

RIPPLE

Written by

Ezra Herz

GRANDVIEW/Faisal Kanaan
Faisal@grandviewla.com
323-852-3756

FADE IN:

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - DAWN

Sunlight glistens as morning mist wafts ghostlike over the calm surface.

In the Background, a HYDROELECTRIC DAM towers over the lake. Stretching from one shore to the other like a castle wall.

OVER THIS IMAGE:

Mountain Top removal - strip mining on steroids - is a threat to both the geography and communities of Appalachia.

Its air pollution, deforestation, waste dumping, and water pollution cause mysterious and dire health effects.

Approximately 17,500 tons of ammonium nitrate (ANFO) are detonated weekly. Equivalent to the power of a Hiroshima bomb.

This need for energy resulted in the creation of man-made Dams throughout the region.

With the Dams came lakes, and with the lakes came long buried secrets...

The last of the text fades away, and for what seems like an eternity, we settle on the murky water. Waiting.

THUNK. A STONE breaks the surface and a RIPPLE forms.

PAN over to find -

BOB, 75, deep eyes, rough cheeks, standing at the edge of the lake. Decked out in fishing gear, he warms his hands. Breath clouding around him in the cold mountain air.

A FISH jumps where the stone landed. Bob's found a good spot. He makes his move, wading slowly into deeper water.

Bob cuts a small figure amidst a shadow of the monstrous Dam.

He jams a wriggling earthworm onto a rusty hook. Casts his line, and waits...

A WOMAN'S voice over breaks the quiet:

MAGGIE (V.O.)

The hills of this land attached to
us like strings to a puppet.
Leading, guiding, never allowin' us
to stray too far. We're protected
here... So long as the hills'll
have us.

Suddenly, Bob's line TIGHTENS.

He snaps to. Reels in his line, tugging the pole as hard as he can -- until a BROWN TROUT emerges.

AT THE SHORE

Bob unhooks the fish. Watches its life fade. Then -

A SOUND, the small splash of water, catches his attention.

He looks toward the sound, but the morning mist has turned into a thick fog over the surface of the lake.

Bob peers through the fog. Walks forward, back into the water. Another quiet splash. Bob whips his head towards it.

A moment passes. Then, a few small, HOVERING ORBS of faint light, emerge from the fog like phantoms, gliding toward him.

He rises to his feet, his whole face tightens, frozen in **FEAR**. We don't see his view, but everything about his deep, cavernous eyes tell us terror lies ahead.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK THE SOUND OF SIRENS LEADS US INTO --

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

EXTREME TIGHT CLOSE-UP - a young man's wasted face. JOHNNY BARNES (25). On the verge of death. Oxygen mask covers his mouth and nose. Eyes bulge, jaw locked tight, saliva FOAMS through his lips.

MAGGIE DAWSON, an EMT in her mid-30's, speaks briskly into a CB RADIO.

MAGGIE
Flying in a male, twenties...
(calling out)
We're losin' him.

RICKY, 25, driving the ambulance, SLAMS on the GAS.

The ambulance careens around curving mountain roads that wind above Lake Balsam and the Hydro Dam below.

Johnny's heart rate FLATLINES. Maggie readies a defibrillator. SHOCK - She hits him with it.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Come on.

Over and over again, she SHOCKS his chest.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP of Johnny's haunted face as white linen covers it.

DOCTOR and **NURSE** stand over the body. Maggie leans against the wall nearby. Doctor rubs his brow, devastated.

DOCTOR
Lost count this week.

MAGGIE
(doesn't miss a beat)
Eleven.

Maggie gazes at the young man, now gone from this world. But something catches her eye.

A STRANGE **BLACK** RASH, wrapped around his forearm.

SLOW PUSH on the RASH -- Swollen, bulging, poisoned flesh.

Maggie eyes the rash, then the Doctor. Like she wants to call attention to it -- *but something deep inside holds her back.*

INT. HOSPITAL - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Maggie splashes water on her face. Grips the sink tightly. She takes deep, soothing breaths. Slowly, her grip loosens.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Maggie and Ricky exit. Pull their coats tight and cross the parking lot toward their cars.

Ricky lights a cigarette, hands one to Maggie.

RICKY

I know I'm new here but...this
can't be normal, right? I mean, all
the overdoses, suicides. Never seen
nothin' like it.

Maggie takes a long drag.

MAGGIE

Death always seems to come in waves
'round here but... yeah, not like
this.

Ricky sighs. Lost for words.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You see that rash on him? Didn't
look right to me.

RICKY

Didn't notice.

Maggie registers this as they reach their trucks.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Well, you wanna take a load off?
Grab a beer or somethin'?

MAGGIE

I gotta get home.

RICKY

Figured as much. I'll see you.

Ricky gets in his truck and drives off.

MAGGIE'S TRUCK

She warms her hands on the heat. Watches as Ricky pulls out
of the lot. Waits. Then -- she swings open her door and...

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

...Walks around the back of the hospital, into a side door.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Maggie's footsteps echo as she walks down a lonely hallway.

She cautiously checks over her shoulders when she reaches...

INT. HOSPITAL - SUPPLY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...Door creaks open. Maggie uses light from her phone to scan supplies along the wall.

She finds a bottle labeled MORPHINE.

She swipes it and stuffs it in her purse.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - NIGHT

Maggie's truck moves down a long gravel driveway, toward -- A broken down old log cabin resting in a mountain holler.

A stone's throw from Lake Balsam, the cabin looks as much a part of this land as the soil it sits on.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maggie enters the foyer.

MAGGIE

Pop?

No response. She moves into the KITCHEN. Drops her keys onto the table next to a pile of OVER DUE MEDICAL BILLS.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Pop?

Again, no answer. The silence steals her breath.

She eases around the corner, scared of what she might find.

In the living room -- an EMPTY HOSPITAL COT under a large window, its sheets tossed haphazardly to the floor.

The site sends PANIC through Maggie's bones. Then:

A TOILET FLUSHES. The HALLWAY BATHROOM door creaks open.

CONWAY DAWSON (75), Maggie's ailing father, stumbles out. He's scrawny, hunched over, like an old stork whose lost its ability to fly.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doin'?

CONWAY

(eyes bathroom)

Obvious ain't it.

Maggie helps Conway back to the empty cot. Lays him down and covers him with a quilt.

He can't seem to catch his breath.

MAGGIE

You know not to be up when I ain't around.

CONWAY

(raspy voice)

Not gonna sit here and shit myself.

Maggie holds up a bedpan.

MAGGIE

That's what this is for.

Conway scoffs - which quickly turning into a COUGHING FIT.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

See, now I gotta listen to this all night.

After a moment, Maggie softens -- clearly he's in great pain. She holds a rag to Conway's mouth as he hacks up a lung.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

There you go. Let it out.

She takes the handkerchief away -- Peppered with BLOOD SPOTS.

She looks into Conway's eyes. At his thin face, cracked and leathery. The kind of skin you get from years in a COAL MINE.

He cringes from the pain in his chest. Gathers his voice...

CONWAY

You get it?

Maggie nods. Pulls out the stolen MORPHINE.

She moves into the kitchen and swipes a syringe and bottle of whiskey from a cabinet's top shelf. Kneels back by Conway.

MAGGIE

Lay back now.

Maggie takes hold of his feeble arm. Ties it off as tight as she can with a belt.

Pours WHISKEY on a protruding vein - injects with morphine.

Then -- She sticks a dose of morphine into his leg.

Conway drifts off into bliss - to a world without pain.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maggie climbs the rickety old stairs.

At the top, she looks right -- her bedroom. To the left -- the MASTER BEDROOM, where the door is CLOSED.

A PADLOCK over the cedar door frame.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Maggie opens her medicine cabinet. Reaches for a pill bottle labeled NUPLAZID.

Dumps two in her hand. Stares at them a moment before washing them down.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maggie exits the bathroom. Starts toward her bedroom, but stops --

LIGHT seeps from under the Master Bedroom door, flickering luringly.

Maggie tenses -- the sight deeply unsettling her.

She inches down the narrow hallway - reaches the door.

Where the PADLOCK has now been undone.

She slowly takes off the lock, cups the doorknob, and cautiously creaks open the old door.

INSIDE THE MASTER BEDROOM

It's a cold, eerie, shrine.

The whole space has an untouched feel. Sterile, not lived in, like that door hasn't been opened in years.

On the bedside table, a LAMP FLICKERS ever so slightly.

Maggie glares at it. *How did that get turned on?*

She steps in, crossing the threshold.

Moving gingerly, as if intruding, she appraises the room -- Stopping in front of an old vanity in the corner.

CLOSE ON: Maggie's THUMBNAIL, DIGGING into her palm.

An old, faded PHOTOGRAPH is tucked into the side of the vanity mirror:

YOUNG MAGGIE standing with Conway (aged 45) and **MARY**, her mother, 40, tight jawed and rigid, like Maggie.

Maggie looks at Mary. Then at herself... Replicas.

PUSHING IN on the photograph, Maggie notices something:

A **BLACK RASH** on her mother's neck. Same as the one on Johnny Barnes. Then -

Maggie's nail digs too deep. Drawing BLOOD. This SNAPS Maggie out of it.

She moves decisively to the flickering lamp, cuts it off, and paces out of the room, slamming the heavy door behind her.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - MAGGIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Her childhood bedroom, now devoid of innocence.

Maggie lays awake in bed, tossing and turning. Wind howls.

She scrolls through the contacts on her phone, landing on the name **ELLIS**. She texts: *Sleep well. Love You.*

After a moment... Ellis responds: *Love you too, Mom.*

The text calms her enough to drift off to sleep.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - ELLIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

ELLIS (12), Maggie's son. Both shy and edgy, a quiet unease always wrapped about him. He also tucks his phone away and rests his eyes.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Deep in the night. The dark hallway is immersed in shadow.

A strange stillness. Suddenly - LIGHT.

A small flicker. From behind the master bedroom door.

SLOW PUSH IN on the door, like we're being dragged toward it.

Out of nowhere, a WOMAN'S VOICE.

A Cacophonous, whispering tone. Demonic. Otherworldly even.

IN OUR HEADS.

VOICE
WAKE UP... TAKE MARY...

As the haunting voice hangs in the air, morphing into a brutal and guttural moan, we --

CRASH CUT TO:

BOOM!

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - MAGGIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Maggie jerks AWAKE.

Drenched in cold sweat and unable to breathe.

Slowly, her breath returns.

She looks down to see BLOOD seeping from her palm, where her nail dug involuntarily.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - DAY

Maggie steps out into the frigid morning air.

Across the lake, SMOKE and DEBRIS soar into the sky off a nearby Mountain's peak. Another BLAST echoes across the land.

Maggie watches with disdain.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Maggie, scans one of the MEDICAL BILLS.

A letter from a health insurance provider -- DENYING insurance to Conway. She rubs her temples. Grinds her teeth.

Suddenly, the kitchen lights FLICKER. The phone rings.

MAGGIE
Hello?

SILENCE. Then:

A low, hollow DRONE emanates from the other end of the line.

A voice? Calling out from some awful void?

The drone builds quickly to an aggressive static. Maggie slams the phone down, cupping her ear in pain.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maggie brings Conway breakfast. NEWS COVERAGE plays on TV. Footage of weary townsfolk protesting the local Coal Mine:

The company is nearly finished mining Black Mountain -- the last great mountain in the area.

She glares at the TV, then pointedly looks away.

MAGGIE

Got everything you need?

Conway holds up his TV remote.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Alright then. See you later.

EXT. DAWSON PROPERTY - MORNING

Maggie reaches her truck. Notices something on the windshield.

She swipes her finger against the glass and pulls off a layer of COAL DUST. Looks at it bitterly.

I/E. MAGGIE'S TRUCK/BLUE CREEK RIDGE - MORNING

A withered old sign -- *"Welcome to Blue Creek Ridge."* Maggie drives past.

WOMAN #1 ON RADIO

It's bad enough our mountains are gone, now our people are followin'.

IN AERIAL

The road runs along LAKE BALSAM, which stretches until it hits the HYDROELECTRIC DAM, separating the water from MILLER COAL MINE -- feeding energy into it.

WOMAN #2 ON RADIO (V.O.)

My husband slaved away at Miller Coal for 25 years.

(MORE)

WOMAN #2 ON RADIO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 What'd he get for it? Nothin' but
 black lung and no payoff.

SOARING HIGHER, we see entire sections of the mountain range
 demolished -- raped and pillaged by Miller Coal.

MAN #1 ON RADIO (V.O.)
 Two weeks from now, they'll be done
 with Black Mountain. What happens
 then?

This last part particularly seems to intrigue Maggie. So much
 so she hits off the radio.

UP AHEAD

ASH CLOUDS billow down from the Mountain, onto a line of cars
 that are stopped by A BLOCKADE set by MILLER COAL.

Maggie slows. Out the window, she sees --

LENNY (30), standing outside his parked car on the edge of
 the lake, pulling on a WETSUIT.

They lock eyes. Nod to each other as she passes.

EXT. BLOCKADE - DAY

Maggie pulls up to the blockade, where an ARMED EMPLOYEE of
 Miller Coal waits.

MAGGIE
 The hell's this?

ARMED EMPLOYEE
 Re-routing traffic for the day.

MAGGIE
 What for?

ARMED EMPLOYEE
 Safety precaution during blasting.
 Need you to keep moving.

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - DAY

The behemoth mine rests on the edge of the desolate town -- a
 constant shadow over Blue Creek Ridge.

A CLUSTER of IRATE TOWNSFOLK crowd around the gated property
 line, holding SIGNS and shouting ANGRILY.

But they're blocked at the entrance by DOZENS OF MINE SECURITY GUARDS, all armed with GUNS.

TOWNSFOLK

We want jobs! Not Machines! Save
Black Mountain!

Maggie pushes her way through the picketers, up to a SECURITY SHACK, where a GUARD, reading a newspaper, stands watch.

MAGGIE

My name's Maggie Dawson. Here to
see my husband William.

Guard doesn't look up. Spits dip into a Diet Pepsi bottle.

GUARD

You on the list?

MAGGIE

Why don't you check it to find out.

Guard looks up. Spits another mouthful of dip then begrudgingly scans the list.

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - DAY

WILLIAM (35), Maggie's ex-husband, stands at the crest of a hill, overlooking a Mountain Top Removal operation below. Speaks sternly to TWO EMPLOYEES.

WILLIAM

That's it? You don't know? Well,
they didn't just walk off.

He's mid-level management, but his hands and face are caked in ash and soot. He's the head of the grunts at Miller Coal, yet still a grunt himself.

