

SUNDOWN

Written by

Nick Hurwitch

THE SUN

high and bright in a clear, blue sky. It beams down on a WHEAT FIELD, stalks waving gently in the breeze...

EXT. FAMILY FARM - DAY

...the same breeze that laps at a white tablecloth on a table set between an idyllic red BARN and a whitewashed FARM HOUSE. It could be a painting.

JEANNINE (16) emerges from the house carrying plates.

YOUNG CHILDREN race out past her, LAUGHING and chasing.

JEANNINE
Time to wash hands!

Several ADULTS -- her MOM, a COUSIN, AUNTS AND UNCLES -- exit after her carrying bowls and serving dishes. Eggs, hash browns, fruit, orange juice and more.

FARM MOM
Girls! C'mon, time to eat.

Her DAD (40s) is last to exit with a platter stacked high with WAFFLES -- and a BORDER COLLIE at his heels. She nips at the children -- WOOFs in excitement -- then zooms off to sniff the edge of the lawn.

The family take their seats. Drinks poured. Plates passed.

FARM MOM (cont'd)
It's nice to have everyone together
like this.

COUSIN
Alright, bacon me up.

JEANNINE
Nuh-uh. I saw you sneaking some
inside.

The dog BARKS: ARF! ARF! Dad finds her at the edge of the wheat field. WHISTLES. She barks more--

FARM DAD
BB, cut it out.

JEANNINE
I'll get her.

Jeannine stands. Strides towards the dog.

JEANNINE (cont'd)
C'mon, girl.

The rest of the family digs in.

ARF! ARF! The girl crouches at BB's side.

JEANNINE (cont'd)
C'mon, Beebs. I've got bacon for ya.
(**ARF! ARF!**)
That's right! Bacon.
(half laughing)
Come on.

The girl follows the dog's gaze and **SCREAMS**--

Silverware CLATTERS. Heads turn.

FARM MOM
(accusatory)
Jeannine!

Jeannine pushes away from the field on her backside.

JEANNINE
There's-- there's something in there!

The eating stops. The dog GROWLS. All eyes on the wheat.

The wind GUSTS ever so slightly... separating the wheat stalks enough to reveal a glimpse of--

A MONSTER, hulking and hideous.

Cracked gray and green skin and protruding tendrils.

The family GASP and point. Push to their feet.

The Dad runs inside with purpose.

As Jeannine drags BB away, her dad re-emerges with a RIFLE-- but the monster is GONE.

WHEAT STALKS wave into an indistinct wall of beige and we--

SMASH CUT TO:

S U N D O W N

FADE IN ON:

THE SETTING SUN

Orange and purple over AN APPLE ORCHARD, trees in a perfect angled grid stretching toward the horizon.

LYNNE (V.O.)
What I want most for you is the sun.

Golden light casts shimmering shadows on leaves, brown and green. Undersized apples. Dry grass. Hits the back of a

LONE FARMHOUSE

Two stories. Fading white wash. Windows dark.

LYNNE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Its light. Its warmth. Its life.

The sun disappears beyond the horizon.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Darkness. The kitchen windows are completely **blacked out**. Our eyes adjust to the faint glow of a NIGHT LIGHT plugged in beside the sink.

LYNNE (V.O.)
What I want most for you is to know
how bright this world can be.

Kitschy wallpaper. Chrome toaster. Gingham tablecloth. A CAT CLOCK on the wall keeps time with its tail. Just after 7.

CLICK-- a coffee maker turns on beside the stove.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

An alarm clock's red glow. The room's only light. 7:14 PM.

7:15-- music plays. CCR. A WOMAN stirs in bed.

She sits up. Lets the music play as she heads to the window in her nightgown. Pulls apart BLACK OUT CURTAINS, revealing METAL BLINDS: Even in broad daylight, this room stays dark.

Using a chain, she CLANGS up the blinds.

The rising moonlight might as well be morning sun for LYNNE (34) whose gentle nature covers a ferocious commitment to her convictions. She allows herself a moment to take it in before she turns away.

She touches the bed as she crosses. GARY stirs beneath the covers.

GARY

I'm comin'.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lynne CREAKS down a narrow staircase lined with FAMILY PORTRAITS. One of Gary and a PREGNANT LYNNE. Another with the two of them and a BABY.

On auto-pilot, she clicks on the overhead LIGHT. Opens the curtains and blinds here, too. Crosses the kitchen to

A METAL DOOR surrounded by the original, country wallpaper. With a GRUNT, she pulls up a heavy latch -- CLANG -- revealing stairs down to a BASEMENT.

LYNNE

Caleb, sweetie. Time to get up.

She lets the door swing open as she returns to the kitchen...

...sets out MILK and OJ...

...scrambles eggs...

...pulls a mug and thermos from the cupboard. As she fills them with coffee, a FIGURE emerges behind her in the basement doorway...

Bleary-eyed CALEB (15, male) shuffles in. Pale skin, long, unruly hair. Lanky and thin, bordering on sickly. He drops into a chair with a YAWN.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Morning, sunshine.

Still YAWNING, Caleb pours himself orange juice.

Irregular CREAKS down the staircase announce the arrival of GARY (34, graying beard), who walks with a CANE and a heavy limp. He's otherwise healthy, dressed the part as a farmer in a flannel and bluejeans. A man who keeps his complaints to himself. He pecks Lynne's cheek.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Morning.

GARY
Morning.

He reaches past her for his thermos just as she finishes fitting it with the lid.

LYNNE
You gonna eat with us this morning?

GARY
(No.)
Trees won't tend themselves.

Gary glances at the back of Caleb's head. Sets his thermos into a LUNCHBOX and limps to the door.

Leaning his cane against the counter, he pulls a NECKLACE from around his neck tied to a KEY. Fits it into a LOCK on the front door -- yet another metal barrier. Opens it to reveal an otherwise normal screen door and front porch.

GARY (cont'd)
See you two at dinner.

He grabs his lunchbox and pushes through the screen door.

Caleb chews scrambled eggs.

LYNNE
Class starts in half an hour, so
don't stay in slow-mo all morning.

Caleb grunts through his mouthful. Lynne climbs the stairs.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

An engine RUMBLES to life. Headlights blare. Lead A TRACTOR from the open door to a classic red and white BARN.

Gary turns the wheel. Drives it into the black orchard.

CUT TO:

A DIAGRAM OF PHOTOSYNTHESIS

in a biology textbook.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gone are the plates and glasses. The kitchen table is now Caleb's desk. The BIO TEXTBOOK and a notebook.

Lynne stands beside a CHALKBOARD on wheels, drawing a similar diagram in white chalk.

LYNNE

So the chlorophyll -- that's what makes plants green -- absorbs the suns rays into chloroplasts, which are the cells where photosynthesis takes place. The chloroplasts use that light to convert Carbon Dioxide and H₂O into energy. Then the plants breathe out--

She points her chalk at Caleb.

CALEB

Oxygen.

LYNNE

That's right. It's a beautiful symbiosis, where we breathe out what they breathe in and vice versa.

CALEB

Mom, didn't we already do photosynthesis?

LYNNE

It's called review, sweetheart.
(remembering)
Oh! I have a surprise for you.

Giddy, she strides to the kitchen cabinet. Pulls a small Ziploc baggie from a dark corner and hands it to Caleb.

It's full of SUNFLOWER SEEDS.

CALEB

Thanks?

Smiling, she turns for the closet. While she rummages, Caleb tosses a few seeds into his mouth. Makes a face: Chewy.

Lynne turns back with a narrow PLATER BOX. Drops a bag of SOIL against her leg.

LYNNE
See? We're gonna plant 'em.
(beat)
What are you eating?

Caleb stops chewing. Spits the chewed remains into his hand.

CUT TO:

WET DIRT

A finger pokes straight into it, making a small hole. A lone SUNFLOWER SEED is dropped inside, then buried.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Lynne looks proudly at the planter box, stationed at the edge of the porch. Caleb looks on skeptically.

LYNNE
That's perfect. From right here it'll catch that first morning light until noon or so. You'll be amazed how big these things get.

CALEB
Okay, here's what I don't get.

LYNNE
What's that?

CALEB
If plants need sunlight to grow--

LYNNE
For photosynthesis.

CALEB
Right. If they need that, why do they start underground?

LYNNE
Oh but that's what makes it so exciting! Photosynthesis is a chemical process that basically turns sunlight and water into-- well, what do you think?

CALEB
Plant food?

LYNNE

Exactly! But like a baby in the womb,
it needs to be nurtured and protected
until it's ready for the world. It
contains all that potential,
everything it needs to become itself.
Even in the dark.

Caleb reconsiders the planter box of potential...

GARY (PRE-LAP)

It's a mess out there.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gary chugs iced tea. His flannel is sweat through. Jeans splattered with dirt. Sits before Lynne and Caleb at the table for spaghetti dinner.

GARY

Half the orchard won't bear fruit.
And the other half seems to only be
doing it out of habit.

LYNNE

Is there anything we can do?

GARY

I'll have to harvest early to save
what I can. Just wish I had some help
out there.

Gary takes a bite. Caleb chews. Sits quietly, wondering if he should say anything. Finally--

CALEB

I could help.

Gary swallows. Clears his throat.

LYNNE

That's a great idea, sweetheart.

GARY

I dunno.

LYNNE

Gar.

Lynne appeals to her husband with her eyes.

GARY

It's hard work. I won't take it easy
on you.

Caleb shrugs: *That's okay.*

Lynne gives Gary another look: *Come on.*

GARY (cont'd)

Well. If your teacher says your
grades are staying up... then okay.

Lynne is tickled. They all go back to eating. After a beat:

CALEB

Do I get to drive the tractor?

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLANGaCLANGaCLANGa-- Metal blinds roll down over the bedroom window. Lynne pulls the chain.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLANGaCLANGa-- Caleb lowers the blinds over the sink.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Pre-dawn navy blue light paints every surface. An uncovered kitchen window -- the lone spot of warmth -- shrinks and disappears. *ker-CLICK*--

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN

Gary turns the key on the front door. Drops the chain down his shirt. Ambles toward the stairs with his cane.

CUT TO:

PICTURES OF BUSTLING CITIES

Skyscrapers and crowded crosswalks. It's a magazine spread about '90s city life called "*THE CONCRETE JUNGLE*."

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - NIGHT

In his PJs, hair wet from a shower, Caleb sits in bed reading a decades-old NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. There's a box of them to his left, and many more boxes on a nearby bookshelf.

The basement is mostly unremarkable: White cinder block walls, narrow window at the edge of the ceiling (blocked by a METAL GRATE), and bed sheet cordoning off its darker regions. But it's otherwise been converted to a bedroom for a teenage boy: Books. Bed. Action figures.

As Caleb flips through photos of bustling cities, Lynne marches down the stairs.

LYNNE

Okay, love, time for lights out.

(re: the magazine)

Oh I love that one.

Lynne joins him on the bed. Has NAIL CLIPPERS. She takes Caleb's left hand, but he recoils.

CALEB

Mom, stop.

LYNNE

Look how long those are. I swear we just clipped 'em.

CALEB

I can clip my own nails.

LYNNE

Okay.

She sets the clippers aside. Brushes tangled hair off Caleb's forehead.

LYNNE (cont'd)

How about a haircut, then? Or do you cut your own hair now, too?

CALEB

We should make one.

LYNNE

Make a what?

CALEB

A city. There are other people out there, right?

LYNNE

Caleb-- They come out in the daylight, you know that.

CALEB

"They." When's the last time you even saw one? I never have.

LYNNE

That's because we stay inside during the day, it's not safe.

CALEB

What about-- what about the people dad trades with? We could live like this, but together. Help each other.

LYNNE

Caleb--

Lynne stops herself. EXHALES.

LYNNE (cont'd)

It won't always be this way. I promise.

Caleb goes quiet. Skeptical. Then--

LYNNE (cont'd)

Alright. To bed.

Caleb reluctantly re-sheathes the magazine and replaces the box to the shelf. Slips under the covers with lifelong companion, PETEY, a tattered stuffed emperor penguin.

Lynne tucks them in.

LYNNE (cont'd)

I love you, Caleb. My sweet, special boy. My shooting star.

She kisses his hair. Stands for the light switch. CLICK--

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

CLANG. The basement door seals shut. Lynne looks unsettled.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Gary reads in bed. Back in her nightgown, Lynne walks to her side of the bed.

LYNNE

That's good you're taking him out there. It'll be good for you both.

Gary GRUNTS. Lynne climbs into bed. Grabs a book. Then:

LYNNE (cont'd)

He was asking about daytime again.

Gary lowers his book.

GARY
And? What'd you tell him?

LYNNE
Same thing as always.

GARY
It's not safe.

LYNNE
I know.

GARY
The way we do things keeps us safe.
All of us.

LYNNE
That's what I told him.

GARY
Good.

Gary stops. Nods, satisfied. Leans over for a kiss.

GARY (cont'd)
Goodnight.

LYNNE
I'm gonna read for a bit.

GARY
Okay.

Gary rolls over and turns off his light. Lynne stares ahead, her thoughts with her son.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

The sun rises.

Golden light reaches up from the road.

Hits the windows of the farmhouse, where it's turned away.

Casts itself instead on the damp soil of the planter box.

Sunlight on tree leaves. Photosynthesis silently at work.

Before long, the sky is orange and purple again...

...and the sun sets behind the trees...

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

The darkened kitchen. The cat clock waves its paw. 7:15.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK

Gary and Lynne sleep. Two lumps under the blanket.

7:16 PM -- CLICK -- music plays.

Lynne rouses. Heads for the window.

LYNNE (PRE-LAP)
That's why if we know the arc length--

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

School is in session. A triangle drawn into a circle on the chalkboard. Lynne writes as she speaks.

LYNNE
We can calculate the sector area and
the length of the radii.

But behind her, Caleb stares through the screen door.

LYNNE (cont'd)
So we use this equation. S equals r
times theta. Where S is the?
(waits)
Where S is the...?

Lynne turns and Caleb snaps to.

LYNNE (cont'd)
I thought you liked trig.

CALEB
I'm not. I do. I just--

His gaze drifts again through the screen door. The first
line of trees at the edge of the orchard.

