looks back to Eric, motions for him to follow after Gwen.

HALEY

Go on! Go get Gwen! We'll be right behind you!

Eric gives a confident nod, turns and runs off after Gwen.

Haley turns back to Jackie.

JACKIE

I'm fucked. Fuck!

HALEY

Shut up and help me!

EXT. WOODS

OTIS' P.O.V.

We charge through the red fog at an inhuman speed.

Gwen SCREAMS from deeper in the woods.

Our pace quickens, so fast now that we practically glide through the thicket.

END P.O.V.

EXT. CAMPSITE

Haley puts her arm under Jackie's shoulder for support, prepares to lift.

HALEY

On three! You ready?

Jackie dramatically shakes his head back and forth.

JACKIE

Fuck no!

HALEY

Three!

She lifts with all her might, helps him get to his feet.

Jackie puts some pressure on his left foot, winces in pain.

HALEY
Can you run?

JACKIE
Are you fuckin' kidding me!? I
don't know if I can even fuckin'
walk!

Haley gives a half smile, then spots something beside the collapsed tent.

A machete stabbed into the ground.

HALEY
(to Jackie)
Wait here a sec.

Confused, Jackie leans on his right foot and watches as Haley walks over to the machete, pulls it out of the dirt.

HALEY
Just in case.

Jackie shrugs.

JACKIE
Fuck, it's better than nothing!

EXT. WOODS

Gwen stumbles through the fog, slows to a stop, leans against a large tree. She snuffles, attempts to compose herself.

GWEN
(to herself)
You're okay. Breathe. You're okay.

Her lip trembles as she fights the urge to sob.

ERIC (O.S.)
Gwen, wait up!

She turns just as Eric approaches.

ERIC (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry that happened, babe.
Jackie didn't mean to --

Gwen shakes her head, wipes the tears from her eyes.

GWEN
It's not that, Eric... It's
everything else! All that blood...
(MORE)

GWEN (CONT'D)
And Debbie!... Oh my God!... Eric,
what the Hell is going on out
here!? Are we going to die too!?

Eric grabs her, pulls her in close for a hug. He takes a deep breath, exhales.

ERIC
I have no idea what's going on. But
I promise you that I'll get you out
of here... I have to.

GWEN
(her head on his shoulder)
You have to? Why's that?

Eric pulls away from the hug, looks Gwen in the eyes, gives her a warm smile.

ERIC
Because I wanna' marry you, Gwen.

He pulls out an engagement ring box, opens it, reveals the ring to Gwen.

Her face lights up. She looks to Eric, can't help but laugh a little as she pulls out the engagement ring of her own.

GWEN
You beat me to it.

The smile on Eric's face grows wider. He leans in, plants a passionate kiss on Gwen's lips.

ERIC
I love you, beautiful.

IN A FLASH, Otis pounces on Eric, like an apex predator attacking its prey!

Blood spatters all over Gwen as she stumbles backwards.

Before she can react, Eric is dragged out of view, deeper into the woods. His CRIES of agony ring out through the fog.

Gwen screams, both horrified and emotionally crushed.

GWEN
(hysterical)
Eric! ERIC!?

ERIC (O.S.)
(sheer agony)
Oh, God! Help me!

Eric's CRIES grow quieter and quieter as he is carried farther away, until he can no longer be heard at all.

Gwen weakly drops to her knees, sobs uncontrollably.

GWEN

Eric!? Eric, please come back!

FOOTSTEPS rapidly approach just as Haley emerges from the fog, stops beside Gwen. She whips her head back and forth, searches the surrounding area.

No sign of Eric. Just a shit load of blood all over the ground and Gwen.

Haley takes a breath, does her best to stay strong. She kneels down in front of Gwen, who continues to sob.

HALEY

(as calmly as she can)

Gwen. Where's Eric?

Gwen can't compose herself. Her hand trembles as she holds up her blood caked engagement ring.

GWEN

It t-took him...

JACKIE (O.S.)

What took him!?

Jackie limps into view, hobbles over to the girls. He stares down at the distraught Gwen.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Gwen!? What the fuck was it!?

Gwen just shakes her head and cries her eyes out.

Jackie looks around, confused. He turns back to Gwen, grabs her by her shoulders, tries to shake an answer out of her.

JACKIE

Tell me what you saw!

Nothing.

JACKIE

What was it, Gwen!? What the fuck was it!?

Haley steps in between them, glares at Jackie.

HALEY

Jackie!

Jackie takes the hint, backs off.

Haley turns to Gwen, places a hand on her shoulder.

HALEY

(soft, comforting)

Gwen, sweetie, I know this is hard.

But you have to come with us now.

We need to keep moving.

Gwen doesn't respond, just blankly stares ahead and cries.
Her mind has completely snapped.

Jackie spots a blood trail leading deeper into the woods.