EMPLOYEE #1

It was late when it got here. We
were tired. Must've -

William steps forward.

WILLIAM

Listen to me. I gotta be the one to
go upstairs and explain to them I'm
short three damn cases ANFO this
week. 3 whole cases of industrial
fucking explosives.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Now, you're responsible for
inventory, so I don't need no
excuses. I need answers.

Employee #1 glances past William. William turns to see --
Maggie cresting the hill.

He looks slaps Employee #1 on the shoulder.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Get back to work. Talk later.

MAGGIE
Real riot on your hands out there.

William pulls cigarettes from his shirt pocket.

WILLIAM
Well, luckily if things go to shit,
I ain't high enough up the ladder
to fall too far.

He lights up a smoke.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Wanna go inside?

She shakes her head. Looks out at the mine operation below.

MAGGIE
Can't stay long.

WILLIAM
How's your Pop?

MAGGIE
(pointedly)
Sick.

WILLIAM
Yeah I know but -- sorry.

MAGGIE
That's what your company told me
too. Right after they claimed
bankruptcy to get off payin' his
insurance.

A BEAT as that stinger hangs in the air.

WILLIAM
What're you doin' here Maggie? If
it's about the road blocks, you
know I don't have the authority to -

MAGGIE
I want to see him.

WILLIAM
You're coming over for dinner
tomorrow aren't you?

MAGGIE
I want to see him without you.

A sudden BLAST from the mine shakes the very ground they stand on. William allows the dust to clear. Then answers.

WILLIAM
Can't happen right now.

MAGGIE
Why not?

WILLIAM
You know why.

Maggie takes that in. Softens a bit.

MAGGIE
Did you ever trust me?

William thinks a moment. Nods.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Then do it again.

She steps forward, closer to William. More intimate.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I'm really tryin' here, Will. But I
can't get better - I can't get past
what happened, without him. I need
time with my son.

William takes a long drag from his cigarette.

WILLIAM
Let's leave tomorrow the way it is.
But I'll think about it. I promise.

Maggie nods. Flicks her cigarette down into the Mine and...

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - CONTINUOUS

...walks down the hill, back toward the gate, where a truck passes by carrying a large supply of ANFO on the back.

Suddenly -- a STRANGE NOISE, a *whisper*, distant and enticing.

Maggie stops on a dime. Slowly turns to an OLD MINE SHAFT.

She looks toward the dark abyss. PUSH IN UNTIL - BOOM!
Another blast from Black Mountain snaps her out of it.

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Maggie crosses the lot. Protests continue in the background.

A stern woman in front, holding a sign, **JULIE** (30), breaks from the crowd, and follows after Maggie.

JULIE
(calling out)
Maggie.

Maggie picks up pace. Pretending not to hear.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Maggie!

But Maggie reaches her truck. Julie watches from afar, disappointment in her eyes, as Maggie drives away.

EXT. LOCAL CLINIC - DAY

A nondescript brick building under a foggy, gray sky. Maggie pulls into the lot. She looks at the clinic, takes a breath.

DR. RILEY (V.O.)
You're quiet today...

INT. DR. RILEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Maggie chews nervously on her finger nails, not really engaging with her therapist, **DR. RILEY**, 60.

DR. RILEY
...I know it's hard to assign words
to feelings that go beyond them.
(beat)
Let's try something else...
Sometimes it's easiest to just
state a fact and go from there.

MAGGIE
Like what?

DR. RILEY

Could be anything. "I woke up today." "I got dressed." "I found five dollars." You never know what can trigger you into talking.

Dr. Riley waits. Feeling safer now, Maggie clears her throat.

MAGGIE

I woke up yesterday. Fed my Dad. Went to work. Then a young man died in my arms.

DR. RILEY

That's terrible Maggie.

Maggie shrugs.

MAGGIE

He wasn't the first. Won't be the last.

(beat)

Tell you the truth, sometimes it just feels like this whole place is doomed, you know. Like no matter what I do, it won't count for nothin'. In the end, Miller Coal's still gonna blast the last mountain, drugs and poverty are always gonna be here, and people in these hills are still gonna die.

A moment passes as concern washes over Dr. Riley.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And I know I shouldn't let those kinds of thoughts in. I'm tryin' not to, but sometimes I can't help it. That make me a bad person?

DR. RILEY

No. I think most people don't have to deal with the kinds of things you face on a daily basis.

Maggie rubs her brow.

MAGGIE

I know. But if I want to see my son, if I want to be apart of Ellis' life again, I have to bury all that away, nestle it inside me somewhere. I just - I'm afraid it'll come out one way or another.

Dr. Riley leans in.

DR. RILEY

That darkness you feel. That pull
inside of you. You're right, you
will have to face it again.

(beat)

These sessions are just preparing
you for when that day comes.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Illuminated by moonlight, a struggling body comes into frame.
Pale feet kicking, clenched hands pawing.

A WOMAN DROWNING... pitch black, claustrophobic, terrifying.
Then - THE WOMAN'S VOICE.

VOICE

Wake up... Take Mary...

CRASH CUT TO:

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - MAGGIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Maggie startles awake. She tries desperately to breathe. But
nothing comes. It's like she's still drowning.

She falls from her bed, collapsing onto the floor. Writhing.

Finally, she sucks in fresh air, as reality returns.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - DOCK - DAY

Standing on the dock at the edge of her property, Maggie
looks out at Lake Balsam.

She kneels, reaches her hand out and cups the murky water.
Staring at the puddle in her hands, she parts them, letting
the water run through.

EXT. PANCAKE HOUSE - DAY

A down home grease joint. Packed with old coal miners smoking
cigarettes and drinking black coffee. A place lost in time.

In the parking lot, Maggie and Ricky eat lunch on the back of
the ambulance. A black SUV pulls into the lot.

3 MEN in suits exit. Executives from Miller Coal. They're followed by an ARMED GUARD.

Another car pulls in behind. Protesters exit, carrying signs and shouting at the executives. They're lead by Julie.

Immediately, Maggie starts packing up her lunch.

MAGGIE

Let's get out of here.

Now he notices Julie too.

RICKY

Who's that?

MAGGIE

Just get in.

Maggie and Ricky climb into the front of the ambulance, but not before Julie and Maggie lock eyes.

Julie nods to Maggie as Ricky drives off.

INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

Ricky drives, while Maggie watches the town pass by below.

RICKY

What was that all about?

(when she doesn't answer)

Come on, we been ridin' in this rig a month and I barely know you. Shit I think we've carried more bodies than conversations.

MAGGIE

Her name's Julie McCall.

RICKY

Real uptight chick that writes for the paper?

MAGGIE

Yeah. We was buddies in high school. Now she keeps tryin' to get me to join the protests.

RICKY

What for?

MAGGIE

Ever since they declared
bankruptcy, Miller Coal doesn't
have to pay health care, pension,
retirement. Nothin'.

(beat)

Then what they do is go to the
families, and "offer a way out."

RICKY

A way out?

MAGGIE

Try to buy your land. And at that
point, they know you need the
money, so they buy it cheap. Most
folks can't afford to resist.

RICKY

That's fucked up.

MAGGIE

Yeah. They done it to my dad. Won't
be long now before they come
knockin' on my door.

Maggie looks out the window, watching Lake Balsam pass by
when CRRSH - The radio clicks on.

CB RADIO VOICE

All Units please respond to 348
Warwoman Road. Code 0 in progress.

Maggie's head snaps to the CB RADIO. Fear in her eyes.

MAGGIE

That's my Uncle's house.

Ricky clicks on the siren and speeds off.

EXT. 348 WARWOMAN ROAD - EVENING

Thick smoke rises from the chimney of a small brick house.

PAN down to see half a dozen cop cars with blue lights
flashing. Deputies crouch behind cover, facing the house,
GUNS DRAWN.

Sirens wail as Maggie and Ricky pull in.

She rushes toward the chaos, but **SHERIFF EARLE HOLLAND**, a
bull of a man, grabs her.

MAGGIE
Let me go Sheriff.

But Sheriff Holland keeps a tight grip.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
What's goin' on?

Just then -- BOOM! A shotgun blast rips through the window.

Sheriff Holland drags Maggie to the ground, taking cover behind his car.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
He barricaded himself in there.
Shoutin' nonsense and shooting
every which way.

MAGGIE
What about Jan?

Sheriff Holland looks morose. Maggie tries to remain calm.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Let me talk to him. I'll get him to
come out.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
Can't let you do that.

MAGGIE
The only other way this is gonna
end is you stormin' in guns
blazin'.

Sheriff Holland takes a deep breath. Against his better judgement...

SHERIFF HOLLAND
Alright then.
(stern)
But if you can't get him out
peacefully, we'll have to take
over. That happens, you hit the
deck and don't even think about
interferin'. You hear me?

MINUTES LATER -- WIDE SHOT of the house. Everything strangely still. Quiet.

We PUSH IN, very slowly, until -- Maggie's foot comes into frame. Moving with us.

As she stops in the front yard, CAMERA stops. Rises. Her full body - strapped with a bullet proof vest -- now in frame.

A bit of movement FLASHES by the front window.

MAGGIE

Uncle Bob. It's Maggie. I know its
been a while. But I'm here to help
you.

Again, no response. Maggie looks back at Sheriff Holland.

She gives him a gesture: *Wait*.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm comin' up onto the porch.

Maggie bravely steps forward onto the creaking steps when -

BOB (O.S.)

Maggie.

Maggie stops. Swallows.

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

I don't like it here.

His voice sounds frail and gravelly. Lost. Droning.

MAGGIE

Well, I'll take you someplace safe.
All you gotta do is -

BOB (O.S.)

Where's Mary? Where's my sister?

Maggie's jaw locks. Her whole body tense. She gathers what little voice she can muster.

MAGGIE

She's gone. You know that.

A LONG QUIET.

Then a heavy THUNK on the other side of the door. The sound of IRON. A barricade being lifted.

CREAK -- the front door inches open. Each inch shining a dim light on...

Bob Whitaker - *the old man from the opening scene* - eyes sunken, cheeks bony. Shotgun dangling from his side.

His eyes lazily scan the yard. Head drifts side to side. Not making eye contact.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Uncle Bob.

Bob doesn't respond.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Where's Aunt Jan?

Bob looks to the heavens.

BOB
All around us. Part of everything
now. Even the air we breathe.

Maggie follows his eyes. We realize he's not looking to the heavens at all. He's looking to the SMOKE from the chimney.

She reaches out, letting particles from the smoke gather in her palm -- small flakes of HUMAN ASH drifting in the breeze.

Maggie nearly vomits. But she holds it together. Turning back to Bob.

MAGGIE
Give me the gun.

Sheriff Holland waves his deputies forward. They fan out in the front yard. Guns raised.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Give me the gun, or they'll kill
you.

For the first time, Bob looks at Maggie. His deep cavernous eyes, locking in on her. BUT - he's not really there anymore.

It's as if he's dreaming with his eyes open.

Maggie looks back at this shadow of a man. Gaunt, sickly, yet somehow austere.

Then her eyes widen, because -- on the side of Bob's neck:

The grotesque, **BLACK RASH** covers his skin. Boiling and pulsating, like a leach.

Bob's wrecked voice snaps her out of it. Growling out...

BOB
It'll take us all.

Bob whips up his shotgun. Sticks the barrel in his own mouth. And pulls the trigger.

BANG!

The back of Bob's head, blood, bones, brains, splatter onto the front door. His body crumples violently to the floor.

EXT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - EVENING

A 3 bedroom modular home. The antithesis of Maggie's salt of the earth cabin. The type of home you rent from Miller Coal.

INT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - EVENING

William sits at the dinner table across from Ellis, who hasn't touched his food. Instead, he eyes the empty chair Maggie should be filling.

WILLIAM

Well, may as well go ahead.

Ellis nods. He and William eat in quiet.

EXT. 348 WARWOMAN ROAD - NIGHT

We pan across flashing blue lights, various law enforcement, paramedics, etc...

Until we find Maggie, blanket around her shoulders, leaning against the edge of the ambulance.

Maggie stands. Moves through the front yard toward the house. Bob's body has been moved. She walks...

INT. 348 WARWOMAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

...Into the house - where more CSI and Deputies move about.

The sight laid out ahead takes her breath away:

Walls are covered in writing -- Smeared letters written in CHARCOAL and BLOOD.

Over and over again, one word: **MARY.**

It nearly breaks Maggie. Then, a CAMERA FLASH steals her attention to the LIVING ROOM.

PUSH IN on the stone fireplace, where AUNT JAN'S CORPSE is propped up at a right angle.

The legs stick straight out, while the torso is still inside the chimney.

The head, shoulders, and arms are GONE -- completely charred, BURNT to a crisp. Another CAMERA FLASH takes us to --

INT. POLICE STATION - SHERIFF HOLLAND'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A LIGHTER SPARKING a cigarette.

Maggie's shaken to the core but maintains her usual tough exterior. She looks at her phone: 5 missed calls from Ellis.

Ricky enters holding coffee. Hands one to her. He stands in heavy silence. No words come.

Sheriff Holland enters. Gives Ricky a look. Ricky gets the message and leaves.

Sheriff sits down across from Maggie.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
You shouldn't of had to witness
that. I'm sorry.

MAGGIE
Don't have time for sorry's. Got to
get home to my dad, so let's get
this over with.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
I sent a deputy to him. He'll be
okay 'til you get back.

Maggie raises her brows.

SHERIFF HOLLAND (CONT'D)
What?

MAGGIE
Nothin'. I just wouldn't want to be
in that deputies shoes right now.

Sheriff Holland laughs. But it doesn't last long -- the weight of the world always has a way of creeping back in.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
When was the last time you talked
to Bob?

MAGGIE

Seen him around sometimes and wave,
but, can't remember the last time
we actually spoke.

Maggie takes a long drag.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Ain't been close since my mom --
All the Whitaker property was left
to me and my dad when she died.
Uncle Bob had some debts to pay off
and wanted to sell to Miller Coal,
but my daddy wouldn't do it. Said
"Mary'd roll over in her grave if
we sold." Bob didn't take too
kindly, so that was that.

SHERIFF HOLLAND

Ever hear him threaten or show any
kind of violent behavior?

MAGGIE

No. He and Aunt Jan had issues with
my dad but, they were always sweet.
Never thought he'd hurt a fly.

SHERIFF HOLLAND

That's what bothers me.

SILENCE. Then:

MAGGIE

What the fuck's wrong with us?
What's wrong with my family? I mean
first my mom, then --
(beat)
Now her brother.

Maggie looks at the Sheriff.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You ever consider somethin' else
might be at play here?

SHERIFF HOLLAND

What d'you mean?

