

DOGFIGHT

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DOG FIGHT

OVER BLACK

BOOTS hit the ground and run, POUNDING hard against the pavement, HEAVY BREATHING.

A CAR DOOR opens and SLAMS shut. TIRES squeal on the street and drive closer until we reveal...

INT. CAR - NIGHT

AIDEN, 14-15, a bruised and reckless youth sits in the backseat. He wears a gold necklace, smokes a joint and spits blood from his mouth. A gun lays beside him. We don't see the DRIVER in the front seat.

DRIVER (O.S.)

Here.

The Driver tosses a roll of CASH into the backseat.

EST./INT. TRAILER HOME BEDROOM - NIGHT

JO, a 12-13 year old boy with a sweet face, wakes to FLASHING police lights. A curious and perceptive kid, wise beyond his years, Jo moves closer to his window to investigate when his brother Aiden crashes down on him from outside.

Aiden is all electric energy. He speaks fast and with confidence.

AIDEN

How long have they been here?

JO

Few minutes.

As Jo closes the window, he sees the neighbor girl the same age, HOLLY, a lonely, longing girl-next-door with a crush, watching from her porch with a pair of hunting binoculars slung around her neck.

AIDEN

Mom call the cops? Fuckin' bitch.

Jo studies Aiden's busted knuckles, pulls a dirty shirt from the floor and wraps Aiden's hands.

JO

What happened?

They huddle in Jo's bed. As Aiden tells the story, Jo hangs on his every word.

AIDEN

So there was this guy. Big, slow mother fucker, you know. He looked familiar but I couldn't place him. He knocked me down in one punch.

JO

Did you hit him back?

AIDEN

I'm laying there to let him think he won. Then he kneels down to get one more in.

JO

What happened?

AIDEN

I waited. Then I peeked and I remembered where I saw him. He was that fat fuck from juvi.

JO

Then what?

AIDEN

I popped him. Right in the nose. Blood everywhere. Threw up his dinner.

JO

Did he go after you?

AIDEN

Hell no.

Aiden tosses the roll of CASH to Jo and Jo counts it.

JO

Four-hundred dollars.

AIDEN

There's more where that came from.

JO

How'd you get this?

AIDEN

I took it.

Aiden takes the cash back but peels off a few twenties and tosses them to Jo.

JO
I could get two bikes.

AIDEN
What the fuck are you gonna do with two
bikes?

JO
Have two fuckin' bikes.

AIDEN
Could have a new life.

Aiden gives Jo a few playful shoves.

Jo notices the cowlick in Aiden's hair. He licks his hand and smashes it down.

Aiden puts Jo in a playful head lock.

They hear FOOTSTEPS approaching the room and stop playing.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
Shit.

Aiden stuffs all of the cash in Jo's sheets and jumps over to his bed, trying to get under the covers.

RITA, their mother, barges in with a POLICE OFFICER behind her. She's been crying. She pulls Aiden up by his arm.

RITA
Get out.

AIDEN
I didn't do nothin'--

RITA
Out.

JO
He didn't do nothing' Mom.

RITA
--Shut up. Where were you?

AIDEN
Don't fuckin' yell at h--

Rita SMACKS Aiden across the mouth. In a knee-jerk reaction, Aiden SMACKS her head but the Officer intervenes and drags Aiden from the room.

RITA

Where have you been? Why are you
bleeding?

AIDEN

Don't yell at him.

RITA

Out now.

AIDEN

You fuckin' get out. You don't care
about us.

RITA

I care, Aiden!

JO

Mom--

RITA

Jo, go to bed.

JO

He didn't do nothing wrong--

RITA

Go to bed.

(to Aiden)

You were supposed to be here watching
him.

AIDEN

You're the mom. You watch him.

OFFICER

Move it.

AIDEN

I hate you.

RITA

I hate you.

Rita stops herself, almost covering her mouth. It slipped out.

The Officer and Rita move Aiden out of the room and close the door. Jo hears the fighting continue but stays to guard the money.

AIDEN (O.S.)

Mom, don't. Mom, I'm sorry.

RITA (O.S.)
I can't do this.

AIDEN (O.S.)
It won't happen again. I'll be good this time. I messed up. I messed up is all.

RITA (O.S.)
Stop it.

AIDEN (O.S.)
I don't wanna go back there.

RITA (O.S.)
What am I supposed to do with you? What am I supposed to do?

AIDEN (O.S.)
Mom, please.

OFFICER (O.S.)
Want us to take him?

A long beat. It's quiet. A DOOR SHUTS and a CAR drives away.

Jo pull the money from the sheets and hides it in a slit in his mattress. Sneaks out of bed and cracks open the door. Jo sees Rita wiping her eyes and HUMMING as she cleans Aiden's busted face in the living room. A familiar routine.

Her HUMMING carries us into...

EST./EXT. - BOONE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA - AFTERNOON

Open WIDE on winding hollers deep in the forgotten Appalachian hills.

We PAN past one closed mom n' pop shop after another: a BOTTLING FACTORY with a torn and faded American flag, thin streams of SMOKE from the auto factories streak the grey sky.

Jo walks with Aiden who now wears a TRACKING DEVICE around his ankle. The brothers collect aluminum cans and bottles in a small wagon.

EXT. BOTTLING FACTORY - BACK LOT - LATER THAT DAY

The place overflows with pop cans, bottles and garbage bins.

Jo and Aiden wait as OLD MICK, a man of few words but a face with a story to tell, weighs their load and then shells over six greasy singles to Jo.

Jo gives three dollars to Aiden and pulls their empty wagon across the gravel lot.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Aiden trashes the street as he and Jo walk, kicking aluminum cans, spitting, knocking over trash cans. Jo pulls the wagon and continues picking up aluminum cans.

AIDEN

I'm gettin' out.

JO

Where are you going?

AIDEN

Somewhere that every time somethin' bad happens, people don't assume it's me.

JO

But it is you.

Aiden gives Jo a playful shove but Jo doesn't push back.

AIDEN

How do you stand it here with her?

JO

She's our family.

AIDEN

She gave fuckin' birth to us but she's not our family. She's stuck here and she wants us to be stuck here with her. Not all boys our age have to turn in fuckin' pop cans for extra cash.

JO

We made thirty bucks this week.

AIDEN

She's probably why Dad left.

JO

You don't even know him.

AIDEN

'Cause he checked outta this shithole soon as he could.

Jo pulls the wagon near some shade along the wood line.

Aiden and Jo crush the cans to the back of the wagon to make room for more.

Up ahead, a few BOYS leave the woods. They stare at Aiden as they laugh and whisper.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

What are you looking at?

BOY 1

Nothing.

AIDEN

You were looking at somethin'.

The Boys push past Jo.

BOY 2

(mumbles)

Fag.

The Boys erupt in laughter.

AIDEN

What's that?

JO

Aiden.

Aiden is face to face with Boy 2.

JO (CONT'D)

We don't want any trouble.

BOY 2

I said F-

Aiden POPS the Boy in the jaw. Blood spurts all over his face. This kid can throw a punch.

AIDEN

Say it again.

Jo jumps in front of Aiden, keeping him at bay. The BOYS run away. Aiden is ready to go after them but Jo blocks him.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

Swing by 1226! Finish it, bitch!

Aiden pushes past Jo and starts after them, but the boys are already halfway down the road. Aiden turns back to Jo only to catch a glimpse of Jo as he runs into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Aiden pushes through the trees and brambles but falls further and further behind Jo.

AIDEN

Jo, come back!

As Aiden pushes forward he hits a steep hill. He quickly and carefully presses forward, slipping every now and then but finally breaking through the trees and onto...

EXT. LOOKOUT ROCK - CONTINUOUS

A vast expanse of rock overlooking the town with a small lake 100 feet below.

Aiden pushes up to the peak and runs SMACK into Jo.

AIDEN

Don't ever do that to me again. I had those guys.

Aiden pushes Jo forward, towards the edge.

JO

Aiden, stop it--

AIDEN

Block me.

JO

Stop.

AIDEN

Come on. Block it.

JO

Leave me alone.

AIDEN

Block your face, Jo. I can't always be here to do it for you.

JO

You're hurting me!

Aiden stops. Jo curls onto the ground, crying but trying to hide it from Aiden.

AIDEN
(softer now)
Jo?
(beat)
Jo, come on, you know I'd never hurt you.

Jo relaxes.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
You know that, right?
(off Jo's nod)
You just gotta stick up for yourself.
Can't let people talk to you like that or
they'll keep doing it. That's how this
place is.
(pulls him close)
Love you. You know that, right?

Jo playfully punches back at Aiden but the playfulness turns serious as Aiden takes in the view.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
Doesn't look like such a shit hole from
the top of Lookout, does it?

Aiden slowly steps forward, toward the ledge

JO
It might get better here and you won't
have to leave.

AIDEN
Those punks, Mom, fuckin' cops and people
at school--

JO
Get back, Aiden.

AIDEN
The whole town. It's never gonna change.

JO
Why not?

Aiden reaches the edge, turns towards Jo and flashes a mischievous grin.

AIDEN
Doesn't want to.

Aiden lets himself fall backwards over the edge. JO LUNGES after him.

In the water below:

AIDEN (CONT'D)
Get in here, Jo!

Jo collapses on the ledge, relieved but angry.

JO
That's not funny.

AIDEN
Get your scrawny ass in here!

Jo climbs down from Lookout Rock, sliding down a small hill, slipping into the water from a lower point.

EXT. TRAILER/HOME - NIGHT

Aiden, in wet clothes, pulls the empty wagon across the front yard. Jo lags behind, jumping into the wagon and surprising Aiden.

Aiden runs ahead to the front door, pulling Jo in the wagon then tipping it over, dumping Jo on the ground.

The brothers laugh, leaving the wagon and walking through the front door.

EXT. WOODS - LOOKOUT ROCK - NEXT DAY

A wagon full of crushed, aluminum cans is parked.

From above, a SCREAM grows closer followed by a LOUD SPLASH.

In the water, Aiden surfaces. Across from him, Jo treads water. Aiden swims to him. The brothers have fun dunking each other in the water.

Aiden climbs out of the lake and Jo follows. Both boys run soaking wet up to the top of the hill. Aiden does a front flip off the top. Jo moves to the edge and hesitates for a moment. He closes his eyes for a moment but when he opens them, Aiden is nowhere to be found.

On the banks below, Jo hears RUSTLING and FAINT VOICES.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jo slides down the hill to the bank and follows a MUFFLED CONVERSATION. Up ahead, a MAN with a ghoulish burlap sack on his head, black slits for eyes, holds Aiden captive and cuts the tracker off his ankle.

They spot Jo.

AIDEN

Get out of here, Jo!

Jo turns back and SLAMS into a second masked FIGURE who carries him to Aiden. He notices a "Z" shaped scar on the neck of the man holding Aiden.

The FIGURE holding Jo inspects Jo's muscles and hands, pushes back his lips and inspects his teeth.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

Leave him alone.

Jo notices military DOG TAGS dangling from the Figure's neck.

The Figure smashes a damp cloth against Jo's nose then drops him. Jo grabs for Aiden's arm. It's just out of reach, but then--

AIDEN IS YANKED OUT OF THE FRAME FROM BEHIND as the men pull him through the woods.

JO

Aiden.

(weaker)

Aiden.

Inky black overtakes Jo as he passes out.

CUT TO:

TWO YEARS LATER

INT. LOCAL SHERIFF'S STATION - DAY

Jo, now 14-15, walks in carrying a stack of newspaper clippings. This once sweet face is now full of hard determination and focus. Jo slides the clippings to the CLERK behind the front window. He knows his way around the station.

The Clerk halfheartedly flips through Jo's news clippings on missing boys.

CLERK

He's not in right now.

The Clerk hands Jo a binder but Jo waits for the Clerk to file the clippings before leaving the room.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

Jo flips through a binder of missing kid mug shots. One of them in AIDEN. Outside, neighborhood KIDS PLAY across the street but Jo doesn't care. This is the only place he wants to be. Jo checks the clock on the wall: 4:00 PM.

INT. FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

The Clerk hands Jo the phone. He calls his Mom.

JO

Are you up? Okay.

Hangs up.

DETECTIVE DAVIS, 35, clean and sharp, steps from his office. Davis doesn't fit in this station. Everything from his pronunciations to his fancy thermos screams big city cop.

DAVIS

How's your mom?

JO

Better.

DAVIS

What do you got this week?

INT. DAVIS' OFFICE - DAY

Jo spreads newspaper clippings of missing boys on the desk for DETECTIVE DAVIS. Jo knows these clippings backwards and forwards. They have become his obsession. Davis looks at Jo fondly, he has wanted to crack cases this badly before too.

JO

(re: clippings)

Both of these boys were seventeen and found two years apart.

DAVIS

These are isolated incidents.

JO

They're in the same state.

DAVIS

I said you can keep coming here if you have proof.

JO

(opens mug shot binder)

This guy was charged at the same time this boy went missing. And he's wearing dog tags.

(off Davis' look)

The men who took Aiden had dog tags.

DAVIS

It's a stretch.

JO

It's the truth.

DAVIS

I didn't say it wasn't.

JO

Are you going to look into these boys?

Davis collects Jo's clippings and closes the binder.

DAVIS

No.

JO

Why not?

DAVIS

Because it's not in my jurisdiction and because I have other problems like drugs circulating this county and keeping teenage boys in school.

Davis escorts Jo out of his office.

INT. FRONT DESK/LOBBY - DAY

JO

He had dog tags.

DAVIS

And that detail is in the report. I've been following your brother's case for two years now. Every print and hair follicle is on my radar and I let you come here because I like you.

(to Clerk)

Do I let people I don't like come here?

The Clerk shakes his head.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

There you go.

SHERIFF BRUCE, 40's, grizzled face, a direct man who walks in the room like he owns it.

BRUCE

What's he doing here?

DAVIS

Leaving.

JO

The man who took Aiden wore dog tags.

BRUCE

Christ, get him outta here, Davis. You see the paper work we've got back there?

Davis follows Bruce.

JO

These boys are connected.

BRUCE

That would make things more interesting, wouldn't it?

(beat)

Davis. My office. Now.

Bruce walks away. Davis escorts Jo to the door.

DAVIS

If you want to bring me some actual tags with a social I can run, be my guest but I don't think there's anything else I can do for you. Do you?

JO

Your job.

Jo bustles past Davis, slamming the door on the way out.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Jo is at the site of Aiden's abduction. He sweeps the area. It's clear this is habitual. Jo finds nothing.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jo walks alone through town past the places he used to go with Aiden, past the bottling factory with the same wagon, collecting aluminum cans and removing damaged flyers about Aiden.

Further down the road, he sees an old BLACK TRUCK. A BOY jumps in the passenger seat. Jo clocks it, but it doesn't raise a lot suspicion.

A police cruiser slows beside him. Davis inside.

DAVIS

Need a ride?

JO

I'm workin'.