That's all it takes.

LYNNE
Alright, go on.

CALEB
Sorry, can you repeat the question?

LYNNE
Go help your daddy.

Excited, Caleb stands. Hurries for the basement.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Don't expect this to be regular.
(calling after)
Tomorrow we get through the full
school day before you go to work!

EXT. ORCHARD - NIGHT

Caleb follows Gary down a dark row of apple trees carrying various equipment. Leaves CRUNCH under their feet. It's easy to imagine it being lush and green once.

Gary stops and flips the switch of a LARGE WORK LIGHT on a 10-foot stand. It casts the trees in strange shadows, but at least now Caleb can see. He looks up the nearest tree.

GARY (O.S.)
Caleb.

Caleb turns--

A FRUIT PICKER flies toward his face--
--and bounces off his arm to the ground--

CALEB
Ow!

GARY
Sorry. Thought you'd catch it.

CALEB
Why would I expect you to throw a
pole at me?

GARY
No, that-- that's fair.

They eye each other. Caleb rubs his arm. Then--

Gary sets a BASKET at the foot of a tree.

GARY (cont'd)
Okay, uhh-- you got your basket, your
picker.

Caleb scoops up the PICKER, a long pole with a metal basket on the end.

GARY (cont'd)

Step ladder if you need it. Now I like to grab three and four apples at a time, then dump 'em. Kinda get into a rhythm. Hoisting up and down, up and down -- well, you'll feel it in the morning.

Caleb nods.

GARY (cont'd)

We work systematically. Clear the whole tree before moving on to the next. Any questions?

Caleb shakes his head. Gary pats his shoulder. Remembers:

GARY (cont'd)

Oh.

(fishing from pocket)

The picker gets loose after a while. Just give the bolts a few turns.

He hands Caleb a SCREWDRIVER. Caleb puts it in his back pocket. With one last look, Gary walks away:

GARY (cont'd)

You stay right in this row and I'll be back to fetch you for dinner in a couple hours.

Gary slips past the work light, into darkness, and is gone.

Caleb looks up at the tree.

LATER:

THE PICKER yanks an APPLE into its metal cage to join several others. Travels downward and empties into the large basket, now over half full.

Caleb wipes sweat from his brow. This is hard work.

With a breath, he reaches the picker back into the canopy. His work RUSTLES the leaves. But as it does--

--there's ANOTHER RUSTLE nearby. Caleb stops.

Quiet. Caleb continues. Plucks an apple.

RUSTLE-- Stops.

Something moves in the darkness, beyond where he can see.

CALEB

Dad?

Caleb is frozen. And now he hears... BREATHING.

He closes his eyes.

CALEB (cont'd)

They only come in the day.
They only come in the day.

He breathes heavily through his nose, hoping it goes away...

...but it gets... CLOSER.

In a sudden spasm, Caleb drops the picker. RUNS--

Past the light. Down the angled row. Running blind, eyes adjusting to the dark.

A glance over his shoulder-- a SHADOW moves through the light of the work lamp. It's chasing him.

Caleb sprints, nearly stumbling--

CALEB (cont'd)

Dad!

--as the thing in the dark gallops ever closer.

Finally Caleb BURSTS from the row of trees--

CALEB (cont'd)

DAD!

--where Gary emerges from the barn--

GARY

Caleb?

--and watches Caleb run toward him and FALL.

Caleb hits the dirt hard and rolls, still backing away from whatever it is -- whatever is about to pounce him and--

--lick him in the face. It's a... a BORDER COLLIE. The same dog from the other farm.

GARY (cont'd)

It's a dog!

Fear turns to confusion in Caleb's eyes. Gary hurries over.

GARY (cont'd)
It's a dog...

Caleb pets her ears, regaining his breath. Both he and his dad are at a loss.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lynne tosses a handful of leftover chicken and rice into a bowl. Gary is on the phone.

GARY
Uh huh. Yup. Found her in the
orchard. Yes, of course.

He goes around the corner, phone cord stretching after him.

Lynne sets down the bowl. Pushes open the screen porch--

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

LYNNE
Caleb! Made some food for her.

Not far away, Caleb LAUGHS. The dog (BB) rushes him carrying a TENNIS BALL. Caleb wrestles it away.

Lynne leans in the doorframe to watch. Smiles. Watches his son LAUGH as he plays his first game of fetch.

LYNNE (cont'd)
C'mon, you two. Come eat.

BB bounds inside. The ball rolls to the side of the house...

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

BB wolfs down the bowl of scraps. Her NAME TAG is sewn into her collar (hence the lack of jingles). Caleb is knelt beside her, in awe.

CALEB
I didn't know people still had dogs.

LYNNE
Well sure, my love.

CALEB
Can we get one?

LYNNE
That's up to your father.

Caleb watches the dog eat. Gary returns:

GARY
Got ahold of 'em. They'll be here to
pick her up in about an hour.

LYNNE
Oh I'll bet they're so relieved.

GARY
Alright, Caleb, time for bed.

CALEB
But I wanna stay with BB.

GARY
We need to be in bed before dawn, dog
or no dog. No sense getting attached.

Caleb appeals to his mom with his eyes. No help.

CALEB
Goodbye, girl. It was good meeting
you.

He ruefully scratches her ears. She licks his face.

Caleb stands and mopes to the basement.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb sits in bed. Pajamas on. Reads about wild Australian dogs in a National Geographic.

From the metal-covered basement window, Caleb hears
TIRES ON GRAVEL. A truck door SLAM. BB BARK.

Soon FOOTSTEPS and-- KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Caleb sets his magazine aside and sneaks to the stairs.
Hears MUFFLED VOICES as he creeps carefully upward.

Puts his ear to the door:

SLESSOR (O.S.)
--so glad you found her. Ran off a
few days ago. I was starting to
wonder if we'd ever get her back.

GARY (O.S.)
I'll pass your thanks along to our
son. Never seen him run so fast.

The owner LAUGHS.

SLESSOR (O.S.)
Well, we've got three kids at home.
BB loves to play.

LYNNE (O.S.)
Sorry to bother you at this hour.

SLESSOR (O.S.)
Oh, it's no problem. Hope to see you
'round. C'mon, Beebs.

There's a BARK, the screen door SLAMS, and soon the sound of truck doors closing and the ENGINE turning over.

Brow furrowed, Caleb sneaks back to bed.

Upstairs, the front door lock CLANGS into place.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Caleb's wet hair hung over his scornful eyes. Lynne pulls some through a comb and SNIPS.

He's on a chair beside the dining table, shoulders and surrounding floor draped in towels.

LYNNE
I swear I've never seen hair grow so fast. Gonna have to trim you once a week at this rate.

Caleb pouts. Lynne SIGHS.

LYNNE (cont'd)
I know it's hard to say goodbye, sweetheart. You did a good thing getting her back to her owners.

REAKING down the steps. Gary limps into the kitchen.

GARY
Morning.

He heads for his thermos.

CALEB

The owner said she'd been missing a few days.

LYNNE

That's right.

CALEB

How's that possible? Shouldn't the monsters have gotten her?

Lynne and Gary share a look.

LYNNE

Dogs are clever. They have sharp senses.

Caleb rolls his eyes. Lynne combs out the next lock.

CALEB

I don't believe in 'em.

LYNNE

Sweetheart.

CALEB

There's never any sign of 'em. Other people have dogs. If it took him an hour to get here how'd he get back before dawn?

Gary stands beside them at the table.

GARY

He had to get ready. The Slessors are three farms down.

Silence again. Believing it's over, Gary turns for his lunchbox. But before he reaches the door--

CALEB

Prove it.

Gary stops. Turns with fire in his eyes.

GARY

What's that?

LYNNE

Gary.

GARY

You want me to prove it?

Gary begins removing his BELT--

LYNNE

Gary!

--and drops his pants.

GARY

Where'd I get that then? Huh?!

Gary points to his right leg. Scar tissue healed over. Thinner than the left leg. Remnants of a horrific injury.

GARY (cont'd)

Tell me what happened to my leg if a monster didn't do that!

Caleb looks away, chastened. Gary lets the point sink in another moment... then yanks up his jeans. Buckles his belt. Pulls the DOOR KEY from around his neck--

Caleb and Lynne startle as the door SLAMS.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN

Gary reads in bed, per usual. Lynne enters -- quietly closes the door behind her -- then turns on him.

LYNNE

The hell's the matter with you?

GARY

Excuse you?

LYNNE

Yelling at him like that! I'd be mad as hell too if I were him.

Gary sets down his book in disbelief.

GARY

Are you kidding me right now?

LYNNE

You were out of line.

GARY

"I don't believe in 'em." That's what he said, Lynne. He keeps that up, he's gonna get us all killed.

LYNNE

Be serious.

GARY
I am serious! After all we've been
through?

Lynne plops onto the bed, her back to Gary. There's a break in the argument. A calming.

LYNNE
What if he's right?

GARY
About what?

LYNNE
What if it's not so bad anymore?

Lynne turns to face him -- not angry. Hopeful.

GARY
Do you hear yourself?

LYNNE
How long has it even been?

GARY
(picking up his book)
I'm not listening to this.

LYNNE
We can't keep him down there forever.
You ever think about that?
Eventually, he's going to need to
find his own place in the world, one
way or the other.

GARY
Or.
(with finality)
He doesn't.

Gary aggressively re-opens his book. Lynne's heart aches.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - DAY

The peeling boards of the porch bathed in sunlight and shadow. The front door RATTLES... and OPENS.

Thirsty trees and brown grass. An eerie silence.

Lynne looks out across the daylight, contemplative.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - DAY

Caleb sleeps in blacks and blues. A faint shadow passes over him... disappears... grows larger... and--

He STARTLES awake. Finds his MOM standing over him.

LYNNE

Come with me.

She walks right back up the stairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Caleb rubs his eyes as he enters, still in his PJs.

CALEB

Is it still daytime?

LYNNE

Shhh.

Lynne awaits him by the door.

CALEB

(whispering)

What's going on?

Silently, Lynne reaches down her collar and pulls out...

THE KEY

Caleb's eyes awaken. Silently, Lynne inserts it into the door and turns the deadbolt -- *THUD*.

They both look up. Wait for stirring from upstairs.

Still silent, Lynne puts her hand on the doorknob--

CALEB (cont'd)

Mom--!

She looks back at him: *Trust me.*

With effort, he nods...

Lynne pulls open the door.

The light is blinding. Impossibly bright. As their eyes adjust, they find themselves in an *<oblong trapezoid of white>* in what was moments ago their cave-like kitchen.

Lynne pushes her palm into the screen door-- Caleb GRABS her by the shoulder--

CALEB (cont'd)
What about--
(beat)
--the monsters?

LYNNE
We see any, we'll run right back
inside. Okay?

Lynne looks outward:

Empty porch. Sun-dried orchard. Silence. The coast is clear.

To show him it's safe, Lynne steps out first.

Caleb hesitates. Lynne purses her lips: It's hard for her to see this-- A lifetime of fear and conditioning and routine plugging into the complex equation for a single step.

She turns back. Holds out her hand...

He takes it. And finally...

...he steps out.

Despite the initial blast of light, the porch is in the SHADE. A hard line of sun drawn half way down the steps.

LYNNE (cont'd)
(gesturing)
Go on. Take a seat.

Caleb stares at the porch steps. Moves slowly toward them...

Down one step. Then another. Then... he sits, and lowers into the line between light and shadow.

He EXHALES... and at once enters a kind of trance.

The sun is beautiful. A miracle. Warmth and light. He closes his eyes, letting it wash over his pale eyelids.

Something in Caleb changes. Posture. Skin.

How could anything feel this powerful? How could he have missed out on this for his entire life?

LYNNE (O.S.)
Caleb.

She has him by the arm.

LYNNE
That's enough for tonight.

He doesn't want to. It's a tease, only getting that much of it. But he looks to the orchard, then back, and remembers...

He stands up. Back into shadow.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - DAY

As Lynne tucks Caleb back into bed, his eyes are bright. Mind racing.

LYNNE
I'll see you in a few hours.

She heads to the stairs--

CALEB
Mom.

--looks back.

CALEB (cont'd)
Thank you.

She nods: You're welcome. And ascends.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DUSK

The sun sets over the horizon.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Lynne walks down the stairs, barely awake. CLANGS open Caleb's metal door.

LYNNE
Caleb, sweetie, it's time to-- Oh.

CALEB
Morning.

Caleb passes her, already dressed for the day. Grabs milk and orange juice himself. Lynne watches him for a beat... then moves to the coffee maker.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Lynne stands at the counter. Grades a HAND-WRITTEN TEST with RED PEN. Turns and hands it to Caleb at his desk.

LYNNE
Great work, sweetie.

Caleb smiles at the 100 written across the top.

INT. THE ORCHARD - NIGHT

In the harsh glow of the work light, Caleb picks apples. Six filled baskets and three empty trees.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Caleb and his parents eat tacos. Gary chugs iced tea.

A long silence. Only CRUNCHING and passing. Finally:

GYARY
Caleb cleared four trees himself.

LYNNE
(impressed)
Wow.

GARY
You did good work out there tonight.

CALEB
Thanks, Dad.

Caleb takes another bite, feeling proud. He and Lynne share a knowing look.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - MORNING

Morning light hits the planter box. Still only dirt.

The porch door OPENS. This time, Caleb steps out first. This time, Lynne grabs him by the arm--

LYNNE
Caleb, listen.
(beat)
This is still... we still have to be
careful. If anything happens, you
come right back inside. Don't wait
for me, you understand?

Caleb takes this in. Nods.

Moments later, they step off the porch. The reaction of Caleb's body is almost palpable:

Eyes closed. Head tilted. Arm hair stood on end--

Skin warm. Mind racing--

LYNNE (O.S.)

Caleb.

Eyes OPEN--

He looks around, surprised to find that he and his mother are almost at the edge of the orchard.

LYNNE

Are you with me?

Caleb nods.

LYNNE (cont'd)

I think that's enough for today.

But Caleb has closed his eyes again. Basks in the sun.

Lynne grows burdened by her surroundings: The openness of the field. The distance from the house. The depths of the orchard...