JACKIE

(under his breath)

Fuck me sideways.

Haley puts an arm around Gwen, helps her to her feet, then guides her as they move in the direction opposite of the blood trail.

She glances back over her shoulder, at Jackie.

HALEY

Jackie, this way. We have to keep moving. Come on.

Jackie takes one last look at the blood trail on the ground. He turns, favors his right foot as he limps after the girls.

JACKIE

(under his breath)

This is so fucked.

The trio disappears into the fog.

PAN DOWN to Eric's bloody engagement ring on the ground.

FADE TO:

EXT. WOODS - CREEK - NIGHT

With their guns in hand, Rick and Travis move alongside the foggy creek. An owl HOOTS. Crickets CHIRP.

The blood moon seems to pulse in the sky.

They slow to a stop, glance around, listen. Just the normal sounds of nature.

Then, a twig SNAPS somewhere nearby.

Rick whips his head around, spots Lon just as he ducks farther into the woods and out of view.

RICK
Hey! I saw you, you ugly son of a
bitch! Get back here!

Determined, Rick and Travis chase after Lon.

EXT. WOODS - BRUSH

Branches claw and scrape at Lon as he blindly runs through the thick brush, desperate to escape. He grips his cane in his hands as he presses forward.

RICK (O.S.)
Get back here!

Lon glances back over his shoulder, no sign of Rick or Travis. He turns back only to smash his face against a low hanging branch. CRUNCH!

He falls hard on his back. His nose gushes blood.

LON
(dazed)
Ah, shit.

Rick and Travis emerge out of the brush.

They both stand over Lon. Rick smirks as he aims his pistol at Lon's face.

RICK
Hello.

Lon spits blood at Rick, who swiftly sidesteps it.

LON
You. Guess that explains why
William never showed up.

He pushes himself to his feet, wobbles a bit on weak legs, but steadies himself.

Travis steps behind Lon, keeps his handgun trained on him.

LON (CONT'D)
(to Rick)
You killed him then?

Rick nods to Travis, who raises his free hand and waves.

TRAVIS
That was me, actually. Broke just
about as many bones as I could
without causing death... And then I
shot him in the face.

RICK
It wasn't pretty.

Lon glares back at Travis, then turns back to Rick.

LON
So, what? You here to stop me, that
it? Well too bad. You're too late.

Rick looks the old man over.

RICK
Looks to me like your little ritual
didn't go quite as planned.

Lon snarls at Rick.

LON
Fuck you.

Rick laughs.

RICK
You assholes really thought you
were gonna meet God!? What a bunch
of fucking window lickers! You do
know that you're all mental, right?

LON
I should have slit your throat when
you came sniffin' around.

Rick rolls his eyes.

RICK
Yeah. Would have saved you from
this predicament here, that's for
sure...
(beat)
Now. Let's get to it, huh? I know
you got a son. Otis, right?...
Where is he? You kill him too?

Travis steps closer to Lon, keeps his gun aimed at the back of his head.

LON

You fools. You've got no clue what you've stumbled into. Both of you are going to die tonight. It'll be cruel. It'll be bloody. And it'll FUCKIN' HURT!

In one swift and sudden move, Lon unsheathes the ritualistic dagger from the top of his cane, spins around and STABS THE BLADE THROUGH TRAVIS' HEAD!

The blade slides in one ear and pokes out the other.

Travis' eyes go wide, unable to process what just happened.

LON

That's for killing my brother, you gutless son of a bitch!

Rick's jaw practically drops.

RICK

TRAVIS!?

Lon rips the dagger out of Travis' head, lets the big guy drop to the ground.

Blood squirts out of Travis' ears and mouth as he convulses on the ground.

Lon turns, charges at Rick, raises his dagger.

LON

You're next!

Rick lifts his pistol, squeezes the trigger. BOOM!

The bullet burrows into Lon's nose, causes the back of his head to explode into a gory mess of blood, brains, and chunky skull fragments.

Lon stands upright for a brief moment, staring ahead at Rick, who glares back.

RICK

Go get fucked in Hell.

The old man blinks twice, then crumples to the ground, dead.

Rick holsters his pistol, looks over at Travis, whose dead eyes stare back at him.

RICK
Shit... Travis... I'll finish this,
man. For you.

He grabs Travis' handgun, holsters it in his pants.

Then, Rick steps over to Lon, reaches down and pries the ritualistic dagger from his dead hand.

He holds the blade close to his face, looks it over, recognizes it. A look of fear falls over him.

RICK
So... This is what you used for the
ritual, huh? Crazy bastard...

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLS - NIGHT

The blood crescent moon rests high in the sky, casting harsh crimson light down onto the fog-covered hills below.

HALEY (V.O.)
(overlap)
C'mon, we have to keep moving!

EXT. WOODS

Haley practically pushes the catatonic Gwen along as they hurry through the foggy forest.