DAVIS

Being interrupted at work doesn't feel so good, does it?

JO

(continues walking)

I lost my brother. I don't really care who I interrupt to find him.

DAVIS

Looked into your articles. They're all seventeen.

Jo stops.

INT. DAVIS' CAR - DAY

Davis offers Jo chewing gum but refuses. He turns on the radio but Jo switches it off.

JO

What do we do next?

DAVIS

I investigate the other boys that fall in my jurisdiction and look for patterns.

JO
What kind of patterns?

DAVIS
Proximity to one another, backgrounds.
(beat)
Tell me more about Aiden

JO
He's fun. We always had fun.

DAVIS
He spent a lot of time in juvi.

JO
There's more to him than that.

They reach Jo's house.

JO (CONT'D)
What do we do after you find clues on the
other boys?

DAVIS
I follow them. See where they lead.

Jo steps from the car. Davis pops the trunk and Jo
removes the wagon and trash bag of aluminum cans.

JO
He's not dead.

DAVIS
How do you know?

JO
Because I do.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Rita, now a mess with years of grief on her face, is
asleep on the couch in a work uniform with a cigarette
still burning in her hand. She's surrounded by sleeping
pills and alcohol bottles. Jo puts out the cigarette and
wakes her.

JO
Mom. Mom.

Rita wakes.

JO (CONT'D)
You said you were up.

Jo flicks the light switch but there is no response. Jo lights a CANDLE.

RITA

I don't feel so good, sweetie.

JO

You said that last time.

RITA

How was school?

JO

It's Saturday. Mom, get up.

Jo checks the cabinets but all he finds are bread and fast food condiments. He takes out the bread and closes the door.

EXT. HOLLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The porch is cluttered with hunting gear and meat packing paper. A skinned and gutted BUCK hangs in the back yard from a tree.

Jo knocks on the door. Holly, now 14-15, answers. Her hands are oily and red from packing meat. She's still reserved but warm with Jo.

JO

Your brother had a good season.

HOLLY

We did alright. He always finds the best bucks around Wolf Pen.

JO

Wondering if I could buy some off him.

HOLLY

Hang on.

Jo waits.

Holly's brother DAVE comes to the door. Holly watches Jo from the background.

DAVE

How much you got?

JO

Mom gets paid on Friday.

DAVE
Come back on Friday.

INT. JO'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jo spreads the condiments on bread.

RITA
You making peanut butter and jelly?

JO
More jelly than peanut butter.

A KNOCK at the door. Holly stands holding wrapped venison.

HOLLY
Should get you through the week. Go on.

Jo takes it. Holly leaves.

He dumps the bread from the pan, drops a chunk of the venison into the skillet and flips the SIZZLING meat.

Through the window, Jo watches Holly argue with her brother as she returns to her house.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Jo cuddles with his Mom on the couch as she watches game shows on TV.

RITA
I tried to go in today.

Jo looks at Rita and holds her closer.

INT. JO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo wakes to SIRENS outside. He sticks his head out the window, excited until the cars pass. Holly is outside watching the POLICE CARS race through the holler.

HOLLY
Heard he was only sixteen.

JO
Who?

HOLLY
Boy they found. It's all over my brother's CB.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jo rushes through the room, pulling on a coat.

RITA
(half asleep)

Jo?

JO
I'll be back.

Jo's out the door.

EXT. BOTTLING FACTORY - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jo runs to a large CROWD of local law enforcement and NEIGHBORS, all trying to sneak a better view. Jo pushes through the crowd, reaching the front. He is momentarily frozen as...

TWO DEPUTIES lift the small, pale corpse of a dead, naked BOY, 13, from the garbage bins. His body is stiff, head shaved and a tiny, black TRIBAL MARK is tattooed on his face.

It's not Aiden.

Jo's body relaxes.

Two Deputies stretch yellow tape in front of the garbage bin, separating the crowd from the dead boy.

Everyone in the crowd tries to bully their way to the front of the yellow tape, pushing Jo to the back of the crowd near Bruce and Davis.

DAVIS

Missing two years ago on the dot,
Sheriff. I want to call in state.

BRUCE

This boy ain't our jurisdiction.

DAVIS

He was found in it.

BRUCE

I don't know how you did things up north.
But we don't sniff shit outside our
jurisdiction.

A stare down between Bruce and Davis. Davis walks away, passing Jo. Jo starts to speak to him--

DAVIS

Not now.

Jo starts to leave, but clocks a MAN beyond the crowd, wearing a hooded hunter's jacket and skulking in the shadows of Old Mick's bottling factory beside an OLD BLACK TRUCK. Jo has seen this truck before.

As the Man moves closer to the crowd circle, Jo studies him: Thick, black tobacco oozes from the Man's chapped lips, disappearing into his heavy, blackish beard.

A "Z" shaped tattoo inked on his neck beside a chain that hangs down, leading to a pair of DOG TAGS.

Jo stops. This is Z, the man who took Aiden.

Z scans the crowd until his eyes fall on JO. They share a hard look.

Quickly, Z leaves the crowd circle.

Jo aggressively darts toward Z, through the crowd circle, ducking underneath the yellow tape, running through the crime scene-

SMACK! Jo is slammed down to the ground by a DEPUTY. He looks up to see Z's hooded jacket disappearing into the crowd. Jo loses him.

DEPUTY

'Said stay back. 'The hell you think you're doing?

The Deputy pulls Jo up from the ground and shoves him to the other side of the yellow tape.

Jo looks around for Z, noticing the black truck is still parked near the bottling factory. He runs to it.

Jo reaches Z's truck, looking through the windows. The truck is empty. He scans the area for Z and sees another CAR speed into the gravel lot and park. It's Rita.

Jo stays low beside the tail gate as Rita runs to Bruce.

RITA

Is it him?

BRUCE

No.

RITA

Are you sure? I heard on the radio that
he was sixteen--

BRUCE

It's not him, Rita.

The CRUNCHING of FOOTSTEPS across the gravel reaches the
driver's door. Jo peeks around the truck. It's Z.

Jo stays low, gripping the tail gate of the truck. He
hears Z unlock the door, climb in and SLAM his door shut.

Jo looks back to his mom.

Rita moves through the crowd, on the brink of tears,
helpless as she searches for Jo.

RITA

Jo. Jo?

Z REV'S THE ENGINE. SMOKE CHOKES from the loud muffler,
hitting Jo in the face.

Jo keeps his hand on the truck. Looks at Rita. Back to
the truck.

In the last second, Z HITS THE GAS as Jo climbs into the
truck bed, flat on his stomach, looking out from the truck
at his mom who gets further and further away...

Jo tucks himself to the back of the truck bed, closing his
eyes real tight.

EST./EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Z's truck drives through town, turning onto a ramp and
speeds down the highway.

INT. TRUCK BED - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jo wakes to the sound of a GAS PUMP. He peeks from the
tarp. Nothing looks familiar. He sees a sign:

INDIAN CREEK NEXT RIGHT

WOLF PEN 61 MILES

Jo ducks back under as the nozzle CLICKS closed. Z climbs
back into the truck and peels out of the lot.

INT. TRUCK BED - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jo stays buried beneath a tarp in the back of the truck bed. The sound of the TIRES speeding across smooth concrete shifts to HARD GRAVEL as the truck turns. Jo and sees a WOLF PEN sign but Z turns onto a dirt road with no signs in sight.

EXT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The truck drives past a lake and through a long stretch of dirt road that becomes increasingly narrow until BRANCHES SCRATCH the sides of the truck.

The skinny hollow opens up to an expansive field.

INT. TRUCK BED - CONTINUOUS

Jo feels the truck slow to a stop. A DOOR SLAMS and he hears Z walk away. Jo climbs out of the truck.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Jo surveys the land but nothing looks familiar. No signs or markers. He's far from home but the distinct sound of INSECTS in the pines tell him that he is still in West Virginia. He hears a CREEK and runs to it.

EXT. CREEK - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs along the creek, unsure of what he will find. It leads him to FOUR SHACKS with open doors. He hears the voice of Z behind him. Jo jumps down into the creek.

BOXES are carried in and out of the labs by MASKED MEN.

Z directs TRUCKS that come and go to the shacks after being loaded with boxes.

Inside a lab, SHADOWS mill about.

Jo doesn't understand what is going on but knows that he shouldn't be here. He suddenly notices a BLOODHOUND guarding one of the shack doors and snarls at Jo.

BOY 1 (V.O.)

What is it, boy?

A Boy exits and looks to the creek. No one is there. He looks up and sees Jo running in the distance. He releases a loud WHISTLE then starts back toward the lab.

BOY

Z!

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs through the foliage but Z's BLACK TRUCK CHARGES INTO THE FRAME.

BRIGHT HEADLIGHTS track Jo across the field.

Jo forges ahead on pure adrenaline until the FENDER nudges his back and THRASHES him to the ground.

Z parks the truck. Jo tries to stand but Z holds Jo against the truck at knifepoint.

Z

How'd you get here?

Jo is momentarily frozen. Just as Z presses the knife, another PICK-UP TRUCK coasts past and stops.

He can not see the MAN in the truck, only a silhouette in the darkness, PURR of the engine, and the orange slit and crackle of cigarette paper burning from his lips.

MAN

Bring him.

A burlap sack is thrown over Jo's face.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Jo is pushed down on a bench. The burlap sack is lifted from his head. Z leaves.

Jo turns to find himself down the long double barrel of a rifle.

On the other end is TIMMY DIRT, 16, muscular, intense, shirtless with ammo strapped across his chest, half his face is tattooed. Jewelry slung over his neck. Alpha of the pack.

TIMMY

Shirt.

Jo is scared and confused but Timmy squeezes the trigger and Jo obeys.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
Shoes.

Jo removes his shoes.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
How old?

JO
I'll be fifteen in May--

The door CREAKS open. A man steps into the room (Note: This is the FIGURE from the woods in the opening sequence and the man from the truck) Timmy lowers the gun in the man's presence.

MAN
No need for that.

Jo studies the man as he approaches.

A master-of-ceremonies, early 30's, worn trousers, black boots lathered in thick polish. A MILITARY CREST is tattooed on his arm and patches of marred skin. He wears a GOLD BAND on his finger, a handkerchief hangs from his back pocket.

He runs his hands through his slightly gray-streaked hair. Working hands-- dry like sand paper with open cracks. Dark, sunken shadows around his eyes that fix on you.

This is FORRESTER.

FORRESTER
Tim's got an unusual way of greetin'
people.

Jo doesn't move or speak. He's too shocked and trying to process everything.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)
(to Timmy)
Go.

TIMMY DIRT
Come on now, Forrester, I was just saying hello--

FORRESTER
Go.

Timmy leaves. Forrester extends a hand to Jo but Jo doesn't move.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Come with me.

Forrester and Jo study each other. Jo looks around for a way out but his eyes fall back on Forrester.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Jo follows Forrester past horse stalls.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Sorry 'bout the scare in the field earlier. We don't get a lot of visitors Real strict 'bout trespassin'.

(beat)

What do they call you?

JO

Jo.

Forrester studies Jo's face, considering it.

FORRESTER

I like it.

Forrester walks to the end of the barn and opens a stall door. Jo catches up and sees a horse stall with a mattress and pillow.

In the stall beside him, two boys, LIL' SNACK and DEACON, around the same age as Jo sit on a mattress with a small TV propped on a hay bale. They play a VIDEO GAME.

JO

I don't think I'm supposed to be here.

FORRESTER

Where are you supposed to be?

Forrester and Jo share a look.

JO

I should go.

FORRESTER

Nights are tricky in these woods.

Jo is exhausted. He looks around at the comfortable, warm barn. Finally, he walks toward the mattress.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

(to Deacon and Lil'Snack)

This is Jo.

(MORE)

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

He's gonna be staying with us tonight.
Make sure he gets some supper before he
leaves in the AM.

Lil' Snack nods.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Holler if you need me.

Forrester closes Jo's stall door. Jo sits on the mattress and holds the fresh clothes. Deacon presses his face against the stall.

LIL' SNACK

(to Deacon)

He's not playing. You're up, Deacon.

JO

Where am I?

DEACON

The Shelter. This is Lil' Snack.

JO

What's the Shelter?

LIL' SNACK

Best place ever.

(beat)

Deac, you're up.

Jo curls up in the corner of his stall and bites his nails.

DEACON

(whispers)

Don't chew. You can use them to scratch.

Deacon returns to the video game. Jo puts on clean clothes and settles in.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Jo is fast asleep. He wakes to a horrific NOISE of BOYS outside the barn. He looks around, scared and trying to process. Deacon and Lil' Snack ignore him, rushing past his stall and outside.

JO

What's happening?

Jo peeks through the boards of his stall.

FROM JO'S POV: A group of SIX BOYS are packed together in a circle. A boy, ANIMAL, 16, stands across from

AIDEN-- now 16, muscular, a broad chest draped in tattoos. His head is shaved, a boiling temper.

Jo can't look away. There is a part of Jo that doesn't believe this is Aiden, but it is him.

EXT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

AIDEN

You told me it was all there.

ANIMAL

I counted it twice.

AIDEN

Then you can't fuckin' count.

Forrester steps between Aiden and Animal.

FORRESTER

Family first. Fighters second.

SHELTER BOYS

Always a man!

Forrester steps back.

AIDEN charges his opponent low and hard. He throws a series of VICIOUS PUNCHES.

AIDEN

You let me go on that drop anyway, didn't you?

ANIMAL

I didn't know.

The CROWD OF BOYS go nuts, wanting to see a fight.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

As Jo watches Aiden fight, he is both frightened and fascinated.

EXT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Aiden KICKS Animal forward in the tailbone. Animal's chin hits the dirt in a audible CLICK as his TEETH CUT into his gums. Blood laps out onto the ground. Aiden backs off.

FORRESTER

Finish it.

Aiden knocks Animal down one last time.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Get him up.

Z helps Animal walk away from the fight as the Boys CHEER for Aiden.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Jo rushes out of his stall.

EXT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Jo catches up to the the Boys gathered around Forrester. Timmy and Aiden stand beside each other, slapping each other on the back and bump fists, like brothers.

Aiden spots Jo--an instant look of relief and happiness hits both brothers in the exact same moment. Aiden quickly shifts his expression, looking away like Jo is a stranger. Jo is confused but follows Aiden's lead.

Forrester steps in the middle of the boys.

FORRESTER

Alright, alright.

The Shelter Boys quiet, giving Forrester their undivided attention as he speaks with evangelical fervor.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

We have another shipment coming up. Need to be more vigilant with our packaging so we're not out here beating each other's asses each week. Don't get sloppy on me. Our buyers notice if we're one bag short.

TIMMY DIRT

That's 'cause we got good shit.

The Boys high five and fist bump each other. Forrester looks at the boys. They grow quiet again.

FORRESTER

We're taking things back a step in our process on this next one. I want older boys on this next drop. Timmy. Aiden.