The winds shifts. Dry leaves RUSTLE.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Caleb.

He INHALES. Back again.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Now.

This time, he knows she means it.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - DAY

As Caleb drops into his bed, Lynne feels his forehead.

LYNNE

How are you feeling?

CALEB

Fine.

LYNNE
You're not hot? Cold? Feeling
nauseated, or, or--

CALEB
I feel great. Why are you so worried?

Lynne looks him over.

LYNNE
Just been a while, that's all.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Lynne emerges into the kitchen. Closes Caleb's door behind her as quietly as she can manage.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The steps CREAK as Lynne ascends, despite her efforts.

She tip-toes around to her side of the bed. As she sits--

GARY
Did you think I wouldn't hear?

--she GASPS. *Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck--*

GARY (cont'd)
The hell were you doing out there?

Gary sits up.

GARY (cont'd)
I know it's hard being shut up in
here all the time. Hell, sometimes
it's downright depressing. But it's
too risky to be sneaking around like
that.

LYNNE
I-- Gar, I--

GARY
What if he heard you? Last thing we
need right now is him asking more
questions.

And with that... Lynne realizes what her husband does and doesn't know. Calming, she turns.

LYNNE
You're right. I should have told you.

She places a hand on his.

GARY
I can help. Okay? You tell me what you need and we'll figure it out.

LYNNE
I know. It won't happen again.

She snuggles to his side, crisis narrowly averted.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Water. Sweet, precious water. Caleb chugs a glass while Lynne lectures about the chemical process of photosynthesis--

LYNNE
...the chemical formula for glucose.
Which means that the enzymes
activated by the sunlight...

Ahh. Glass empty.

CALEB
Sorry.
(raising his hand)
Can I get another glass?

LYNNE
Sure, love.

Caleb turns for the sink. Water GLUG-GUGS from the tap--

EXT. ORCHARD - NIGHT

Caleb pulls apples down from a canopy. Gary is nearby, working the same row. He glances at his son, pensively. Looks again. Caleb picks on. Finally--

GARY
What, ah-- what's your mom got you working on? These days?

CALEB
Huh? Oh.
(beat)
All kinds of things.

He raises the picker back into the tree.

CALEB (cont'd)
Some Trig. Steinbeck. Biochem. We
planted some sunflowers on the porch.
Reviewing the chemical processes for
photosynthesis.

GARY
Good. That'll come in handy when you
take more responsibility in the
orchard.

Caleb can't help but CHUCKLE. His dad's idea of a
compliment. They return to silent work.

CALEB
The trees are thirsty.

GARY
Well yes, son. We're fifteen years
into a drought.

CALEB
There's water down there, I bet. If
they could reach far enough.

Gary looks at his son, perplexed. But Caleb gets back to
work. And so does he.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Caleb and Gary walk from the orchard, sweat soaked. Caleb
notices SECOND PICK-UP TRUCK parked in front of the porch.

CALEB
Aunt B.

He quickens his pace.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

AUNT B, or BRENDA, exits the warm light of the kitchen to
greet Caleb on the porch. They embrace.

BRENDA
Hiya, kiddo.

CALEB
Hi, Aunt B.

Brenda (40s) is petite but sturdy. The kind of woman who
can't be pushed around. She looks Caleb over.

BRENDA

Gol-lee, you've grown a foot. Your mom feeding you fertilizer?

CALEB

Stop.

BRENDA

It's a good thing. Got a truck for you to unload.

She opens the truck hatch: It's full of FOOD and SUPPLIES.

LATER:

From the truck bed, Brenda pushes a basket of vegetables toward Caleb. He hoists it. Sets it on the porch with effort. Lynne starts to unload.

Caleb turns back. With Gary's help, they lift a basket of APPLES onto the gate. Push toward Brenda.

It joins two others.

GARY

That's it. For now.

BRENDA

That's alright. I'm good for it.

LYNNE

Brenda--

BRENDA

Don't you even. I'm good for it. Besides, you all need it more than a single short lady. Let's eat.

Caleb helps Brenda down. They head inside.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Empty dinner plates. Half-consumed wine glasses. Brenda listens to a STETHOSCOPE as she pumps a SPHYGMOMANOMETER around Gary's arm.

BRENDA

It's not just you all. Half the regular traders have moved north or gone dark. My corn guy last week only had four ears.

CALEB
That's not so bad. I've only got two.

The adults smile -- even Gary.

BRENDA
129 over 81. You taking it easy out
there?

GARY
Caleb's been helping me out.

BRENDA
Really?
(to Caleb)
You're up, corn cob.

Brenda rips the velcro from Gary's arm. Transfers the device to Caleb's. Pumps.

BRENDA (cont'd)
But. We're hangin' in there.

CALEB
You should come live with us.

BRENDA
Where's my bed go? The barn?

CALEB
More people should live close. We
could help each other. Like a city.

BRENDA
I appreciate you thinking of me.
But... for now, the arrangement we've
got is what works best.

Brenda shines a light in Caleb's eyes. Pupils dilate. Looks in his mouth, pink and wet.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Never healthier.

She smiles. SLAPS him on the knee as she stands.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - LATER

Brenda's back in her IDLING truck.

BRENDA
I'll be back next month.

LYNNE
Thanks, Doc.

BRENDA
Likewise. Stay safe.

She rumbles down the driveway for the gate. Lynne, Caleb, and Gary watch her go.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Lynne washes dishes. Caleb dries. She smiles at her son. Caleb smiles back. Past them, Gary LOCKS the front door.

GARY
I'm gonna shower.

Lynne nods. She waits for the CREAKS to stop and her mood changes. She shifts uncomfortably.

LYNNE
Sweetheart-- I wanted to tell you-- I think we'd better take the night off.

CALEB
What? How come?

LYNNE
I'm tired. Hard to lose an hour of sleep back-to-back nights like that.

Caleb can't hide his disappointment.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Plus-- it's a risky thing we're doing. The monsters are still out there. We can't push it.
(beat)
We'll go out again soon, okay?

Caleb goes back to drying dishes, mood soured. Lynne glances at him, full of conflict. After a long while:

CALEB
Hey, do we still have that book on plants?

LYNNE
The biology textbook?

CALEB

No, the, uh... almanac. Farmer's almanac. I wanted to look up about sunflowers.

LYNNE

It must be on my bookshelf upstairs. You can run get it if you want.

Caleb nods. Sets down the last dish in the drying rack and runs upstairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The shower runs. Shower curtain drawn. Gary's clothes lie in a pile on the floor. And beside the sink

THE DOOR KEY on the necklace.

Just beyond it, the bathroom door opens slowly.

Careful he hasn't been heard, CALEB waits in the threshold. Then takes one step -- two -- toward the necklace.

With another glance at the shower curtain, Caleb pockets it.

The water cuts with a SQUEAK. The curtain slides open--

But Caleb is GONE.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Lynne finishes packing leftovers into the fridge. Looks up as Caleb passes for his room -- holds up the FARMER'S ALMANAC -- and bounds downstairs.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Caleb tosses the almanac on his bed. Opens it.

THE KEY lays inside.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lynne sleeps on her side. Gary a lump beside her.

She's completely still, in a deep sleep, when there's a CLICK somewhere in the house. Lynne's eyes

OPEN.

Beside her, Gary is already throwing off the sheets--

GARY
Caleb.

Gary reaches under the bed and pulls out a RIFLE--

LYNNE
Gar.

--and hobbles for the stairs.

LYNNE (cont'd)
GAR!

She hurries after him.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Fifty yards from the house, at orchard's edge, Caleb stands in the open, exposed and basking in SUNLIGHT.

He closes his eyes. Looks skyward.

It's so warm. So bright. So powerful.

Behind him, the porch door FLIES open--

GARY
Caleb!

Gary pulls the hammer as he limp-runs.

Lynne appears behind him seconds later--

LYNNE
Gary, wait!

Gary winces. Overrides the pain.

GARY
Caleb! Back inside! Now!

Lynne races after him, hampered by NIGHTGOWN and BARE FEET.

LYNNE
Gary!
(beat)
Caleb, listen to him!

But Caleb doesn't. He's in the sunlight.

They're closing. Twenty yards. Ten.

Gary levels the rifle, still on the move.

Now ten feet away, Gary stops-- *BANG!--*

AND SHOOTS CALEB IN THE BACK.

Caleb staggers. Falls. And everything goes

BLACK.

FADE IN ON:

A FLASHBACK

Lynne's smile.

A blanket in the grass.

A baby LAUGHS. BABY CALEB.

Gary hoists him into the sky--

--where the SUN shines down on them.

They're out in the daylight.

And they're happy.

FADE IN:

A WOMAN'S FACE COMING INTO FOCUS

Dark hair pulled back. Plastic frames. Looking down at us.

DARK again...

...then she's back. With the BASEMENT CEILING behind her--

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb awakens in his bed. The woman over him is BRENDA.

BRENDA

Hey kiddo. How're you feeling?

CALEB

What're you-- where's Mom?

On cue, hurried FOOTSTEPS down the stairs.

LYNNE

Caleb!

She throws her arms around him. Brenda smiles.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Are you okay?

She examines her son.

CALEB
What... what happened?

More FOOTSTEPS on the stairs.

FLASH TO: Caleb basks in the sun.

NOW: Caleb winces.

FLASH TO: Gary levels his SHOTGUN--

NOW: Caleb opens his eyes--

--as his DAD reaches the bottom step.

CALEB (cont'd)
You shot me.

Caleb grabs at his back in search of the wound.

GARY
It was a tranquilizer.

CALEB
You shot me!

GARY
We had to get you inside before a
monster could /attack you--

CALEB
/What monster?! There wasn't anything
out there!

GARY
Not yet.

LYNNE
Sweetheart...

Lynne rests her hand on Caleb's arm. He pulls it away.

BRENDA
Your father did the right thing. It
isn't safe for you to be out in the
daylight.

Caleb stays quiet.

BRENDA (cont'd)
You'll feel a bit woozy for the next
eight to twelve hours. Drink plenty
of fluids and try to rest.

Brenda stands.

BRENDA (cont'd)
I'll check in with your parents to
see how you're doing.

Brenda exits up the steps.

Caleb drops into bed. Then turns his back on his parents.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lynne closes the basement behind her. Brenda is waiting.

LYNNE
Thanks for coming so quickly.

Brenda hugs her. Lynne sighs -- she needs this hug. She
needs her friend.

BRENDA
Of course.

They pull away.

LYNNE
He gave us a real fright.

BRENDA
Not surprising, at his age. They're
practically wired to question the
world around them.

Lynne nods sheepishly. Won't say more.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Let me know how he's doing. And don't
forget to get some rest yourself.

LYNNE
Thank you. I-- I will.

Brenda nods... and EXITS.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sitting on his side of the bed, Gary cleans his tranq rifle. Examines the chambers.

Lynne enters. EXHALES. Sits on the bed, never relaxing.

GARY

You okay?

Lynne doesn't say anything.

GARY (cont'd)

Hey.

Gary returns the rifle to its place under the bed. Sidles over to his wife.

GARY (cont'd)

We got to him in time. Everyone's safe.

Lynne nods. Gary wraps his arms around her. But he can't see her face, where it's clear: She's not so sure.

INT. LYNNE'S CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

A MALE STUDENT (8), hair matted to forehead with sweat. A SPELLING TEST is placed on his desk by

LYNNE, waddling the aisles between desks. Younger. Uncomfortably overheated. Uncomfortably pregnant.

LYNNE

It might seem cold of me to give a test on a day like this.

The collective panting of the class is drowned out by a useless BOX FAN in an open window. It is sweltering. A distorted desert freeway trapped inside a classroom.

Still, Lynne's enthusiasm overrides her discomfort:

LYNNE (cont'd)

But you all know by now you need to stay frosty in my classroom. The learning cannot be put on ice. The theme of today's flurry of spelling words will have you shivering.

She smiles.

LYNNE (cont'd)
*So remember your sight words and
 think arctic thaw--*

She winces. Smile fades.

LYNNE (cont'd)
...think arctic... thoughts...

*Lynne props herself on a desk. But her legs are weak.
Something's wrong.*

MALE STUDENT
Mrs. Clark?

She tries to fight... but collapses.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

*Lynne -- OXYGEN MASK, GURNEY -- is raced through linoleum
 corridors.*

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

*A windstorm of activity: Lynne's bed is pushed into a large
 delivery room and up against a wall. NURSES connect
 monitors. Open sterilized tools. DOCTOR MCCARTHY descends--*

DOCTOR MCCARTHY
Find me a heart beat.

LYNNE
What's happening?

A nurse puts a band around Lynne's abdomen. Rolls her.

NURSE
Sorry, ma'am.

LYNNE
*Where's Gary?
 (no answer)
 Can someone call my husband?*

BEEP BEEP--

NURSE
*Heart rate is thirty-five bpm and
 dropping.*

DOCTOR
Prep for an immediate cesarean
delivery.

A nurse shouts into the hallway.

NURSE
Code Yellow!

A new flurry. Nine bodies changing course.

LYNNE
What's happening?

NURSE
Ma'am, your baby is turned over in
the birth canal. It's possible the
umbilical cord is wrapped around
their neck. We need to perform a
Cesarean Section to remove the baby.

LYNNE
But I'm not-- my due date's not for
six weeks.

Nurses fly in with disposable PADS. Drape a TARP over the
floor at the foot of the bed. The doctor washes at a SINK.

DOCTOR MCCARTHY
Where's Doctor Lee?

DOCTOR LEE
Here, sir.

DOCTOR LEE (female, 50s) pushes a cart into the room. A
syringe and a vile ride to Lynne's side.

DOCTOR LEE (cont'd)
Ma'am, I'm going to administer an
anesthetic for the surgery.

LYNNE
Can you call my--

BEEP BEEP--

NURSE
Heartbeat at 25 beats per minute.

DOCTOR
Doctor Lee.

*DOCTOR LEE
Administering 10 milligrams of
Bipuvicaine.*

Doctor Lee feels at Lynne's back. Makes an incision. Doctor McCarthy slides up to the end of the bed, hands at the ready.

BEEP BEEP--

Doctor Lee measures a syringe.