Maggie stares down at her hand -- nail now digging into her
palm. *The Rash clearly on her mind.*

MAGGIE

Nothin'.

Sheriff Holland leans in.

SHERIFF HOLLAND

I don't know much. But I like to think of myself as a good Christian. And I've read the bible enough to know that darkness can latch itself onto our world. Now I never understood it, but I have to believe that somewhere in God's plan, he seems to be okay with good people gettin' caught up in that darkness.

MAGGIE

What if I ain't good?

The Sheriff looks at her like a father would a daughter.

SHERIFF HOLLAND

Seen you with your boy. Nothin' but good in that.

Maggie suppresses a few tears.

MAGGIE

You always been real fair to us, Earle. Thank you.

She takes a sip of coffee and ashes her cigarette.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Be alright if I go down and pay my respects?

He nods. Maggie stands. Sheriff Holland goes to follow, but --

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I know my way.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Fluorescent lights flicker on, revealing a cold, stale room.

Maggie enters. On a steel table ahead, a body is laid out, covered by a sheet.

She moves closer.

Closer.

Right over him now.

She places her hand on the sheet. Takes a breath, and pulls --

Maggie winces at the horrific site of Bob's mangled head. But she forces herself to confront it.

She reaches out, touches her hand to his chin. Turns his head, so she can see where the **BLACK RASH** had formed.

Except it's NO LONGER THERE.

The skin on his neck is no longer oozing and pulsing.

Panicked, confused, frustrated, Maggie inspects Bob's whole body. His arms, legs, back... nothing. No Rash.

She thinks on something a moment. Then moves to the cold chambers lining the nearby wall. Slides one open - Empty.

Down the line she goes until she finds A BODY.

She slides it out of the cold chamber and pulls back the sheet -- Johnny Barnes' stiff dead face looks back at us.

Maggie frantically looks at his wrist. Sure enough, the **BLACK RASH** has disappeared.

Confusion and desperation burn in her eyes.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

From ACROSS LAKE BALSAM, the cabin rests alone in the quiet, eerie hills.

We PUSH TOWARD THE HOUSE, gliding methodically over the water. As we reach the house, we --

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - MAGGIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maggie's eyes grow heavy as she reads an article on "Coal Mine Air Pollution Symptoms." Suddenly --

FOOTSTEPS -- slow, methodical, thuds -- outside her door.

MAGGIE

Pop?

But the tone in her voice tells us she senses something's off. Scared, Maggie rises.

Opens the bedroom door -- The upstairs hallway is empty. BUT, the master bedroom is ajar. Padlock on the floor. *Impossible.*

Maggie moves slowly toward it. Enters.

INSIDE THE MASTER BEDROOM

It's as untouched as ever, EXCEPT for a small MUSIC BOX, sitting in front of the vanity mirror.

An engraving on the top reads: **MARY**.

Maggie moves closer. Rests her fingertips on the box. She opens it to find --

A dusty piece of parchment, folded up. Maggie unfolds it.

DARK INK is scribbled messily across the paper. She strains her eyes, and reads aloud.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Calling out for help, the ravenous,
vengeful past never lets us leave.
We are but walking shadows amongst
them. Tools for payment to the
world below.

Tears well in Maggie's eyes as she frantically reads her mother's haunted writings.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Built with monstrous rock and
stone, the dead water rises while
ash and fire billow in our hell.

The rest of the ink is too faded to read.

She scans further down, past more demented drivel, until she finds the last line:

"The Rash marks the chosen."

Maggie's jaw tightens. Then --

The lamp in the corner begins flickering rapidly until -

THUD: A noise from downstairs. Maggie looks up, eyes sharp.

KITCHEN

Maggie enters cautiously. Nothing. Then, a GROAN.

LIVING ROOM

Maggie finds Conway sprawled out on the floor.

She flicks on the light -- POW! The ceiling light bulb blows, shattering to the ground.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ.

Maggie moves to Conway's side. He's delirious.

She drags him into his bed. Suddenly --

A SCRATCHING NOISE emanates through the room.

Maggie snaps to. Alert.

ANOTHER SCRATCH. This one longer, louder.

And it's coming from the front door.

Maggie grabs a SHOTGUN from above the fireplace. Inches toward the front door.

SCCRRATTCHH.

It's coming from right outside. Maggie gathers her voice.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Who's there?

No answer. So she flips on the porch light.

Readying herself, she swings open the door and raises her shotgun.

Nothing in the doorway.

Trying with all her might to keep her shaking hands steady, she creeps out onto the front porch.

At first, there's nothing. Then, HEAVY PANTING behind her.

She whips around to see -- A large, shaggy, **BLACK DOG.**

Maggie startles. But Black Dog remains still as a statue. Blank. Expressionless. Staring, as if it knows something.

She steps closer. Black Dog doesn't move.

Maggie lowers the gun. Reaches out to feel its neck.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
No collar. Where'd you come from?

MOMENTS LATER

She sets out water and some old ground beef.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maggie climbs the stairs. Stops at the top. Looks to the master bedroom, cracked open invitingly.

It's enticing her.

But she storms to the door, and slams it shut, clamping the padlock together once again.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Maggie sips coffee. Conway watches news reports on Miller Coal.

She grinds her teeth and rubs her temples. Chews nervously on her nails. Dark circles have formed around her eyes.

MAGGIE

(re TV)

Will you turn that damn thing off?

Conway doesn't.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I said turn it off.

She snatches the remote and clicks off the news.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

That's all anybody fuckin' talks about in this town.

Conway clears his clogged throat. Every word a struggle.

CONWAY

Look tired.

MAGGIE

Yeah, wonder why that could be?

Conway looks at her - confused.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I heard you wandering around up stairs goin' through Mom's room last night. Then I come down and you're sprawled out on the floor.

(beat)

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Can't rest if I'm worried about you
fallin' down and killin' yourself.

CONWAY

Ain't been... in that room... since
the day... she died.

MAGGIE

Then why was the light on a few
days back? Why was the door open?
Why's her music box laid out?

Conway shrugs. Coughs.

Maggie looks into his big hound dog eyes. If it was him, he
truly doesn't remember it.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Before Mom died, you remember her
havin' a black marking? Looked
kinda like a rash, or a burn.

Conway thinks a moment. Shakes his head.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You sure?

Conway nods. Maggie takes a breath as Conway eyes her with
deep concern.

CONWAY

Why?

MAGGIE

Guess I just want to know what was
on her mind before the end. What
she went through. What lead to it.

LONG SILENCE. Then, with a grave expression:

CONWAY

No. You don't.

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

SUN RISES. Maggie exits. Black Dog is still there, waiting.

MAGGIE

Why'd you come to me huh?

A distant BLAST on top of Black Mountain steals both their
attentions. She pats Black Dog on the head.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Better get used to that if you're
stickin' around.

Suddenly, the SOUND of a CAR ENGINE.

Maggie looks to see -- An SUV pulling down the driveway. She
grits her teeth. Walks inside the house.

3 MEN in suits step out of the SUV -- executives from Miller
Coal. Clean cut and business like. Black Dog approaches them.

EXECUTIVE #1
Hey there pooch.

The large dog GROWLS and bares his teeth.

EXECUTIVE #1 (CONT'D)
Mrs. Dawson? Mr. Dawson?

Maggie exits with her SHOTGUN.

EXECUTIVE #1 (CONT'D)
Not looking for trouble.

MAGGIE
No. You're just bringin' it.

EXECUTIVE #1
We're with Miller Coal. We'd like -

MAGGIE
I know who you're with.

EXECUTIVE #1
Alright. Well, we want a minute of
your time.

Maggie walks down into the yard. Stands next to Black Dog.

MAGGIE
Go on then.

EXECUTIVE #1 nods to EXECUTIVE #3 who pulls out a form and
hands it to Maggie, keeping a close eye on Black Dog.

EXECUTIVE #1
This is an offer.

Maggie looks at the paper. The moment has come at last.

EXECUTIVE #1 (CONT'D)

I'm sure you've heard the company's planning expansion after our Black Mountain operation ends next week. We're looking for new land. This generous offer -

Executive #1's voice trails off as Maggie looks around the property. Her home. Her family's land. She turns.

Through the screen door -- Conway sits bedridden, hooked to oxygen. The Mine put him there, now they want his land.

She looks past the Executives, at the billowing smoke on Black Mountain. A thought hits her.

MAGGIE

(sotto)

Ash and fire.

EXECUTIVE #1

Excuse me?

Maggie glares at him.

MAGGIE

I'm sure you've pulled this routine on other folks 'round here. But I ain't them. We've lived under the shadow of Miller Coal and your fuckin' Dam for generations, and I don't figure one more'll do much harm. Shit, I got more coal dust on the side of this house than paint.

Maggie moves closer, toe to toe with him now.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

We ain't leavin'. Ever.

She spits in his face.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(nodding to her shotgun)

Now I know I ain't in my rights to use this on you. But you best get the hell off my property before I do anyways.

Executive #1 wipes the spit from his face. Stares menacingly at back. Finally, he nods to his partners.

Maggie watches them get back in the SUV and leave. With Black Dog by her side, her gaze falls back onto --

BLACK MOUNTAIN. Its wounded peak billowing ash and smoke.

Then to -- the HYDROELECTRIC DAM and LAKE BALSAM.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Monstrous rock and stone.

As Mary's words emerge from Maggie's mouth, we...

INT. DAWSON PROPERTY - MAGGIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pitch black. Save for a sliver of pale moonlight.

Maggie sleeps.

QUICK FLASH - Master Bedroom door. Light squeezing around its frame. The voice again...*WAKE UP...TAKE MARY.*

BACK TO - Maggie's eyes pop open. Her body seems paralyzed. Barely able to breathe.

CREEEEEAAAKKKKK -- long, drawn out, deliberate.

She looks up to see the bedroom door clicking shut ever so gently. BY. ITSELF.

Then, at a closer look, something in the shadowy corner of the room makes Maggie FREEZE.

Standing motionless in the darkness, caught ever so slightly in the dim moonlight, is a **FIGURE** -- Its outline so faint it could just be our eyes playing tricks on us.

Maggie reaches a trembling hand to the bedside table and clicks on the lamp.

As the light comes on, the Figure instantly disappears. Like it was never there.

Paralyzed with fear, Maggie sits motionless. Then she stands. Walks to the bedroom door. Opens it.

INT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - ELLIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellis' face. Tossing and turning. Wind howls outside. Suddenly, *soft whispers*. Nearly inaudible, as if apart of the wind. But just enough to get his attention.

He rises. Slowly scans the room's dark corners. Waiting for the source of the whispers to show itself. But -- Nothing.

BACK TO:

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

At the end of the hall, the master bedroom door. Shut. No lights. No movement anywhere in the house.

Maggie makes the long walk across the hallway, to the master bedroom door, and enters.

FADE OUT.

OVER SHOTS OF THE VAST APPALACHIAN LANDSCAPE...

CHOIR GIRL (V.O.)
(singing)
Oh, bury me beneath the willow
Yes, under the weeping willow tree.

The lament rings out over the land.

EXT. COUNTRY CHURCH - CHAPEL - ESTABLISHING

Set on the shores of Lake Balsam, it's the kind of mountain church outsiders only see in books and old photographs.

INT. COUNTRY CHURCH - CHAPEL - DAY

Two closed coffins - Jan and Bob's - rest before the altar, where a young CHOIR GIRL sings the sad lament.

CHOIR GIRL
So he may know where I am sleeping
And perhaps he'll weep for me.

Her voice chills the bone as we pan over townspeople, packed into wooden pews - despair etched into their withered faces.

Maggie, Conway (strapped to an oxygen tank), Ellis, and William stand in the front row.

Maggie glances to Ellis, who looks ominously at the coffins.

Off Ellis, she sees LENNY a few rows back - *we recognize him as the man in the wet suit by Lake Balsam.*

Feeling her eyes, he gives a slight wave. William notices.

CHOIR GIRL (CONT'D)
*Oh, bury me beneath the willow,
 under the weeping willow tree.*

The last words ring out like a sad lullaby.

MOMENTS LATER:

The last of the Mourners shuffle past the coffins, paying respects, saying goodbyes. Gospel tunes play as Maggie, Conway, William, and Ellis (who doesn't look) get their turn.

Maggie stops. Fingers a piece of paper in her hand. *The writings from Mary.*

She stands still, as if waiting for some kind of sign... When it doesn't come, she follows the rest of the Mourners out.

INT. PANCAKE HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

William, Ellis, and Maggie, still dressed in funeral attire, eat in awkward SILENCE - they've forgotten how to be a family. Maggie breaks it.

MAGGIE
 Sorry Grandpa couldn't make it. He was tired after the funeral.

ELLIS
 That's okay.

MAGGIE
 I meant to show you this earlier.

She pulls out her phone. Shows Ellis a picture of Black Dog.

ELLIS
 He's yours? That's awesome!

Maggie smiles. Reveling in Ellis' happiness. But her smile doesn't last long, because --

EXECUTIVE #1 (O.S.)
 William.

She turns to see Executive #1, approaching the table. William stands and shakes his hand.

EXECUTIVE #1 (CONT'D)
 So this is your family?

WILLIAM
 My son Ellis.

Ellis nods a hello.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
And this is Maggie.

EXECUTIVE #1
Yes, we've had the pleasure.

Executive #1 holds out a hand. Shakes with Maggie. A BEAT, then he turns to William, lowering his voice.

EXECUTIVE #1 (CONT'D)
We saw your inventory report and had a few concerns. I'd like to talk in the morning. First thing.

WILLIAM
Yes sir.

EXECUTIVE #1
Pleased to meet you Ellis. Mrs. Dawson.

Executive #1 leaves. William sits back down. Under the table, we see Maggie's thumbnail release from her bloody palm.

EXT. PANCAKE HOUSE - DAY

They exit into the windy parking lot. Ellis points across the street to - LENNY'S PAWN SHOP.

ELLIS
Hey can we go in there? That guy's got cool stuff.

Maggie and William look at each other.

WILLIAM
Y'all go ahead. I'll wait.

INT. LENNY'S PAWN SHOP - DAY

Maggie and Ellis walk through the shop - filled with old trinkets. Impossible to tell value from junk.

But Ellis finds a cool looking relic pocket knife. He turns it over in his hands, admiringly.

LENNY (O.S.)
Got that off a traveler down in White Oak.

Lenny -- now changed from funeral attire, sports long hair, colorful tattoos, and a grimy white T.

He's country, true local, but somewhere along the way became a hippie. This is what folks around here call a "River Rat."

LENNY (CONT'D)

Said it'd been passed down through his family for generations. Datin' all the way back to the Civil War. See here...