Jackie limps along behind them, struggles to keep up.

HALEY (CONT'D)
(to Jackie)
It shouldn't be much farther.

JACKIE
Bullshit. We're fuckin' lost! I
can't see fuckin' shit and --

He twists his bad ankle, falls down to his knees.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
(in pain)
Fuckin' shit!

Haley stops, turns back to Jackie.

HALEY
We have to keep moving, Jackie!

JACKIE

Why!? We can't see anything. How do you know which way we're even going? Admit it... We're fucked!

HALEY

(stern)

I'm not giving up. And neither are you. Now get your ass up and move!

Jackie takes a deep breath, nods. He pushes himself back to his feet, grimaces in pain.

A twig SNAPS nearby, startles both Jackie and Haley. Gwen seems oblivious.

Jackie hops on his good foot as he moves closer to Haley, who grips the machete tight.

They both scan the surrounding woods for the source of the sound. Nothing but fog and trees.

JACKIE

(eyes on the woods)

Listen... Whoever... Whatever this fuckin' thing is...

He turns to Haley, looks her in the eyes.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna be able to run away... Do you understand?

Haley frowns, confused.

HALEY

What are you --

JACKIE

Just listen. When it starts to kill me... You grab Gwen and you two run. You run until you can't run anymore! You hear me?

With misty eyes, Jackie leans in and kisses Haley.

JACKIE

I fuckin' love you, Haley.

Haley can't help but shed some tears.

HALEY

(crying)

I love you, too.

Another twig SNAPS in the forest. Closer this time.

Jackie stiffens up, nervous as can be. Sweat glistens off his pale face.

JACKIE
(to Haley)
Get ready to run!

FOOTSTEPS approach, then --

A bright light appears from the fog, shines onto the trio of scared friends.

Jackie shields his eyes with his hand, squints to see.

RICK (O.S.)
You kids are lucky I'm the one who
found you.

Rick takes his flashlight off the trio, steps closer.

Jackie and Haley exchange relieved looks.

RICK (CONT'D)
You really shouldn't be out in
these woods. Not tonight.

JACKIE
Yeah, no shit. There's someone or
something out here. And they're
really fuckin' mad, dude!

RICK
(nods)
Yeah. Sounds about right.

HALEY
Who are you?

Rick smirks.

RICK
Guess I'm the cavalry. Heh.

He looks past Haley, at Gwen, who continues to blankly stare off into the woods.

RICK
She alright?

Haley shoots a look of sadness Gwen's way, then she turns back to Rick.

HALEY
No. She's not.

Rick steps past Jackie and Haley, peers out into the woods.

RICK
Well I hope she can walk, cuz we
have to get moving. I gotta' get
you kids out of here. Too many
people have already died tonight...

FADE TO:

EXT. WOODS - BEATEN PATH - LATER

The winding trail snakes back and forth through the leafy underbrush. Red fog hangs in the space.

Using his flashlight to guide the way, Rick quickly moves along the path.

HALEY (O.S.)
Where exactly are you taking us?
You got a ride out of here?

Haley helps guide Gwen as they follow close behind.

RICK
No time to make it back to my car.
But if we keep heading north, we
will come to an old highway. I'll
get you kids that far. Then you can
follow the road until someone else
comes along.

HALEY
You mean if someone comes along.

RICK
Trust me. You kids have a much
better shot of escaping with your
skins if you make it to that old
highway.
(glances back at Haley)
Someone will come along.

HALEY
And what about you? Something tells
me you weren't out here looking for
us.

RICK
No, not exactly.

Limping, Jackie yet again brings up the rear. He grimaces with each step he takes.

JACKIE

(to Rick)

Hey, mystery-dude. You wanna throw us a bone and explain what the fuck is going on out here?

Rick looks up at the sky for a moment, searches for the right words. He sighs. "Fuck it."

RICK

The name's Rick. And... Well, I'm starting to think that this might be my fault.

JACKIE

What do you mean "your fault"?

RICK

Well, I... I fucked up. The inbred fucks who caused all this shit... The Whitmore family... I was supposed to make sure... Fuck! How could I let this happen!?

Jackie frowns, annoyed by Rick's response.

JACKIE

The fuck are you talking about!?

HALEY

Whatever's doing this, I don't think it's a person. I mean, it looks human, but just barely. It's... I don't know what it is... It's a monster.

RICK

Doesn't really matter what it is, does it? It's not meant to be here. It could be the Devil himself for all we know. Makes no difference.

Jackie lets out a slight chuckle, but quickly stops once he realizes how serious Rick is.

RICK

The Whitmore's... They thought that the Potem would take them to a higher plane of existence. They were very, very wrong.

HALEY
The Potem?

JACKIE
The fuck is that!?

RICK
A ritual. A sacrifice of the
innocent under a blood moon.

HALEY
A sacrifice?