BEEP BEEP--

And everything plunges--

BEEP BEEP--

--into DARKNESS.

GASPS. People TALK over each other. Tools SCATTER to the floor. A metal CRASH--

*NURSE
It's a black out!*

*DOCTOR
Someone get the generator going!*

On LYNNE, barely visible in the dark. Someone throws open the curtains -- no help. The sun has set.

*LYNNE
Where's my baby?*

*DOCTOR
Where's the GOD DAMN generator?*

The doctor barges into the hall.

*NURSE
Ma'am, try and stay calm.*

*LYNNE
Where's my baby?*

No answer. Running feet. Distant CRIES.

And DARKNESS.

*LYNNE (cont'd)
Where's my baby?*

CUT TO BLACK.

CALEB AWAKES WITH A GASP--

--startling LYNNE, who stands over him with a tray.

LYNNE (cont'd)
I... I brought you soup.

Caleb gathers his bearings. Exhales.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - LATER

Caleb slurps the last of the warm broth.

LYNNE
Can I get you anything else?

Caleb shakes his head. Lynne removes the tray. Caleb snuggles under the blanket next to Petey the Penguin.

LYNNE (cont'd)
My sweet, special boy. My shooting star.

She runs a hand through his hair.

LYNNE (cont'd)
I'm sorry we scared you.

Caleb closes his eyes. Before she stands--

CALEB
Do you remember the sun?

LYNNE
Well, sure.

Caleb gets groggier as he speaks:

CALEB
I think I do, too. From before.
(beat)
I'm just a baby. But we're all out in
it together. On a blanket in the
grass. Like a picnic. Is that a
memory?

LYNNE
I--I think it must be, sweetheart.

CALEB
It was so... warm... so bright...

Caleb drifts off.

Lynne pauses... then heads up the stairs. Moments later, the door CLOSES, casting the room in darkness.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - MORNING

Morning sun hits the dormant planter box.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

In near complete darkness, the kitchen sits empty.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Lynne and Gary sleep.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - DAY

Blackness. Quiet. Caleb's bed... EMPTY.

A FLASHLIGHT turns on. Illuminates his bookshelf.

He pushes aside boxes of National Geographics. Behind them, finds what he's looking for:

THE SCREWDRIVER. The one for the picker basket.

THE METAL GRATE over the basement window. The screwdriver inserts into the first of its four BOLTS.

Caleb teeters on his night stand.

Carefully pockets the first bolt. Then the second.

Moments later, he pulls the metal grate away, revealing a brilliant rectangle of SUNLIGHT through the windowpane.

There's a latch. Metal and rusted. Caleb struggles with it.

It won't budge. He re-doubles his effort. Strains--ker-THUD-- it comes loose.

BEDROOM:

Lynn shifts in her sleep.

CALEB'S ROOM:

Caleb waits for signs of movement from upstairs.

When none come, he pushes the window OPEN.

Caleb looks across it: The grass at eye level. The first row of the orchard in the distance. A gentle breeze.

A line of shadow ends two feet from the farmhouse, sunlight just out of reach. And in it, the TENNIS BALL.

Caleb listens. No sound but the breeze. Steels himself. And--
Thrusts his hand into the sunlight.

CUT TO:

LYNN'S ALARM CLOCK

7:17 PM. Music plays. Lynne hits the clock--

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

--and is to her feet. Opens the drapes. The metal blinds. And walks downstairs...

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Lynne sits at the kitchen table. Nurses a coffee.

REVERSE ON: The metal door. Closed.

CREAKING STAIRS herald Gary's arrival.

LYNNE
Lunch is on the counter.

GARY
Thanks.
(following her gaze)
Caleb up?

LYNNE
I'm lettin' him sleep in a while.

Gary kisses the top of her head. Grabs his lunch. Unlocks the front door and EXITS.

LATER:

Lynne places her empty mug in the sink. Heads to the bottom of the stairs. Passes the metal door -- still closed --
--but hesitates.

At the door, Lynne listens. Silence. She grabs the handle and PULLS--

Stands at the top of the steps, only silent darkness below.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Caleb?

No reply.

Lynne steels herself... and starts down the stairs...

Caleb's room

coming into

view one

step at a--

--she GASPS, hand to mouth. *The grate is off the window.*

And Caleb-- Caleb is missing.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Caleb?!

She runs to the open rectangle of nighttime air. Peeks out.

LYNNE (cont'd)

(anguished)

Caleb.

CALEB

I'm here.

Lynne wheels around. Finds him sat on the FAR WALL in the shadows, holding something in his lap.

She hurries to his side.

LYNNE

Are you okay? Are you hurt?

Caleb... isn't sure. He shakes his head.

CALEB

I'm sorry.

LYNNE

Sweetheart. What for?

She places a comforting hand on his knee.

CALEB
I shoulda... listened... I shoulda--

He doesn't know.

LYNNE
What happened?

In answer, Caleb holds up the object in his lap--

THE SCREWDRIVER, steel curled into the shape of a C. Lynne is startled. Before she can stammer anything out he reveals--

HIS OTHER HAND -- the one he thrust into the light -- which now appears blackened and hardened over, as if burned.

But she doesn't gasp. Doesn't startle.

It's almost as if she expected this.

CALEB
Is there something wrong with me?

She looks at her son with deep sorrow and compassion. Then--

LYNNE
Go get your flashlight.

CUT TO:

FLASHLIGHTS

along the grass. Illuminating the way to

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Lynne stops before the open barn doors. The tractor's gone -- Gary out somewhere in the orchard.

Lynne exhales... and leads Caleb inside.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

A lone light bulb BUZZES overhead. A mountain of MULCH is piled high the corner. Lynne grabs a PITCHFORK off the wall.

CALEB
What are we doing out here?

LYNNE
Grab a pitchfork.

She starts in on the mulch. Moves her first scoop from the pile to an empty patch of floor a few feet to the right.

He looks down at his hand to find it's almost back to normal. Flexes it without pain.

Perplexed, Caleb grabs another pitchfork and joins in.

LATER:

Caleb and his mom heave mulch. Sweat on their brows. The mound has moved, clearing the floor beneath it that--

--with one final scoop-- uncovers a rubber RUG.

Lynne drops her pitchfork. Flips up the rug, revealing A DOOR with a metal ring.

Caleb looks at his mom expectantly, but she says nothing.

Instead she simply... opens it.

The space inside is too big for a cellar. About eight feet deep, 20 feet across, filled almost entirely by something covered in a GREEN TARP.

Using a LADDER affixed to the wall, Lynne lowers down. Waits for Caleb to follow. Pauses.

LYNNE (cont'd)
I want you to know this doesn't change anything.

CALEB

Okay?

LYNNE
You're still our son, no matter what.

CALEB

Okay.

LYNNE
Do you understand me?

CALEB

Yes, Mom, I said okay.

Lynne EXHALES... and pulls down the tarp.

CUT TO:

THE NIGHT SKY - FLASHBACK

A collage of constellations.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

In a pajama and bath robe, Lynne stands at the edge of the porch, looking out to the stars. A BRIGHT STREAK cuts across the sky. Mesmerizing. Then it's gone.

Lynne suddenly remembers her purpose:

LYNNE
GARY!

No answer. She hugs herself, cold.

LYNNE (cont'd)
GAR!

The TRACTOR RUMBLES somewhere in the distance. Frustrated, Lynne turns inside.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

At the kitchen table, Lynne stares at the floor. Through the floor. Elsewhere. The cat clock on the wall keeps the time -- TICK-TOCK, TICK-TOCK -- her only companion.

TICK-TOCK, TICK-TOCK--

There's SPAGHETTI DINNER on the table. The lone plate across from her has hardened over. SLAM--

--she slaps the table--

--and is out the door before the silverware stops shaking.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lynne marches from farm house to tree line, on the warpath.

LYNNE
Think you can ignore me? I'll show
you grieving, coward piece of shit.
Give you a piece of my GOD damn mi--

But A SOUND interrupts her -- something BRIGHT and FAST overhead. Before she can register it, the thing

EXPLODES to the orchard.

Lynne is knocked back by the impact. Holds her arms over her face. When she looks again, the orchard is **BURNING**.

LYNNE (cont'd)
(to herself)
Gary?
(shouting)
GARY!?

EXT. ORCHARD - NIGHT

Lynne runs into the orchard, painted in orange light.

LYNNE
Gary!

Through a plume of smoke she stops--

There's a gaping wound in the earth, torn across the careful geometry of the trees. And at the far end of the wound, embedded like a splinter, is a car-sized METEORITE.

GARY
Lynne! Lynne help with the water!

Finally she notices her husband-- filling BUCKETS OF WATER with the ripped end of an IRRIGATION HOSE.

She runs toward him--

Gary hauls a full bucket to the nearest burning tree. Lynne grabs the next bucket. Charges into the fray.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

Silence. Gary and Lynne sit together on the porch swing. Soot-covered and breath heavy.

They look out over the smoldering orchard -- only smoke now, wafting into the dawn sky.

Neither says anything.

EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

The RUMBLING tractor. Gary at the helm. Turns down a row toward the still-smoldering meteorite.

Gary stops the tractor, agog.

Slowly, he dismounts... and walks.

And as he approaches the meteorite -- mostly buried in the Earth -- we see what he sees:

Grown up from the ground... directly above the space rock...

A tiny SAPLING... grown into the shape of a NEW-BORN BABY...

MATCH CUT TO:

CALEB

Dumbfounded.

CALEB

What?

LYNNE

This brought you to us, Caleb.

She places her hand on rock's rough exterior.

LYNNE (cont'd)

This... seed... crashed into the orchard. And you... grew from it.

FLASH TO: Gary carries a flannel-wrapped BABY -- with branches and leaves growing out of him. Passes him to Lynne.

They stare at him together, tears in their eyes.

NOW: Caleb shakes his head, incredulous.

CALEB

...You were pregnant. The--the picture--

LYNNE

Your sister.

She instinctively places her hand below her navel.

Caleb's mind reels. Tentatively touches the "seed."

LYNNE (cont'd)

Do you know why you were sent to me?
Over any other place else in this universe?

Tears well in Caleb's eyes. He shakes his head.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Because I knew what to do with you.

CALEB
Keep me locked in a basement?

LYNNE
Protect you, sweetheart.

Lynne steps toward him. Places a hand on his cheek.

LYNNE (cont'd)
My sweet, special boy. My shooting
star.

CALEB
No.

Caleb backs away.

LYNNE
What did I say before I showed you
this? It doesn't change anything.
You're our son. No matter what.

CALEB
I'm not.

Before he can see the pain this causes her -- fueled by
confusion and fear -- Caleb climbs the ladder.

LYNNE
Caleb.

She climbs after him. He's already running from the barn--

LYNNE (cont'd)
CALEB!

Lynne pulls herself up and runs after.

EXT. ORCHARD - NIGHT

Caleb runs through the angled rows of trees, faint glow of
the barn somewhere behind him.

LYNNE (O.S.)
CALEB!

He runs into the darkness, deeper and deeper.

Tears fly from his cheeks. And as the sound of his mother's
cries grow distant, he runs faster.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

The RUMBLING ENGINE of the tractor. Gary in its seat.

He turns out of the orchard toward the barn. Squints as he approaches the silhouette of

LYNNE standing in the open door.

He cuts the engine. Hops down. One look at her face and he knows. Lynn falls into his arms.

GARY (PRE-LAP)

Caleb!

EXT. ORCHARD - NIGHT

Flashlights dart through trees. Two of them, rows apart--

LYNNE

CALEB!

Nothing but branches and shadow.

In his row, Gary stops. Holds his flashlight on the dormant work light, picker, and empty baskets from nights ago. Gives himself a moment. Then--

GARY

CALEB!

--continues on.

LYNNE (O.S.)

CALEB!

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAWN

Lynne stiff-arms through the screen door. B-lines for the PHONE beside the stairs. Dials. It RINGS--

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAWN

A lush oasis in a box. Vibrant greens and flowering vines. Roses, blueberry bushes, orchids, and hydrangeas.

A phone RINGS.

At the back, a woman in work clothes tends a SMALL BONSAI in her hands. It's BRENDA.

She snips a branch-- and the bonsai squirms.

The phone RINGS on. She takes her time. Sets down the pruner. Removes a gardening glove. Picks up her CELL PHONE:

BRENDA
How's my patient?

LYNNE (PHONE)
Brenda he's-- he's loose again.

There's a long pause. A glint in her eyes.

BRENDA
I'll be there soon.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Just as Lynne hangs up the phone, Gary enters from outside.

He waits. When she doesn't offer:

GARY
Well? You wanna tell me what the hell happened?

She hesitates. But there's no point denying it:

LYNNE
I told him the truth.

GARY
You what?

LYNNE
He used the damn screwdriver to take the plate off and stuck his hand out the window.

GARY
Oh, I don't believe--

Gary paces, incredulous.

LYNNE
He was cogent and-- and scared. It wasn't like the other times.

GARY
Wait a minute.

Gary stops. Looks Lynne in the eye.

GARY (cont'd)
What else have you been telling him?

LYNNE
What?

GARY
He stole the key and got out. Now
this. You're telling me he just woke
up one day and got curious?

Lynne's hesitation says it all.

GARY (cont'd)
Sonnuvabitch, Lynne.

Lynne calms. *It's out there now. So fuck it.*

LYNNE
We can't keep him here, Gary.

He waves his hands. Keeps pacing.

LYNNE (cont'd)
He's been sick. And bored. He needs
the sunlight. He needs friends.

GARY
Friends?!

She's lost it.

LYNNE
If we don't at least try to let him
live out there, then we're never
going to know what type of person he
can be.

GARY
HE IS NOT A PERSON!

She glares at him, full of contempt. He already knows he
shouldn't have said it.

LYNNE
Fuck you.

GARY
Lynne--

LYNNE
FUCK you!

She shoves him in the chest.

GARY

You know I didn't mean it like that.

She shoves him again for good measure.

GARY (cont'd)

You finished?

She is. Turns for the stairs.

GARY (cont'd)

C'mon-- where're you goin?

LYNNE

To get our son.