Lenny steps forward. Points out an engraving on the wooden handle: A&P.

LENNY (CONT'D)

Told me them letters were his great grandparent's initials. That they was long lost lovers.

ELLIS

How much is it?

Lenny looks to Maggie. Back to Ellis.

LENNY

On the house bud.

ELLIS

(beaming)

Really? Thank you.

Ellis leaves to look around at more stuff. Never taking his eyes off the pocket knife for too long.

MAGGIE

You didn't have to do that.

LENNY

Ah it ain't worth much anyways.

MAGGIE

Sure sounds like it is.

LENNY

I found the old thing on the side of the road. Made that story up.

MAGGIE

What for?

LENNY

Habit I reckon. Always got to be a salesman in the pawn shop industry.

MAGGIE
But you gave it away for free.

LENNY
What can I say, I like stories.

Their friendliness slowly dissipates.

LENNY (CONT'D)
Sorry about your Uncle. That was a nice service.

Lenny steps closer. Any goofy charm he had is now gone. He looks at her like he knows her deepest secrets.

LENNY (CONT'D)
Listen, I uh - We never really got a chance to talk after your -

He doesn't know what to say... Ellis comes back. Relieving Maggie and Lenny from each other.

ELLIS
Where d'you get all this stuff?

Lenny leans down. Eye level with Ellis. Putting on his story mode voice again.

LENNY
This town's full of secrets boy. All kinds of items. Relics of the past. You just got to know where to look.

OFF MAGGIE -- *thinking about this statement from Lenny.*

EXT. PANCAKE HOUSE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Maggie shuts William's truck door. Leans into the passenger seat and kisses Ellis on the forehead.

Ellis twirls the new pocket knife in his hands excitedly. William stands a few feet back. Maggie goes to him.

WILLIAM
I was thinking about our conversation the other day. Does Saturday work for you?

Maggie's confused. William talks quietly so Ellis can't hear.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
I know you got your therapy that
day, but if you want to -- Ellis
has been actin' a little off
lately... he needs you Maggie.

Tears well in Maggie's eyes.

MAGGIE
Saturday. Yeah. That's good.

WILLIAM
I'll bring him by around lunch.

William smiles. Gets in his truck and leaves.
For the first time, we see pure joy cross Maggie's face.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

SIRENS BLARE as Maggie's ambulance flies down curving roads
until it reaches --

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

Double-Wide trailer on Lake Balsam's edge, OVERTAKEN BY FIRE.

Firefighters are on the scene, spraying water, trying
desperately to save the home.

Maggie and Ricky exit the ambulance and rush forward, where
TWO FIREFIGHTERS pull a girl, LYDIA (16), from the flames.

Maggie and Ricky strap Lydia to a gurney.

MAGGIE
Is there anyone else?

FIREFIGHTER
Two kids in back. Goin' in now.

The two firefighters RUN back into the burning trailer.

MAGGIE
(to Ricky, re: Lydia)
Get her in the truck and stabilize
her. We gotta wait -

WHOOSH!

The trailer ERUPTS IN FLAMES. The power and heat sending
Maggie and Ricky crashing to the ground.

Lydia tumbles off of the gurney, next to Maggie.

Dazed, Maggie rises to see other firefighters in a war with the flames.

Screaming for their comrades -- now burning alive inside, along with the two children. No saving them now.

Regaining her focus, she crawls to Lydia and turns her over.

To Maggie's horror, she sees the **BLACK RASH** -- grotesque and spotted across Lydia's arm.

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - DAY

A school bus pulls up. Ellis exits. Walks around the crowd of protesters to the SECURITY SHACK.

MOMENTS LATER:

Employee Entrance Gate opens. Ellis enters. Crosses the mining site, toward William's work lot. BUT --

A soul-stirring whisper draws his attention.

Ellis turns to the sound. His gaze falls on the mouth of an old mine entrance. *The same one Maggie saw earlier.*

The *WHISPERS*, inarticulate and otherworldly, seem to come from the bowels of the mine, filling his bones with dread.

But he can't help himself. He walks forward.

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - DAY

William overlooks a blasting operation. Something catches his eye down a nearby hill.

WILLIAM
What the hell?

It's ELLIS, moving toward the old mine, as if in a trance.

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - DAY

Ellis steps into the dark mining tunnel.

INSIDE MINE SHAFT -- Entranced, he moves further forward.

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - RIDGE - DAY

On a nearby ridge, MINERS set explosives. Ready to blast.

INT. MINE SHAFT - DAY

Ellis walks the cavernous tunnel. Sunlight disappearing behind him. The *whispers* suddenly STOP.

And he's now accompanied only by silence and darkness.

ELLIS

Hello?

BOOOM!

The walls shake. Coal Dust and debris cover the young boy. Clouding around him like a thick wool blanket.

He COUGHS violently. Like he inhaled something poisonous.

Suddenly, the *WHISPERS* kick in again. Surrounding him. As if a part of the dust clouds.

Ellis rubs his eyes, trying to breathe. Delirious, about to pass out when -- A SILOUHETTED FIGURE emerges behind him.

The Figure's hand reaches out, pushing through the smoke...

EXT. MILLER COAL MINE - DAY

William drags Ellis out the shaft. Towering over his son, holding anger only a frightened parent can possess.

WILLIAM

What the hell were you thinking?

Ellis, covered in coal dust and wheezing, looks down.

ELLIS

I'm sorry. I thought I -

Ellis can't bring himself to say it.

WILLIAM

You thought what?

ELLIS

I thought I heard someone. Voices.

William's at a loss for words. Slowly, his anger dissipates.

He kneels down next to Ellis, and slaps a strong hand on his son's shoulder.

WILLIAM
I'm just glad you're okay.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maggie, skin caked in ash from the trailer fire, stands outside Lydia's room.

She turns to see Sheriff Holland.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
Never far from tragedy are you?

MAGGIE
Part of the job.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
Tell me about it.

He looks into Lydia's room, where the young girl lays strapped to the bed, in a deep coma, tubes and Iv's running through her body.

MAGGIE
Family know yet?

SHERIFF HOLLAND
Told the parents an hour ago. Had to stop 'em on their way home.

MAGGIE
Jesus.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
Losin' three kids in one night.
Can't imagine.

MAGGIE
Two. Lydia's still alive.

Something comes over Sheriff Holland. And Maggie notices.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
We found what was left of the kids.
Fire wasn't no accident.
(beat)
Looks like they was tied up.
(MORE)

SHERIFF HOLLAND (CONT'D)
Gasoline marks were everywhere. We
think Lydia done it herself.

MAGGIE
Why would she do that?

The Sheriff shrugs. Exasperated.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
Found some text messages and talked
to her friends. Apparently her
parents just sold the property to
Miller Coal. They're supposed to be
out end of the month. Reckon she
was mad about it.
(beat)
Still hard to believe that'd drive
her to do somethin' like this.

MAGGIE
Don't you think it's strange how
often you had to say that lately.

He looks at her skeptically.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Can't be natural.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
What're you gettin' at?

Maggie looks at him. Can't bring herself to tell the truth.

SHERIFF HOLLAND (CONT'D)
Go get some rest. You been through
enough for one day.

Sheriff Holland watches with concern as Maggie leaves.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - DAY

Maggie straightens up the house. Sweeps, wipes down the
counters, cleans up around Conway's area.

She stops in front of a hallway mirror and fixes her hair.

Desperate to make a good impression.

BATHROOM

Maggie washes down her two pills. Eyes herself in the mirror.
Throws a third pill down her throat.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Maggie sits with Black Dog, anxiously tapping her foot.

In the distance, William's truck pulls down the driveway.
Maggie walks into the front yard to greet them.

Ellis and William climb out the truck.

Maggie and Ellis hug.

Black Dog approaches cautiously. Sniffs Ellis' hand.

MAGGIE

He likes you. Don't seem to like
most people.

William reaches a hand out, but Black Dog SNAPS.

WILLIAM

(pulling hand away)
Shit.

MAGGIE

Told you.

WILLIAM

Yeah I see that.

Ellis walks off with the dog. William scans the property.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Place looks good.

MAGGIE

Your boys from Miller think so too.

WILLIAM

Tried warning them getting you to
sell was about as likely as the
mine itself shutting down.

They share a rare smile together.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Listen, I didn't want to tell you
this the other day, but I talked to
the court. They said this can be a
trial, long as I'm comfortable.

Maggie's taken aback.

MAGGIE

So now this is some kind of test?

WILLIAM
I didn't say that.

MAGGIE
You said he needed me.

WILLIAM
He does.

MAGGIE
You think I don't know how you see
me? How this whole town sees me?
(beat)
I know everybody thinks I'm crazy
after what I done. What my mother
done.

WILLIAM
That's not true.

MAGGIE
Yes it is. I made peace with it.
But it's hard enough for me to
swallow my pride, without you
judgin' me too. You're the one
person I thought never would.

WILLIAM
This hasn't been easy for me
either. Just doing the best I can.

SILENCE.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
I'll leave y'all to it then.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Ellis exits out the bathroom. Looks to the master bedroom at the end of the long hallway. The padlocked door enticing him just as it did Maggie.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie, Ellis, and Conway eat lunch. Suddenly, Ellis coughs. Hard and Brutal. She pats him on the back.

MAGGIE
How long's that been goin' on?

ELLIS
Few days.

MAGGIE
Sounds like bronchitis.

ELLIS
I'm okay.

MAGGIE
Well keep an eye on it. Gets worse
make sure your dad takes you in.

Ellis nods. His eyes scan the place. Land on Conway. Then on
a nearby photo of Conway and Mary's wedding.

ELLIS
How'd Grandma die?

Maggie looks up sharply, not sure how to respond.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
Nobody'll ever tell me.

Conway eyes his Grandson. Clears his throat.

CONWAY
(matter of fact)
Kilt herself.

BEAT as Ellis takes this in. It's like he already knew.

CONWAY (CONT'D)
Took a boat out on the lake, slit
her wrists, and dove in.

MAGGIE
Dad -

CONWAY
It's truth.

Ellis looks hard at Conway.

ELLIS
Is that what'll happen to me?

Maggie's eyes dart sharply to Ellis, filling with concern.

MAGGIE
Of course not. Why the hell would
you even think that?

ELLIS
Grandma did it.
(to Maggie)
You did it.

Maggie's speechless. Under the table, her finger nail digs hard into her palm.

After a moment, she slides her chair back, stands up, and walks outside.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - DUSK

Maggie walks by Lake Balsam -- the edge of her property line.

Black Dog follows close by.

She watches as EXPLOSIONS ring out from Black Mountain - its ash clouds billowing down over the Hydroelectric Dam.

Ellis approaches. She doesn't look, but knows he's there.

MAGGIE

Even blastin' on a Saturday.
You believe that? Guess the quicker
they finish Black Mountain, the
sooner they can move on to the
next.

She walks a few more paces. Ellis follows in SILENCE. Then gathers his courage.

ELLIS

Sorry about what I said.

MAGGIE

You got the right to ask questions.

She takes a breath.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Sometimes it's just hard for your
dad and I to know exactly what to
tell you and what to keep from you.

They walk a few more steps.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

What's got you so interested in
Grandma anyway?

Ellis doesn't answer.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Ellis.

ELLIS

I think she visits me.

Maggie stops walking.

Looks down at her son while her nail digs deeper than ever into her palm.

MAGGIE
What d'you mean?

ELLIS
Well, I know I never knew her, but
sometimes I think she talks to me
in my dreams.

Ellis coughs again. Maggie remains stoic, unsure what to say.

Then, she releases her nail. Kneels down next to Ellis. And the truth pours out:

MAGGIE
I was about your age when she did
it. It was the hardest thing I ever
had to deal with. Still am...
I'm sorry I put you through it too.

Tears well in Maggie's eyes.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I ain't the best at giving advice,
but if I had to give you some. I'd
tell you not to do what I did.
Don't drown in the bad. Don't try
to control things you can't... The
best thing you can do, is be a kid.

Maggie smiles reassuringly.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Don't try to solve my problems. Or
your Dad's. Just be 12.
(beat)
Do that, and I promise, I won't let
nothin' bad happen to you.

Ellis smiles. Finding some small comfort.

LATER -- Ellis skips stones across the lake. Maggie watches. Black Dog sitting by her.

Ellis sees something across the lake... A familiar glow on the surface --

A small, HOVERING ORB of light. The same we saw in the opening scene with Bob.

ELLIS

You see that?

He points to the orb. A few more have eerily formed around it. Maggie looks up. Walks next to Ellis.

MAGGIE

They're called Wanderlights.

Ellis looks up. Surprised she knows. But intrigued.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

In old folktales, they represent the souls of ghosts, of spirits. In some stories they're just there. In others, they wait. They entice. And they lure travelers to 'em. But they never satisfy.

ELLIS

Why not?

MAGGIE

Well, the people that follow go mad, 'cause no matter how long they search, or how far they follow, they can't ever reach the light.

ELLIS

You ever try?

MAGGIE

When I was little I used to take Grandpa's boat out and try to catch them in mason jars. But every time I got close, they'd slip away.

ELLIS

I didn't know Grandpa had a boat.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - BARN - SUNSET

Maggie drags open the barn door.

Old furniture and rusted farm equipment are stacked in the corners. Cobwebs stretch across the wooden beams above.

In the back of the barn, Maggie approaches a large object, covered by a dirty old tarp.

MAGGIE

Give me a hand.

Together, Ellis and Maggie pull the tarp to reveal a rusted out old MOTORBOAT, caked in dirt and grime.

ELLIS

Cool.

Maggie steps back. Admiring the boat she played on as a kid.

Ellis moves closer. Starts wiping away some dirt and grime.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

There's writing. Look.

Maggie kneels down by Ellis, who reaches out, and wipes away a layer of mud, revealing the boat's name -- **MARY**.

Maggie's eyes flare. *How did she never think of this before?*

MAGGIE

(sotto)

Take Mary.

Black Dog barks. Maggie looks at him sharply. The dog locks eyes with her. Barks again.

Maggie stares back at the name.

WE PUSH IN SLOWLY.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - MAGGIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maggie lies awake, restless in bed. Mind somewhere else.

QUICK FLASH - The bubbling **BLACK RASH** on Lydia's forearm.

BACK TO - Maggie in bed. She swings the sheets off and rises.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie checks on Conway, who sleeps. Sweat pours from his head. She leans over to hear his breathing.

His wheezing is terrible. Each breath more of a gurgle. She swipes her car keys from the table and exits.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Maggie waits in her car, gnawing nervously on her fingernails. She reaches in her shirt pocket for a cigarette, but her carton is empty.