Rick glances back at Haley, a stoic look in his eyes.

RICK
A pure soul, eighteen years old.
They slaughtered their own son like
cattle. Now... He's a vessel for
something dark. Something evil.

HALEY
Jesus.

Shame falls over Rick's face. He takes a deep breath.

RICK
If I'd done my job like I was
supposed to, none of this would
have ever happened.

JACKIE
Awesome. You know, I had considered
the possibility of being attacked
by a wild animal, like a wolf, a
bear, even a deer! But a
demonically possessed hillbilly!?
That sure as fuck wasn't on my
bingo card!

RICK
Guess it wouldn't be, would it?
Hey, could be worse though! Could
be vampires, or witches, zombies,
or...

(shudders at the thought)
Wraiths.

Haley makes a face, isn't sure what to believe.

RICK
Crazy, huh? Knowing there really is
something out there that goes bump
in the night.

HALEY

An hour ago, I would have called you a nutcase. But after what we've been through...

Jackie shakes his head, frustrated.

JACKIE

Fuck my life.

While helping Gwen along, Haley scans the dark woods around them. Nothing but fog and shadows.

HALEY

What does this thing want with us?
Just to kill us!?

RICK

Well, yes. And more...

Haley frowns.

HALEY

More?

Rick looks to his feet, forces a smile.

RICK

If this thing is what I think it is... It wants to get back to where it came from.

A curious look forms on Haley's face.

HALEY

And how would it accomplish that?

Rick's eyes rise back to meet Haley's.

RICK

With a lot of dead people.

Afraid, Haley hugs Gwen tighter.

Behind them, Jackie spots something deeper in the woods. He stops, squints his eyes as he peers through the fog.

His eyes light up.

JACKIE

Holy fuck! It's Eric!

Gwen snaps out of her stupor, looks out in the same direction as Jackie, frantically searches for her boyfriend.

GWEN

Eric!?

About thirty yards away, partially obscured by the fog, there's a small cluster of tall trees. But something is very off about this picture.

SNAP ZOOM on the cluster of trees. In the middle of them hangs a naked, disemboweled Eric, suspended by his own intestines. Fuckin' gruesome.

Gwen turns white, drops to her knees, and SCREAMS her heart out. Totally devastated.

Rick goes into high alert mode, looks to Haley.

RICK

(quiet, stern)

Shut her up!

Haley can't help but cry as she grabs Gwen. She covers her mouth with her hand, silences her.

HALEY

(hushed voice, crying)

I'm sorry! I'm so, so sorry!

Suddenly, a SINISTER LAUGH echoes through the foggy woods.

Then, HEAVY FOOTSTEPS rapidly approach from the distance, grow LOUDER and LOUDER.

Visibly shaken, Jackie stares out into the woods, too scared to blink.

JACKIE

(petrified)

Oh, man! You have got to be fucking kidding me!

Rick takes action, forcefully grabs Jackie by the shoulder, shoves him back towards the direction they've been heading.

RICK

(urgent)

Keep moving! There should be an old highway, just up past those trees! Get to the road and stick to it!

He turns to Haley, motions for her to grab Gwen.

RICK (CONT'D)

You're gonna have to make her move, understand? You gotta' run!

Haley gets her arm under Gwen's shoulder, attempts to hoist her up on her feet. She shoots Rick a worried look.

HALEY
(panicked)
You're not coming with us!?

RICK
I didn't come here for you kids. I
came here to stop this!

Haley pauses for a beat, gives him an understanding nod.

Rick turns back to Jackie.

RICK
You get these girls out of here!

Jackie shakes his head in disbelief.

JACKIE
You're seriously not going to come
with us!? What the fuck, man!?

RICK
I'm gonna send this motherfucker
back to the Hell it crawled out of!

Haley finally gets Gwen to her feet, quickly forces her down the trail, past Jackie.

HALEY
(to Jackie)
Come on!

The two girls don't wait around, rush past a large cluster of bushes, quickly move out of view.

Rick hands his pistol and flashlight to Jackie, forces him to take them.

Confused, Jackie looks from the pistol, to Rick.

JACKIE
What are you doing!? Are you
fuckin' crazy, dude!? What, are you
gonna fight that fucker with your
bare hands!?
(points to Eric's corpse)
Did you not see what that fuckin'
thing can do to a person!?

Rick pulls out the dagger, holds it up towards the sky. Red moonlight shines through the fog, shimmers off the blade.

Jackie scoffs.

JACKIE
Yeah, you're fuckin' crazy!

RICK
This dagger, it brought that
monster into our world. Now... It's
the only thing that can kill it!

The FOOTSTEPS grow even LOUDER. Then, they stop. Just like that. Silence. Unnerving as fuck.

Rick turns towards the foggy woods, takes out his flask, finishes it off, then throws it to the ground.