GARY

Lynne, you can't--

LYNNE

Why? You gonna do it?

Gary purses his lips. Looks away.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Didn't think so.

She bounds the stairs.

CUT TO:

CALEB'S FACE

in the shade of an apple tree. Bracing himself.

EXT. ORCHARD - DAWN

He sits against the trunk of the last tree in the orchard. Faces an open field of tall grass, and a 10-FOOT-HIGH fence at the property line.

Most of Caleb's body is in shade, but an *INTENSE BEAM OF SUNLIGHT* angles past the canopy and reaches for his face...

Caleb inhales sharply. A immediate internal reaction.

Though terrified, he stays put as the light moves down his face... down to his neck and chest...

He winces-- blocks the light with his arms on instinct.

Then... he begins to transform.

Caleb's veins become DARK GREEN VINES beneath the surface.
His pale skin hardens and darkens like bark.

Caleb lowers his arms. Stares at them in horror.

But in doing so allows the sunlight to hit his face.

Jagged dark lines creep up from under his shirt--

--down from his hair--

--his skin crackles, rough and gray--

Terrified, Caleb closes his bronze eyes. And when he opens them again they're

bright, glowing GREEN.

CUT TO:

THE BRIGHT, MORNING SUN

Shining down on a--

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

Where Caleb stands, arms outstretched, basking in the sun.

Only, he doesn't look much like Caleb anymore. He's green, gray, and brown, with tendrils and leaf-like protrusions, standing 7-feet tall. A half boy, half tree.

And he's no longer afraid.

Lowering his arms, opening his bright, green eyes, The Monster looks around. Then--

--starts to run.

He leaps the fence and the creek.

LEAPS AGAIN-- bursts into another clearing and LEAPS--

--hurtles through the air, yellow sun beaming down on him, sails for 100 yards before he touches down and--

LEAPS again-- arcing high above the trees, wind through his vine-like hair--

--and lands. Feet slide through dirt to a stop. Unharmed.

He feels alive. Looks around: *What else can I do?*

CUT TO:

A COW

Munching grass in a pasture. Doe-eyed, it bends down to take another bite-- but its mouth never makes it there.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

Instead, the cow rises--

--lifted by The Monster, who holds it overhead like a barbell. The cow MOOS. Other cows mill about, oblivious.

Moments later, TWO COWS rise into the air. One in each arm.

The Monster gently lowers them to the earth. Then--

--hears LAUGHTER in the distance. He listens...

...and bounds in its direction.

EXT. FAMILY FARM - DAY

A cornfield. And beyond it, a BARN and a HOME. Not unlike Caleb's, but brighter. Freshly painted and well maintained.

Between the cornfield and the red and white barn, a LONG TABLE is draped in a flowing white tablecloth.

A GIRL from the house carrying plates. YOUNG CHILDREN race out past her, LAUGHING and chasing.

JEANNINE

Time to wash hands!

We're back in the opening scene. Only this time--

MONSTER CALEB watches them from between rows of corn.

More adults exit the house, all carrying bowls of food and serving dishes.

FARM MOM

Girls! C'mon, time to eat.

As the kids run in, one more adult comes out--

A man carrying a platter stacked high with waffles... and BB at his heels. The dad from the opening is MR. SLESSOR.

BB nips at the children. WOOFs in excitement-- then zooms off after squirrels.

The family take their seats for brunch.

The Monster watches in utter bewilderment. *An entire happy family... sitting down to a meal outdoors... in broad daylight. It's like a dream...*

Then BB appears between the rows of corn. Sniffs at The Monster -- and knows him right away. Licks him and--

ARF! ARF!

SLESSOR
BB, cut that out.

JEANNINE
I'll get her.

The Monster eyes BB with curiosity, as if trying to place her...

FLASH TO: Caleb waves the tennis ball. BB leaps. Caleb throws it--

NOW: The Monster tries to pet her, but she's in no mood. Runs back out to where she can be seen and turns back--

ARF! ARF!

The Monster reaches out--

--and recoils. There's a GIRL there Caleb's own age.

JEANNINE (cont'd)
C'mon, Bebe. I've got bacon for ya.
(**ARF! ARF!**)
That's right! Bacon.
(half laughing)
Come on.

The girl looks up and SCREAMS--

Silverware CLATTERS. Heads turn.

FARM MOM
(accusatory)
Jeannine!

The Monster holds up his hands in a vain attempt to appear non-threatening. It doesn't help.

Jeannine pushes away from the field on her backside.

JEANNING

There's-- there's something in there!

The eating stops. BB GROWLS. All eyes on the wheat.

Then the wind gusts, separating the wheat stalks ever so slightly, revealing--

THE MONSTER -- gray, green and monstrous.

The family GASP and point. Push to their feet.

Slessor runs inside with purpose. BB BARKS.

The Monster backs away, fear rising. And runs--

Wheat stalks slap his face. His breath heaves.

BAM! A gunshot rings out overhead. It's barely perceptible, but The Monster's skin reacts. Moves and thickens.

He gets faster. FASTER-- *Impossibly fast*--

ANOTHER GUNSHOT. The Monster LEAPS--

Bounds through the sky in a fantastic arc, high above the wheat field and trees--

Beside the brunch table, Slessor lowers his weapon.

SLESSOR

What in the hell...

The Monster arcs above the wheat again, nearly flying.

SLESSOR (cont'd)

Aaron! Ezra! In the truck.

His son, AARON (19, handsome) and nephew, EZRA (25, sonofabitch) don't need to be told twice.

By the time Slessor has tossed his rifle into his truck bed and climbed into the cab, the boys are there--

EZRA

We gonna kill him?

SLESSOR

No.

Aaron gets in the back. Ezra closes the passenger door.

AARON

Come on, like you could kill anybody.

EZRA

When have I had the chance? I'll kill
this guy, you bet yer ass.

SLESSOR

No one's killing anybody. Probably
just some drunk in a costume. But we
are gonna scare the sunnovabitch.

That settles it. They pull down the long, paved driveway
toward the road.

I/E. - BRENDA'S TRUCK - DAY

Brenda drives. Lynne rides shotgun. No music. Windows down.
They're alert -- watching, listening.

They drive past wilted corn stalks and thirsting trees. Sun-
faded FOR SALE signs and farmland gone to seed. The entire
landscape slow roasted by relentless sun.

A drought. A blight.

Brenda reads Lynne's expression.

BRENDA

You get out much anymore?

LYNNE

A few times, when Gary hurt his leg.

But no. Not lately.

(beat)

It's worse than I remember.

Brenda nods.

BRENDA

Before Roddy died he used to call our
farm "The Garden of Eden." Glad he
doesn't have to see it now. An empire
of dirt.

LYNNE

Nothing you could have done about
that.

Brenda shrugs.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Thank you. For being there for us.

BRENDA
Of course. Your boy's the closest
thing I have to a purpose.

They return their attention to the sunburned landscape.

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY

WHEAT STALKS move like the wake of a speedboat. As they give way to trees and thick brush, the Monster slows.

Looks back. Chest heaves. There's a CLEARING up ahead--

No-- a ROAD. And beside it, a POLICE CRUISER, "County Sheriff" printed on the door.

The Monster stops. Watches. Inside the cruiser, graying, mustached SHERIFF MORRISON wields his RADAR GUN. Sings along to "Bad Moon Rising." Then he looks right at The Monster.

He sees me. Does he see me?

From the road, The Monster looks like one tree of many-- but one in the shape of a man. One that breathes.

Not willing to find out, The Monster sprints in the other direction. Branches whip past his face. Soon bursts into--

ANOTHER ROAD. He speeds across it, but--

--brakes SQUEAL, a truck swerves-- *SLAM--*

The Monster skips across the road like a meteorite.

Inside the TRUCK, three men catch their breath. It's Slessor, Aaron, and Ezra. They gaze 20 yards down the road to the mass of bark and leaves they've just struck.

The front of the truck is smashed and steaming.

EZRA
Did we kill him?

In a pothole of his own making, The Monster stands in a daze. Takes in the truck...

...and the three men staring at him...

AARON
Dad... what is that?

BRAD
(dead quiet)
Ain't a goddamn costume.
(beat)
Pass me my rifle.

Aaron forces himself to look away. Opens the window to the TRUCK BED and pulls a long rifle from under a tarp. Passes it forward.

Slessor slips it out his window... and takes aim.

I./E. BRENDA'S TRUCK - DAY

Brenda looks over at Lynne. Sees her distraught face. She pats the ARM REST COMPARTMENT between them. Lynne looks.

BRENDA
If anything happens.

She opens the compartment, revealing a HANDGUN inside.

LYNNE
Oh, I couldn't-- I could never pull a gun on Caleb.

BRENDA
Not for him.

Lynne stares at her. Startles when-- *KER-BAM!*--

--a gunshot in the distance. Brenda SCREECHES the truck to halt. Listens. Lynne points.

LYNNE
That way.

Brenda slams the GAS and the truck peels in that direction.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The Monster looks down at his chest... realization slowly dawning that he's been shot...

A BULLET is lodged in his chest between two pieces of cracked bark. He removes it...

...and refocuses on the THREE TERRIFIED MEN in the truck.

Just as terrified, The Monster turns-- and RUNS.

After a beat, Slessor yanks in the rifle, hands it to Aaron--

EZRA
Go, go, go!

--and the truck PEELS OUT again.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The Monster runs between trees, country road at his back. Snapping branches and blurred trees. Glances over its shoulder, oblivious as it bursts through the tree line--

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

--and into another road beside a GAS STATION. A traffic light. And PEOPLE.

The Monster stands among them, exposed.

Cell phones are pointed. A mom shepherds children away. A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY reaches for his holster, unsure what he's seeing. SCREE--

Slessor pulls into the intersection. Parks at a safe distance. All three men climb out with RIFLES--

SLESSOR
Fan out!

The Monster spins in place, searching for an EXIT.

LYNNE
CALEB!

SCREE-- Brenda's truck arrives from the other direction.

Lynne is out before the truck stops. Unarmed. Hands raised.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Caleb... it's me.

She steps cautiously forward.

From the GAS STATION, Ezra aims his rifle...

LYNNE (cont'd)
It's Mama.

The creature shakes his head, confused. Feels blocked in. Spins and spins-- people staring--

LYNNE (cont'd)
Hey.

And then she's there. So close.

LYNNE (cont'd)
What do you say we go home? Okay?

The Monster seems to calm. He slouches toward Lynne and--

BAM! ANOTHER GUNSHOT hits his shoulder--

He thrashes on instinct-- sends Lynne hard into the pavement. Onlookers SCREAM.

The Monster spins-- it's Ezra who fired, but AARON who The Monster sees with a gun.

Snarling, The Monster charges. Bounds.

Lynne pushes herself up--

LYNNE (cont'd)
No--!

Aaron stumbles backward. Drops his gun--

PAF-- and is slapped away like a stuffed doll. He skips once off the pavement... and goes limp.

SLESSOR
AARON!

Slessor scrambles and FIRES. Fires AGAIN. SCREE--

--but Brenda's TRUCK is between them.

A strange PURPLE LIGHT envelope's the Monster's vision.

The bark and tendrils fly back from from his skin. The world starts to blur as he falls.

The purple light grows as Brenda steps over him and everything goes--

BLACK.

FADE IN ON:

FLASHBACK

Baby Caleb in a SUN HAT, playing in the grass.

A BEE buzzes from clover to clover.

LYNNE
Caleb, sweetie? Do you want a snack?

*Caleb turns in the direction of his mom's voice--
--and sits right on the bee.*

THE MONSTER'S FACE

Awash in UV light.

He SNARLS. Winces. The bark and tendrils fly back in retreat, revealing glimpses of CALEB underneath.

He fights, but it's futile. Slips back out of consciousness.

FLASHBACK

Baby Caleb WAILS. GARY scoops him up and his SUN HAT falls to the grass.

GARY
Shh shh. Daddy's gotchu. Daddy's here.

Gary bobs his sobbing son.

GARY (cont'd)
What's the matter, big guy?

Lynne places a gentle hand on Caleb. Looks around.

LYNNE
Gar, I think he might have gotten stung.

GARY
Aww. Did the big, bad bee getchu?

BABY CALEB
No!

Caleb shakes his head, sobbing.

BABY CALEB (cont'd)
NO!

GARY
Shh shh shh. Shh shh shh.

But Caleb's tantrum is getting worse.

The SUN beats down on his face.

GARY (cont'd)
You're alright. Daddy's gotchu--

In a fit, Caleb STRIKES his dad-- THUD--
--and Gary DROPS HIM. On the ground, Caleb sobs ever harder.

GARY (cont'd)
Shit! Sonnuvabitch!

Gary turns away, holding his face.

LYNNE
Gary?!
 (to Caleb)
*Are you okay, sweetheart? Daddy
 didn't mean to.*
 (to Gary)
The hell's the matter with you, Gar?

*She looks over at him. Slowly he turns-- and lowers the hand
 from his face. Lynne GASPS--*

*His cheekbone is COLLAPSED, swollen red around sunken skin.
 Red blood leaks into Gary's eye--*

To the sound of Baby Caleb's SOBS...

CALEB AWAKES WITH A GASP

A boy again. Only him and the UV light. And darkness.

A voice comes from the black:

BRENDA (O.S.)
*Light from our sun is what's known as
 a "broad spectrum light source."*

He rouses slowly. Squints into the light.

BRENDA (O.S.) (cont'd)
*It contains everything from infrared
 to ultraviolet and everything in
 between.*

CALEB
 (weakly)
Hello?

BRENDA (O.S.)
*The light I'm casting upon you,
 Caleb, is ultraviolet light -- UVB,
 to get specific -- which in humans
 triggers a process in the skin that
 produces vitamin D. In moderation,
 it's healthy, even necessary, for
 pigmented animals.*

Caleb regains awareness. Shadows move beyond the light.

BRENDA (O.S.) (cont'd)
Plants, however, do not absorb or synthesize vitamin D. See in them, UVB light triggers a range of physiological responses. Most commonly, the production of UV-absorbing pigments and other defenses against UV-induced damage. A tree can't apply sunscreen, after all.

CALEB
Aunt B?