Maggie opens her glove compartment.

Digs around for another cigarette. But instead, she finds a pointed METAL OBJECT -- a device to pick locks.

Maggie holds it. *Seemingly shocked to have it.*

But she shakes off the odd feeling, closes the glove compartment and exits.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Maggie opens the side entrance. Walks down the long dark hallway. Stops in front of --

LYDIA'S ROOM

MAGGIE'S POV: Lydia on the bed, still in a coma.

She goes to open the door but stops herself. She turns and walks back down the hallway, toward the...

SUPPLY ROOM - Where Maggie finds the door is padlocked shut.

MAGGIE

Shit.

As Maggie wrestles with the lock, CAMERA SLOWLY PANS around her shoulder, revealing --

A FIGURE, standing in the HALLWAY. Watching Maggie.

The silhouetted figure stands remarkably still, a hospital gown dangling from its body. It's LYDIA.

An idea hits Maggie. She turns toward the side exit.

Doesn't see Lydia in the hallway behind.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Maggie reaches her truck. Dives back into her glove compartment, and pulls out the lock pick.

INT. HOSPITAL - SUPPLY ROOM - NIGHT

The sound of a lock being jimmied. After a moment, the door clicks open, and Maggie steps inside. She swipes her usual share of Morphine for Conway.

HALLWAY -- Maggie, Morphine in hand, reaches the exit door.

But she stops.

This time, the background hallway is empty. There's no Lydia. But something's still on Maggie's mind. She looks back down the hallway.

Starts walking toward Lydia's room.

Closer...

Closer...

Closer...

LYDIA'S ROOM:

Maggie creaks open the door. Looks up to see --

Lydia, lying in the hospital bed. No sign of movement.

She moves closer to the girl. Eyes on her wrist.

Maggie reaches out and touches Lydia's arm. Turns it over. Sure enough, there's the rash.

PUSH IN SLOWLY until -- Lydia's eyes pop open.

GRIPS TIGHTLY around Maggie's wrist.

Maggie startles, tries to pull away, but Lydia is awake now. Heart-rate beeping wildly. Eyes wide and burning.

Maggie winces in pain as Lydia grips tighter. The RASH pulsating on her wrist.

LYDIA

It'll take us all. Can't stop it.

Maggie bites through the pain. Lydia's whole body trembles.

MAGGIE

(re Rash)

Where did that come from?

LYDIA

They made me do it.

MAGGIE

Who? Who made you?

Lydia's eyes widen -- the same lost gaze Bob had. She looks past Maggie, out the window. Terror fills her as her grip tightens more on Maggie, squeezing. *Really. Fucking. Hard.*

LYDIA
The dead water... Release them...

With her eyes nearly bulging from her head, Lydia passes out.

Maggie rips her hand free -- momentum sending her crashing to the floor. Maggie tries to steady her breath.

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Maggie leans against her car, trying to clear her head. She pulls her mother's note from her pocket. Opens it.

MAGGIE
The Dead water rises.

She lifts her head. Maggie looks down at her wrist -- now covered in deep bruises.

She glances up to Lydia's window. Looks back to her wrist.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(sotto)
It'll take us all. Release them.

Maggie rubs her eyes. *What does that mean?*

She gets in her truck and cranks the ignition. Takes one last glance up to Lydia's room. This time, she sees --

LYDIA -- Standing stoically in the window -- WATCHING MAGGIE.

Maggie shutters. Freezes at the site. For a moment, time stands still. Then -

CRASH! Lydia leaps, breaking through the hospital window, and falling with a sickening CRUNCH to the pavement below.

Maggie runs toward Lydia -- broken body now sprawled across the concrete, twitching involuntarily.

Maggie's whole body shakes uncontrollably. Then:

WHISPERS ALL AROUND HER -- WAKE UP...TAKE MARY.

Maggie presses her palms to her ears. Shakes her head as the voices bore into her skull.

Sobbing now, crouched over Lydia, Maggie pleads.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
This isn't real. This can't be
real.

The voices build into an unbearable, inaudible, noise. Until suddenly -- A BANDAGED HAND grabs hold of Maggie's shoulder.

She turns, expecting the worst, but -- A wave of relief washes over. The hand belongs to LENNY.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie sits across from Sheriff Holland.

SHERIFF HOLLAND

That's it? You pulled in and that's when it happened?

Maggie nods. Pulls her sleeve over her wrist, attempting to hide the bruises Lydia gave her.

MAGGIE

You said you didn't know what could drive her to do what she did.

A BEAT as Maggie takes a deep breath. Gathering her courage to say what she's about to say.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I think somethin', or someone is the reason for all this.

Sheriff Holland stares. Concerned but intrigued.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I know it sounds crazy Earle, but I've seen markings, the same ones, like a rash, on three different bodies. It's gotta mean somethin'. Seems like the closer we get to Miller Coal finishing Black Mountain, the more bodies keep piling up.

Sheriff Holland eyes her sympathetically.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that. There's a cancer over this town. It got my uncle, Johnny Barnes, now it got Lydia. Not to mention the dozens of others these last few months. It's the reason for all these deaths. I'm tellin' you something is -

SHERIFF HOLLAND

What? Something what? Made her jump? Pulled her out the window? Jesus Christ you said yourself you saw her do it.

Maggie stays silent.

SHERIFF HOLLAND (CONT'D)

Lydia set that house on fire. She killed her little brother and sister, then she woke up and did it to herself.

MAGGIE

You call yourself a man of God, but when evil strikes you turn to a man of logic.

A brief pause, then:

SHERIFF HOLLAND

I was there after your mother did what she did. I heard the things she was sayin' weeks before. Don't go down that road, Maggie.

He places a loving hand on Maggie's shoulder.

SHERIFF HOLLAND (CONT'D)

We make our own fate. Ain't nothin' else controlling us. No one made your Uncle do what he did. Or your mother. Or you... The sooner you get that through your head the better off you'll be.

HEAVY SILENCE as the Sheriff's tough love fills the room with tension. Finally, Lenny enters. Followed by an awkward beat.

LENNY

Am I interrupting?

SHERIFF HOLLAND

You're fine, Lenny. We're done.

Sheriff Holland stands. Looks down to Maggie sternly, but there's also worry and love in his eyes.

SHERIFF HOLLAND (CONT'D)

Think about what I said.

He nods to Lenny and exits, leaving Lenny and Maggie alone. After a moment...

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - NIGHT

Lenny's truck pulls into the driveway. Headlights shine onto the front porch, illuminating Black Dog, who waits stoically.

MAGGIE
Want to come in?

They exit the truck and walk to the front door, where Black Dog growls ferociously at Lenny.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
It's okay boy.

But Black Dog isn't having it, bearing its teeth. Maggie grabs him by the collar and pushes him away.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Go on now. Get.

Black Dog does as he's told and lumbers out of the way.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maggie and Lenny enter. Horrible coughing comes from the other room.

MAGGIE
Shit.

LIVING ROOM -- Maggie moves quickly to Conway's side.

Cringing in agony, the old man coughs brutally. It sounds like his throat is being shredded from the inside out.

Maggie dabs at his mouth with a handkerchief. After a few moments, the cough subsides.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Didn't mean to leave you so long.

Maggie glances at Lenny, standing in the doorway of the room. Her look tells us she's unsure of what to do with him here.

But she makes a decision. She ties Conway's arm tight. Then takes out the stolen Morphine.

Lenny looks on curiously. Glances away as Maggie administers the drug. Conway drifts quietly off into bliss once more.

Maggie rises. Looks Lenny square in the eyes.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Don't tell no one.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Maggie and Lenny pass a bottle of Wild Turkey back and forth. She looks distracted. Staring at the barn, where Black Dog lays in the open doorway, keeping a close eye on them.

LENNY
How long you been givin' him that?

MAGGIE
Long as I needed to. Can't afford treatments with no insurance so...

LENNY
Can't believe them assholes would do that to people.

Maggie takes a swig of whiskey.

MAGGIE
You heard me talkin' to the Sheriff earlier, didn't you?

Lenny nods, embarrassed.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
It's alright. I thought as much.

She passes the bottle to Lenny.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You think I'm crazy too?

Lenny shakes his head.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Liar.
(smiles)
Shit you seen me at my worst.

Maggie looks out at the dark landscape.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Never thanked you, did I?

LENNY
Never needed you to.

Lenny gives her the whiskey. She takes another big gulp.

MAGGIE

You know, when I woke up after you pulled me out of the water, I wasn't relieved. If someone stops you from killin' yourself, you should be grateful, but it's not really like that. I didn't come to with a moment of clarity about how good it is to be alive. I was just angry. I wanted to die, and you took that from me.

Lenny doesn't know what to say.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

But the other day, I was with Ellis. He was upset and I calmed him down...*I was a good mom...* Right then I realized I am glad to be alive. I'm glad I'm here to protect him. You gave me that.

Lenny takes the bottle and sets it on the porch. He leans in and kisses her. Maggie recoils a bit. Then kisses him back.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - MAGGIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maggie and Lenny in bed, post-sex.

MAGGIE

Hand me a cigarette will you.

He grabs a pack. Tries to light one, but the bandage on his hand prevents it.

She lights it herself and takes a drag.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

What happened to your hand anyways?

LENNY

Cut it on a slab of metal while I was diving in the lake.

MAGGIE

That's odd.

Lenny shrugs.

LENNY

Find all kinds of things for my shop down there. But don't tell nobody. It's my little secret.

MAGGIE
What's down there?

Lenny eyes her playfully.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Come on, you seen all my secrets.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lenny opens up his laptop. Maggie sits next to him. He scrolls through images and videos. All images he's taken under the lake.

Maggie watches, intrigued. Then, her brows furrow. Something seriously captivating her now.

MAGGIE
What is that?

The PHOTO is grainy and dark. But through the murky lake water, a long, white, structure can be seen.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Is that a church steeple?

LENNY
You ain't seen nothin' yet.

Maggie looks on in amazement as we flash through images of an underwater Church, a graveyard, foundations of houses, all still standing. Somehow intact.

A WHOLE TOWN - washed away and forgotten, yet strangely preserved. Lost in time at the bottom of Lake Balsam.

INT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - ELLIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellis sleeps. A NOISE wakes him. He opens his eyes. Sits up sharply in bed.

FEELS the presence of someone else in the room, lurking in the shadows, the walls, the air.

He's rigid, too afraid to look. Too afraid to breathe.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

Footsteps... INSIDE HIS ROOM. Ellis closes his eyes tight.

PUSH IN on Ellis as the THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. Comes closer.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - NIGHT

Maggie stands on the dock, looking out at the lake.

One by one, WANDERLIGHTS appear over the water. Moving toward her. Maggie doesn't move. She can't.

Closer now, the orbs disappear underwater. BUT --

Something else takes their place. Maggie squints.

Under the cold moonlight, she sees something. A NAKED BODY floating toward the shore.

Maggie panics. She reaches into the water and grabs hold of the body. Turns it over. A MAN, covered in the **BLACK RASH**.

She recoils. Looks out to see more naked bodies floating toward her. Pale corpses in the black water.

One bumps the dock. It's JULIE. Tears fill Maggie's eyes.

These are the bodies of townsfolk she has known her entire life. Each carrying the black rash.

Maggie, on her knees at the dock, pulls at her hair. She turns another body over. WILLIAM's dead face looks back up.

MAGGIE

No.

She looks up, notices one more body, 20 yards off shore. It's small, the only child sized corpse.

She wades into the water. Moving through the corpses. Their dead hands and feet brushing her as she passes.

Finally, she reaches the child's body. She turns it over to find ELLIS.

The grief and horror of the site proves too much to bear. Her worst fear finally come true. Maggie wails into the darkness.

Her dead son draped limply across her arms. Suddenly - Ellis' hand GRASPS HER THROAT. He looks at her menacingly.

ELLIS

Release me.

The other corpses in the water have now risen, surrounding Maggie. She tries to scream but their hands wrap around her mouth, her face, her eyes.

They drag her into the black water.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maggie's eyes pop open. Paralysis kicking in.

Her mouth is open as if she's screaming, but no noise comes. Slowly, her rigid body loosens and her scream is audible.

Lenny wakes as Maggie roles off, collapsing to the floor.

LENNY

What the fuck.

Maggie rises to her knees. Mumbling.

MAGGIE

Dead water.

Lenny helps Maggie back onto bed.

LENNY

Are you okay?

Shaking, Maggie picks up her phone. Dials William's number.

CUT BETWEEN WILLIAM AND MAGGIE.

William wakes up to his phone buzzing. He answers tiredly.

MAGGIE

Is he okay?

WILLIAM

It's 3'clock in the mornin'. What the hell is this ab-

MAGGIE

Just check on him Goddamnit.

A PAUSE. William lets out an exasperated sigh.

IN WILLIAM'S HALLWAY -- William exits the bedroom. Walks down toward Ellis' room.

He creaks open the door -- looks in the dark room to find... Ellis, sleeping. He walks toward his son, whose back is toward us.

WILLIAM

Ellis.

He puts his hand on Ellis' back. Checking his breath. Satisfied, William stands and walks back to the door.

Unable to believe he got woken up for this, he lifts the phone to his ear.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
He's fine.

ON MAGGIE as she nearly breaks from relief.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
What the fuck's goin' on?

ON MAGGIE as she holds back tears.

MAGGIE
Nothing. Just a bad dream. Sorry.

Maggie hangs up. William closes the bedroom door. BUT, as he does, we... PUSH IN on Ellis -- awake. Eyes wide in fear.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - MAGGIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maggie sets the phone down. Shaken to her very core.

LENNY
You alright?

BATHROOM -- Maggie washes her face in the sink. As she lifts her hands, she stares petrified at the **BLACK RASH**.

Now on her wrist. It replaced the bruises Lydia gave her.

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - MORNING

Lenny pulls into the lot, next to Maggie's truck.

Maggie pulls at her long sleeve shirt, ensuring the rash is covered. She exits the truck. Before closing the door, she turns back.

MAGGIE
I want you to take me down there.

LENNY
What for?

MAGGIE
All these thing's can't just be coincidence. Suicides, overdoses, fires, Miller Coal. Our whole town's dying.
(beat)
(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I know it sounds crazy, but this is
all connected to the lake somehow.
I can feel it.

INT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Ellis showers. Suddenly, he coughs. Again and again. He keels over. Unable to stop.

Water splashes onto his back as he coughs up a THICK BLACK SUBSTANCE -- Not blood.

It looks like Mud, like black sand, like COAL DUST.

Ellis doesn't believe what he's seeing as the Coal Dust washes down the drain. He coughs again and DARK RED BLOOD splatters on the white shower wall.