Forrester walks past Animal and Cowboy.

I want younger boys keepin' a close watch on detail, everything from cook to drop. I don't want to see you stuffin' bags or checking temps. Not one bag should be transported out of these woods that ain't ready.

The boys nod along with Forrester. They understand.

Forrester moves to Jo, Deacon and Lil' Snack.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

We have newcomers. Welcome.

(beat)

I recognized something in you or you wouldn't be here.

(beat)

We all come from the same place as you. Places where we're bred to stay at the bottom. Here at the Shelter, we make the rules. The Shelter is a place where you can fight for the things you want. You can spend your days however you want and not according to anyone else's standards.

Jo is confused by all of this. He looks to Deacon and Lil' Snack who are nodding along with Forrester and the other boys.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

If you want to go squirrel huntin' all day, get on with it.

(beat)

Wanna work in the gardens for a couple hours then spend your week in the pond with your friends. Go on.

(beat)

In our woods. At our Shelter, we're rewarded for our hard work. Outside these woods, no one's gonna give it to you.

Forrester directs his attention to Jo who is becoming more interested in Forrester's speech.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

There are two commandments we live by here at our Shelter. Number one. Fight for everything. Fight and by-God Almighty, everything you will receive. Number two. You will not do anything to disrupt the order and way of life that everyone here has fought to sustain. And now, more than ever, every detail matters.

(beat)

This is our time. Our place.

(beat)

When we want something at the Shelter, we fucking take it.

Jo is now immersed in Forrester's sermon.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Take it.

(CHANTS intensify)

Take it.

TIGHT on the faces of the boys as they chant "take it."

EXT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Jo follows Deacon and Lil' Snack back to their barn as he looks around for Aiden. He spots Aiden walking alone into the woods and runs after him.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jo catches up to Aiden.

JO

Aiden.

Aiden stops in his tracks and turns to Jo.

JO (CONT'D)

You're alive.

AIDEN

What are you doing here?

JO

I'm here for you. Is this where they took you?

AIDEN

Worry about your-own-fuckin'-self. You
can't be here.

Aiden pulls Jo further into the woods.

JO

Stop it. What are you doing?

AIDEN

I'm getting you out.

Timmy catches up to Aiden and hands him a joint.

TIMMY DIRT

Hey man, that fight was dope. Did you
see Animal--

(notices Jo)

This little bitch bothering you?

JO

He's my brother.

Timmy laughs and pushes Jo around, he lives to taunt the
other boys.

Jo smacks Timmy's hand away from his face.

Timmy backs off of Jo.

TIMMY DIRT

What the fuck's he goin' on about?

Forrester approaches the argument. All three boys are
quiet.

JO

I'm his brother.

Forrester looks at Aiden, then looks at Jo.

FORRESTER

This true?

Aiden looks defeated but still trying to find a way out of
this situation, possible answers racing through his mind.
Jo stands his ground.

AIDEN

Yeah.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Timmy guards the door with Aiden. COWBOY, 16, inspects Jo's clothing while Forrester watches.

FORRESTER

Sorry about all of this but we can't risk someone disrupting our community.

COWBOY

He's clean.

FORRESTER

How did you know your brother was here?

AIDEN

He--

Forrester throws Aiden a hard look. Aiden doesn't speak.

Forrester look at Jo.

JO

I guessed.

FORRESTER

Did someone send you?

JO

I saw the tags and I climbed in the truck to see if they would lead to Aiden.

FORRESTER

Did you tell anyone you were leaving?

JO

No.

FORRESTER

Mom? Dad?

JO

I don't have a dad.

FORRESTER

Why not?

JO

Don't know him. Don't care to.

FORRESTER

Why's that?

JO

Already made my way.

Forrester's expression shifts upon hearing this, relaxing a little bit.

FORRESTER

If I let you leave, how do we know that you won't tell people about this place?

TIMMY DIRT

He's a snitch.

JO

No, I'm not--

COWBOY

You're a snitch and pussy and you'll never hack it--

Jo takes a swing at Cowboy. Misses. Cowboy DECKS Jo in a hard HIT.

Aiden starts to intervene, Jo gets back up and throws his first PUNCH, sending Cowboy against the wall.

Timmy presses a shirt against Jo's head and aims the gun against it.

TIMMY DIRT

Think he'll make a mess?

Forrester grabs the rifle from Timmy.

FORRESTER

Get out. You know better.

Timmy has a grin on his face as he leaves with Cowboy. Jo can't stand him.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

What do you want?

JO

I'm not leaving him.

AIDEN

He can't stay here--

JO

I'm not leaving you.

Forrester studies Jo and is moved by Jo's loyalty to his brother.

FORRESTER
Set him up in the elder barn.

Forrester walks out. Jo is pleased with himself but Aiden is furious and follows Forrester.

EXT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

AIDEN
We don't have room in the elder barn.

FORRESTER
Make some.

AIDEN
He doesn't fit.

FORRESTER
Why don't you want him here?

AIDEN
He's not like us.

FORRESTER
Do you want to lead?

AIDEN
Yeah, but--

FORRESTER
Do you want to lead?

AIDEN
Yes.

Their eyes are hard on each other.

FORRESTER
He stays or he dies.

Forrester stares at Aiden, watching Aiden's expression shift and soften. Finally, Aiden looks away, accepting that Jo is here to stay.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)
Boys here respect you. They fear Timmy but they respect you. I can't blame him for wanting to follow you. Remember, no one makes it through this lifetime alone. You wanna show me somethin'?

Forrester cups the side of Aiden's face with his hand. It's a tender moment.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)
Show me you can lead.

Forrester walks away. Aiden sees Timmy lurking nearby. Timmy boils with jealousy.

EST./EXT. THE SHELTER - DAY

Aiden gives Jo a tour of the Shelter: a contained village that rests in miles of abandoned farm land. The closest towns are an hour away but the a person would have to be searching for the Shelter to find it.

Coal sheds, chickens feed around pens, Gothic feed mill and garages. They pass gardens of corn, green beans and cabbage tended to by Forrester's Boys.

AIDEN

We take turns working the gardens. We eat the food and sell the rest to markets outside the county.

EST./INT ELDER BARN - CONTINUOUS

An abandoned hay barn filled with hip-hop music, video games and alcohol.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

This is where we sleep, smoke, whatever.

JO

Are you happy here?

AIDEN

I'm finally with people like me. No one wanted any of us. Except Forrester.

JO

What's the deal with him?

AIDEN

Forrester's all about making your own world. That's why he made this place.

RIP ROARING ENGINES cut through the hills. Timmy Dirt rides a four wheeler.

JO

Who's he?

AIDEN

Timmy Dirt. He was here before me. Taught me everything.

(MORE)

AIDEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Don't fuck with him, okay?

JO

Why?

AIDEN

Because when he fights, he doesn't stop.

They continue walking.

EXT. THE BIG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Aiden and Jo stand at the bottom of a hill, looking up.

A two-story house protected by a barbed wire fence. An American flag and single rocking chair on the porch. None of the boys work or play near this house.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

That's where Forrester lives. No one goes up there.

JO

What do you guys do all day?

Aiden considers this, the very thought excites him.

AIDEN

Live.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

We PAN a row of DIRT BIKES.

Jo runs his hand along one of the bikes then look to Aiden.

AIDEN

Better than two bicycles, huh Jo?

Timmy mounts his dirt bike, slaps the helmet on his head and REV'S the engine. Timmy STAMPS his foot down on the GAS and he's off.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

All seven Boys on dirt bikes RACE INTO THE FRAME. This sequence feels like an adrenaline rush with bikes WHIZZING past each other.

Timmy and Aiden lead the pack, each inches ahead of the other at difference times. Timmy CUTS OFF Aiden and goes full speed ahead. He makes a SHARP TURN, racing straight ahead at the creek-- IN THE AIR. UP AND OVER...

Timmy CRASHES down on the other side of the bank, an impressive landing.

Aiden and the other boys make the jumps over the creek. Aiden pops up his helmet as they wait on Jo and Deacon.

AIDEN

What the fuck, Tim. He won't do that.

On the other side of the creek, Jo and Deacon stop their bikes. Deacon removes his helmet and starts walking his dirt bike. Jo watches Timmy and the other Boys make fun of him on the other side.

Jo HITS the gas, full speed ahead at the creek. He's UP IN THE AIR--

CRASHES AGAINST the muddy bank, inches from the other side. He stays on the ground and hears Aiden calling out to him.

AIDEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Jo? Jo you okay? Jo.

Jo lifts his helmet and surveys his crash. He looks up to Aiden on the bank.

JO

Ready to go again?

Aiden smiles back at Jo.

EXT. ELDER BARN - DAY

Jo and the Boys pass a joint and play video games on a flat screen in the barn. Aiden finally watches Jo teach Deacon how to use his controller.

EXT. GARDEN - DUSK

Jo, Deacon and Lil' Snack help Forrester pull vegetables from the garden. Forrester shows them how to crush the cabbage heads. He lifts a big slate of ROCK and SMASHES it down onto the cabbage, breaking the cabbage heads into pieces.

FORRESTER

Then we gather all these up and put 'em in a stew. Go ahead.

The boys take turns crushing the cabbage heads.

AIDEN (O.S.)

Hey Jo!

Jo turns back and sees Aiden in fake war gear.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

Capture the flag. You in?

Jo looks to Forrester. Forrester nods. Jo runs after Aiden.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Jo, Cowboy and Aiden are on a team. Aiden has a bb gun slung over his shoulder. Aiden hands Jo a camo stick.

AIDEN

Put this on.

Jo rubs the camo stick all over his face. The boys huddle.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

We have three flags. We're red. They're blue. First one to capture all three of the other team's flags, wins.

JO

Is that real?

COWBOY

They're just bb's.

Cowboy flashes a SCAR on his ankle.

COWBOY (CONT'D)

You can pick 'em out.

Jo looks suddenly ill.

AIDEN

Don't worry. Timmy has the gun on their team and I can handle him.

A LOUD SQUAWK SOUND ECHOES through the forest.

COWBOY

They're ready.

AIDEN

Cowboy take Animal. Jo go to the lake. I'm gonna chase Lil' Snack in your direction. You grab his flag and run straight back to me, okay?

Jo nods. Aiden releases a loud SQUAWK SOUND back to the other team. It's on.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs in the direction of the lake. He hears someone behind him. Turns back and a BB SHOT PLUNKS into a nearby tree.

EXT. DIFFERENT SECTION OF THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

From behind a large, rotting log, Lil' Snack watches Cowboy. He sees the exposed red flag and begins to sneak closer him.

A BB SHOT sinks into his leg. Lil' Snack WAILS and goes down. He hears SOMETHING runs past him. It's Aiden.

Lil' Snack limps away from Cowboy in the direction of the lake.

EXT. LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Jo waits by the water. Two boats are tied to a small dock.

Suddenly, Lil' Snack bustles out of the woods, holding his hand over his wound. Jo runs to Lil' Snack and GRABS his blue flag.

From the woods, Aiden walks with the bb gun aimed at Lil' Snack.

AIDEN
Go back to your home base.

Lil' Snack returns to the woods. Jo is pumped up from the rush of the game.

JO
(re: flag)
I got it. He wasn't going anywhere. Did you see him?

Aiden slings the gun over his shoulder and goes to the dock, pulling a BLACK PLASTIC TOOL KIT BOX from underneath. He opens it to reveal CASH. He grabs three bound wads of money and stuffs them in Jo's pockets while keeping an eye on the woods.

AIDEN
I've been saving this. I'm the only one who knows about this money.

JO
What are you doing?

AIDEN
Takes thirty minutes to get across the water. I can buy you about twenty so paddle like the fuckin' wind.

JO
What is this? What about the game?

AIDEN
It's no fuckin' game.

Jo knows that Aiden is serious but he doesn't understand what is happening. As Aiden speaks, he unties a rope on one of the rowboats and guides Jo into it.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
This is enough to get you outta town, away from Mom. Find a farm, offer to work for cheap for a while. Don't tell anyone about this place--

JO
I'm not leaving--

Jo refuses to get in the boat.

AIDEN
I said you couldn't stay here. You saw me, but don't remember this place.

JO

I like it here. I don't understand-

AIDEN

It's not what you think. I can't be responsible if something happens to you. Now go.

Jo steps into the boat.

JO

Nothing is going to happen to me.

AIDEN

I said go.

Jo starts to climb out of the boat. Aiden FIRES A BULLET near Jo, making Jo drop low in the boat. Jo looks back up at Aiden.

JO

You're my brother.

Jo stares at Aiden with tears welling in his eyes.

AIDEN

That wasn't my choice.

This is the one that stings Jo. Jo studies Aiden, then pulls a paddle from the boat.

Aiden runs back into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Aiden walks back to their team's home base and fights back the emotion. From behind, Timmy points his GUN at Aiden's head.

Aiden stops while Animal snatches Aiden's flag.

TIMMY DIRT

We win, bitch.

All of the boys come out from hiding and walk back toward the Shelter.

TIMMY DIRT (CONT'D)

You shot my boy, here.

Lil' Snack limps through the woods.

COWBOY

Where's Jo?

AIDEN

He's out.

TIMMY DIRT

Told ya he was gonna puss out.

AIDEN

Yeah. Fuck him.

The DINNER BELL CLANGS in the distance. The Boys run to it.

INT. CHOW HALL - NIGHT

Forrester's boys are in the middle of a late night dinner. They talk LOUDLY as they brag about the game. Forrester and Z sit a table across the room.

TIMMY DIRT

Alright, alright, but who's team won?

COWBOY

Let's not forget who got shot in the fuckin' leg?

TIMMY DIRT

(mimics)

Lil' Snack came limpin' through the woods like--

The DOOR SWINGS OPEN. Jo walks in.

Everyone turns to look at him. No one says anything. Aiden is surprised and upset to see Jo.

Jo rips off his red flag that no one captured.

JO

Were you fuckers just gonna leave me out there?

A beat. All of the Boys LAUGH at Jo. Jo walks to Aiden and stands before the table.

FORRESTER

Get him a plate.

Jo squeezes in between Aiden and Timmy. Jo and Aiden look at each other. Jo isn't going anywhere.

EXT. POND - DAY

The boys take turns swinging from a rope and dropping into the water. Deacon swings from the rope but is too afraid to let go. The boys YELL for Deacon to drop into the water.

On a nearby bank, partially obscured by weeds and foliage, Forrester sits against a tree, barefoot with his flannel shirt open. He's buried in a book. The pages are dog-eared like he's been studying it. Even though he is relaxing, his presence is scary.

SPLASH! Deacon finally drops into the water in front of Forrester but Forrester is unflinching, nose deep in the book.

TWO MEN approach the pond, a pair of brothers, RJ and GARRET TIPTON, two scary, intense metal heads.

Forrester's eyes shift to Tipton Brothers. Then back to his book.