He glances back over his shoulder, at Jackie.

RICK
(assertive)
What the fuck are you still doing
here!? Go now!

After one last quick glance at Rick, Jackie turns to follow after the girls.

Just then, a dread inducing CACKLE causes Jackie to stop dead in his tracks. It came from the bushes directly beside him.

Jackie's whole body trembles, scared out of his mind.

A few yards down the path, Rick is also frozen with fear. Finally, he opens his mouth to speak.

RICK
RUN!

With a burst of adrenaline, Jackie drops the flashlight, whips the pistol around, aims into the bushes. He closes his eyes and squeezes the trigger. BANG!

JACKIE
Fuck you!

Suddenly, one of Otis' massive, blood-caked arms shoots out from the bottom of the bush, digs its massive claws into Jackie's bad leg.

Blood gushes out of the wound as Jackie CRIES OUT.

Rick runs to help, but it's too late.

Jackie drops the pistol to the ground as he is yanked off his feet, then dragged into the bushes.

RICK

No!

The bushes rapidly shake back and forth as Jackie continues to SCREAM out in agony.

EXT. WOODS - CLUSTER OF BUSHES

OTIS' P.O.V.

We tower over Jackie, who lies on the ground and stares back up at us, sheer terror spread across his face.

Our right arm comes into view, SWIPES at Jackie's chest with our wicked claws.

Blood gushes out of the savage wound as Jackie rolls over onto his stomach.

He GROANS as he desperately tries to crawl away.

We let out another SINISTER LAUGH.

Terrified out of his fucking mind, Jackie curls up into the fetal position.

We LAUGH harder.

END P.O.V.

EXT. WOODS - BRUSH

Haley continues to help a distraught Gwen as they hurry through thick brush.

Jackie's SCREAMS echo through the foggy woods.

Haley fights back tears, tries to pick up the pace.

An emotional wreck, Gwen starts to stumble, but Haley manages to steady her.

HALEY

C'mon, Gwen! Keep your legs moving!

GWEN

I can't... Eric... He --

Haley SLAPS Gwen across the face, gets her attention.

HALEY

Gwen! I'm sorry, but Eric is dead!
We have to keep moving or we're
dead too!

Gwen takes a deep breath, does her best to compose herself.

GWEN

(sniffles)
Okay... Yeah...

Haley forces a smile. She grabs Gwen's hand, pulls her deeper into the brush.

EXT. WOODS - CLUSTER OF BUSHES

Rick bursts into the bushes, dagger raised high in the air, but no one's there. He frowns.

No Otis. No Jackie. Just a whole shit ton of blood.

Then, Jackie CRIES OUT from the fog.

Rick's eyes scan the surrounding woods. He seethes with rage, pulls out Travis' gun.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - HILLSIDE

A few trees stand tall just beside a steep hill. The red fog seeps out of the tree line, falls down the hillside like some sort of Hellish waterfall. Hauntingly beautiful.

RICK (O.S.)

Where are you!? Show yourself!

Just then, Jackie is THROWN into view! He SMASHES hard into one of the thick trees, the force of the impact shit-whipping his body around.

With a THUD, Jackie falls to the ground, limply rolls down the steep hillside, into the darkness below.

Only a moment later, Rick runs into view, steps up to the edge of the hillside. He whips his head back and forth, no sign of Otis or Jackie. This guys timing fucking sucks.

Rick spots blood dripping down the tree that Jackie smashed into just a few moments ago. He reaches out, drags his hand across the tree, looks at the blood on his fingers.

RICK
(under his breath)
Fuck.

SINISTER LAUGHTER from the fog grabs Rick's attention.

With the dagger gripped tight in one hand and his pistol in the other hand, he spins around, faces the woods before him.

With a steely determination, he scans the trees for movement.

Off to Rick's right, just out of his peripheral vision, something moves in the fog.

Otis, crouched down low to the ground, stalks towards him!

RICK
(oblivious to Otis)
C'mon, asshole! Show yourself!

OTIS' P.O.V.

Slowly and methodically, we crawl along the forest ground, towards Rick, who is laser-focused on the woods before him.

RICK
(oblivious to us)
I'm gonna fuck you up!

We speed up as we get closer. Faster. And faster. Until we are right up beside Rick.

Suddenly, we stand up tall. We tower over Rick, who spins around toward us, raises the dagger high.

RICK
Yeah, fuck you too!

END P.O.V.

CLOSE ON the bloody tree Jackie was thrown against.

A WET CRUNCH, followed immediately by fresh blood spattering against the crimson tree.

SMASH TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - BOTTOM OF HILL - MOMENTS LATER

Crimson moonlight illuminates the foggy area below.

Jackie lies sprawled out on his back, motionless.

His eyes suddenly pop open. He sits up, gasps for air.

With a grimace, he clutches the bloody slash wound on his chest, forces himself up on wobbly legs.