BRENDA (O.S.)
But in your case... in your case, the defense response to monochromatic UVB is to transform into something that can use it. Namely... human skin.

CLICK. The UV light goes off.

Slowly, the world around Caleb comes into view: wood walls, high ceiling, a mound of mulch...

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Brenda moves towards him. Caleb recoils as she reaches out-- and unclasps the METAL SHACKLES around his wrists.

BRENDA
Prolonged darkness also would have done the trick. But who has that kind of time?

She turns away again. Goes to retrieve something from a table Caleb can't see.

CALEB
Where...?

BRENDA
At home. In the barn.
(beat)
I know your Mom likes to call me Doc, but that's a bit of an inside joke. Truthfully, I'm a botanist. A farmer, in another life.

Brenda returns holding a SYRINGE and several empty VIALS.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Though I'm sure you're starting to
put together why that might be
preferable. Hold out your arm.

CALEB
What are you doing?

BRENDA
Drawing blood.

He hesitates.

BRENDA (cont'd)
You just spent more time in your true
form than you have in your entire
life. We need to make sure you're
alright.

Caleb relents. Brenda ties a band to Caleb's arm.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Not to mention that you were shot,
hunted, and hit by a car. Feeling any
of that?

CALEB
I'm fine.

Caleb squints. Bothered by something:

CALEB (cont'd)
I don't... I don't remember.

BRENDA
No. You don't. Which... has its
advantages.

Brenda swaps the first filled vial for a second.

CALEB
So you know. What I am.

BRENDA
Sure do. The question is: Do you?

He doesn't understand. She smiles.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Your father's orchard. How's it
faring these days?

CALEB
Not... well?

BRENDA

He's not alone. Crops are drying up the world over. Record temperatures, mudslides, drought-- unpredictable, violent climates.

Brenda removes a third vial. The needle... the band...

BRENDA (cont'd)

Your mother wants you to be her son. A normal human boy. But you're not.

CALEB

I am--

BRENDA

You're much more. Don't you see? You arrived on this planet in the wake of unprecedented ecological and environmental crises. That's no coincidence. You are here for a purpose. You, Caleb. You can save us.

She looks at him admiringly, as the possibilities of her words dance behind his very human eyes.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

AN OPEN SUITCASE lands on Lynne and Gary's bed. Lynne flies around the room, pulling open drawers and grabbing clothes. When Gary ENTERS, sweat through from work, she doesn't slow.

He watches her charge into the bathroom. Charge out again.

GARY

Hey.

Toothbrushes and medicine CRASH into an open bag. She's back on the move. Gary steps in her path.

GARY (cont'd)

Hey. What's goin' on?

LYNNE

What does it look like?

She steps by him. He turns.

GARY

Okay. Mind telling me where?

LYNNE

(from the closet)

Alaska.

GARY
Alaska.

She's back again, winter coats in her arms. Begins stuffing them into an empty bag.

LYNNE
It's dark there three straight months. We can live a bit. Caleb can-- maybe go to school, even. I dunno.

GARY
You know it's light there three straight months, too.

She stops stuffing. Looks at him.

LYNNE
They saw him, Gary. People saw him. Fought with him.

GARY
This is our home.

LYNNE
And what good is it if it doesn't keep our son safe?

Gary takes this in. They stand in silence for a long moment.

GARY
If I-- if something happens out there... what am I supposed to do?

LYNNE
The only thing you're ever supposed to do: Be his father.

She stuffs the loose garments into the bag, zips it, and charges past Gary for the stairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lynne rounds the staircase into the hall, where

CALEB stands in the open doorway. Wears the look of a kid who ran away and got picked up by the cops. From behind, Brenda gently guides him inside.

Lynne drops her bag. Pulls Caleb into an embrace, overcome with relief.

LYNNE
Oh my sweet boy.

Relief turns to worry. She looks him over.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Are you okay? Are you hurt?

CALEB
I'm fine.

She continues to scan him.

BRENDA
He'll need plenty of rest, but should
be himself again in no time. I'll be
back to check on you all tomorrow.

Lynne and Caleb nod in thanks.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb sits in his bed, hair wet. Not reading. Waiting.

Lynne descends the stairs.

LYNNE
Hi, love. You ready for bed?

He just stares at her, waiting. Finally--

LYNNE (cont'd)
I understand if you're angry. Or have
questions. I'm-- I'm here.

She sits on the bed beside him.

CALEB
How many times before?

Lynne makes a sound: *Except that.*

LYNNE
A few. Once, only, like this. But
you're home now, sweetie, that's what
matters. You're safe.

Lynne sits beside him. Rubs his back. His voice quivers:

CALEB
Why can't I remember?

LYNNE

I don't know. Maybe because... that's not you. That's something separate.

He buries his face in his hands.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Oh, my sweet boy. I know I laid a lot on you.

Lynne pulls Caleb onto her shoulder. *Shh-shhs* softly.

CALEB

You lied.

LYNNE

We did what we had to, my love. To protect you.

CALEB

No.

Caleb sits up. Stares at her through glassy eyes.

CALEB (cont'd)

You promised it wouldn't always be this way. But it will.

Lynne's heart breaks.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The basement door closes at Lynne's back. She B-lines for the kitchen counter. Grips it. Stares out the would-be window. Only black metal stares back.

Finally-- she turns. Yanks the BAG from the floor.

Pulls the KEY from her neck -- and unlocks the front door.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAWN

Lynne pushes through the screen door, bag in hand--

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

--down the porch steps and along the gravel to GARY'S TRUCK.

She tosses the bag into the back and turns but out of the corner of her eye she sees them:

MEN, at least two, lurking around the barn.

She only hesitates for a split-second. Strides back the way she came-- *Must get Caleb. Must get him NOW.*

She climbs the steps, reaching out for the porch door when--

SLESSOR
Evening, Mrs. Clark.

--she GASPS. ERIC SLESSOR is on the porch swing. He smiles.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Tense as trip wire, Lynne leads Slessor inside, followed by Ezra and a bigger man we don't recognize. Call him SHANE.

LYNNE
(faux casual)
Can I get you boys anything?
Lemonade? Iced tea?

SLESSOR
I'll take an iced tea if ya have it.

Lynne nods. Heads to the fridge.

Slessor takes a seat at the dining table.

LYNNE
Is BB loose again? I don't think
we've seen her, but I can ask Gary
when he gets home.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

Gary stands frozen, listening to the MUFFLED VOICES coming through the FLOOR.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Lynne tops off the glass of iced tea.

SLESSOR
Oh no, she's safe at home. This is
more of a courtesy visit.

She sets the iced tea before him. Leans back against the counter, maximum effort into nonchalance.

SLESSOR (cont'd)
 I don't know if you heard, but
 there's a monster loose in town.

LYNNE
 A monster?

SLESSOR
 Saw it myself. Ezra, too.

EZRA
 Yes, ma'am.

INT. CALEB'S ROOM - SAME

Caleb lies awake, listening to the VOICES overhead.

SLESSOR (O.S.)
 Right in my wheat field. Horrible
 thing, covered in--

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN

Slessor grips the glass of iced tea.

SLESSOR (CONT'D)
 --well, I don't know what. Looked
 like a tree on two legs.

LYNNE
 (scoffing)
 Sounds like a drunk in a suit.

SLESSOR
 Exactly what I said-- until I hit it
 with my truck. Popped right back up
 like nothing happened.

Lynne folds her arms.

SLESSOR (cont'd)
 I shot at it. Chased it. And then--
 it came out right down by the gas
 station at Halsted and County Road
 Nine. People all over. You didn't
 hear about this?

Lynne shakes her head.

SLESSOR (cont'd)
 I find that surprising. Considering
 you were there.

FLASH TO: Slessor peers over the hood of his truck. Watches on as Lynne talks to the monster.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

As carefully as he can, Gary sneaks to his bedside. Reaches underneath. Pulls out the RIFLE. He nestles the butt into his shoulder and starts for the stairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

The tenor of the room has changed. Lynne shifts.

SLESSOR

I thought to myself, it's so strange. Here I meet these neighbors I hardly ever see. Then all of a sudden, there you are in town... talking to a monster.

(beat)

Then I remembered your door.

FLASH TO: BB licks Slessor's hand. Muted chatter from Gary. Slessor looks past him, locked on to Caleb's bedroom door...

NOW: The door. Slessor stares at it...

Turns to face Lynne.

SLESSOR (cont'd)

Your blinds. Your fence. "Now why in the world would they need all that," I said to myself.

Lynne grips the counter top.

LYNNE

I work the night shift. Slightest bit of sunlight and I can't sleep a wink.

EZRA

Oh bull-shit.

Slessor holds up a hand to silence him.

SLESSOR

Oh well then I apologize.

LYNNE

What for?

SLESSOR
For keeping you awake.

Dew droplets form on Slessor's untouched glass of iced tea.

LYNNE
Is there something specific I can
help you with?

SLESSOR
My boy... he's in the hospital from
that thing.

FLASH TO: Aaron, unconscious in a darkened hospital bed. The rhythmic BEEP of an EKG...

NOW: Slessor glowers.

SLESSOR (cont'd)
I wanna know where it is, Mrs. Clark.

Lynne's blood runs cold. A tense silence follows...

...interrupted by the slightest CREAK from above.

Slessor looks to Shane, who NODS. Gun at the ready, he spins to the base of the stairs--

EMPTY.

REVERSE ON:

Gary, pressed into the wall atop the steps. CURSES himself.

Down below, Shane starts to climb...

KITCHEN:

Slessor turns to Ezra.

SLESSOR (cont'd)
Open that door.

Ezra starts toward it--

LYNNE
Wait!

They look.

LYNNE (cont'd)
That-- that's my son's room.

CALEB:

Ear pressed to the door, Caleb listens:

LYNNE (O.S.)
Please leave him out of this.

BEDROOM:

Gary measures his breath as Shane CREAKS each step. Gary slips his finger onto the trigger...

KITCHEN:

Slessor stares into Lynne's eyes, trying to find the truth.

Finally:

SLESSOR
Open it.

LYNNE
NO!

Ezra steps forward. LYNNE steps in his path. He shoves her aside. Grabs the metal handle--

BEDROOM:

Shane is nearly at the top. Gary readies himself and SPINS--

Shane knocks the barrel aside -- *BANG!* -- and the shot fires into the wall.

Shane grabs the barrel-- YANKS--

KITCHEN:

Ezra, Slessor, and Lynne watch the kitchen wall that lines the staircase--

wuh-thump-wuh-thump-wuh-thump--

--as Gary TUMBLES and SLAMS directly into the wall.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Gary!

She runs to him. Falls to his side.

GARY
(through pain)
I'm alright.

Beside them, Shane scoops up the tranq rifle.

BASEMENT:

Caleb sits on the top step with his back to the door. He's still listening, but his eyes are closed.

FLASH TO: *Monster Caleb is shot in the shoulder--*

NOW: Caleb breathes through the memories. Focused.

FLASH TO: *AARON'S FACE in the middle distance. We gallop toward it. His fear grows--*

NOW: Caleb shakes his head. Sweats.

FLASH TO: *Monster Caleb backhands Aaron--*

KITCHEN:

Lynne looks back at Slessor, desperate.

LYNNE

I'm sorry for whatever happened to your boy, truly I am. But that monster is gone and it's not coming back.

SLESSOR

We'll see.

Shane grabs the door handle. EZRA ushers Lynne and Gary further into the kitchen and out of the way.

Slessor stands. Aims his PISTOL at the door...

Shane opens it. Quickly mounts his rifle as the door swings open revealing...

...CALEB, hands raised.

EZRA

It's just a kid.

LYNNE

I told you.

Shane grabs Caleb by the arm. Yanks him into the kitchen.

Slessor lowers his weapon.

SLESSOR

Are you okay, son?

Lynne watches on. Calculates in her mind. Then--

--she CHARGES--

SHOULDERS into the metal door. It SLAMS into Shane. He stumbles inward. Slessor and Ezra SHOUT--

Shane SCREAMS-- the door SLAMS onto his hand. Gun CLATTERS to the floor. Lynne shoulders the door again--

There's a CRUNCH and--

Whump-thump-THUMP--

Shane tumbles down the stairs.

Gary comes up with his TRANQ RIFLE and FIRES--

Slessor slumps over the kitchen table.

Lynne turns, breath heavy, and her eyes go WIDE--

LYNNE

Caleb!

--as Ezra backs out the porch door with a rifle held clumsily to Caleb's temple--

EZRA

Don't FUCKING move!

But Lynne does move-- helplessly drawn after her son with hands raised. Gary pushes to his feet.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Ezra drags Caleb backward one step at a time. Closer to the steps. Closer to SUNLIGHT.

Lynne catches the screen door. Holds up her hands again.

LYNNE

Please... he's a child.

He hits the top step...

EZRA

I'm not lettin' him go.

The second step...

EZRA (cont'd)

I'm not lettin' him go until MY UNCLE
AND COUSIN ARE OUTSIDE AND IN THE
GODDAMN TRUCK!

The ground. One more step until sunlight...

Caleb locks eyes with Lynne: *Mom. It's okay.*

Ezra steps back, ready to drag Caleb back with him when
A SYRINGE PLUNGES INTO HIS NECK.

He collapses. BRENDA stands over him.

Lynne pulls Caleb back into shadow.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - DUSK

BOOTS drag across the porch. Bounce against each step. Shane's unconscious body is leaned against his uncle and cousin, the three of them in a heap of limbs in the grass.

Lynne and Brenda stand, wipe sweat from their brows.

Lynne heads back inside.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Lynne crosses to Caleb's door--

LYNNE

Caleb!

--opens the door--

LYNNE (cont'd)

Finish packing. We're gone as soon as
the sun's down.

Caleb looks up from a duffel bag -- PETEY the Penguin and several National Geographic magazines visible. Nods.

Lynne continues upstairs--

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK

--where Gary sits on the end of the bed rubbing his leg. She ignores him at first. Pops into the BATHROOM, peeks into her dresser drawer. Last looks.

She steps into the closet--

GARY

Lynne.

--walks past him. Back down the stairs.

GARY (cont'd)
Lynne.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Lynne is already halfway out the door by the time Gary hobbles to the bottom of the stairs.