Jo clocks how unnerved the Boys are by the Tipton brothers as they stop playing and climb out of the pond.

RJ

Easy. We're not here to hurt nobody.
Are we Garret?

GARRET

I don't reckon.

Forrester SNAPS his book shut.

He stands in front of the Boys, defensive and annoyed.

RJ

We had an agreement.

(beat)

You got three more weeks to make good on that. When your family shows up short, one ounce, two ounces. Makes no difference. Does it Garret?

GARRET

Nope.

FORRESTER

You thinkin' of biting the hand that fed you? 'Cause I don't play by those rules.

RJ
Rules are changin'.
(beat)
Keep those bags full.

Forrester and the boys watch RJ and Garret disappear back through the woods.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The boys and Forrester walk back through the woods. Jo lags behind with Aiden.

JO
What was that about?

AIDEN
Neighbors.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Deacon and Jo pick cabbage. Forrester watches over them. They have a couple full wagons. Aiden interrupts.

AIDEN
We're ready.

Forrester nods to a wagon. Aiden pulls it away.

FORRESTER
Take Jo with you.

AIDEN
I have Timmy and Animal.

Forrester stares at Aiden.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
C'mon, Jo.

EXT. WOODS - WOODEN SHACKS - CONTINUOUS

Jo follows Aiden to four familiar shacks half a mile from the Shelter. Jo has been here before when he first climbed out of Z's truck.

AIDEN
This is where we work.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

We get supplies, cook, break and weigh it. You'll start out packaging it. We supply for two distributors. You'll only meet them when Forrester sends you on an exchange. The distributor sells to people in the county. It keeps some income circulating for us but it's not what we're about.

JO

Is that who those guys from the other night are?

AIDEN

They help us move stuff and take a percentage.

JO

Why were they mad?

AIDEN

Forrester was behind on product for the Tipton brothers to sell and never caught up on his debts.

JO

What if the police catch you?

AIDEN

They won't.

JO

Is this how you have all of that cash--

AIDEN

That's between us. I might not always be living here and when I'm ready to go, we'll be set up.

Aiden takes Jo outside to a couple wagons packed with cabbage from the gardens. Aiden reaches underneath the cabbage heads, pulls back a flat piece of ply wood, revealing plastic bags of meth beside wads of CASH.

EXT. FEW MILES OUTSIDE OF THE SHELTER - DUSK

Jo, Aiden, Timmy, Animal, Cowboy, Deacon and Lil' Snack cut through the woods and weave around each other on the back of DIRT BIKES.

AIDEN (V.O.)

We go into a town near Wolf Pen, about an hour out. We never go further than Wolf Pen.

EXT. LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Two small row boats are parked at shore. The boys park their dirt bikes along the bank and climb inside the boat.

They row across the expansive lake.

AIDEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Only drifters and seasonal hunters are in Wolf Pen so there's little chance of getting caught.

EXT. A TOWN - NIGHT

Timmy and Aiden lead the boys to a PHARMACY. Cowboy stays outside at the door.

AIDEN (V.O.)

Take a lot of everything. We can't knock off the same place for a few months later.

Timmy pulls a heavy stone from his bag and launches the ROCK INTO A STORE WINDOW.

A SECURITY ALARM WHOOPS as the boys climb through the

INT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

Aiden and Jo stuff BATTERIES into their backpacks.

Timmy uses a small DRILL from his bag to unlock the prescriptions area. He packs VICODIN, OXYCONTIN, small orange bottles and syringes into his bag.

Jo hears SIRENS, stops moving.

COWBOY (O.S.)

Gotta go.

Timmy climbs out a window.

A COP nears the entrance doors. Jo stands, unsure what to do. Aiden goes to the window.

AIDEN

Jo!

TIMMY DIRT (O.S.)

Come on.

AIDEN

Hurry up.

Aiden climbs out the window.

EXT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

Aiden falls to the ground from the window, joining Timmy. They start to leave but Aiden waits for Jo.

TIMMY DIRT

Fuck it, let's roll. He'll be fine.

Aiden leaves with Timmy.

INT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

Jo knocks over an aisle divider and climbs it to window and throws himself outside.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Jo ducks in the alley until the SIRENS PASS. He steps from hiding and spots the woods in the distance.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs until he sees the lake. Aiden, Timmy and Cowboy are already in the boats.

Jo jumps in the water.

EXT. LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Jo swims to the boats and Aiden pulls him in.

EXT. WOODS - METH LAB STATIONS - DAY

Jo helps Aiden and Timmy unload stolen supplies from the pharmacy: tubes, pill bottles, trays. They unload plastic barrels from Z's truck.

INT. METH LABS LAB - NIGHT

Z and the other boys measure ingredients and set timers. Aiden helps Jo and Deacon pack meth into small plastic bags.

Jo drops a bag of product.

He tries to scrape it back into the bag but most of it falls between the cracks of the floor boards. He looks around. No one sees it.

He panics, scraping the spilled drugs into the cracks.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Jo, Deacon and Lil' Snack pull heads of cabbage from the garden and load them into a small wagon.

EXT. WOODS - METH LAB STATIONS - CONTINUOUS

Jo and Aiden load the drugs into the bottom layer of the wagon and cover it with a pile of cabbage.

AIDEN

Did you count it?

JO

It's all there.

EXT. TIPTON PROPERTY - DAY

Aiden unloads the wagon and Jo stacks the product near the an old, vandalized SCHOOL BUS with the bus doors open. Garret cleans his gun on top of the bus, glancing at Jo.

As Jo stacks the product, he notices other plastic bags of product are stacked inside the bus. The product is a different coloring than Forrester's product and wrapped in different packaging.

Jo moves closer to it, trying to investigate further.

AIDEN (O.S.)

Jo, let's go.

Jo finishes unloading the product, taking one last glance at the Tipton's stash. He walks back to Aiden.

RJ

Forrester still giving out twenty five cents on every dollar?

AIDEN

More than that.

RJ

Used to seem like a lot to me too.

AIDEN

Forrester took care of you and you screwed him over.

RJ places a revolver underneath Aiden's chin.

RJ

That how he sees it?

(beat)

Where's Forrester now, Shelter boy?

A LOUD POP from Garret's gun. Aiden FLINCHES. Opens his eyes, realizing he's still alive in RJ's grip.

RJ (CONT'D)

Let me know when you don't wanna be someone's boy no more.

RJ releases him. Jo and Aiden leave.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

The Boys celebrate around a fire. MUSIC blasts from the speakers as some of the Boys dance and smoke. Aiden sits with Jo.

JO

Did those brothers used to live here?

AIDEN

Supposedly they grew up here and when they hit eighteen, they broke out on their own.

JO

I'd go with you.

AIDEN

I think you'd go anywhere with me.

JO
Not back to Old Mick's.

AIDEN
Yeah no shit. That place smelled like piss.

They both LAUGH.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
Old Mick's, Mom's, the whole dump is just a reminder that I'm nothin'. I don't ever wanna see it again.

Jo studies Aiden.

Nearby, Forrester sits on a ROCK and rolls some weed for the boys and passes it around but Forrester never smokes it. Forrester passes it to Jo. This is an intimate moment between them.

FORRESTER
How do you like it?

JO
(coughing)
Strong.

FORRESTER
The Shelter.

JO
I love it here.

Forrester studies Jo.

FORRESTER
I want to give you something.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Jo sits on a hay bale beside a travel tattoo machine. Forrester wipes the needle with his handkerchief.

FORRESTER
I know that people have failed you. People have failed me too. But you have to let it go or it eats at you like a poison. Let the pain go.

Forrester twists the needle and tightens it down.

JO

What's that?

Forrester FLIPS the switch on the machine. The tattoo gun BUZZES. Jo lurches back as the BUZZING needle nears his face and cuts his tender flesh.

FORRESTER

Go away from the pain.
(holds Jo in place)
Train your mind.

Jo focuses on a nearby dirt bike as Forrester tattoos him. The sound of the WHIRRING NEEDLE goes silent as Jo goes to a place in his mind that is quiet and clear.

Forrester finishes the tattoo and stands Jo in front of a side mirror on the dirt bike. Jo studies TWO TEARS tattooed on his face.

Forrester hands Jo his flask.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Now you're my *family*.

Jo takes a sip.

From the barn entrance, Aiden peeks. It hurts him to see Forrester close with another boy. He runs away.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Aiden runs through the woods until he reaches the lake.

EXT. DOCK - CONTINUOUS

Aiden stashes more money in his secret tool kit.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Aiden walks back to the Shelter but sees a FIGURE barreling through the woods. The figure moves closer to reveal ANIMAL-- bloody face, shaking hands, BROKEN FINGERS. He drops to Aiden's feet, WAILING in pain.

AIDEN

Who did this to you?

ANIMAL

We shorted the Tiptons. It hurts so fucking bad. My pocket.

Animal motions to his pocket and Aiden pulls a note from it.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Forrester stands before the boys and reads the note to himself: TWO BAGS SHORT. 48 HOURS. He rips it to pieces and throws it down.

FORRESTER

(yells into the woods)

This ain't how it's done! You hear me?

Jo watches Animal in pain and feels tremendous guilt. He steps forward.

JO

I did it.

(beat)

I spilled two bags.

AIDEN

He means we were two short in the lab.

FORRESTER

What?

AIDEN

I was distracted. I shorted Jo's wagon.

JO

I was short. Not him.

AIDEN

Shut up, Jo. You don't know what you're talking about.

FORRESTER

What happened?

(to Aiden)

You.

Timmy glares at Aiden. He knows that Aiden is covering for Jo.

AIDEN

We messed up in the lab. I take responsibility for it. It won't happen again--

FORRESTER

You think this is a game? This is how you eat, son. This is a special set up you have here--

AIDEN

(resentful)

Not special enough.

Forrester grabs a handful of dirt.

FORRESTER

This place isn't special enough for you?

AIDEN

That's not what I meant-

FORRESTER

You wanna eat this? I give you more than this. When you short them two bags, your lack of attention to detail shorts all of us.

(beat)

Tim.

Timmy looks at Forrester. Forrester keeps his eye on Aiden as he hands Timmy the clump of dirt.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Feed him.

Timmy carries the handful of dirt to Aiden. Aiden looks to Forrester.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

No one else is going to eat it. I want you to feel really special.

Aiden puts his mouth on the dirt.

Timmy shoves it in Aiden's face. The boys watch in disgust as Aiden devours the dirt, choking and swallowing it.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Do you appreciate the food and life you have here?

AIDEN

(choking)

Yes. I'm sorry.

FORRESTER
(re: boys)
Don't apologize to me, apologize to them.

AIDEN
(choking)
I'm sorry.

Forrester nods to Timmy. Timmy releases Aiden. Aiden spits out some dirt. Forrester holds Animal's battered hands and walks him to the barns.

Once Forrester is out of sight, Jo tries to comfort Aiden but Timmy pushes him away.

TIMMY DIRT
You've done enough.

Aiden walks away with Timmy.

INT. ELDER BARN - LOFT - NIGHT

Jo wakes to CRYING below. He sneaks from his bed and peeks downstairs: Forrester cleans Aiden's dirty, bruised face.

FORRESTER
I make an example of you because I know you can handle it. I can't be this tough on the others.

EXT. SHELTER - METH LAB STATION - DAY

Aiden packs bags of product into two wagons. When the wagons are full, Jo stacks cabbage onto the product, concealing it.

JO
I'm sorry.

Aiden stops.

JO (CONT'D)
I never meant to get you in trouble.

Aiden packs in the last bag and starts back for the lab.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Aiden and Timmy pull the wagons. Jo and Deacon follow them.

They reach a back road that snakes off the main road into a dark, narrow holler. A dumpy TRAILER surrounded by weeds is visible, just off to the side of the holler.

TIMMY DIRT

Who's goin'?

Deacon keeps his head down. Jo steps forward.

Timmy pulls a SINGLE-ACTION REVOLVER from the back of his pants. He flicks open the cylinder. It's loaded with five rounds. Spins and SNAPS it back. He knows his way with a gun. He hands it to Deacon.

TIMMY DIRT (CONT'D)

If you have to.

Deacon takes the gun by the barrel, holding it with both hands.

Aiden and Timmy walk through the back road hollow, pulling the wagons. Jo follows them, leaving Deacon at the edge of the road with the revolver.

Aiden and Timmy lead Jo to the trailer. A CHEVY EL CAMINO with tinted windows is parked beside the trailer.

AIDEN

Think they've been here long?

TIMMY DIRT

We're here now.

Jo helps Aiden and Timmy and remove the cabbage heads, revealing product packed into the wagons.

AIDEN

Wait here.

Aiden and Timmy pull the wagons to the trailer and KNOCK. The door swings open. Aiden and Timmy load the wagons inside, leaving Jo beside the El Camino in the front yard.

EXT. ROAD - AN HOUR LATER

The boys walk away from the trailer, pulling the wagons along the road.

Behind them, a CAR approaches and coasts alongside them. TWO TEENAGE GUYS, 18 and 19, with a case of beer, stick their heads out the window and speak with a drunken slur.

PASSENGER
Can I buy some cabbage?

TIMMY DIRT
You couldn't afford it.

PASSENGER
Come on, give us some cabbage.

DRIVER
What's with the tattoos?
(laughing)
Where can I get one of those?

Timmy throws a hard look at the drunk Passenger. The boys keep walking.

The Passenger CHUCKS a beer can at Aiden. Timmy drops the wagon handle.

PASSENGER
Didn't see you there, man.

The Driver stops the car, gets out and walks to Timmy and Aiden. Jo and Deacon stay close to the wagons.

DRIVER
What are you doing with wagons of cabbage?

PASSENGER
They're goat-fuckin' farm kids.

The Teenage Guys LAUGH at them. The Driver grabs for a head of cabbage but Timmy steps in front of him.

DRIVER
Can't you spare one?

The Passenger CHUCKS another beer can out the window.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
Give you a beer for one.

TIMMY DIRT
Sure.

Jo, Aiden and Deacon look at each other.

Timmy reaches for a head of cabbage. Turns back toward the Driver. BLAM! Throws a FIST into the Driver's face. BLOOD SPURTS! BUSTING him right in the nose. The Driver WAILS in pain and slumps onto the hood of the car.

The Passenger leaps from the car to defend his friend. As he barrels toward Timmy and Aiden, he knocks over a wagon, spilling cabbage heads and revealing bound wads of CASH.

The Driver and Passenger count the money.

PASSENGER

'The fuck?

Jo scrambles to pack the cabbage back into the wagon.

The Passenger lunges for Timmy. Jo drops the cabbage and joins Aiden at Timmy's side.

In an instant, Aiden, Jo, Timmy and the Passenger are in a messy brawl, pushing, throwing sloppy punches at each other. The Passenger draws back his fist at Jo-

DEACON (O.S.)

Get back in the car.

Everyone freezes. They turn back to see Deacon aiming the revolver at the Passenger.

DEACON (CONT'D)

Get back.