INT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

William sips coffee. Ellis' breakfast plate next to him.

WILLIAM

Hey bud, breakfast is gettin' cold.

William stands. Refills his coffee. He turns. Immediately the mug slips from his hand, shattering to the ground.

REVEAL -- Ellis standing naked, thick blood rolling out of his mouth, down his chin and onto his chest.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - DAY

Maggie slips in a wet suit. Lenny hooks her to diving gear.

LENNY

Ready?

Maggie nods. Lenny climbs into his little motorboat. She follows, but stops. Lenny notices.

MAGGIE

I haven't been on the lake since...

Lenny holds out his hand. Maggie takes it. And climbs aboard.

LENNY

Gotta get out to the middle.

He cranks the engine. The boat chugs away from shore.

CLOSE ON: Maggie's cell-phone, still in her truck, ringing over and over from William's desperate calls.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - DAY

Out in the middle, the deepest part of the lake.

Lenny cuts off the engine. The Boat idles in the water.

Behind them, in the near distance, the Hydroelectric Dam looms, with Miller Coal just beyond.

Lenny turns to Maggie.

LENNY

Got enough air for two hours, so
just remember to stay calm and
breathe. Get to feelin'
claustrophobic just come straight
back up. I'll be waitin'.

Maggie nods nervously. Lenny clicks on Maggie's diving mask.

It's heavy and dated looking. Like something Lenny would sell in his shop.

She sits on the edge of the boat. He gives her a thumbs up.

Maggie looks down at the dark water.

The same water that's haunted her dreams. Haunted her life.
Her mother's chosen resting place.

At one point this was her own chosen resting place.

Maggie bites down on her oxygen tube and dives.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

Crashing into the water, Maggie floats for a moment.

Adjusts her eyes. Flicks on the flashlight attached to her mask, which looks coincidentally like a miner's lamp.

Then swims forward.

DEEPER NOW -

Maggie finally sees it. The **UNDERWATER TOWN.**

Eerie, forgotten, strange. A ghost town in the truest sense.

Maggie moves through the town, guiding herself with the headlamps and the faintest rays of sunlight.

Algae and fungi cover the buildings, but other than that, they are bizarrely intact.

Through the windows, Maggie sees overturned furniture, wilted paintings. These were lived in homes.

It's deathly quiet. Isolated. She may as well be on the moon.

Maggie passes by lines of tiny old houses, each looking exactly the same.

This was clearly an old coal mining camp.

Her eyes dart back and forth.

The distinct feeling of being watched setting in.

Maggie moves through an underwater GRAVEYARD.

She shines her headlamp onto tombstones. Moves close to them. The names are gone, faded, washed away. Forgotten forever.

Maggie looks up. With Lenny's boat no longer visible, panic sets in. She's now acutely aware of how alone she is at the bottom of this mystical water.

So much has been lost down here. History, towns, Mary. This was nearly even Maggie's tomb.

HOUSE - She pushes her way into one of the house windows.

INSIDE - Furniture is still there. A PAINTING hangs above a caved in fireplace. Maggie's light hovers over it.

Faded, washed out, but bizarrely still intact enough to see the outline of what looks like a family, dressed in black.

But their faces are gone. Washed away just like names on the tombstones. She stares at them intently. They look like the FIGURE from her room.

Suddenly -- Maggie's headlamp blinks. Ever so softly. Similarly to the lightbulb in the Master Bedroom.

She reaches up to it, shaking the light, trying to get it to stop. But -- the light goes out...

DARKNESS SHROUDS HER. -- All we hear is Maggie's breathing.

We catch brief glimpses of her moving panicked through the house as her head lamp flashes.

Each flash threatening to bring some waiting horror out of the darkness and into the light.

Finally...

Maggie's light flickers back on. Her eyes spell relief, until she realizes where she's standing...

HOUSE BASEMENT -- WHERE SHE IS SURROUNDED BY --

BODIES --

Strangely still somewhat preserved, the half-decayed corpses, bloated and covered in algae, float like suspended ventriloquist dummies.

Their eyes are hollow, mouths droop, jaws hang loose.

The remains of the family in the picture -- long forgotten in the depths of Lake Balsam.

Horrificed, Maggie lets out a muted scream --

And the oxygen tube falls from her mouth, causing her to take in water.

Panicked and choking, she turns from the corpses to the basement door, but it's closed.

She's locked in.

The corpses seem to float *toward* her.

Drawn to her.

Maggie puts the oxygen tube back in her mouth and pushes the door as hard as she can.

She struggles with all her might, but to no avail.

This is it. This is where she dies.

The underwater tomb that's been waiting for her ever since she escaped it the first time.

As the CORPSES of the past float closer, their veiny white hands suspended outwards, inches away --

Maggie's lamp again goes out.

PITCH BLACK.

Just the sound of muffled panic. Pure desperation, until --

In the small pixels of sunlight that made it to the bottom, we find Maggie.

She somehow felt her way out of the house.

Floating in the open, she turns to see -- LIGHTS, turning on in a few of the house windows. Each one closer than the last.

Terrified, Maggie kicks off the lake bed.

And rising to the surface, she looks down to see the lights in the town dimming.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - DAY

Maggie explodes to the surface. Choking, gagging, exhausted, she breathes in fresh air.

Lenny's boat, idles 20 yards away.

She makes inaudible noises. Enough to get his attention.

He whips toward her. Drives close and lifts her into the boat. She crumples to the floor.

Lenny kneels over. Takes off her mask to find Maggie's petrified eyes staring back.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - DAY

On the shore, Lenny and Maggie sit. Clearly she's just told him what happened.

LENNY

You said you lost your oxygen.
Could've hallucinated.

MAGGIE

No. They were there. I felt them.
All around me. I saw lights.

Lenny can't believe what he's hearing.

LENNY

Been going down there for years.
Never seen nothin' but forgotten
houses and rusted old junk.

Maggie doesn't listen. She's certain this was real.

MAGGIE

It was a family. No different than mine. Must've took shelter in that basement. Hidin' from somethin'.

Suddenly -- a BLAST from Miller Coal. Behind the Hydroelectric Dam, smoke pours from Black Mountain.

And then, a moment of clarity as an idea hits Maggie.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Miller Coal built this dam right?

LENNY

Reckon so.

Maggie stands. A newfound energy sweeping through her.

MAGGIE

So stupid. I can't believe I never thought of it before.

LENNY

Thought of what?

Maggie moves to her truck.

LENNY (CONT'D)

Maggie. Wait!

As Maggie gets in, she accidentally knocks her cell phone to the ground. But she's in too big of a hurry to see --

MULTIPLE MISSED CALLS from William.

Lenny jumps in the truck just as Maggie peels out.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Maggie speeds down the road, parallel to Lake Balsam.

LENNY

What's goin' on?

MAGGIE

What're dams built for?

LENNY

Dams?

Maggie drives faster.

MAGGIE
Yes Dams. They got a purpose right?

LENNY
Energy. Electricity. Power -

MAGGIE
Exactly.

LENNY
I ain't followin'.

ON THE ROAD AHEAD - Maggie sees a MILLER COAL BLOCKADE.

MAGGIE
Fuck this.

VROOM! She whips the truck to the right, skidding down a gravel road only a true local would know.

She follows the rocky, bumpy road, barely more than a hiking trail, until they come out at a clearing on the edge of Lake Balsam --

Not far from the base of the Hydroelectric Dam.

Maggie stares at the Dam. Finally tells Lenny what's on her mind.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Miller Coal built that dam to feed energy into the mine.

Lenny shrugs.

LENNY
Yeah, so?

MAGGIE
Don't you see. There must've still been people in that town when they flooded the valley.

Lenny's at a loss for words.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
If you go stand on top of that dam, you can look down at Miller Coal on one side, Lake Balsam on the other. It's all connected.

Lenny sighs. Rubs his eyes.

BZZZZ. Maggie's phone vibrates. She reaches down by her feet, and picks up her phone.

William's calling.

INT. HOSPITAL - EVENING

CLOSE ON: Ellis -- in a COMA. His pitiful body motionless.

DOCTOR (V.O.)
I wish I had better news.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - EVENING

Doctor, at his desk, speaks to William and Maggie.

DOCTOR
His lungs aren't responding to the treatment, and his kidney activity is decreasing rapidly. He's stable for now, but we need to be proactive to find out the cause. Right now, eliminating problems is the best path to finding it.

William, distraught, aura of shock around him.

WILLIAM
I don't understand. He was fine yesterday.

DOCTOR
When did the cough start?

MAGGIE
He had it a few days ago when he came to my house.

WILLIAM
Started before that. Ever since...

William eyes Maggie.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Since he went down in the mine.

MAGGIE
He what?

Maggie shoots daggers at William -- who looks pale and sheepish.

WILLIAM

It was an accident. He came to see me at my office and I guess went wandering around. I told him never to go down there.

MAGGIE

What happened?

WILLIAM

He went in one of the old mine shafts. They were blasting that day.

Maggie stands. Paces.

MAGGIE

Jesus fucking christ.

WILLIAM

I pulled him out. But, he was coughing a lot. I didn't think anything of it at the time. I mean I've breathed in coal dust a million times in my life and nothin' happened to me.

MAGGIE

Yeah, we all have. Maybe that's the fucking problem in this town.

(beat)

Why would he go down there?

WILLIAM

He said he thought he heard voices.

MAGGIE

Voices? Like what?

WILLIAM

I don't know, I didn't ask.

MAGGIE

Your son tells you somethin' like that and you just let it go.

WILLIAM

He's a kid. He got curious.

(bitterly)

We're not all blessed with your imagination, Maggie.

Maggie's jaw tightens. She's irate, a coiled snake ready to strike. Doctor interjects.

DOCTOR

Alright. Let's try to calm down. We don't know that's what caused -

MAGGIE

Don't tell me to be calm until you fix my son.

She exits. Slamming the door behind her.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELLIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie sits next to Ellis, in prayer pose. She holds his hand and talks to him.

MAGGIE

Ellis. If you can hear me, I want you to know I wasn't lyin' when I said I won't let nothin' happen to you. Okay baby?

Tears stream from Maggie's determined eyes.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna fix this. I'm gonna make it right.

EXT. JOHNNY BARNES' HOUSE - DAY

Maggie parks at a wrecked house in a holler near Lake Balsam.

She exits her truck and climbs the rickety front porch.

She knocks. No answer. So she knocks again.

A Woman, JOHNNY'S MOTHER, answers.

Pock marks pepper her thin and wasted skin -- the face of a meth addict.

MAGGIE

My name's Maggie Dawson. I live over off Miller Road.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER

Dawson? Conway Dawson's girl?

MAGGIE

Yes ma'am.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
Mamma's the one went crazy years
back?

Maggie holds her tongue.

MAGGIE
I was wonderin' if I could have a
word with you, about your son?

This gets the woman's attention.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
You knew Johnny?

MAGGIE
No. I um - I only spent a few
moments with him.

Johnny's Mother steps aside. Maggie follows her in.

INT. JOHNNY'S HOUSE - DAY

The whole place is filthy. A hoarders paradise.

Another example of the poverty that festers under the shadow
of Miller Coal.

Johnny's Mother nods toward a torn up old couch, where a
picture of Johnny rests on a nearby table.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
Take a seat.

Maggie does.

Johnny's Mother lights a cigarette. She goes in the kitchen
and returns with a plastic cup filled with whiskey.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
So, what'd you wanna know about
Johnny? He owe you money? Cause I
ain't got none to give.

MAGGIE
Not here for nothin' like that.

A LONG SILENCE.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Were you with him at all the few
days before he passed?

Johnny's Mother stares suspiciously. Like most residents of Appalachia, she's born skeptical.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
Yeah. He lived here with me.

MAGGIE
He act strange or, unusual?

Johnny's Mother walks to a lazy boy. Sits down.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
You know, he was fifteen the first time I saw him use. Didn't even stop him. I was just glad he brought some home for me.

Takes a drag from her cigarette.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Guess I ain't gettin' no mother of the year awards huh?

Maggie waits for her to continue.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Johnny was cranked out his mind most the time. But, now you mention it, yeah a few days before he passed, there was a kind of clarity over him I ain't seen since he was a kid.

MAGGIE
Clarity?

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
He wasn't using.
(beat)
See we sold this place to Miller Coal a few weeks back.

Maggie perks up at this.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
He convinced me to do it. Said it'd help us start over. Think he thought that was true. That it could really happen. That we could both get clean.

Maggie listens intently.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Then, everything changed. All of a sudden that clarity was gone, and it was like he couldn't go another moment without a fix.

She lifts her hair out of her face to show Maggie a large scar on her head.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
Last time I saw him he did this.
Few hours later I got the worst phone call of my life.
(beat)
Losin' a child's a terrible thing.

Maggie tries to maintain composure. Flexing that tough exterior she always carries.

MAGGIE
You said you sold to Miller Coal?

Johnny's Mother stands up.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
Gotta be out in a few days. Reckon as soon as they're done with Black Mountain, they'll come claim what they got from me.

Johnny's Mother looks around her house. Drunk, high, dazed, and BITTERLY ANGRY at the world.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Ain't gonna take a goddamned thing neither. For all I care the company can burn this place to the ground, and all that's in it.

She locks eyes with Maggie.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
That's what they do best.

Johnny's Mother turns and starts toward her bedroom.

MAGGIE
Wait.

Maggie stands. Johnny's Mother looks back.

Maggie rolls up her sleeve, looks down at her wrist, where the black rash pulses. She shows it to Johnny's Mother.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You see anything like this on
Johnny?

Johnny's Mother looks at Maggie's wrist. We don't see her POV
-- *does she see the rash too? Or just bruises?*

JOHNNY'S MOTHER
What's that got to do with
anything?

Maggie pushes her sleeve back down.

JOHNNY'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
You can see yourself out.

Maggie watches as the Johnny's Mother walks to her bedroom,
and closes the door.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - NIGHT

QUICK MONTAGE:

- Maggie grabs Conway's stack of newspapers.
- Looks through the latest, flipping to the OBITUARY section. She finds the one she's looking for -- JOHNNY BARNES.
- Maggie circles his family's address.
- Opens her laptop to MAPS. Inputs Johnny's address. Drops pin.
- She does the same with Lydia's home and Uncle Bob's.
- Maggie stares at the computer screen. She's figured something out.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Maggie paces down the hallway.

Turns into Ellis' room, but stops -- because standing over Ellis is William, and Executive #1.

He's shaking William's hand.

EXECUTIVE #1
Look forward to you coming back and
finishing up soon, Will.

He turns and sees Maggie, in the doorway.