GARY
Lynne goddammit--

LYNNE
They are going to wake up. They will be back with more men, and more guns. Wanting to know where we've gone.

GARY
(beat)
Then you'd better not tell me.

Gary looks up at his wife. He comes by his stoicism honestly, but Lynne's is born of anger. She juts out her chin.

LYNNE
Wanna make yourself useful? Drop those assholes back at their farm.

She turns out the door.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Night has fallen. Caleb shoulders his duffel out the door and across the porch. Stops when he catches his DAD out of the corner of his eye.

Gary stands at the porch railing, staring into the distance.

Caleb hesitates. Then:

CALEB
It was me, wasn't it?
(Gary looks)
Your leg.

Gary looks at his son. Shields a painful memory--

GARY
You take care of your mother.

--and heads inside.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Lynne clanks the rusted 10-foot gate closed. Climbs back into the truck.

Brenda pulls the truck into the two-lane highway.

In Lynne's rear view mirror, the TOP of the farmhouse peeks out from over the fence... getting smaller...

...and smaller...

...until it's gone.

INT. BRENDA'S RANCH - NIGHT

KEYS JINGLE. A door opens into the KITCHEN of a ranch-style home. Lights flip on. Brenda leads Lynne and Caleb inside. The house eschews kitschy farm decor in favor of clean minimalism. Brenda mostly lives in the greenhouse.

BRENDA

Make yourselves at home. Afraid I don't have metal blinds, but I taped off the curtains in the last bedroom on the right. Black out, of course.

Caleb is fascinated: it's the first home he's ever been in other than his own.

LYNNE

Thank you, Brenda.

BRENDA

My pleasure.

Lynne looks at her friend full of gratitude.

BRENDA (PRE-LAP)

No matter what he did, he could not get this bull to move.

INT. BRENDA'S RANCH - LATER

Lynne, Brenda, and Caleb sit around the remains of an elaborate dinner -- spinach salad, fish, WINE. Fancy by their standards. Brenda is animated:

BRENDA

I swear to you, this animal did not move for sixteen hours. Roddy thought it had died standing up.

(MORE)

BRENDA (cont'd)
He yelled at it, brought the dogs.
Finally, he drove out the tractor.

LYNNE
Oh he did not.

BRENDA
He was going to drag it back to the pen if he had to. So he hooks it up to this cart he'd made, chains and the whole bit, and that's when he saw it. Right next to the bull... a massive bush of marijuana.

Lynne loses it.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Damn thing had eaten half the bush!
He wasn't dead, he was higher than a redwood.

LYNNE
(through tears)
Was it yours?

BRENDA
I cannot confirm or deny any prior knowledge of the plant in question.

The women CACKLE. Caleb looks between them, confused. They gradually regain their composure. Then--

CALEB
What's marijuana?

--lose it again. Tears.

CALEB (cont'd)
What?

BRENDA
Oh!

Brenda CLAPS, surprising her guests.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Can I show you two something?

CUT TO:

OVERHEAD LIGHTS THUNK ON

over an oasis of plants and flowers under a glass roof.

INT. GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

Caleb enters first, in awe. Unsure where to look. Decides on a group of purple, pine-cone-like blooms.

BRENDA
Echium fastuosum. Native to Portugul.

He steps further in. Touching leaves. Smelling blooms. Each one a fascination; a friend.

Brenda and Lynne share a look: *This is good.*

CALEB
You collected all these yourself?

BRENDA
Yes. Or traded.
(conceding)
Conspicuously borrowed, in some cases.

CALEB
It's incredible.

BRENDA
And yet-- not even the incredible thing I wanted to show you.

She starts toward the far end of the greenhouse. Caleb and Lynne catch up to her, as she takes something out of a small plastic cage. Turns with it in her hands.

Lynne GASPS. Caleb's not sure how to react.

The thing is a small plant, bonsai-like, except... the thing is also a RAT.

Brenda gestures. Caleb cautiously puts out his hands. The rat crawls from her hands to his.

BRENDA (cont'd)
She's like you.

CALEB
How...?

BRENDA
Your blood. She's the first one to make it this far. Something about this most recent time... how long you were in your true state, your maturity, perhaps. But... well, you see.

Lynne shakes her head involuntarily: *Whatever this is -- whether it's like Caleb or not -- it should not be.*

BRENDA (cont'd)
With any luck, she's only the beginning.

Lynne casts Brenda a severe look.

EXT. BRENDA'S RANCH - DAWN

Brenda looks out into the dawn light. Nurses a beer. Her greenhouse adds strange geometry to the landscape.

Lynne drops into the opposite seat.

BRENDA
Asleep?

Lynne barely nods. There's another BEER waiting for her, but she doesn't look at it. Doesn't look at Brenda.

Brenda purses her lips: *Okay, here we go.*

BRENDA (cont'd)
I should have told you about the rats.

Lynne EXHALES her anger.

BRENDA (cont'd)
It wasn't my intention, Lynne. It really did start with me taking his blood for all the normal reasons. To be his doctor. But he is not a normal patient. And so I got curious. If the results hadn't been so-- well, you saw it. How could I ignore that?

LYNNE
It's not your blood to do what you will with.

BRENDA
And it's not yours either.

LYNNE
No.

She finally looks over.

LYNNE (cont'd)
It's Caleb's.

Brenda takes a breath. Knows she was too aggressive.

BRENDA

Caleb is more special than he
realizes. More special than any of us
realize--

LYNNE

I know exactly how special he is.

Lynne stands.

LYNNE (cont'd)

He and I leave first thing after
sundown. And if you don't kill the
rat... I will.

The door SLAMS.

EXT. ROADSIDE DITCH - DAWN

Headlights lead Gary's truck into roadside gravel. Go dark.

Gary climbs from the idle cab. Grabs his tranq rifle. Limps
around the truck to the TARP-COVERED cab...

...but slows at the sound of MUFFLED MOANS from beneath.

GARY

I'd rather leave you boys here with
no trouble. But if you give me any,
I'll have to put you out again.

He yanks off the tarp-- scrambles to aim his weapon and--

GARY (cont'd)

Jesus Christ.

SLESSOR, EZRA, and SHANE are tied up and gagged in a row,
but something is wrong. Shane is AWAKE, GROANING and pushing
far as he can into the truck wall, far as he can away from

EZRA... or... at least... where Ezra should be.

A MANGLED BUNCH OF ROOTS have enveloped him -- no... no,
they are him. Grow out of him, through him-- with none of
the organization of Caleb's growths. Chaotic and painful.

Ezra is the second source of the moaning. He's alive.

And suffering.

INT. BRENDA'S RANCH - NIGHT

The long back hallway. Closed doors. Lynne emerges from one of them, hair still wet from a recent shower. KNOCKS on one of the other closed doors.

LYNNE

Caleb? Time to get up, sweetheart,
we've gotta hit the road.

No answer.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Caleb?

She grabs the handle to open it--

CALEB

Down here.

--Caleb appears at the end of the hall, leaned back in a dining chair. Lynne starts toward him.

INT. BRENDA'S RANCH - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Caleb and Brenda are at the kitchen table, mid-breakfast.

CALEB

You want eggs, Mom? They're good.

Lynne walks past them for the cupboards.

LYNNE

No. Thank you. I'm gonna make us sandwiches for the road.

(pulling out supplies)

We can make it pretty deep into Wisconsin by dawn. Figure we should cross the border somewhere remote, like North Dakota. Less likely to get held up.

Lynne glances over and back-- then back again. They're staring at her.

LYNNE (cont'd)

What?

CALEB

Mom...

Lynne sets down a knife.

LYNNE

What?

Caleb hesitates. Appeals to Brenda, who nods. Finally--

CALEB

I'm not going.

Lynne SCOFFS. Goes back to sandwich making:

LYNNE

Yeah right.

CALEB

I'm not.

LYNNE

That's not an option.

CALEB

I don't want to hide anymore.

Lynne can't hear this. Won't. Points the knife at Brenda:

LYNNE

What did you tell him?

CALEB

It wasn't her decision, Mom--

LYNNE

Are you going to be responsible for
what happens?

CALEB

It was mine.

Lynne looks at him. A silence passes.

CALEB (cont'd)

It was one thing when I didn't think
there was a world out there. Now that
I know there is...

LYNNE

There are a million other men just
like that. A billion. What happens
when they find you?

Lynne chokes on a SOB. Caleb is there at once.

CALEB

Mom...

LYNNE
What happens?

He tries to comfort her. Look into her eyes.

CALEB
You see what it's like out there.
Aunt B thinks-- maybe I can do
something about it. Help fix it.

Lynne SOBS anew. *Stupid boy. Stupid, brave boy.*

CALEB (cont'd)
Mom... come on.

LYNNE
I just-- I need a minute.

Trying to hold it together, Lynne barges out the front door.
Caleb stands in the resulting vacuum, full of conflict.
Returns to his seat. Stares at his plate.

BRENDA
You did well, Caleb. That was very
brave.

Caleb nods. Plays with his fork until--

CLICK-- Lynne is back in the doorway. With Brenda'S HANDGUN.

LYNNE
Caleb. I need you to go get your
things.

CALEB
What? Mom, I--

LYNNE
NOW.

With a GRUNT, Caleb starts to get up--

But Brenda holds an arm across his chest. Stares down Lynne.

BRENDA
What is it you think you're entitled
to? Hmm? You think because he
happened to land in your backyard --
because of cosmic coincidence -- you
get to decide what happens to him?

LYNNE
No. I get to decide because I'm his
mother.

BRENDA

Ah. For thirteen years you kept him locked in a basement. For fifteen years, maintained the charade of family life with an ever-expanding /lie--

LYNNE

/I did what I had to do to /protect--

BRENDA

/AND NOW you're willing to continue that charade at gunpoint.

Lynne rocks on her feet. Shoulders heave--

BRENDA (cont'd)

You're not his mother. You're his warden.

Her words pierce straight to Lynne's soul. She looks at Caleb, who averts his eyes. The gun lowers...

LYNNE

Is it really what you want?
To stay here with her?

He doesn't move. Then he NODS, never looking up.

CUT TO:

LYNNE'S FACE

Grief stricken. In a trance as she walks down--

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

In the dark. Alone.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gary sits at the kitchen table. One-thousand-yard stare--
--that's BROKEN as the front door opens behind him.

GARY

Lynne?

Gary stands so fast, his cane CLATTERS to the floor. He throws his arms around her. Lynne hugs back.

GARY (cont'd)
Thank god. Thank god you're here.

They stay in each others' comfort for a long time... until Gary's brow furrows.

GARY (cont'd)
Lynne?

He pulls back to look at her.

GARY (cont'd)
Where's Caleb?

CUT TO:

THE BONSAI RAT

It SQUEAKS. Runs along Caleb' hand.

INT. GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

Brenda pauses as she ENTERS. Watches Caleb and the rat for a moment, full of pride.

BRENDA
How are you two getting on?

CALEB
Good.

He plays with the rat, working up the will:

CALEB (cont'd)
So... what's the idea? I believe I
can help, like you said, but... how?

BRENDA
Think about it. Humans have ransacked
this planet with mass production of
fuel, with force-fed animals fattened
and made to suffer to provide
hormone-filled milk and animal by-
products to billions of addled
consumers. We poisoned the river of
creation so that we could drink more
of its offerings. But consider a
world where people make their own
food. Simply by accepting the
offering of the sun's rays. A world
of people like you. We could save
humanity from itself.

CALEB

But that's not... possible, right?

BRENDA

Maybe not all at once.

Brenda bends down and scoops up the rat.

BRENDA (cont'd)

But the first step: No more hiding.
We need you to be yourself. Your true
self. So last night was your last
time sleeping through the daylight.

CALEB

But I'll... I'll change.

BRENDA

Yes, Caleb. You will.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Two tranq rifles, boxes of tranqs in Gary's truck bed.
SLAM-- Lynne closes the gate. Leans on the edge and stews.

Gary appears. Puts his arm around her.

LYNNE

So stupid.

GARY

C'mon.

LYNNE

I saw exactly what she was up to and
I just-- left him there.

GARY

Everything we've done has been for him.
Doesn't mean we can't screw up, too.

(beat)

Let's go get him.

It takes Lynne a moment... but she nods.

LATER:

The truck pulls out from the gate. They don't bother to stop
and close it behind them.

EXT. BRENDA'S FARM - DAWN

Caleb EXHALES. He stands alone at the edge of Brenda's dead orchard, desiccated trees like rows of corpses at his back.

The sky above grows brighter. Minutes from dawn.

CALEB
Aren't you scared?

Brenda watches on from 20 yards away.

BRENDA
Do you intend to harm me?

Caleb shakes his head.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Then no. I'm not scared.

Caleb breathes. Steels himself. And then--

THE SUN crests over the horizon, its rays race past shadow to blanket the dormant orchard.

Caleb GROANS. Dark lines carve up and down his arms--

It's faster this time. Caleb's body welcomes the warm embrace of the sun.

He grows in all directions. Eyes glow GREEN--

And The Monster ROARS.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Making use of your blood is handy --
for me--

She walks toward him.

BRENDA (cont'd)
--but you've only experienced a
fraction of what you're capable of.
You can make things happen.

She's close now. The Monster flinches-- but she's not afraid, and so he isn't, either.

She pulls something from her pocket--

BRENDA (cont'd)
You can make them like you.

--a RAT. A normal rat. She offers it to him.

He takes the rat in his hands and concentrates. Feels the strength of the sun. From his hands, tiny branches reach out. Find their way into the rat.

SQUEAK-- The Monster's eyes open.

The rat lays on its side. The tiny branches pull away.

Brenda points... a heartbeat. And then the branches and leaves grow again. Not from The Monster. From the rat.

BRENDA (cont'd)

Good.

(beat)

How about something a little harder?

EXT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

A CELLAR DOOR built into the earth along the back edge of the greenhouse. Brenda leads The Monster there. Opens it:

A square of white framed by black. Sunlight illuminates

A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY, bound and gagged at the bottom of the dirt-floored cellar. DEPUTY HOLT -- the same one who saw The Monster at the gas station.