The Passenger looks at Deacon. Looks back to Timmy, Aiden and Jo staring at him. He slowly steps back, helps his friend into the car.

JO

You heard him.

The Passenger jumps back into his seat and SLAMS his door. The guys speed away through the holler and out of sight.

Aiden, Jo and Timmy stare at Deacon.

AIDEN

Holy shit, Deac.

JO

What the hell was that?

Deacon lowers the gun. Timmy walks to Deacon and takes the revolver, flicking the cylinder. It's empty.

Deacon pulls five bullets from his pocket.

DEACON

It's not like I was gonna kill anybody.

The boys burst out LAUGHING.

Timmy grabs the bullets from Deacon. He loads the revolver and tucks it in his pants. Jo, Aiden and Deacon finish loading the spilled cabbage into the wagon.

The boys walk along the road together in the direction of the Shelter.

INT. CHOW HALL - DAY

Jo sits with Aiden, Cowboy, Deacon, Timmy, Animal and Lil' Snack. They whisper so that Forrester can't hear them across the room. Timmy speaks excitedly as he recounts the story.

TIMMY DIRT

(mimics Deacon)

He raised the gun like this. "Get in the car," Those fuckers sped off and I opened the cylinder-

(smacks Deacon's arm)

This dipshit took out all of the bullets.

The Boys LAUGH along with Timmy. Jo looks at Deacon who isn't laughing with them.

TIMMY DIRT (CONT'D)

I'm telling you guys, if I hadn't popped that fuckin' guy, we would have been fucked.

JO

But he got rid of them. Didn't you Deac?

Deacon perks up a little.

TIMMY DIRT

With an empty gun.

Timmy mimics Deacon swatting at the boys with an empty gun. As Timmy fake-hits Animal and Cowboy, all of the Boys LAUGH. Except Deacon and Jo.

JO

We get it.

Timmy stops joking with the Boys, sharing a hard look with Jo.

JO (CONT'D)

You told the story ten times.

Forrester stands to clear his plate. Jo and Deacon follow.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Cowboy drives while Aiden, Jo, Timmy, Deacon and Animal ride in the truck bed and bust mailboxes with a baseball bat. Animal's broken hand is still wrapped. They are deep in farm country with very little chances of getting caught.

TIMMY DIRT

You're up.

Deacon refuses the bat.

TIMMY DIRT (CONT'D)

Did all the action at the drop wear you out?

DEACON

I just don't want to.

Aiden hits the next mail box. Hands the bat to Jo but Jo refuses it.

TIMMY DIRT

Maybe if I gave you a fuckin' glock, you could swat a mailbox with that.

JO

Lay off.

ANIMAL

Be sure to take the bullets out first.

JO

Shut up, Animal.

Timmy CRACKS another mail box, hands it to Deacon. Again, Deacon refuses.

JO (CONT'D)

He said no once.

TIMMY DIRT

Don't you make your own decisions, Deac? Or does Jo control when you can sleep and jack off too? Maybe we should just drop Jo off right now.

JO

Yeah, maybe you should.

Timmy lowers the bat, sharing a hard look with Jo.

JO (CONT'D)
Know what I think?

TIMMY DIRT
What's that?

JO
I think you're jealous that Deacon got
rid of those guys, not you. And he
didn't have to bust his hand to do it.

All of the boys look back and forth between Timmy and Jo.

TIMMY DIRT
If you wanna go, go. But I'm not
threatened by Deacon.

They stop at another mail box at the end of a long gravel
drive. Jo takes the bat from Timmy. CRACKS the mailbox
off the post in one clean swing.

Jo drops the bat at Timmy's feet.

JO
Maybe I'm the threat.

TIMMY DIRT
Cowboy. Hook a right.

The truck pulls onto a main road.

Timmy points out a gas station in the distance.

TIMMY DIRT (CONT'D)
Pull up.

JO
This is stupid. We're gonna get caught.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Cowboy drives closer to the gas pumps.

TIMMY DIRT
Closer.

DEACON
We shouldn't be here.

JO
You're the fuckin' shit, Tim. We get it.
Let's get outta here. Aiden, talk to
him.

Cowboy drives past a MAN pumping gas, closing in on him. Timmy brings the bat way back behind his shoulders, holding it in place.

TIMMY DIRT

Ten points.

WOOSH! He swings the bat, CRACKING the Man in the head.

Deacon SCREAMS.

Cowboy PEELS out of the gas station, burning rubber.

Aiden and Jo are horrified and duck down in the truck. Animal and Lil' Snack are momentarily frozen. Timmy sits back down in the truck, holding the blood-stained bat.

ANIMAL

Holy shit.

AIDEN

Go, go, go!

DEACON

Oh my god, oh my god.

JO

What the fuck.

AIDEN

Go! Drive!

Jo sees a SMEAR OF THE RED on the tail gate. He touches it, confirming it's the MAN'S BLOOD. He frantically wipes it back onto the truck.

DEACON

Oh my god, oh my god.

JO

Pull over.

Cowboy speeds faster, turning onto the first back road they pass.

DEACON

Is he dead?

Nobody responds. Timmy drops the bat at Jo's feet.

INT. ELDER BARN - NIGHT

Jo, Aiden, Cowboy and Animal sit wide-eyed and silent, processing what just happened. Nobody speaks. Deacon rests his head on Jo's lap, CRYING as Jo comforts him.

Across the loft, Timmy listens to music through his headphones. He gives Jo a long stare, a mischievous grin forms.

INT. METH LAB STATIONS - DAY

Z watches over the boys as they cook and package the drugs, paying close attention to their every detail. Deacon breaks the meth obsessively until it's almost a fine powder.

Z

What's this?

Z throws it out.

DEACON

Sorry.

Z

Don't be sorry. Get it right. This is our last drop to catch us up.

JO

(to Deacon)

You okay?

Timmy eyes Jo, then bumps into him as he passes.

TIMMY DIRT

I'm gonna fuck you up.

JO

Go to hell, Dirt.

TIMMY DIRT

Would love to.

EXT. METH LAB STATIONS - CONTINUOUS

Jo and Deacon pack the wagon. Jo notices Deacon's shaking hands.

DEACON

We should've gone back.

JO
It's over so just forget it.

DEACON
We killed that guy.

JO
Stuff goes down all the time here, why
are you acting like this now?

DEACON
We don't kill people. Do we?

Jo considers this, affected by this question.

JO
(re: drugs)
It's all there.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Aiden and Timmy pull wagons through the woods. Deacon and Jo lag behind with rifles for the lookout.

Timmy drops the wagon handle and veers off into the woods to pee. Aiden and Jo follow.

TIMMY DIRT
(to Deacon)
Stay with the stuff.

Deacon waits with the wagons.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Aiden and Timmy pull the wagons. Deacon and Jo wait in the woods.

Timmy turns back to Deacon.

TIMMY
You wanna go with me?

DEACON
Me?

TIMMY DIRT
Yeah.

AIDEN
What are you doing?

TIMMY DIRT
He's never been. Gotta learn sometime.
You cool with it?

AIDEN
Yeah. I'm cool.

Timmy leads Deacon onto the road toward the Tipton property.

EXT. WOODS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jo and Aiden watch the road with their rifles ready.

JO
Something's wrong.

AIDEN
Shut up.

JO
He hates Deacon. Let's walk to the sign and check.

Jo hears the sound of a wagon tracking across the gravel as Timmy comes into view. Timmy and Aiden start walking back to the Shelter. Jo rushes Deacon.

JO (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

DEACON
Yeah.

JO
I don't think you should be going with him.

DEACON
He told me you'd say that.

JO
I don't trust him--

DEACON
Why? Because he picked me for once instead of picking on me?
(beat)
Let me handle myself, Jo.

Deacon pushes past Jo, joining Aiden and Timmy.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

The Boys wake to a GUNSHOT blowing out a window in the Big House. The Boys, Forrester and Z run outside.

Garret Tipton steps into view and throws two bags of meth at Forrester's feet.

GARRET

There's dog shit in that product.

Forrester opens one of the bags then pulls it away from his face because of the stench.

GARRET (CONT'D)

Think this is a game?

FORRESTER

My boys wouldn't do that.

GARRET

Deal's off.

Z reaches for the gun tucked behind his belt but a BULLET from an unknown place WHIZZES past him. Everyone stops, looking around for the shooter. (RJ is firing shots from somewhere nearby in the surrounding woods.)

GARRET (CONT'D)

Easy, RJ.

FORRESTER

What's that mean?

GARRET

Means we're finished because you don't take paying your debts seriously. You might work with kids, but we don't.

FORRESTER

You don't have any product without us.

GARRET

You think I can't cook that skid row, low grade shit? I wrote the fuckin' recipe. We're separate businesses now.

(beat)

Deal's off.

Garret turns his back on Forrester. Forrester makes a grab for Z's gun but is interrupted by a BULLET from RJ that grazes his arm.

The Boys and Z stop. A moment of silence. Everyone looks at each other. Garret turns back, facing Forrester, clocking his blood-stained sleeve.

Forrester does not flinch. He looks at Garret, reading him. The look chills Garret to the bone. These men have history. Garret's expression shifts, recoiling a bit, then slowly steps backwards. Then, he turns and runs back into the woods.

Forrester holds the damaged product in the air.

FORRESTER

Who did this?

The Boys look at each other.

Timmy TACKLES Deacon. Jo tries to pull Timmy off Deacon.

DEACON

I didn't do anything.

TIMMY DIRT

You're lying. I took him on his first drop today. I was just trying to help him out. He's the only thing we did differently.

DEACON

I didn't do anything.

JO

I packed the wagons. Everything came straight from the lab.

TIMMY DIRT

He was the only one alone with it.

FORRESTER

(to Jo)

Is this true?

TIMMY DIRT

Tell him Jo. He was the only one left alone with the wagons.

JO

Fuck you.

FORRESTER

Was he?

JO

He's doing this to get at me-

FORRESTER

Was he?

JO

Yeah, but-

Timmy charges Deacon in a quick blow, tackling him to the ground.

The Boys are fascinated by the fight. Jo lunges forward to stop the fight but Aiden restrains him.

JO (CONT'D)

You set him up. Stop it!

Timmy straddles Deacon, PUNCHING him until Deacon's head goes limp. Then, Timmy raises Deacon's head in his hands and SLAMS it down, BANGING it against the ground.

Deacon squirms underneath Timmy, dirt CRUMBLING, FAINT WHIMPERS as he presses his hands against Timmy's chest, but it only moves the fight closer to a pile of CINDER BLOCKS and SAND BAGS. This fight is horrific.

JO (CONT'D)

You won Timmy. You win.

Timmy and Deacon are now a couple feet from the cinder blocks and sand bags. Deacon moves his hands up to Timmy's throat but he can't push Timmy off him.

Deacon stretches his arm out for help, his FINGERNAILS SCRATCHING against a sandbag, trying to hold onto something.

Deacon's eyes shift from the sand bag up to Jo.

They lock eyes.

Jo pushes Aiden's arm off him, unrestrained but not moving forward.

JO (CONT'D)

He's killing him.

(to Forrester)

Do something.

Forrester looks at Jo, then folds his arms.

Deacon stops fighting back as Timmy raises his head one more time, holding it.

His eyes shift up to Timmy, pleading, his mouth trying speak.

DEACON
I'm s-...sor-

He can barely get his voice to say it, then:

Timmy CRACKS Deacon's head down on the edge of a cinder block followed by a spatter of RED across Timmy's face.

JO
DEACON!

Jo drops to his knees, frozen.

Silence in the circle. Everybody stares at Deacon, processing, waiting...

Deacon doesn't move.

INT. CHOW HALL - DAY

It's quiet and mournful. Boys sits at tables with food on their plates. Forrester takes his first bite, the boys begin eating. Jo eyes Deacon's empty seat at the table. Picks up his tray and moves to the end of the table to sit alone.

A long beat.

Aiden leaves Timmy to sit with Jo.

Forrester clocks this. He stands with his drink.

All eyes turn to Forrester.

FORRESTER
Deacon fought back. He didn't walk away.

Jo looks to Timmy. Timmy picks dirt off his sneakers.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)
We'll remember him for his resilience
through a vigil to guard the Shelter.

Jo walks out. Aiden starts to go after him but Forrester motions for Aiden to let him go.

EXT. SHELTER - LATER

The Boys guard the perimeter of the Shelter with their rifles.

COWBOY

What do the Tipton's mean, "the deal's off"?

ANIMAL

Forrester must think they're gonna try something soon.

AIDEN

(to Jo)

Are you okay?

JO

We didn't even bury him.

The Boys are quiet. Nearby, Jo watches Forrester pick an ear of corn from the garden and walk to his house.

Jo breaks from his duty and follows Forrester.

JO (CONT'D)

Timmy set him up to get at me.

FORRESTER

We can't change anything now. We all lost him, Jo.

JO

Timmy didn't. Timmy doesn't care.

FORRESTER

Why don't you go on in the elder barn and take some time for yourself.

Jo stops. Forrester keeps walking toward his house.

JO

You let him die.

Forrester turns back, trying to restrain himself.

FORRESTER

So did you.

Jo watches Forrester walk up the hill and go into his house, closing the door behind him.

Jo crosses the fence and climbs the hill to Forrester's house.

From their perimeter spots, the Boys stare at Jo as he walks up the hill.

INT. BIG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The soft TICK-TOCK of a cuckoo clock on the wall.

Faded portraits from Afghanistan, postcards from Japan that are signed by women and kissed with lipstick, a bowl of copper chevrons and medallions.

In front of a huge window rests Forrester's chair-- a lumpy, brown creaking leather chair with a bowl of peanut shells on the night stand beside it.

From a window, Forrester watches Jo walk onto his porch.

EXT. BIG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jo KNOCKS on the door.

Forrester opens it, leaning against the door frame with suspenders strapped over his white undershirt. He holds the ear of corn, SHAVING off flakes with his pocket knife and eating them.

JO

Where did you take Deacon?

Forrester throws down the ear of corn and FLIPS his knife back into its sleeve.

JO (CONT'D)

Why can't we bury him?

Forrester stares at Jo, reading him. Jo takes one step back, but Forrester is quick. He lunges at Jo, dragging him off the porch.

Forrester drags Jo down the hill, holding a tight grip on his arm and shirt. Jo squirms beside Forrester, trying gain his footing and free himself.

They reach the bottom of the hill.

Forrester releases Jo, throwing him to the ground.

Jo starts to get up but Forrester STAMPS his big, black boot on Jo's chest, pinning him to the ground.

Jo looks around. All of the Boys have left their post and gathered at the bottom of the hill. Jo looks back to Forrester.

JO (CONT'D)

You're a murderer.

Forrester looks at the Boys.

FORRESTER

Hold him.

All of the boys, except Aiden, hold Jo down to the ground. Aiden places a hand on Timmy, trying to stop him. Timmy shrugs Aiden's hand off him and helps the other boys restrain Jo.