She watches in SILENCE a moment. Feeling fury like never before.

William looks up.

WILLIAM

Maggie. You remember my boss. Came by to see Ellis.

MAGGIE

(to Executive #1)

You got a real habbit of poppin' up where you ain't wanted, don't you?

You could cut the tension with a knife.

EXECUTIVE #1

I should get going.

MAGGIE

I think that would be best.

Maggie steps aside, as Executive #1 exits past.

WILLIAM

What the fuck Maggie?

MAGGIE

I don't want him, or anyone else from that place, near our son.

WILLIAM

Jesus Christ.

William sits down in a chair. Exasperated.

Maggie closes the door behind her. Giving them privacy. She steps forward. Stands over Ellis, petting his forehead and hair.

MAGGIE

I know how to help him.

William raises his head.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I went under the lake. There's a whole town down there.

Maggie continues petting Ellis.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Miller Coal buried it... and the people who lived there.

William looks at her. Doesn't have an answer. He seems numb, as if nothing she says will surprise him anymore.

Maggie knows what she's about to say is crazy.

But she gathers her courage and continues anyway.

She turns to William.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I think they're angry. I think
we're all bein' punished.

Tears fill William's eyes. A man on the brink.

WILLIAM

My son's dying. And you're talking
about ghosts? Folktales.

MAGGIE

What if it's not? What if it's
real?

(beat)

I've seen 'em. I think Ellis has
too. That's the voices he heard in
the mine. The dreams I've been -

William's heard enough.

His pity suddenly erupts into anger as he rises to his feet.

WILLIAM

Okay Maggie. Let's say you're
right. Let's say this fucking crazy
story of yours is true.

(beat)

Why now? Why after all these years
are your ghosts suddenly deciding
to punish us?

Maggie stays surprisingly calm. It all makes sense to her.

MAGGIE

Uncle Bob, Layla, and Johnny all
sold their land to Miller Coal. So
I looked into some of the deaths
these last few weeks. They all did
too.

WILLIAM

That doesn't prove nothin'. The company's always buying land in the mountains, and people in the mountains are always dying. That's the way it is.

MAGGIE

And Miller Coal's not responsible for any of it?!

She steps closer to him.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I think years ago, Miller Coal wanted the same thing they do now. They needed people off the land so they could flood the valley and build the dam. They'd have an endless amount of energy for years to come.

(beat)

But those people wouldn't leave. They didn't give in, and now they're punishin' us for not doing the same.

William scoffs, each word more preposterous than the last.

Then, a thought.

WILLIAM

You didn't.

MAGGIE

What?

WILLIAM

You didn't give in. You kicked Miller Coal off your porch. Spit in their face.

(beat)

So what do these ghosts want with Ellis? Why're they punishin' us?

Maggie hadn't thought of this.

MAGGIE

I think they want me to help them. To do somethin' for them. Just like my mother.

William sighs. Softening a bit, he comes closer.

Tries to contain his emotions as he takes hold of Maggie's hand.

WILLIAM

I know you can't help how you act sometimes. I know it's hard to see the truth.

(beat)

But Ellis is sick. He's sick and we gotta get through that together.

He looks her dead in the eyes.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

It's not ghosts, Maggie. It's not the mine, or the lake. He's just sick.

A pitiful looks sweeps Maggie's face.

MAGGIE

I'm not crazy.

She pulls away, shifting to determination. Eyes crazed.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I've been wrong about everything. I thought I could help Ellis by stayin' away. By shielding him from the worst parts of me and my family. But now I see, I can't stay away anymore. I can't be silent.

(beat)

We have to stop Miller Coal from finishing their work. It's the only way to save him.

William can't believe what he's hearing. And it kills him to see her like this.

WILLIAM

(desperate)

Goddammit Maggie -

He reaches out, but she tugs away again.

MAGGIE

Don't. If you won't help me, I'll find the people who will.

INT. COMMUNITY BUILDING - NIGHT

Dozens of Townsfolk have gathered.

Julie stands at a podium, speaking to the crowd.

JULIE
Miller Coal's taken advantage of
this town and its people for too
long. We can't stand for it!

The Townsfolk cheer. Julie beams.

As the crowd noise dissipates, a voice calls out.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
What's the plan?

From the Podium, Julie sees Maggie pushing through the crowd.

JULIE
Maggie? I can't believe you finally
came.

Maggie walks closer to the podium, paying no mind to the
Townsfolk eyeing her as she passes.

MAGGIE
I want to know what the plan is.

JULIE
(caught off guard)
Plan?

MAGGIE
For stoppin' Miller Coal.

Maggie turns to the townsfolk. Raises her voice.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Ain't that why you're all here?!

Julie eyes Maggie. Concern creeping in.

JULIE
We're building a movement. Get as
many people on board as we can,
then take our demands to the state.
Progress is coming.

Maggie looks disappointed.

MAGGIE
(muttering)
It's coming. It's always coming.
(back to Julie)
How soon?

All eyes on Maggie now, as every word she utters shows conviction... shows madness.

JULIE

We still have a lot of work to do.

Maggie nods. Without a word she turns away, pushing back through the crowd.

Julie's in shock. Calls after.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Maggie.

Maggie stops. Julie steps off the podium, down into the crowd. She approaches Maggie.

JULIE (CONT'D)

What're you doing?

Maggie turns to Julie.

MAGGIE

You won't win this way. You can't.

She keeps walking, but Julie paces after her. Grabs her wrist, right on the spot where Maggie's rash is.

Maggie jerks away violently.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Don't fucking touch me.

Julie raises her hands. Voice trembling.

JULIE

Okay. I'm sorry.

Maggie's eyes bore into Julie. Stare daggers at townsfolk.

MAGGIE

(raising her voice with
intensity)

You people hear what I'm sayin'?!
You can't win this way! Protesting
the company ain't never done
nothin'! It's always the same.
Someone like you...

(points to Julie)

...comes along and goes toe to toe
with them. Maybe get's them to
change for a minute. Maybe gets
workers another dollar or two an
hour.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

But what happens when you get
tired?

(to the crowd)

What happens when they've laid all
you off? Forced you off your land.
Killed you one by one?!

JULIE

(steadfast)

Someone else steps up.

A maniacal, sarcastic laughs escapes Maggie.

MAGGIE

You people are so fucking lost.
Don't you see? They don't care
about you or your protests. They
never have. They're a machine.
They'll finish Black Mountain and
move on to destroy something else.
Until nothing's left.

Maggie looks right at Julie.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

They'll wash you away... Wash you
all away. Just like they done to
everyone else.

Julie looks at the mad-woman in front of her. She steps
closer. Concerned, she speaks softly.

JULIE

If you came here just to be cruel
to me --

MAGGIE

I came because I want Miller Coal
to pay for what they done! I came
to see if you actually had a plan.
If you had anything but words to
throw at them!!

(beat)

Looks like I'll have to figure
something out myself.

Maggie storms out of the building, leaving Julie to deal with
the stunned crowd.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - NIGHT

Maggie stands on the edge of the lake, looking out over the
water. Illuminated by headlights behind her.

Wanderlights float toward her.

Maggie speaks out loud, to the lake. To the unseen forces she's convinced are there.

MAGGIE

I'll do anything you want. Please
don't take my son from me.

Maggie closes her eyes. Like she's praying.

PUSH IN, then:

THE VOICE. Icy and Cold.

It's like she stepped inside one of her dreams.

VOICE

*Release us. And your son will be
free.*

Maggie's face freezes in fear. Her whole body trembles. But she manages a few words.

MAGGIE

Tell me how.

VOICE

Wake up... Take Mary...

Maggie opens her eyes -- which tell us she finally understands.

She stares off at something in the distance --

THE HYDROELECTRIC DAM:

A monument of death, and proof of Miller Coal's destruction.
A gate keeping lost souls drowned.

She leans down, fills her palms with dark water from Lake Balsam.

And just as she did earlier in the film...

Maggie opens her hands, letting the water run through.

CAMERA PANS slowly around, until BLACK DOG is in frame.
Watching Maggie.

She turns to him. Stares a while.

Then walks across her yard toward...

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - BARN - CONTINUOUS

Maggie enters. She walks toward the MARY BOAT in the back.

She whips off the tarp. Grabs hold of the motor boat and tugs with all her might.

As she slides it, a strange sound...

Like rain falling. Maggie moves around the boat, toward the sound.

REVERSE to see -- dirt spilling into a CRACK in the floor.

Maggie kneels down. Fingers the crack.

Follows it around until it turns. And we realize --

This is a trap door. Maggie finds the handle. Opens it.

INSIDE -

A hole, about 5ft by 5 ft, is dug into the barn floor. And a large CRATE sits inside.

She Opens it. Peers in.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELLIS' ROOM - DAY

William sits in the hospital room with Ellis -- still in a deep coma. His phone rings.

WILLIAM

Hello?

DR. RILEY

Mr. Colter?

WILLIAM

Yes.

DR. RILEY

This is Dr. Eileen Riley. Maggie's therapist.

William sits up in his chair.

DR. RILEY (CONT'D)

I'm calling because Maggie's missed her last two sessions with me and she won't return my calls. I'm concerned.

WILLIAM

Can't believe she didn't tell you.

William rubs his eyes. Clears his throat.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Our son Ellis is sick. He's uh -
he's been in a coma the last week.

DR. RILEY

I see.

WILLIAM

Yeah. Between this and her Uncle
passing, I'm sure she's probably
just lost track of things.

DR. RILEY

Mr. Colton, I appreciate how
difficult this time must be for
you, and for Maggie. I really do.
But that's precisely why someone in
her condition shouldn't be missing.

WILLIAM

Her condition?

DR. RILEY

Maggie's in a highly sensitive
place right now. She's dealing with
serious trauma. Depression. These
issues can't go unchecked.

WILLIAM

I understand.

DR. RILEY

I shouldn't ask this but, are you
aware if she's taking her
medication?

WILLIAM

No idea. Is there something I
should know?

DR. RILEY

I'm sorry. I - I shouldn't have
called. I can't divulge -

WILLIAM

Wait. Look, Maggie and I aren't
together anymore. I don't know what
she's told you, and lord knows I'm
not perfect.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

But I would never do anything to hurt her. Please. Tell me what's going on.

Dr. Riley takes a deep breath.

DR. RILEY

I prescribed Nuplazid to Maggie a few months ago to combat hallucinations and paranoia that I believe she's manifested out of grief. Guilt.

WILLIAM

Hallucinations?

DR. RILEY

We're all susceptible to emotional trauma in different ways. I think Maggie's Mother committed suicide due to hallucinations born out of her own depression.

(beat)

And I think Maggie followed in these same footsteps.

William's at a loss for words.

DR. RILEY (CONT'D)

Have her call me as soon as possible.

WILLIAM

Thank you.

William hangs up. Processing what he just heard, he takes a long hard look at Ellis.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - EVENING

WIDE SHOT of the barn. Noise from inside. Clattering and clanking.

Black Dog comes into frame.

We PUSH IN slowly over his shoulder...Maggie exits.

Covered in dirt, her hair a wild mess. She locks eyes with Black Dog.

MAGGIE

They sent you?

Black Dog just stares. Maggie stares back.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Tell 'em I'll do it.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maggie stands in the hallway outside her bedroom, staring at the Master Bedroom at the other end.

She walks downstairs. Slowly.

Each of her steps a familiar Thump...Thump...Thump...

LIVINGROOM

She enters to find Conway coughing rapidly. His thin frame shaking and heaving.

With a crazed look, far off and distant, nearly catatonic, Maggie walks toward him.

In her hand -- we see the stolen morphine.

She kneels beside her father. Takes his hand.

Conway's grizzled face and sunken eyes look up as Maggie wipes sweat from his forehead.

MAGGIE
It's okay Pop. I'm here.

He coughs again.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Shhh.

Maggie strokes his head lovingly.

She stands. Walks over to an old record player in the corner.

She pulls out a withered vinyl. "*The Carter Family.*"

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Remember how much Mom used to love
them?

Conway nods. Maggie puts on vinyl and drops a groove.

Bury Me Beneath the Willow by *The Carter Family* plays.

We've heard this before. It's the song the Choir Girl sang at Bob's funeral.

Maggie listens intently.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
She used to say they were the voice
of our people. The voice of the
mountains.
(beat)
But that voice was taken Pop. I'm
gonna give it back.

Maggie kneels beside Conway. She wraps his arm tightly until
his veins protrude.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Mom tried to warn you about the
lake didn't she? Tried to tell you.

Conway looks at her. Fear growing.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You just thought she was crazy.

Conway nods.

A few tears flow down Maggie's cheeks.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I did too.

Maggie pulls the band as tight as she can and injects him
with the morphine.

But, she doesn't walk away.

She stays, staring into her father's eyes.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
There's something I have to do now.
I've known it for some time.

To Conway's horror -- Maggie reloads the Morphine.

She grabs Conway's arm. He struggles to break free, but
doesn't have the strength.

CONWAY
Mag - no -

MAGGIE
After I'm done, I don't think I'll
be around to care for you no more.

She forcefully injects him with more drugs.

Conway struggles to stay alert. But quickly drifts.

Maggie reaches for a pillow. She kisses him on the head.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

They'll pay for what they done to
you. What they done to all of us.

She rises. Then presses the pillow to his face. She pushes down hard, smothering him.

Conway's muffled noises can barely be heard as Maggie sings along with *The Carter Family*.

His arms fight for few moments. His legs kick weakly. His chest falling up and down.

Maggie just presses down harder, until all movement stops. She stands. Looks out the window where -

DOZENS OF WANDERLIGHTS FLOAT NEAR THE DOCK.

The Wanderlights, along with Lake Balsam, the Dam, and the Mine, seem to call out to her.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

William drives. He calls Maggie.

WILLIAM

Come on pick up. Pick. Up.

But it goes straight to voicemail.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Shit.

He dials another number.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - HOUSE - NIGHT

Wide shots of the quiet, still, empty house, as the phone rings off the hook.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

William on the phone.

WILLIAM

Maggie pick up. I'm sorry for not
believing you. I'm on my way.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - NIGHT

William's truck pulls into the yard.

He exits, crosses the yard and climbs the front porch steps.

He knocks on the door. No answer.

William peers in the window.

Moonlight shines just enough for him to see Conway's Bed.
It's Empty. Sheets on the floor.

Unsettled by the site, William tries to open the front door.

Locked. He retrieves a spare key from under the porch.

He uses the key to click open the front door. Creaks it open
and peers into the dark house.

A terrible energy has engulfed the place. Saturated every
corner.

Faint music can be heard inside.

WILLIAM

Maggie?