His wallet falls out of his pocket, onto the ground.

Jackie bends over, picks it up, flips it open.

He stares at the picture of his sister, caresses the photograph with his thumb. Then --

Jackie stuffs his wallet back into his pocket, looks up the steep hill. He looks discouraged.

JACKIE

Fuck me a little more, right?

Slowly, he starts to climb back up the hill. In pain, he GRUNTS every step of the way.

EXT. WOODS - HILLSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Jackie scrambles to the top of the hill, peers out into the foggy woods before him. He struggles to catch his breath.

JACKIE

I hate these fuckin' woods.

He limps forward, slips in something wet, stumbles, and falls face first into Rick's gory remains.

It's Rick's disemboweled torso! The head and limbs have been savagely torn off, but the shirt is clearly Rick's.

Disgusted, Jackie pushes himself up off the ground, does his best to wipe the blood from his face.

JACKIE

(frustrated)

Oh, c'mon! Give me a fuckin' break!

This is fuckin' ridiculous!

As he gets back to his feet, something in the gory mess catches his eye. A glint of light.

It's the ritualistic dagger, lodged deep into Rick's torso.

EXT. WOODS

Totally exhausted, Haley and Gwen continue to press on through the fog, move as fast as their legs will carry them.

As they run across the uneven terrain, Haley spots something in the distance. Her eyes light up.

Up ahead, the woods start to open up. Even the fog seems to be lighter.

HALEY
(hopeful)
We're almost there!

They pick up their pace.

Just then, an UNNERVING CACKLE comes from the fog behind the two girls.

Haley and Gwen both stop dead in their tracks, frozen in fear. They exchange terrified glances.

They slowly step back towards the tree line, but keep their eyes locked on the fog-filled woods before them.

Another CACKLE. Closer this time.

Haley grips the machete tight, ready to defend herself.

Gwen grabs hold of Haley's free hand, squeezes tight.

GWEN
(to Haley)
What does it want!?

OTIS (O.S.)
(distorted)
I WANT YOU TO RUN!

Just then, something is thrown out of the fog, hits Haley in the chest, then drops to the ground.

Pure horror spreads across Haley and Gwen's faces as they look down at their feet and see --

RICK'S DECAPITATED HEAD!

A DEMONIC LAUGH comes from within the fog.

Terrified, Haley turns, grabs Gwen and pushes her towards the tree line.

HALEY
Gwen, MOVE!

OTIS' P.O.V.

We stand motionless in the red fog, watch as Haley and Gwen make it to the tree line.

Just as the two girls move out of view, We unleash more DEMONIC LAUGHTER.

END P.O.V.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD

A flat, grassy field sits beside the vast sea of thick woods.

The red fog spills out of the woods, hangs about a foot over the grassy field. It seems to have expanded as far as it can.

A desolate old highway cuts through the field, runs along the side of the forest.

The DEMONIC LAUGHTER carries through the night air.

CLOSE ON the blood crescent moon in the sky.

Haley and Gwen rush out of the tree line, sprint through the field, towards the road.

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS rapidly approach from the woods behind the two girls. He's coming!

Haley glances back over her shoulder, doesn't like what she sees. She pushes Gwen ahead of her.

HALEY
DON'T LOOK BACK!

EXT. WOODS

OTIS' P.O.V.

We charge through the foggy woods at an incredible speed, HEAVY FOOTSTEPS below us every step of the way.

Twisted branches blur by us as we reach the tree line and burst into the --

EXT. GRASSY FIELD

Up ahead, Haley and Gwen run through the field, towards the road. Quickly, we close the distance.

Just as we are right on the girls, Haley spins around and swings her machete right at us!

END P.O.V.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS

With the dagger clutched tight, Jackie hobbles through the fog as fast as his injured leg will allow him to.

He GRUNTS with each step.

JACKIE
(to himself)
Man, fuck this fog!

Up ahead, the woods start to open up.

Haley and Gwen both SCREAM in the distance.

JACKIE
HALEY!?

He picks up the pace.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD

OTIS' P.O.V.

We stand on top of Haley, pin her to the ground with one of our massive clawed feet, which protrude through the end of our shoes.

HALEY
(desperate)
No! Please!?

She screams out in agony as our claws dig in deeper. Blood trickles out of her back.

Then, the machete slowly comes into view. It's gripped tight in our right hand. We hold the blade out towards Haley, press the blade up against the back of her head.

She whimpers in fear, certain she's going to die.

GWEN (O.S.)
(hysterical)
Hey!

We turn to see Gwen charging right at us, a thick tree branch raised high over her head.

GWEN (CONT'D)
Get the fuck off her!

Just as Gwen winds back to strike, we lash out with our left hand, viciously slash our sharp claws across her face.

END P.O.V.

Gwen drops the tree branch to the ground, clutches at her face as she turns and stumbles away.