Animal, Lil' Snack and Cowboy look back at Aiden. Aiden hesitates, then steps forward and helps them.

Jo tries to get up but he's outnumbered. He looks to Aiden but Aiden looks away.

Nearby, Aiden's DIRT BIKE.

Forrester grabs the dirt bike. He turns ON the ignition and lowers the SPINNING back tire of the dirt bike inches from Jo's face.

Jo feels the heat from the burning rubber as the sound ACCELERATES like a chain saw. It's the most intense sound VIBRATING in his ears.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

You'll know things when I want you to know them.

Forrester lowers it again. The hot rubber SKIMS the tip of Jo's nose, Jo turns his face to the side but his eye is wide on the tire.

Aiden presses Jo's arm against the ground, looking back and forth between the tire and Jo's face, panicked, he releases Jo's arm, refusing to be a part of it, but not stopping it.

Lil' Snack holds Jo's leg down, but looks away. Timmy holds Jo's other leg, grinning with fascination as the tire moves closer to Jo.

Finally, Forrester releases the gas in a cathartic MURMUR. He tosses the dirt bike back in the grass. The Boys release Jo.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Get him off my lawn.

Aiden helps Jo off the ground.

INT. ELDER BARN - NIGHT

Aiden cleans the dirt and blood off Jo's face.

AIDEN

You probably made it worse.

JO

He killed someone.

AIDEN

I didn't see you jump in the fight.

JO

I didn't think Deacon wanted me to.

AIDEN

What am I supposed to do?

JO

Leave. Right now. Get out of here with me.

AIDEN

Do you think we can walk out and not get caught? Timmy is already onto you.

JO

Then we get rid of him. Without Timmy, no more boys get killed here and it will be easier for us to get away.

AIDEN

How would we get out?

Jo looks away, considering this.

JO

One last run. The next time we leave for supplies, we get rid of him, take your savings, leave everything else behind and get out.

Aiden considers this. He continues washing Jo's face.

AIDEN

I don't know if I can do that to him.

JO

He'd do it to you.

Aiden stops. A beat. He looks back to Jo.

AIDEN

Next run.

INT. DAVIS' OFFICE - POLICE STATION - DAY

CLOSE on photos of blown up pixilated faces of the Shelter Boys at the gas station.

Davis and his partner BEN FORD hunch over a monitor and watch TAPE from the Shelter boys' hit and run at the gas station.

DAVIS

There.

FORD

Telling me some boys in the boonies killed this guy?

Ford pulls another photo with a clearer view of all the boys in the truck and compares it to a photo of AIDEN.

DAVIS

Sonofabitch.

FORD

Do we know him?

Davis pulls out a mug shot book filled with photos of missing kids. Davis points to Aiden's head shot with a photo of Jo beside him. (This is the book Jo looked through in the beginning. He's now in it.)

DAVIS

Remember the other missing kid, Jo? Used to hang around the station.

FORD

Looking for his dead brother, yeah.

Davis drags his finger back to Aiden's mug shot.

DAVIS

That's his dead brother.

FORD

No shit.

DAVIS

Get me any information on the areas surrounding that gas station. Maps of everything in a thirty mile radius.

Davis stares at the other blurry images of boys in the truck.

EXT. DOCKS - DAY

Timmy and Aiden take some of the rope from the boats that are tied to the dock.

AIDEN

How much do we need?

TIMMY DIRT

Enough to wrap around the barrels.

Aiden cuts another piece of rope and tosses it to Timmy.

AIDEN

I'll get this last one and catch up.

TIMMY DIRT

See you over there.

Aiden watches Timmy disappear into the woods. He pulls some money from his pocket and stashes it in his secret tool kit beneath the dock. Just as Aiden puts the kit back in place...

TIMMY DIRT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hurry up, bitch.

Aiden spins back around, drops the tool kit.

TIMMY DIRT (CONT'D)

What's that?

AIDEN

Tools.

TIMMY DIRT

For what?

AIDEN

In case something goes wrong on the dolly.

Timmy knows Aiden is acting strange. He's curious about the kit.

TIMMY DIRT

Cool.

Aiden walks away.

TIMMY DIRT (CONT'D)

Aren't you bringing it?
(picks it up first)
I got it.

Aiden nervously watches Timmy carry his savings in the kit.

EXT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Jo, Timmy, Aiden and Cowboy climb into the bed of Z's truck. Jo sees Timmy carrying the tool kit. Jo and Aiden share a hard look. Forrester closes the tail gate. Lil' Snack and Animal stay behind with Forrester.

FORRESTER

I'll be here to unload when you get back.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Z drives the Boys through a holler. The tension builds as the tool kit SLIDES around the truck bed.

Finally, Aiden STAMPS his foot on the kit. He picks it up.

COWBOY

How many batches you think this'll cook?

TIMMY DIRT

It's gonna be a good fuckin' year boys.

EXT. GRAVEL PARKING LOT - DAY

Z stops the truck. In the distance is a road kill compost: a silhouetted building in the middle of nowhere. One truck is parked outside the compost. Several empty, plastic barrels are stacked against the compost.

The boys unload a METAL DOLLY from the truck. Aiden keeps the tool kit with him.

AIDEN

Watch the door.

Cowboy stakes the door while Jo, Timmy and Aiden go inside.

INT. ROAD KILL COMPOST - CONTINUOUS

Dark with no windows. The back door is open. One huge metal bin full of dead animals but we don't see them.

Beside it, plastic barrels are sealed shut and filled with the liquid remains that used to be the road kill.

Against a wall, Jo spots barrels marked "LYE" and goes to them.

Aiden shakes the ladder. It's wobbly. He starts to climb with the tool kit but Timmy cuts him off.

TIMMY DIRT

Someone has to be up here to baby sit the brothers.

Timmy grabs the tool kit but Aiden won't let go of it.

TIMMY DIRT (CONT'D)

I'll probably need this, right?

Aiden shares a hard look with Timmy. Timmy lets Aiden take the kit.

AIDEN

Go ahead.

Jo and Aiden set the dolly beside the sodium hydroxide barrels.

From the TOP OF THE LADDER-- Timmy sees a SHADOW near the back door and signals the boys.

ON THE GROUND FLOOR-- Jo and Aiden tilt the barrel and roll it on to the dolly. They dolly the barrel to the front door and TAP.

Cowboy opens the door.

COWBOY

There's a guy back there.

Jo and Aiden push the barrel out of the compost.

From the TOP OF THE LADDER-- Timmy opens the kit and sees the money.

AT THE FRONT DOOR-- Aiden and Jo hear a WORKER stamp out a cigarette, close the door and walk toward them. Aiden nods to Jo. They rush to the ladder.

From the bottom of the ladder, Aiden motions for Jo to wait as the BACK DOOR CLOSES followed by the sound of FOOTSTEPS.

Aiden looks up and clocks Timmy staring at his savings in the opened kit. Timmy and Aiden share a hard look.

TIMMY DIRT
Think you're leaving us, bitch?

Aiden looks to Jo, nods.

Together, they push the ladder, knocking Timmy to the floor and dislocating his leg.

Aiden runs to Timmy. Timmy tries to stand but he can't. He touches his head, a gash from the fall.

Aiden GRABS his money and Timmy's gun. He WHIPS Timmy in the face with the gun and runs away just as the Worker catches them.

WORKER
Who the hell are you?

The Worker pulls out his phone, keeping Timmy pinned to the ground and watching Jo and Aiden escape through the back door.

WORKER (CONT'D)
Hey!

EXT. ROAD KILL COMPOST - BACK SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Jo and Aiden burst out the back door with Aiden's savings. Jo looks around. Against the compost, a pile of cinder blocks. Jo drags a couple cinder blocks against the door and runs into the field.

AIDEN
The lake's back that way.

JO
We'll cut through the woods.

Aiden and Jo run through the field. Twenty meters ahead, the wood line.

They run faster. Ten meters. Seven. Almost.

Behind them, Z's truck cuts across the field. In the truck bed, Cowboy waves for them to stop.

Aiden stops. Jo is at the wood line.

JO (CONT'D)
Keep going!

The truck reaches Aiden and Jo.

COWBOY
Where are you going?

AIDEN
We couldn't get out the front door.

Z
Get in!

Aiden looks at Jo. Looks back at Z. He climbs into the truck bed. Behind them, the Worker escapes the back door of the compost.

Jo runs to the truck, climbing inside with Aiden.

COWBOY
Where's Timmy?

AIDEN
They caught him.

Z tears across the field. Jo looks at the wood line and it grows further and further away from them.

EXT. METH LAB STATIONS - NIGHT

As Z's truck approaches the labs, Forrester stands, waiting on them.

Jo and Aiden help unload the barrel of sodium hydroxide from the truck. Aiden keeps the tool kit with him without drawing attention to it.

FORRESTER
How'd it go?

Z
We had some trouble.

FORRESTER
Where's Tim?

Z
I wasn't in there but boys are saying he got caught.

FORRESTER
What do you mean he got caught?

AIDEN
We lost Tim.

Forrester pulls a smashed, cigarette pack from his back pocket. He TAPS it repeatedly in his palm as he stares at Aiden.

Aiden recoils, shifting his eyes to the ground.

INT. BIG HOUSE - DAY

Jo and Aiden are seated on the couch. Forrester pulls a sharp, steel FIRE POKER from the coal stove.

FORRESTER

Why didn't you help your fallen comrade?

AIDEN

I'm sorry.

FORRESTER

(to Aiden)

You're his partner.

AIDEN

It happened so fast.

Forrester raises a hand to cut him off.

Forrester probes the orange and black ash in the stove then roasts the fire poker in the flames. He tilts the poker, making sure every side is scalding HOT.

He pulls the poker from the stove.

FORRESTER

It's important to know who we can and cannot depend upon in the field.

Forrester sits in his chair and tests the fire poker against the edge of his wooden table. The hot poker SIZZLES into the wood.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Ring the dinner bell.

Aiden and Jo share a quizzical look. Then, Aiden rises.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Not you.

Aiden sits down. Jo goes to the door. Stops.

JO

It's my fault too.

FORRESTER

Ring the bell.

JO

I let you down--

AIDEN

Ring the bell, Jo.

Jo flees from the house.

EXT. BIG HOUSE PORCH - CONTINUOUS

As Jo runs down to the bottom of the hill with Aiden's horrific SCREAMS behind him.

Jo reaches the dinner bell and CLANGS it.

INT. CHOW HALL - NIGHT

All of the boys sit in front of their plates in silence. Forrester, Aiden and Timmy are missing.

The chow hall doors swing open. Forrester walks in with BLACK ASH all over his hands as he piles food onto a plate.

He takes a BITE. The boys eat.

INT. ELDER BARN - LATER THAT NIGHT

All of the boys are tucked in their bunks asleep. Jo notices that Aiden's bunk is empty.

INT. HORSE STABLES - CONTINUOUS

On the front of the barn is a sign that reads "KEEP OUT."

Jo enters. He follows WHIMPERS past the vacant stalls.

JO

Aiden? Aiden, is that you?

Jo peeks between the boards.

JO (CONT'D)

What did he do to you?

Aiden's face is marked with charred ash and dried blood from the fire poker that has been branded on his face.

AIDEN

The tool kit is still in Z's truck.

JO

We can't stay here. Are you okay--

AIDEN

All that matters is you put the tool kit back.

Jo tries to pry back some of the boards on the stall. Aiden looks over Jo's shoulder then moves to the back of the stall.

Jo turns around. Forrester stands, having just entered the barn.

INT. BIG HOUSE - NIGHT

Forrester sits in his chair across from Jo.

FORRESTER

You'd do anything for him, wouldn't you?
(beat)

It was that same loyalty that moved me to let you stay here.

JO

Let him out.

FORRESTER

Aiden can go whenever he chooses.

JO

Is that why he's locked up?

FORRESTER

Let him go. See if he leaves.

Forrester leans back, studying Jo.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

I like you, Jo. Always did.

Jo stands, defiant and ready for a fight. Forrester remains calm, watching Jo's expression shift into a sincere plea.

Jo holds out his hand.

JO

Let us go.

Forrester looks at Jo's hand. He doesn't shake it.

FORRESTER

You're in the gardens this week.

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT

Jo hides the tool kit full of Aiden's savings underneath the dock.

EXT. GARDENS - DAY

Jo picks corn from the gardens. He's covered in sweat and dirt after a long day of work. From the small field of corn husks, he can see the

EXT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

A patrol car creeps into the holler, past the boys. DETECTIVE KENT DAVIS and his partner, DETECTIVE BEN FORD step from the car.

DAVIS

Morning.

They show identification to Lil' Snack and Animal.

FORD

You boys live here?

Ford nudges Davis, directing his attention to the coal sheds. Davis looks around at the wagons full of cabbage. When he turns back, Lil' Snack and Deacon are gone.

From the top of the hill, Forrester pulls on a shirt and walks down the steps.

FORRESTER

Can I help you?

DAVIS

Detective Davis with state investigations. This is my partner, Detective Ford.

FORRESTER

Something wrong?

Davis looks around, clocking the situation. He sees bikes, a boy's sneaker, beer bottles, remnants of tenants but no people.

Davis holds up photos of Timmy Dirt prior to living at the Shelter. Beyond Forrester, Davis eyes a barn with a sign: KEEP OUT.

DAVIS

We found a missing boy from our county. Timothy James. Went missing five years ago at Boone County Juvenile Corrections. Name ring a bell?

FORRESTER

No, it sure don't.

FORD

James boy had half his face covered in tattoos and scars. No one knows what happened to him and he won't talk.

DAVIS

What's with the boys?

FORRESTER

Nephews and neighborhood kids earning extra cash. Started out with just one or two. Guess word got out.

DAVIS

Do their parents know they're here?

FORRESTER

Assume so.

FORD

What's your crop?

FORRESTER

Cabbage mostly. I'm the supplier for the Boone County Market.

DAVIS

How long have you lived here?

FORRESTER

Let's see. I moved here in '91. About twenty.

FORD

Twenty-one years?

FORRESTER

Yeah, you could say that. Sure.

Davis notices Forrester's military crest tattoos.

DAVIS
Afghanistan?

FORRESTER
Two tours.

DAVIS
Who owned the property before you?

FORRESTER
Built it when I moved here. I have the deed upstairs if you want to take a look.

Forrester starts up the hill to the Big House, leaving Davis and Ford alone. Davis and Ford walk toward the barn with the KEEP OUT sign. The door is unlocked and cracked open.

Davis watches Forrester as he walks onto his porch. He glances back to the barn.

EXT. GARDENS - SAME TIME

From a distance, Jo spots Davis and Ford slipping into the barn. He drops his basket and starts running.

JO
Hey!

Jo runs down the hill, reaches the bottom.

He runs along the back of the barn. FROM BEHIND: Z seizes Jo, pressing a gun to his temple, pulling him to the back of the barn.