BRENDA

He got my license plate at your appearance by the gas station. Came knocking.

Moments later, Deputy Holt -- dirty and barely conscious -- is pushed to his knees in front of The Monster.

BRENDA (cont'd)

This is how we start.

The Monster looks down at the man. Then at his hands. Then at Brenda.

BRENDA (cont'd)

You can't hurt him. You're going to rescue him. Soon they'll all see that it's them who are wrong to be as they are, not you.

The deputy, meanwhile, slowly returns to consciousness, and the awareness of TREE MONSTER standing over him.

Pushing past his reluctance, The Monster reaches toward Deputy Holt. The man's eyes widen. MUFFLED SCREAMS beneath his gag as The Monster's hands engulf his face--

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK--

EXT. BRENDA'S RANCH - FRONT - DAY

DEPUTY ARMOGIDA (30s, male) stands at Brenda's front door. Waits. Peers inside. Dark. Knocks again:

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK-- No answer.

He squeezes his shoulder-mounted RADIO.

DEPUTY ARMOGIDA

This is Armogida. Doesn't look like anyone's home. I'm gonna check around back.

The radio CRACKLES and the deputy leaves the front porch.

EXT. BRENDA'S RANCH - BACK - DAY

Deputy Armogida rounds the back of the house, his firearm drawn. But there's nobody here either. No Brenda. No Monster. Only a greenhouse and a dead orchard.

Scanning, head on a swivel, he strides around the back of the greenhouse--

Nothing. He squeezes the RADIO.

DEPUTY ARMOGIDA

Yeah, there's no one here.

But then he hears a GROAN.

Immediately raises his firearm and spins--

No one. Another GROAN--

He steps cautiously toward it. Down past the end of the greenhouse... rounds the corner to find--

DEPUTY HOLT contorted into a half-tree abomination.

DEPUTY ARMOGIDA (cont'd)

Holt?

In a daze, Armogida steps toward him. Looks as though he might be sick. Limbs in contorted angles, growths through and of his fellow deputy. THE RADIO--

DEPUTY ARMOGIDA (cont'd)
This is Deputy Armogida. I need an
ambulance. And backup. I need--

A SHADOW looms behind him. Shaking, the deputy turns--
And THE MONSTER'S FIST swings down into his skull.

I/E. - GARY'S TRUCK - DAY

Gary wills his truck down a long two-lane highway at speed,
dust in its wake. Behind them

SIRENS FLARE. Lynne looks back--

LYNNE
Shit.

--and the SHERIFF'S CRUISER gains. Gary doesn't slow. The
cruiser banks into the oncoming lane--

--and SPEEDS PAST THEM.

Momentary relief... turns to fear.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Gar. Hurry.

Gary FLOORS IT.

EXT. BRENDA'S RANCH - DAY

Gary pulls into view of Brenda's house, where a DOZEN POLICE
CRUISERS are parked the lawn, half with their lights
spinning, and twice as many DEPUTIES awaiting orders.

DEPUTY THELEN emerges from inside. Reports directly to
SHERIFF MORRISON, who has just arrived.

DEPUTY THELEN
Inside's clear. No sign of Holt or
Armogida.

BRENDA (O.S.)
HELP!

All eyes turn to Brenda, who stumbles around from the side
of the house. Lynne and Gary, too, as they exit the truck.

BRENDA
HELP ME!

A nearby DEPUTY helps her to the ground.

BRENDA (cont'd)
The-- the-the-- monster. It got the
others. Back there.

SHERIFF MORRISON
I want a full sweep of the orchard!
And up-to-the-second updates over
radio. Weapons free.

As the deputies spring into action, Lynne whispers to Gary.

LYNNE
We've gotta get to him first.

Gary nods. Together, they slip around the opposite side of the house.

EXT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

Deputy Holt -- or what's left of him.

Lynne looks down at him, her hand over her mouth. She shakes her hand. It's too much. She turns away.

INT. GREENHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lynne steps cautiously inside.

LYNNE
Caleb?

The greenhouse feels claustrophobic alone. The Monster could be hidden anywhere.

Still, Lynne moves deeper inside until--

A GUN is pressed into her back by Brenda.

Lynne doesn't risk a fight. Holds still.

LYNNE (cont'd)
Where is he?

BRENDA
I told you already. He's in the
orchard.

Brenda pushes the gun into Lynne's back toward the door.

EXT. GREENHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Brenda guides Lynne toward the orchard.

BRENDA

If I were you I would have stayed away. But I suppose it's only fair, you being here at the beginning. I'm excited for you to watch.

LYNNE

What do you think Roddy would make of all this? Or your son?

If this stings, Brenda doesn't show it.

BRENDA

Probably not much seeing as they're both dead.

She pushes Lynne ahead.

EXT. DEAD ORCHARD - DAY

The quiet underbrush of the orchard. Dappled sunlight. Burnt orange serenity until--

A HANDGUN extends past a tree. Another. A dozen more, leading an equal number of OFFICERS deeper within, one to a row.

DEPUTY THELEN

What I'm wonderin. Is if we're supposed to read it its Miranda Rights.

The other officers CHORTLE as they march on.

ELSEWHERE:

Gary sucks wind. Leans into a dead tree to catch his breath. After a few gasps-- looks around the trunk for any sign of Caleb or the deputies.

ELSEWHERE:

Lynne is pushed to her knees between two gruesome trees. Brenda begins to tie her at the wrists and ankles.

LYNNE

If you're going to shoot me, at least let me tell him goodbye. I deserve that much.

BRENDA
I don't want to shoot you.

She stands.

BRENDA (cont'd)
I want you to accept what Caleb
really is.

ELSEWHERE:

The deputies continue their march through the orchard. Guns pointed. Heads on swivels.

SHERIFF MORRISON
Spread out. Every other row.

OFFICER THELEN
Every other row!

The officers part from the middle to cover more ground. Leaves rustle in the breeze. Dry grass crunches beneath boots. And RAINDROPS patter the Earth.

Morrison looks down at droplets, growing in intensity.

SHERIFF MORRISON
Gotta be kidding me.

Deputy Thelen continues on, feeling isolated.

He crosses one tree... then the next...

...then another that looks different somehow...

As the deputy moves past it, a SHADOW engulfs him from behind. Feeling it over him he spins--

THE MONSTER stands over him. He FIRES-- *BANG! BANG!--*

--and FLIES BACK into a tree trunk.

DEPUTIES
Shots fired! / Man down! / This way!

The other deputies descend--

ELSEWHERE:

Gary spins, aiming his tranq rifle through the rain. Finally, he can see it:

Flailing limbs and MUZZLE FLASHES--

At least three unconscious deputies. The others try and keep their distance, firing on the monster in a circle.

Gary takes aim: He has a clear shot at The Monster.

But through his eye...

The Monster is hurt. Spins in a circle. Scared.

The officers move in on him, firing freely. Finally Gary--
--shifts his aim and SHOOTS AT A DEPUTY. He collapses.

Searches for the next one. BANG!

Another. The tide is turning. Four left.

Gary moves in closer. BANG! Three.

The Monster picks one up. Gary shoots another BANG! Searches for the last one, but sees The Monster ready to tear the deputy limb from limb--

GARY
HEY!

The Monster turns to him.

FLASH TO: The Monster bears down on Gary. Gary RUNS--

NOW: Gary steps closer to The Monster.

GARY (cont'd)
We don't do that.

He lowers his weapon. Drops it. Shows his palms.

The Monster turns back to the spluttering deputy--

FLASH TO: Gary is LIFTED from the Earth by his RIGHT LEG, gripped in the hand of The Monster. He swings Gary down--

GARY (O.S.)
Caleb.

NOW: Gary holds up his palms. Gestures.

The Monster... lowers the deputy... who wastes no time running. Gary and The Monster are now yards apart. Gary knows if it wanted to, it could end him in a split second.

But it doesn't.

They lock eyes in the rain...

BANG!

GARY

Aghh!

Gary falls. Grabs at his LEG as he drops.

Brenda lowers her gun, striding forward through the trees.

BRENDA

I had hoped--

--still guiding Lynne by the arm.

BRENDA (cont'd)

--today would be the day we would
revive my orchard. New trees for a
new beginning.

She pushes Lynne to her knees before The Monster.

BRENDA (cont'd)

One will have to do.

Brenda strides over, close to him. Whispers:

BRENDA (cont'd)

Change her.

LYNNE

Caleb--

BRENDA

The woman who lied to you.

She points to Lynne.

BRENDA (cont'd)

The woman who kept you locked away.

LYNNE

Caleb--

BRENDA

You don't speak!

(to Caleb)

The woman who subjugated you. Who
made you play dress up as her son
even though she knew what you were
and kept it from you. This is how we
save the world, Caleb. How we take
the bloated population of takers --
and change them into providers.

The Monster heaves. Stares straight ahead at Lynne.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Do it or I'll shoot her.

Brenda aims the gun at Lynne. Pulls the hammer.

The Monster looks from Brenda... to the gun... to Lynne...
...and steps forward.

He looms over Lynne.

LYNNE
Caleb...

The Monster reaches out with his shield-like hands. Lynne closes her eyes. Braces for the worst... The Monster--

Turns rapidly-- *BANG BANG!*-- Brenda fires on instinct, but the gun is

SLAPPED away. The Monster is on Brenda in a split second--
UV LIGHT chases The Monster off Caleb's skin. Like wind to water. He reels.

BRENDA
Perhaps... too much for one day.

She bears down on him with the UV light. He falls to his knees, changing back more with each second.

BRENDA (cont'd)
Let's try again tomorrow.

Once again, everything goes

BLACK.

FADE IN:

LYNNE'S EYES FLUTTER OPEN

and see CALEB -- a boy again.

EXT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

Lynne and Caleb are tied up side by side in the dirt. Next to the open door of the cellar.

LYNNE

Caleb?

(beat)

Caleb, do you hear me?

He barely does. She fights at her bindings. Pulls and yanks and twists-- and gets her right hand free.

But she doesn't use it to stand or fight. Or to undo any more bindings. She looks into Caleb's fluttering eyes:

LYNNE (cont'd)

Everything you need to become
yourself. It's right here.

She places her free hand over his heart. Presses.

LYNNE (cont'd)

Even in the dark.

As if in response, Brenda LIFTS Caleb by the legs and FLIPS him into the cellar. He SLAMS into the dirt floor and the cellar door CLANGS closed over him--

BRENDA

You should be proud.

Brenda hoists Lynne to her knees. Produces a SYRINGE.

BRENDA (cont'd)

You're about to help your son achieve
his purpose.

Brenda lowers the syringe. Moves toward Lynne--

LYNNE

You were wrong before.

INTERCUT:

CALEB in the cellar. He closes his eyes. Breathes--

LYNNE on her knees--

LYNNE (cont'd)

I may not have done everything right.

THE APPLE tree where Caleb slept. Its canopy is lush and green and full of bright red apples--

LYNNE (V.O.)

But being a mother is more than a
title.

CALEB concentrates. Digs deeper into his body--

Brenda glares down at Lynne--

THE WHEAT STALKS where Caleb watched the Slessors eat...
grown high and golden brown, towering over the field--

LYNNE (V.O.) (cont'd)
It's something you do.

CALEB starts to vibrate. The dirt around him LIFTS--

LYNNE looks up at Brenda, sanguine. Awaits her fate--

THE PLANTER BOX, still only dirt--

Brenda LUNGES at Lynne-- but STOPS--

Behind her, the orchard MOANS, and the trees THRUST UPWARD -- explode with new, green leaves -- from the first row and across them all, like a wave--

As Brenda watches this, dumbfounded--

THE CELLAR DOOR EXPLODES OUTWARD and--

THE MONSTER, FULLY TRANSFORMED, tackles her away.

Stillness in the aftermath. Lynne is on her side. She looks over to The Monster, who stands, revealing

Brenda, gasping, pupils pools of black...

...and the SYRINGE protruding from her own arm.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Early dawn light casts eerie shadows across hospital beds and their long, deformed doppelgangers.

Intermittent SOBS cut through the space. And soon we find her... Lynne. But she's not the one crying.

Rather, she is still. Vacant. Despondent.

Through the CURTAIN beside her, not fully drawn, she can see a woman in the next bed, convulsing with tears.

At last, Lynne notices. Watches her.

Then, wordlessly... she reaches out.

Her fingertips just reach the curtain. Push it open a few inches, rings clattering on their rod.

The woman inhales sharply. Weeping slightly abates.

Lynne simply holds her hand there, fingertips outstretched.

And then... where the curtain is parted, the woman's fingertips touch Lynne's. They stay like that...

...and at last we see her. The woman in the next bed is Brenda.

MATCH CUT TO:

LYNNE'S OUTSTRETCHED HAND

With the last of her strength, Brenda takes Lynne's hand... as vines and branches and shoots grow out of her, envelope her, and at last quiet her desperate gasps.

Her hand goes still in Lynne's grip.

CALEB

Mom!

Caleb -- a boy again -- pulls her up into an embrace. They hold each other for a long while.

CALEB (cont'd)

Do you know why I landed here? And not any other place in the universe?

Lynne pulls back to look at him, smiling:

LYNNE

Why?

CALEB

Because you're my mom.

They hug again. Then Lynne GASPS to see Gary--

LYNNE

Gar!

--limping over, bloody leg tied with his shirt. He shrugs:

GARY

I've had worse.

He joins their hug.

Caleb backs away. Lets them have their moment.

He feels the sun. Enjoys it on his skin. To be in it, without fear.

Then, he transforms again...

Not violently, or unexpectedly, but because he welcomes it. When he's finished, it's different. He and the Monster are no longer separate. He is himself.

Lynne gets close. Touches his face.

LYNNE

This will all always be home. Okay?

Caleb nods.

Lynne cries. But they're happy tears. Proud tears.

She backs away. Gary puts his arm around her.

Caleb takes a moment to gather his strength... then BOUNDS into the sky.

Lynne and Gary they watch their son arc through the air...
...and become a silhouette in the sun.

The same sun that shines down on THE PLANTER BOX...

...where a dozen small, green sprouts have breached the surface. Out of the darkness... and into the light.

FADE OUT.