As she covers her face with her hands, blood seeps through her fingers, drips down all over her shoes.

HALEY (O.S.)
(sobbing)
Oh, God! Gwen!?

ANGLE ON Haley, who is still pinned down on her stomach, the clawed foot pressed down hard on her back.

Weakly, she lifts her head, reaches a desperate hand out towards Gwen. With pure anguish on her face, she starts to say something.

HALEY
Gwen, I'm so sor --

Suddenly, the machete is **SLAMMED DOWN ON HALEY'S HEAD**, nearly splitting her skull down the middle!

The clawed hand wrapped around the machete's handle lets go, then pulls away, out of view.

CLOSE ON Haley's face, the machete jutting out of her nose. Her left eye rolls back in her head, while her right eye twitches. A choked gasp escapes her lips.

HALEY
(barely conscious)
I-I... Wan-w-wanna... Go... H-home...

Then, her head slumps forward, finally dead.

AT THE TREE LINE

Jackie limps out of the woods. He looks out over the grassy field, spots Haley's limp body, the machete still wedged into her head.

Tears well up in his eyes as he swallows the lump in his throat. He hangs his head.

JACKIE
(under his breath)
Haley... Fuck. I'm sorry.

Then --

GWEN (O.S.)
(hysterical, crying)
Please... Just, stop!

Jackie turns, watches as Gwen blindly stumbles out of the field and into the road.

In the field behind Gwen, Otis crawls on all fours in the fog, moves closer and closer towards her.

Jackie pushes through the pain, runs as fast as he can.

JACKIE
(calls out)
Gwen! Watch out! That fuckin' freak
is right behind you!

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY

CLOSE ON Gwen, who weakly staggers along the center of the two-lane road. She still holds her hands up against her bloody face.

JACKIE (O.S.)
Gwen!?

An UNNERVING CACKLE comes from the shadows beside the road.

Gwen lowers her shaky hands, reveals a savage gash across the right side of her face. Her left eye hangs out of it's gaping socket. Her bottom lip trembles.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD

Jackie sprints toward the road, steps awkwardly on his busted leg. SNAP!

He goes down in a heap, cries out in agony.

JACKIE

Fuck! Fuck, fuck, fuck! FUCK!

Just then, light catches his eye. He turns his attention to a bend in the road further on down.

Headlights flood the road as a small sedan rounds the bend.

Jackie grunts through the pain, pushes himself up. He turns back to Gwen, who just stands in the middle of the road.

JACKIE

Car! Gwen! Fuck! THERE'S A CAR!

He looks back to the car. It SPEEDS toward Gwen, with no sign of slowing down.

INT. SEDAN - TRAVELING

NANCY, (48), a crazy cat-lady complete with a crazy cat-sweater, sits behind the wheel.

UPBEAT POP MUSIC plays over the radio.

While nodding her head to the beat of the music, Nancy glances back over her shoulder.

In the back seat, a fat cat SNORES inside of a cat carrier.

NANCY

Goofy cat. You'll sleep through anything, won't ya?

THROUGH THE FRONT WIND-SHIELD, the headlights fall over Gwen, who stands traumatized in the middle of the road.

Nancy turns back to the road. Her eyes go wide, her foot SLAMS down on the brake pedal!

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY

The car brakes hard, but it's too late.

Gwen is RUN DOWN, her body disappearing under the small vehicle, which skids to a stop in the middle of the road.

A few tense moments pass, then --

The driver's door POPS opens and Nancy steps out.

She covers her mouth with a shaky hand, steps towards the back of the sedan.

The UPBEAT POP MUSIC spills out of the car, carries over the night air. Creates an ominous juxtaposition.

As Nancy steps around the back of her vehicle, Gwen's mangled body comes into view.

Arms and legs broken, Gwen lies sprawled out on the pavement. Blood begins to puddle up around her.

Nancy bursts into tears, rushes over and kneels next to Gwen, who twitches.

NANCY
(hysterical)
Oh, Lord! Please, don't let this
happen! PLEASE!

She squeezes Gwen's hand as she SOBS harder.

A DEMONIC CACKLE creeps out from behind Nancy. She spins around just as a shadow rises up behind her.

With the car's tail-lights casting a red glow over his blood-caked body, Otis stands a good two feet taller than the terrified Nancy.

His needle-like teeth form a twisted smile. Scary as Hell.

Nancy clutches at her chest, gasps for air. She's having a fuckin' heart attack!

Otis lunges forward and digs his clawed thumbs into Nancy's eyes, GOUGES THEM OUT OF THEIR SOCKETS!

With his thumbs buried deep in her skull, Otis lifts the dying woman off her feet! Her legs kick back and forth!

OTIS
(distorted)
Stay with me. There's still more!

Otis SQUEEZES harder.