EXT./INT. - STABLES - CONTINUOUS

As the door closes behind Forrester, Davis and Ford slip inside the barn.

Davis and Ford walk past all of the stalls, swinging doors open.

INT. LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Above Davis, Jo sits, Z covering his mouth and pressing a gun at his head. Across from him, Aiden sits with Cowboy training a gun on him.

Jo studies Aiden, shifting his eyes to the power cords running along the wall, leading down...

INT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Davis reaches Aiden's stall, pushes the door open.

It's empty.

FORD

Anything?

Davis stands still, his eyes scanning the barn, careful not to miss a detail.

His eyes fall on a VIDEO GAME CONTROLLER in the hay.

He walks closer to it, picking it up. He studies it, eyes shifting from the controller to a POWER OUTLET at the base of the barn, CORDS running up along the wall...

The DINNER BELL CLANGS. Davis spins around FACE-TO-FACE with Forrester:

FORRESTER

I've got two Tennessee Walkers back there from auction.

(beat)

Haven't broken 'em in yet.

DAVIS

(re: the bell)

What's that?

FORRESTER

Time to call it a day.

Forrester hands Davis the property deed.

DAVIS

Care if I take a look?

FORRESTER

Sure. Can I see your warrant?

DAVIS

(studies Forrester)

Another time.

EXT. GARDENS - CONTINUOUS

Forrester and Davis leave the barn empty-handed as Forrester walks David and Ford to their police cruiser.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

What's with the locks?

FORRESTER

These hollers are thick with pill poppers
and temp labs shootin' up left and right.

DAVIS

I noticed you use limestone cement to
build the base of the coal sheds. Same
things they used in the seventies for
backwoods cook labs. They stopped using
cement around sheds in the nineties so
they could burn evidence to the ground.

FORRESTER

Can't say I've ever dropped off illegal
substances. But since you bring it up, I
suppose so.

DAVIS

(starts his car)

I didn't bring it up. You did.

FORRESTER

Hold up. I think I might have something
for you.

Forrester walks away. Davis and Ford share a look.

DAVIS

Did you see the marks on those boys?

FORD

Place gives me the fuckin' creeps.

Forrester returns to the patrol car with a head of
cabbage. He gives it to Davis.

FORRESTER

No reason why you boys should come all
the way out here and leave empty handed.

DAVIS

(takes cabbage)

Thanks.

FORRESTER

Yep.

Forrester watches the patrol car disappear through the
holler.

INT. LOFT - CONTINUOUS

At gunpoint, Jo watches Davis' police cruiser drive away through the Shelter and out of sight.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

From their positions on the ground, the Boys pull guard duty with rifles around the perimeter. Jo watches Z lead Aiden back into the barn.

EXT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Jo is at the barn doors, looking around. At Forrester's house, the lights are out.

Jo opens the door, slipping inside.

INT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Jo uses a hammer to pull nails from Aiden's boarded stall.

JO

The cops are onto Forrester now. I know the cop who came here. Davis. He worked on your case. He's good. He'll be back.

Jo pulls nails from a board, YANKING off the board and moving on to the next.

JO (CONT'D)

Forrester can either let us go now or he can let us go when the cops bust him.

AIDEN

He won't let us go.

Jo stops prying nails and boards.

JO

We can leave in the middle of the night.

AIDEN

What if someone sees us. They have a truck. They'll catch up.

Jo considers this.

JO

What if I told Forrester about a new shipment that requires no cooking and no supplies. Totally free.

AIDEN

What shipment?

Jo leans in closer to Aiden, whispers.

JO

The Tipton Brothers have a brand new stash. A bus load from a new supplier or maybe they're cooking their own. Either way, they've moved on. Forrester has no idea.

AIDEN

How do you know this?

JO

I saw it on our first drop together.
(beat)
If I told Forrester, it would distract him. When they go check it out, we run to the lake, take your money and never look back.

Jo and Aiden move closer to each other, growing excited at the thought of escaping.

JO (CONT'D)

Get out when everyone leaves to go after the stash.

Jo drops the hammer into Aiden's stall.

JO (CONT'D)

It's like we planned before except everyone will be out of the way.

Aiden takes the hammer, hiding it in the hay. He returns to the stall, face to face with Jo.

AIDEN

When they leave, I'll run out and meet you at the boats.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Jo walks away from the horse stables and toward the Elder Barn. Lil' Snack runs to Jo.

LIL' SNACK

Forrester's lookin' for you.

EXT. BIG HOUSE PORCH - NIGHT

Jo sits on the porch steps. He hears a MUFFLED ARGUMENT between Forrester and Z. An abrupt moment of silence. Then, FOOTSTEPS coming closer until...

Forrester swings open the front door.

FORRESTER

Get in.

INT. BIG HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jo follows Forrester into the kitchen. Z sits at a table, smoking a cigarette. It's quiet. A palpable tension between Forrester and Z. Forrester's gun rests on the table. Forrester sits in front of it. Nods to Jo.

Jo pulls a chair and sits between them.

FORRESTER

We have a shipment due to an important buyer. You're gonna lead the cook.

Z sucks down his cigarette, biting his tongue.

JO

What about the cops?

FORRESTER

Taken care of. They won't be back.

Z

Don't know that.

Forrester looks at Z. Z stamps out his cigarette butt. Lights up another.

JO

They have a whole supply that doesn't look like our shit.

Forrester and Z share a look. Then back at Jo.

JO (CONT'D)

I saw it on a drop. I know where it is.

FORRESTER

Where?

Jo looks at Forrester, leveling him with his eyes.

JO

The bus. You should check it out.

Z

Bullshit.

JO

They're your competitor now. They have a lot. You'll need the truck.

Z puts out his cigarette.

Z

Our buyers and distributors will understand the situation. We should lay low 'til the coast is clear.

FORRESTER

(to Jo)

You go check it out. Tomorrow.

JO

Okay.

Forrester looks at Z. Looks back to Jo.

FORRESTER

Okay.

Z picks up his hat and walks to the door. Jo follows, looking pleased with the outcome. Forrester FLICKS his lighter until the flame catches, lighting his cigarette.

He takes a drag.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Z, you go with him.

Z and Jo stop at the door. Z nods and leaves. Jo looks back at Forrester, defeated.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

Get out.

EXT. BIG HOUSE PORCH - CONTINUOUS

As Jo leaves, he peeks into the window: Forrester hunkers down in his leather chair.

INT. METH LAB - DAY

Jo loads bullets into a revolver. Spins and charges it.

He stretches gloves onto his hands. He pulls a burlap sack mask over his head.

Stuffs black trash bags into his pockets.

INT. AIDEN'S STALL - SAME TIME

Aiden uses the hammer to pry nails from his boarded stall.

INT. TRUCK - SAME TIME

Z drives Jo through a bumpy holler.

Z

One of the boys will be waiting in the lab for the exchange. Give him the stuff and leave.

Z comes to an abrupt stop several feet from a rusted chain tied between two trees and faded NO TRESPASSING sign.

Z (CONT'D)

Far as I go.

Jo climbs out of the truck.

INT. AIDEN'S STALL - SAME TIME

Aiden pries the last nail, pushing against the board. He hears the barn door CREAKING open, LIGHT spilling in through the entrance.

AIDEN

Jo?

No response. SOMEONE approaches, stopping at his stall. Quickly, he tucks the hammer underneath the hay.

The door opens. Forrester stands.

FORRESTER

Ready to get out of here?

Aiden looks up at him.

EXT. TIPTON PROPERTY - SAME TIME

Jo goes to the school bus and tries to open the doors but it's locked.

Jo goes to the back door of the house and hears LOUD HEAVY METAL MUSIC. SCREAMING and HEAVY BASS POUNDS through the house as he enters.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

RJ plays the air guitar and rocks out to the music while doing lines of coke. He's a hyper and intense junkie. A half-dressed, strung out WOMAN is slouched on the floor, barely awake or barely alive. RJ's wallet and a ring of KEYS are on a coffee table beside him. A cabinet full of stolen long barrel rifles, automatics and an assault rifle is against the wall.

Garret bursts through the front door and turns off the music.

Jo hurries back through the kitchen and hides in the cabinets below the sink.

RJ

Where have you been, man?

GARRET

I gotta go into town. You coming?

RJ

Yeah.

GARRET

I don't have all fuckin' day. Get her outta here.

Garrett goes outside. Jo hears a DOOR SLAM and the sound of RJ walking UP STAIRS while SCREAMING to the music.

Jo crawls out of the cabinets. The Woman looks at Jo as he sneaks past her and reaches over her for the keys.

He freezes, waiting for the Woman to rat him out but she just watches him.

Jo GRABS the keys.

INT./EXT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Jo tries each key until the right one opens the bus doors. He searches for the drugs but sees nothing. He hears VOICES leaving the house and he drops low.

With one hand on a bus seat, Jo notices the seats are loose and lifts a seat to reveal neatly stacked, plastic bags of meth.

Jo flips up another green seat to reveal more product.

Jo pulls a black, trash bag from his pocket and works his way to the front of the bus, flipping seats and packing meth.

Jo checks the driver's seat. Turns around--

GARRET stands, staring at him.

Jo shuts the bus door as Garret lunges forward.

GARRET

Get the fuck out of here! I'll fuckin'
kill you.

RJ joins his brother.

GARRET (CONT'D)

He locked himself in there.

RJ

Who is it?

GARRET

One of Forrester's kids.

RJ

Get the bus keys.

Garret runs inside the house.

RJ (CONT'D)

I'm gonna fuckin' kill you. You hear me?

Jo stays flat on the aisle. Garret returns with a rifle.

GARRET

Can't find 'em.

RJ

They're on the table.

RJ drags the tip of the rifle barrel along the windows, taunting Jo.

The NOISE stops.

Jo listens intently to figure out where they are. He lifts his head in front of a window.

RJ fires a SHOT. GLASS SHATTERS over Jo as he hits the floor again.

Jo follows the sound of footsteps to the back of the bus. He hears the brothers BREAKING the lock, PULLING the rusty handle.

RJ opens the back door. BANG! Jo shoots RJ in the leg with a revolver.

RJ drops to the ground. Garret kneels to his brother. RJ is alive but bleeds profusely on the ground.

GARRET

RJ? RJ?

Jo drops the revolver and steps away from it. He notices the faded Shelter tattoos on RJ and Garret.

Garret looks up at Jo.

Jo jumps out of the bus and runs away toward the property entrance.

Garret stays with his brother trying to cover the wound with his shirt.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs to Z's truck, his hands are trembling.

Z

Got it?

Jo tosses the trash bag of meth into Z's truck then climbs into the passenger side, but Z pushes JO out of the truck and SPEEDS away with the meth.

JO

Z! Hey! Z!

From behind, Jo hears FOOTSTEPS gaining speed. He turns back, sees Garret gunning toward him with a rifle.

Jo runs across the road, into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs toward the Shelter. He loses Garret in the thick trees. He looks back but falls down a steep hill.

Jo gets up and continues running.

EXT. METH LAB - CONTINUOUS

Z parks his truck and gives the bag of stolen drugs to Aiden.

Z

Welcome back.

INT. METH LAB - CONTINUOUS

Aiden shows BRUCE and his PARTNER (the cops from the beginning) the product. The Partner counts it. Bruce studies one of the bags, clocking the color difference.

BRUCE

Is this a new batch?

AIDEN

It's all here.

Bruce's Partner counts the last bag.

PARTNER

He's good.

INT. HORSE STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs to Aiden's stall.

JO

Aiden!

He flings the door open but it's empty. He turns back to find Forrester at the barn entrance. Forrester stands, looking surprised to see Jo.

JO (CONT'D)

Where's Aiden?

Unseen to Jo, Forrester reaches for his gun tucked into the back of his pants.

Jo steps back.

JO (CONT'D)

Did you get the stash?

A series of POPS interrupts the moment. Forrester and Jo look to the barn entrance. Jo takes off running.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Garret stalks through the woods firing an assault rifle into the air every few feet.

EXT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs past the barns, darting into the woods.

INT. METH LAB - CONTINUOUS

Bruce pulls his gun and peeks outside.

BRUCE

(re: gun sounds)

What the hell is that?

Jo barges into the lab and sees Aiden. Aiden looks at Jo. They're surprised to see each other.

JO

What are you doing?

AIDEN

Forrester said you were gone.

A beat of recognition between Jo and Bruce. At first, Jo is relieved to see Bruce...

JO

Where's Davis?

OFF: Jo realizes-- Bruce is also one of Forrester's buyers and the reason Forrester doesn't get caught.

Another BURST OF BULLETS are audible outside the lab. Bruce nods, and his Partner walks outside.

INT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Garret raises his gun to Bruce's Partner as he comes barreling through the woods, a manic and determined look in his eyes.

GARRET

Give me my stuff.

PARTNER

Put that down.

Garret POPS the Partner in the CHEST, killing him instantly.

GARRET

Give me my stuff.

Bruce steps from the lab and pulls his gun as the Partner bleeds on the ground.

GARRET (CONT'D)

My brother's shot, man.

BRUCE

I don't have any business with you,
Garret.

GARRET

Where's Forrester? Are his fuckin' punks
in there?

BRUCE

One's in there. I don't have anything to
do with your brother.

GARRET

I don't take orders from this place no
more.

Garret steps forward.

GARRET (CONT'D)

Let the kid out.

INT. METH LAB - CONTINUOUS

Aiden and Jo scramble to the back of the lab.

JO

What did Forrester tell you?

AIDEN

Leave me alone. Everything was good
until you showed up.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Garret walks past Bruce, hand extending to open the lab
door--

BLAM! Bruce CLIPS Garret in the back of the neck, just
above the faded SHELTER TATTOO on his neck. He stops,
motion arrested, stumbling forward, eyes frantically
searching for his shooter.

BLAM! Another bullet SINKS into Garret's neck, beside the
first shot, bringing Garret to the ground and killing him.

Bruce keeps his gun raised.

From behind a nearby tree, Forrester emerges and walks to
the lab.

The lab door swings open. Jo steps out, staying pressed against the lab, clocking Garret's body, then Forrester.

Bruce trains his gun on Forrester and Z.

BRUCE

Who's stuff were you planning on selling me?

Forrester doesn't respond. Instead, he pulls a pack of cigarettes and lighter from his back pocket. TAPS the pack in his palm.

Bruce keeps his gun trained on Jo, Forrester and Z as he moves toward the lab to recover the drugs owed to him.

Forrester stops TAPPING the pack and selects a cigarette. He lights up, taking a long, cool drag.

FORRESTER

Leave my money, Bruce. I got no problem with you.

BRUCE

This isn't something I can turn my back on. What am I supposed to do with someone's else's product?

FORRESTER

Finish the drop.

BRUCE

Who's stuff are you selling me?

FORRESTER

Of all the shit that goes down in your corrupt fuckin' department, does it matter Bruce?

Bruce squeezes the trigger. Dead serious.