His voice echos into the halls of the ancient log cabin.

William swallows. Gathering courage, he steps inside.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - HOUSE - NIGHT

William walks through the downstairs section of the house.

The Carter Family plays. Echoing throughout the house like a
haunted choir.

LIVING ROOM

He stands over Conway's empty bed. Looks down, and sees
something. He picks it up -- The Morphine vile.

On high alert now, William rises.

BEHIND HIM WE SEE --

MAGGIE.

Or at least the body that used to hold her, lurking in the
shadows. Still as a statue. An otherworldly presence about
her. Stalking him as Lydia stalked her.

But William doesn't see. He moves through the kitchen and up the stairs.

At the top, he looks to Maggie's room. It's dark.

But to the left -- *light flickers from behind the Master Bedroom Door.*

William walks slowly toward it. Closer...

Closer...

WILLIAM
Maggie? It's Will. You in there?

There's a quiver in his voice. A hint of fear.

Right at the door now, he sees the padlock on the floor. He cups the doorknob.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
I'm comin' in.

William opens the door.

Over his shoulder, we see Maggie standing stoically behind him in the hallway. Zombielike. Watching.

Reverse to see --

MASTER BEDROOM

It's not pristine like we last saw it. In fact it's like we're seeing it from a totally different point of view.

The view of someone who isn't Maggie.

Black writing is scribbled all over the walls just like Bob's house.

Photographs of Layla, Johnny, and Bob's corpses litter the floor.

But to William's horror, on the bed -- CONWAY lies, arms crossed over his chest.

William walks toward him. He reaches Conway.

Touches his neck to check for a pulse. Nothing.

Tears well in William's eyes.

He looks up to the writing on the walls. Looks closer...

The words are written over and over:

Wake up...Take Mary.

Along with some fragments of Mary's writing:

The Rash Marks the Chosen.

Finally. A NAME is written over and over:

Ellis.

William backs up.

He bumps into the armoire in the corner, shattering the mirror.

The picture of Young Maggie with Conway and Mary falls from the mirror, onto the floor, along with a stack of papers.

William curiously looks through them to find:

Drawings of PEOPLE IN BLACK VEILS. Ghostly figures.

Reminiscent of the damaged paintings Maggie saw at the bottom of Lake Balsam.

Then, he sees something else...

PHOTOS of Miller Coal's Hydroelectric Dam.

Confused, curious, terrified, he wildly flips through the photos -- each one a different angle of the Dam's foundation.

Finally, a thick piece of parchment. He unfolds it and spreads it out.

A BLUE PRINT of Miller Coal Mine.

There's a marking running through. Tracing the shafts until we realize --

The Dam is indeed connected to the Mine.

Feeding energy into it. William's eyes widen.

Suddenly, something outside catches his gaze:

The light in the barn clicking on.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - NIGHT

William exits the house, into the gothically dark night.

He takes the long walk toward the barn. *Where he now knows nothing good will be waiting.*

He pushes open the door, and walks in. Behind him --

Maggie comes into the light.

A haggard mess. Pitiful to look at, yet still terrifying. A woman totally disconnected from reality.

An eternity seems to pass before she raises a 2X4.

William, finally *feeling* her behind him, turns. But it's too late.

She SMASHES him over the head and we -

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - BARN - NIGHT

POV: The ceiling lightbulb, in and out of focus.

PULL BACK -- William wakes. Blood trickles down his head and into his eyes. Half blinding him.

He goes to stand but can't, because his hands are tied to a wooden post.

William panics. Tugs at the ropes.

But a deep, resonate GROWL steals his attention.

William turns to see BLACK DOG in the doorway.

He approaches William. Sniffs him. Then sits. Staring.

The sound of an ENGINE alerts William to the barn door where, Maggie's truck backs in.

The truck stops in front of *Mary's Boat*, covered by a tarp. Maggie steps out.

WILLIAM

Maggie. What are you doing?

But Maggie doesn't respond. William may as well not even be there. She rips off the tarp.

Mary's Boat now sits upright.

It's been cleaned, polished, ready for the water.

She hooks it to the truck's towing package, gets back into the truck, and pulls forward.

William sees the Trap Door in the floor. *What the fuck.*

Maggie exits the truck. Opens the trap door. Reaches down and rises, holding a heavy bag of some kind.

As she tosses it into the truck bed, William sees what it is...

ANFO.

This is where his missing inventory disappeared to.

She's going to use their own explosive devices against them.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Maggie. It was you?

CUT TO:

QUICK SERIES OF IMAGES:

- Maggie, dressed in all black, walking silently through Miller Coal at night.

- She stops in front of a warehouse. Using her LOCK PICK, she opens the warehouse door.

- Inside, she finds a crate. Uses the Lock Pick again to bust open the crate, where bags of ANFO are inside.

END IMAGES:

BACK TO:

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - BARN - NIGHT

Maggie lifts another bag of ANFO into the truck bed. And another.

WILLIAM
Don't do this.

Maggie finally finishes loading the ANFO.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
(desperation kicking in)
I want to help you.

She walks to her truck door. Paying him no mind.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Ellis does too.

At this, Maggie stops. Doesn't look at William.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Don't do this to him. He needs you.

Maggie turns, eyes filled with sadness, anger, insanity.

MAGGIE
This is the only way to save him.

WILLIAM
No it's not! Maggie this is fucking
crazy!

MAGGIE
I've seen them. The bodies of us
all. If I don't do this, Ellis
won't be the only one to suffer.
The Mine's disease will spread and
the Lake will keep punishing us.

William cries. This lost cause slipping away.

WILLIAM
You just need help.

Maggie steps toward him.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
(desperately pleading)
Let me help you.

She looks down at William as if trying to remember what it
was like before. *What it was like to be sane.*

She kneels in front of him. Strokes his face with her hand.

MAGGIE
Did you ever trust me?

William's eyes fill with tears --

We've heard her ask this of him before. In their first scene
together.

He answers the same way -- with a nod.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Then do it again.

She stuffs a gag into William's mouth. Stands. Gets in her truck, and drives away -- pulling the boat with her.

William's muted pleads are muffled by the gag.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELLIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Ellis' heart rate monitor beeps. Once, twice, faster now.

EXT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - DOCK - NIGHT

Under the moonlight, Maggie lowers the *Mary Boat*, which is now loaded with the ANFO, into the water.

She climbs in. Cranks the motor.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - BARN - NIGHT

William scratches the ties that bind him on a rusted nail.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - NIGHT

Maggie drives the motorboat toward the Dam.

She looks in the near distance where Wanderlights dreamily guide her path.

INT. MAGGIE'S PROPERTY - BARN - NIGHT

William frees himself. Unraveling his hands and taking the gag from his mouth.

He stands. But -- BLACK DOG enters.

Growling, territorial, RABID. William backs away slowly.

The dog stalks. Muscles flexing. Ready to kill. Then, it --

CHARGES. William readies himself for the blow.

The beast pounces, forcing William onto his back. It bites, spits, foams at the mouth.

His jaw locks around William's wrist. BITING down HARD.

WILLIAM

AHHHHH!!

William fights with everything he has to keep the Dog at bay.

Blood pours from his wrist.

Then, the sickening sound of RIPPED FLESH as Black Dog tears off some of William's skin.

William crawls away. But Black Dog pulls him back.

Pouncing on him again, this time on his back. He bites down hard on his shoulder.

William reaches for a shovel, just feet away.

Dark Blood pours from his collar bone and onto his face. A pool forming on the ground by his mouth.

With one last gasp of energy, William reaches the rusted shovel and --

WHAM!

Lands a blow to Black dog's skull.

It's enough for William to scamper to his feet.

Black Dog scowls at him. Ready to charge again. He does.

WHAM!

William lands another blow with a vicious crunch.

The shovel snaps in half.

William only holds the broken wooden handle, now in the form a pointed stake.

Black Dog comes again. Leaping on top of William.

Bleeding and primal, William holds Black Dog off with all his might with his good arm.

And with his injured wrist, he DRIVES the WOODEN STAKE into the dogs throat.

The pointed wood pushes through the back of Black Dog's head.

The Dog quivers involuntarily. Twitching violently a moment before becoming still.

Exhausted, bleeding, and injured, William pulls himself to his feet.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELLIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Ellis' heart rate rises higher now. He's drenched in sweat.

Doctors and nurses rush in. Placing ice bags all over him.

But there's no stopping this fever.

Suddenly, his eyes shoot open. He sees something ahead.

Or is he just hallucinating?

Either way, fear overtakes him.

INT. WILLIAM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

William, blood seeping from his wounds, speeds down the road.

Woozy, he dials a number.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(tired)

Hello?

WILLIAM

Beth it's William Colton, put Earle
on right now.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - HYDROELECTRIC DAM - NIGHT

Maggie has driven her boat right up to the edge of the Dam.

She stacks the last of her ANFO at the most vulnerable area
of the Dam's foundation.

Attaches a FUSE to the ANFO.

Unravels it and crawls back into her boat.

Before she can pull away:

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Maggie!

She looks up sharply to see William on the banks of the lake,
at the edge of the Dam, twenty yards away.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Don't do it!

Maggie looks down at her hands. So close to committing
something terrible.

But it's the only way.

MAGGIE

I have to! They'll take him just
like the others if I don't.

WILLIAM

There's no one to take him.

Maggie looks around. Wanderlights begin surrounding her.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELLIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Ellis seizes violently. Foam seeps from his wire tight jaws.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - HYDROELECTRIC DAM - NIGHT

The Wanderlights are all around Maggie now.

MAGGIE

(to William)

Don't you see?

Maggie watches as the Wanderlights rise out of the water.

BUT -- just below them, the surface of the lake changes from
still and mirror smooth, to dark and churning, because --

FIGURES press up against the surface, as if blocked by a
sheet of ice.

Dark shapes, in all black, faceless, covered in veils.

One by one the faceless specters emerge from the water,
hovering on the surface. Tied to it.

Trapped in this horrific state.

Maggie's eyes glass over, just as we saw with Bob.

Dreaming with her eyes open.

The specters glide forward slowly, towards William. To the
shores. BUT --

One by One, they sink back into the dead water. Back to their
forgotten home in the depths below.

The home they're cursed to live in forever... unless Maggie
frees them.

But William can't see them.

His attention's focused on the DOZENS of POLICE OFFICERS who have arrived on the scene -- Sheriff Holland amongst them.

They move down the banks of the lake, blue lights flashing on the hilltops.

All point their guns at Maggie.

SHERIFF HOLLAND
Maggie! Put that down right now!

But Maggie doesn't listen. He calls out again.

SHERIFF HOLLAND (CONT'D)
It's not real! None of it's real!

But Maggie's long gone.

She only has eyes for the specters, as the last of them -- a small, child sized figure, is pulled back into the dark of Lake Balsam.

Tears well in Maggie's eyes as she watches the child, no bigger than Ellis, disappear.

She looks up to the Sheriff and repeats Bob's words...

MAGGIE
It'll take us all.

Sheriff Holland looks on, stunned. He was there when Bob said it. Now he's watching it all happen again.

Maggie shifts to William. Locking eyes with him.

A moment of private intimacy amidst chaos.

Then her declaration...

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I'm going to cure this town. I'm going to save our son.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELLIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Ellis' seizure worsens. His whole body shaking.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - HYDROELECTRIC DAM - NIGHT

Maggie gives one last longing look to William.

Her sad, crazed eyes rippling with emotion, pain, terror.

She lights the fuse...

EXT. COMMUNITY BUILDING - NIGHT

Julie and other townsfolk exit.

Clearly coming from another protest meeting. Suddenly --

BOOM!

They all look toward the DAM.

INT. MILLER COAL MINE - OFFICES - NIGHT

Executive #1, working at his desk, falls to the floor as his office walls SHAKE.

His eyes widen as he looks out the window to see the cause.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - NIGHT

Sitting alone on the edge of the lake, Lenny rises to his feet.

Staring wide-eyed at the far off Dam, sadness fills him.

LENNY

Maggie...

INT. HOSPITAL - ELLIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Ellis still struggles.

But the explosion catches the Hospital staff's attention. They look out the window.

In the distance, the explosion rocks the night.

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - HYDROELECTRIC DAM - NIGHT

ASH CLOUDS the air as the "monstrous rock and stone" of the Dam falls everywhere.

We find William, laying on the ground by the shoreline.

Woody, he rises and looks out upon the devastation.

The middle of the Dam is GONE. Obliterated by Maggie's explosion.

She actually did it.

William's eyes land on the Lake --

the water now moves like a river, coursing through the gaping Dam, which crumples more with each second.

William looks around. Shouts like a mad man.

WILLIAM
Maggie! Maggie!

But he knows she's gone.

Crazed, he tries to go into the water, only to be pulled back by Sheriff Holland.

William struggles but the Sheriff holds him tight. After a moment, they break away from each other.

They stand upon the edge of Lake Balsam and look out at the flowing water, slowly draining from the lake.

As we PUSH IN on the surface of the water...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ELLIS' ROOM - NIGHT

EXTREME CLOSE UP on Ellis' face as his seizure gradually dissipates. His breathing steadies. Finally, his eyes settle.

But, they settle so much so, it's hard to tell if he's dead or alive. Gone from this world or returned to it.

If Maggie was right, or crazy.

If the curse was broken, or never existed at all.

If the Wanderlights were indeed specters -- lost souls betrayed by the past -- or a folktale all along.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. LAKE BALSAM - DAY

We began with the water from Lake Balsam. Now we end with it.

PANNING over the surface of the lake, the water is low.

This man made reservoir slowly draining. Returning the past to us.

A motorboat idles nearby. Lenny sits inside, looking out over the landscape.

Maggie's voiceover breaks the silence:

MAGGIE (V.O.)
The hills of this land attached to
us like strings to a puppet.
Leading, guiding, never allowin' us
to stray too far.

CAMERA stops, low to the surface.

In far **BACKGROUND**, Black Mountain looms, the Mine attached to its side like a leach.

Slowly PULL BACK until the **FOREGROUND** reveals the peak of a CHURCH STEEPLE protruding from the water.

Lenny looks at the steeple. Thinking about everything Maggie told him.

MAGGIE (V.O.)
We're protected here...

PULLING BACK further -- Lenny's view becomes more clear.

The foreground is now filled with tips of ancient rooftops from the town below -- forever a reminder of what was lost under the iron fist of Miller Coal.

And the people who lived there...

A deep quiet resonates as the water ebs and flows. Lowering and rising in a soft current.

MAGGIE (V.O.)
...So long as the hills'll have us.

Johnny Cash's *Long Black Veil* plays us out as we...

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END