Nancy SQUEALS as her skull CRACKS. Blood and brains shit out and slop down her convulsing body.

Behind Otis, Jackie dashes across the road, dives into the car, SLAMS the driver's door shut behind him.

The car BURNS OUT before speeding away.

Enraged, Otis tosses Nancy's limp body to the side of the road, then gets down on all four and SPRINTS AFTER THE SPEEDING VEHICLE!

INT. SEDAN - TRAVELING

The MUSIC continues to blast as Jackie white-knuckles the steering wheel.

He shoots a beady-eyed look at the rearview mirror, sees Otis closing in fast.

JACKIE
What the fuck is this thing!? It
doesn't fuckin' quit!

His foot SLAMS down on the gas pedal, but he's driving a piece of shit four-cylinder.

ON THE SPEEDOMETER, the needle hovers just above 70 MPH.

Frustrated, Jackie PUNCHES the dashboard repeatedly.

JACKIE
(at the sedan)
C'mon, FUCKIN' GO!

IN THE BACKSEAT, the fat cat in the carrier HISSES and GROWLS at Jackie.

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY

OTIS' P.O.V.

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS below us as we rush along the road at an insane speed, quickly gain ground on the speeding vehicle.

Suddenly, we launch ourselves a good twenty feet into the air, towards the car!

END P.O.V.

INT. SEDAN - TRAVELING

A loud BANG on the roof, which partially caves inwards.

Startled, Jackie nearly loses control of the vehicle.

Tires SQUEAL as he turns the wheel hard, just barely able to regain control.

Then, a clawed hand BURSTS THROUGH THE ROOF, just inches from Jackie's sweaty face!

JACKIE

Fuck! Are you fuckin' serious!?

The clawed hand swipes and grabs at Jackie, who ducks down just out of reach.

It wildly swings around, barely misses Jackie, but catches the radio dial.

The radio changes to another station. INDUSTRIAL METAL MUSIC blasts through the stereo speakers.

While keeping one hand on the wheel, Jackie reaches down and pulls the ritualistic dagger from his waistband.

He glares up at the clawed hand.

JACKIE

I'm fuckin' sick of your shit!

Jackie STABS the dagger through the clawed hand's wrist!

Smoke and blood seep out of the wound as it SIZZLES and POPS.

Otis SCREAMS out in anguish as he desperately tries to yank his hand free, but the blade won't fit through the hole in the roof.

Dark blood squirts out of Otis' SIZZLING wound, all over the side of Jackie's face.

JACKIE

How does that feel, motherfucker!?

With one final hard yank, Otis RIPS his arm free, splitting his hand down the middle!

A loud THUD as Otis falls off the back of the car.

THROUGH THE REAR WIND-SHIELD, Otis lands hard on the road, rolls to a stop.

Jackie STOMPS on the brakes.

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY

The car SCREECHES to a stop.

INT. SEDAN - PARKED

Jackie throws the gear selector into reverse, turns around to look out the rear view wind-shield.

He SLAMS on the gas.

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY

Tires SQUEAL as the car reverses at a high speed.

ANGLE ON Otis, lying motionless in the middle of the road. He suddenly sits up just as --

THE CAR CRUSHES HIM!

THUMP! THUMP!

Otis's body crumples under the vehicle as it passes.

INT. SEDAN - TRAVELING

Jackie turns back to the front wind-shield, steps down on the brakes, brings the sedan to another SCREECHING halt.

He puts the gear selector back into drive, smashes down on the gas yet again.

The car BURNS OUT for a brief moment before accelerating directly towards Otis's broken body.

JACKIE
Get fucked!

Otis weakly raises a broken arm in defiance just as he again disappears under the vehicle.

THUMP! THUMP! A juicy speed bump.

Jackie looks over his shoulder, out the rear wind-shield, a crazed grin spread across his face.

He punches the roof, starts to celebrate.

JACKIE
(a rush of emotions)
Fuck yeah! Fuck you, dude! Fuck
you! Not me! You didn't get me, you
ugly bastard!

Jackie bursts into a maniacal laughter.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
I fuckin' made it! I fuckin' made
it you motherfucker!

He exhales a huge breath of relief, can't help but cry a little. His lips curl into a smile.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Fuck yeah, man! I made it!

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY

ANGLE ON Otis's mangled body.

The car's tail lights grow smaller in the distance.

SLOW ZOOM onto Otis, right up to his blood-spattered face, on his dead eyes. They stare back at us.

HOLD HERE for a very long beat as --

The END CREDITS begin to scroll by.

HOLD. The dead eyes stare back.

The END CREDITS continue.

HOLD. No movement. Not even a twitch.

Finally, the END CREDITS wrap up.

HOLD... Then --

Otis' eyes twitch!

SMASH TO BLACK.

DEMONIC LAUGHTER echoes over the --

TITLE CARD -- THE POTEM

FADE OUT.