BRUCE

Yeah. It does.

Z

That's our money.

BRUCE

I don't buy from you guys anymore. We clear?

Forrester takes another long drag of the cigarette, staring at Bruce, mildly-annoyed.

Bruce starts packing his money back into the bags. He leaves the drugs.

Bruce packs the last wad of cash and zips the bags. He starts to walk away. From behind, Z steps in front of Forrester, protective, reaching for his gun.

Bruce spins back, making a quick-draw, PLUGGING a bullet into Z's stomach.

Z looks down at the bloody hole in his gut. He cups his hands over the wound and starts to fall backwards, into Forrester. Forrester pulls him upright, close and personal, keeping a TIGHT GRIP on Z's hunter's jacket. They lock eyes.

Then, Forrester lets him slip to the ground.

Z dies.

Forrester and Bruce stand across from each other.

Bruce's gun is on Forrester. In front of Forrester, Z's gun is on the ground.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Kick it.

Forrester kicks Z's gun forward.

Bruce grips his gun a little tighter, his expression shifting. Forrester's obedience confusing him.

Bruce steps over Garret's body and walks to Forrester, keeping his gun trained on him.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Down.

Forrester obeys, dropping to his knees.

Bruce steps over Z's body and stops a few feet in front of Forrester, scanning Forrester's body for a hidden weapon. He reaches down to retrieve Z's gun.

SUDDENLY: From surrounding areas in the woods, a series of BULLETS WHISTLE through the air, PEPPERING Bruce's body at the same time.

Forrester RAISES A HAND.

The fire fight stops.

Bruce slumps over, his body shredded with lead.

From the woods surrounding Bruce, TATTOOED FACES and CHESTS slowly emerge from the forest, all of FORRESTER'S BOYS slowly creep from hiding.

Forrester retrieves Z's gun and stands.

Aiden steps from the lab and stands beside Jo.

JO
Let's go, Aiden.

Aiden moves to Forrester's side.

JO (CONT'D)
We had a deal.

Forrester holds the gun out for Aiden. Aiden takes it.

JO (CONT'D)
What are you doing? He doesn't care about you. He doesn't care about any of us.

Aiden walks to Jo with the gun in his hand.

JO (CONT'D)
He's a liar.

AIDEN
Did you think you were going to get rid of me, like Timmy?

JO
No. Look at yourself-

Aiden raises the gun at Jo. Jo stumbles backwards.

JO (CONT'D)
I'm your brother. I came here to be with you. Think.

As Jo speaks, Aiden's hands begin to tremble on the gun.

JO (CONT'D)
Put it down. Think.
(beat)
He uses you.

Aiden takes his finger off the trigger.

FORRESTER

You'll get in a fight within a week and they'll take you into another reformatory and tell you all the things you feel are wrong. Everything was fine until he showed up--

JO

He uses you. Think for yourself.

Aiden looks to Forrester. Looks back to Jo. Aiden wipes the sweat and the welling tears from his face, hands shaking on the gun still trained on Jo.

JO (CONT'D)

Don't listen to him--

FORRESTER

--You're dangerous. That's why they kept you locked up.

JO

We can leave, Aiden.

Aiden considers this, lowering the gun.

FORRESTER

If you leave, you can't come back here.

Aiden keeps the gun pointed at the ground, begins to cry. Jo rushes to Aiden, grabbing the barrel of the gun and tossing it to the ground. He wraps his arms around Aiden, pulling him into his chest.

JO

They took you and brainwashed you.

A moment of silence, then Aiden pulls away from Jo's embrace. Aiden wipes his face, collecting himself.

AIDEN

They never took me from you.

Aiden moves back.

JO

They did. I was there-

AIDEN

I left you.

A beat.

JO

What?

AIDEN

I wanted to come here a week earlier but
I was under house arrest.

Aiden turns to walk away from Jo. Jo grabs Aiden's arm, pulling him back. Aiden pushes Jo's hand off of him. Jo shoves him back, his anger boiling.

Aiden wraps his arms around Jo's neck in a head lock. Jo is scratching, slapping and swatting to break free. Aiden holds Jo low to the ground, leaning into his ear, whispering:

AIDEN (CONT'D)

I was always supposed to be here.

Aiden releases his grip, leaving Jo lying on the ground. He picks up the gun and walks to Forrester, pressing the gun into Forrester's hand, holds it there.

FORRESTER

Finish it.

They lock eyes.

AIDEN

You finish it. I'm no one's "boy"
anymore.

Aiden walks past Forrester and Jo. He picks up Bruce's bag of money and starts walking in the direction of the road.

Forrester grips the gun...

FORRESTER

Okay.

He raises it...

JO

No!

BANG! Forrester plugs a bullet into the back of Aiden's head. A small, RED MIST SPATTERS from the impact as Aiden drops to the ground.

Forrester kneels to retrieve his money:

FORRESTER

Got the wrong boy that day in the woods.

Aiden's dead eyes are wide on Jo.

Jo is still on the ground, frozen like a statue. Shocked for a moment. Then, Jo gets up, making a run for Aiden but is abruptly clotheslined by Forrester's gun that is aimed at him.

Jo slowly backs away from Aiden's body.

He turns around and takes off running. A couple LOUD GUNSHOTS fire close to his legs, making him FLINCH. He ducks low, runs harder, weaving through the trees.

Once Jo runs to far ahead, Forrester lowers his gun.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jo, covered in Aiden's blood, runs toward the lake.

He reaches the edge and JUMPS

LAKE - UNDERWATER

Jo SCREAMS.

He surfaces and swims to the bank. He climbs out and pushes one of the rowboats into the water.

He looks back in the direction of the Shelter as he sits in the boat, drifting aimlessly.

EXT. WOODS - LATER THAT NIGHT

FLASHLIGHTS scans the woods as Forrester's boys look for Jo.

Against a muddy bank beside the dock, Jo stays low, pressed against it. He hears the boys looking for him, sees the reflections of their FLASHLIGHTS dotting the water. He hears FOOTSTEPS behind him, he holds his breath as his eyes shift up...

Above him, Forrester stands at the edge of the muddy bank, staring out at the lake and smoking a cigarette. He releases a HEAVY EXHALE, smoke leaving his lips and nostrils.

Forrester releases a LOUD WHISTLE, calling off the hunt.

FORRESTER (CONT'D)

(to the boys)

We'll come back.

Forrester walks away. Below him, Jo relaxes.

EXT. WOODS - TREE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jo, now soaking wet, climbs a tree.

He sets himself on a thick branch, high above the ground. From here, he is concealed by leaves and can see the Shelter.

Jo observes Forrester's boys collecting weapons and ammo of the deceased. He watches them wrap the bodies of Z, Garret, Bruce and his Partner in plastic tarps and load them into the bed of Z's black truck.

His eyes fall on Lil' Snack wrapping Aiden's body in a tarp and dragging it through the woods and out of Jo's eye line.

Jo hoists himself to a higher branch for a better view. From here, he scans the woods for Lil' Snack but Lil' Snack is out of sight.

EXT. WOODS - TREE - COUPLE HOURS LATER

Jo sits on a thick branch, resting against the tree trunk. He hears the DINNER BELL CLANG and watches the boys and Forrester pile into the mess hall for dinner.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Jo's eyes grow heavy as he watches the lights go out in the elder barn. He sees the last light burning in Forrester's house.

It goes out.

Jo starts climbing down the tree.

INT. TOOL SHED - NIGHT

Jo steals Forrester's garden shears, one small jug of gasoline and a box of matches.

INT. ELDER BARN - NIGHT

The Boys are asleep.

Jo uses garden shears to slash the bike tires.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Jo uses the garden shears to flatten the tires on Z's truck.

- Pops the hood.
- CUTS wires near the engine.
- Takes off his shirt and ties it around a huge stick.
- LIGHTS the end on fire like a torch.

EXT. ELDER BARN - CONTINUOUS

Jo pours gasoline around the base of the entire barn and LIGHTS it up.

He CLANGS the dinner bell.

Forrester's boys run out of the barn, confused and looking around.

COWBOY

What the fuck?

The boys watch everything burn: all of their possessions, shoes, clothes, guns in the fire, posters and dollar bills CURL and filter from the barn, rubber tires on the bikes melt.

LOUD CRACKLING. HAUNTING BURSTS of HIP-HOP MUSIC SCREAMS through the speakers as they melt and burn too.

Lil' Snack runs to the garden, grabs the garden hose, stretching it as far as he can. He sprays the fires but it's useless. The damage is too massive and growing.

Cowboy grabs the water hose from Lil' Snack, trying to do a better job. Lil' Snack and Cowboy try to pull the water hose away from each other.

Animal lunges forward to save his dirt bike in the elder barn. From behind, Cowboy pulls him back, away from the flames.

Finally, the boys stand back and watch it all burn.

EXT. BIG HOUSE - PORCH - SAME TIME

Forrester bursts through the front door, pulling on a flannel shirt, just out of bed. He looks at the WILD FIRES SPREADING through the Shelter. Panicked.

Frightened. His eyes fall on JO staring up at him from the bottom of the hill.

Forrester's expression shifts, his face tightening, eyes gleaming and predatory, locking on Jo.

FORRESTER RUNS DOWN THE HILL, barreling at Jo.

He reaches the bottom, taking Jo down to the ground with all of his weight. With one hand on Jo's shirt and the other on his pants, Forrester lifts Jo UP. THRASHES him to the ground, laying Jo out flat on his back.

All of Forrester's Boys stand around to watch the fight.

Forrester stands above Jo, takes off his flannel shirt, stretching and cracking his hands, his wide, menacing eyes fixed on Jo.

Jo WINCES in pain, squirming and twisting. He gets on his knees.

Forrester KICKS Jo back down to the ground.

Jo props his arm up for support but his armed is kicked out from under him. He falls flat down on his face.

FORRESTER

Who else wants to fight me? Who else

wants to be the big dog?

(beat)

Anyone?

Jo is struggling for position, heaving and sucking air, hurting everywhere. He slaps his hands down on the ground in push-up position, clambering to his knees until he is on all fours.

Looks up at Forrester.

JO

Anyone can be you.

Jo gets back on his feet.

Forrester LUNGES at Jo but Jo ducks out of the way.

Quickly, Jo runs hard at Forrester, opening his arms. SMASH! CHARGES FORRESTER from behind!

Forrester's taken aback, loses his footing and falls down.

Jo straddles Forrester, throwing down some PUNCHES.

BLAM! In one fluid motion, Forrester KNOCKS his head into Jo's face. Jo slumps over from the impact as Forrester starts to crawl on top of him.

They both struggle for position, wrestling and rolling across the dirt. They reach the garden.

A foot away, a pair of GARDEN SHEARS.

Forrester wraps his hands around Jo's throat, squeezes, veins in his hands pulsating, killing him.

Jo looks up at Forrester, sucking for air, his face is blood red, the life being SQUEEZED out of him.

His fingertips BRUSH the garden shears. He squirms, inching himself a little bit closer. And closer.

He GRABS THE SHEARS!

Jo drives the blades into Forrester's gut!

Forrester releases Jo, rises to his feet, stumbling backwards. He wraps his hands around the garden shears protruding from his stomach, swaying back and forth. He looks to Jo. Then to his big, bloody wound.

He falls to his knees, slumping into the fetal position.

Forrester's Boys are gathered around, mouths agape, watching.

Beside them, Jo lies on the ground, GASPING for air, rubbing at his throat.

A couple feet away in the garden, Forrester's ROCK used to crush cabbage.

Jo stands up and walks to the rock, lifting it.

He carries the rock to Forrester and stands above him, looking down: Forrester lies on his back, bloody hands wrapped around the garden shears protruding upright from his stomach, soaking in his own blood. His face is pale, gaunt, pathetic, his eyes roaming.

Jo lifts the heavy ROCK, arms quivering and knees buckling from the weight.

Forrester's eyes stop on Jo as-

JO SMASHES THE ROCK DOWN...

Stopping it inches from Forrester's face. He stays in place, hands still on the rock.

Tosses it aside.

Jo steps back. He walks away, leaving Forrester to die.

The Boys follow Jo.

Jo stops at the wood line. He looks back, HIGH FLAMES separating him from the Boys.

JO (CONT'D)

Where's Aiden?

The Boys stare at him. Lil' Snack steps forward.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Jo runs behind Lil' Snack, following him along the dirt road until he reaches a

EXT. CATTLE FARM - CONTINUOUS

Lil' Snack leads Jo through a muddy field of Angus cattle. The farm is filled with the SUCTION sound of SHUFFLING HOOVES sinking into the pasture.

Lil' Snack stops at a round hay manger. Jo looks to Lil' Snack for help but Lil' Snack runs back to the woods.

Jo climbs inside the hay manger. He tosses hay out of the manger until he reaches a fresh pile of dirt. He sticks his hands into the pile and scoops out clumps of mud.

Jo steps down into the hole and continues digging until his foot touches a plastic TARP. He maneuvers AIDEN'S BODY out of the hole.

EXT. LAKE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jo paddles across the lake in the rowboat. Inside the rowboat, a wagon, the tool kit and Aiden's body wrapped in a tarp and tied with rope.

EXT. SHORE - NEXT MORNING

Jo wakes in the rowboat. BIG RIGS on the HIGHWAY are audible.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

Jo pulls Aiden's body in the wagon.

EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

Jo pulls the wagon.

He parks the wagon at the edge of a field and rests beside it. He studies the tarp, folding back part of it, looking at the top of Aiden's head.

He touches his hair.

Jo folds the tarp back in place. Several feet away, a familiar sign reads: NOW LEAVING WOLF PEN.

EXT. BOONE COUNTY - HOURS LATER

Jo pulls Aiden's body along the street. A couple NEIGHBORS stare from their porches and windows.

One NEIGHBOR calls the police.

Jo pulls the wagon to the front door of his old house. He unloads Aiden on the front steps then opens the front door.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jo stands in the door way.

He sees Rita asleep on the couch in her work uniform. A cigarette burns on the coffee table beside her. A jar of peanut butter still opened on the kitchen counter beside a frying pan.

He steps outside.

EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jo places the tool kit with Aiden and sits beside him.

Jo looks out at the neighborhood and lands on Holly's house. From behind a window, Holly peeks through the blinds, then steps away.

Jo walks to the woods.

A POLICE CRUISER pulls into Jo's yard. Davis steps out of the car.

DAVIS

Jo.

Jo stops at the wood line. Looks at Davis. Then Aiden. A slight smile forms.

Davis follows Jo's gaze to Aiden's tarp covered body on the steps. When he looks back to the woods, Jo is gone.

EXT. DEEP IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Jo runs fast up a hill, onto some rocks. This is familiar territory.

EXT. LOOK OUT ROCK - CONTINUOUS

Jo climbs to the top.

He doesn't know where he's going or what's going to happen to him...

...but he won't be stuck here.

And we FREEZE on Jo.

FADE OUT: