

The Missing..

by

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Original Screenplay

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EXT. DEEP FOREST-DAY

A morning mist and gentle fog hold sway over all as another day begins.

A SLOW, LAPPING LAKE.

A STOIC, LARGE, REDWOOD STANDS ROBUST YET MYSTERIOUS; ITS LOWER TRUNK HOLLOW FROM AN OLD BURN APPEARS GUARDED BY FERNS.

JUST ABOVE A SMALL CREEK LAYS A TWISTED SNARL OF VINES AND SAPLINGS AKIN TO A WILD BLIND, HOME TO SOME UNKNOWN THING.

A DARK GLEN IS SURROUNDED BY TALL TREES ENVELOPED IN SHAGGY MOSS WITH GIANT BOULDERS COVERED IN SOFT DARK GREEN FURLS OF THE SAME.

GENTLE DISSOLVE INTO A LARGER ESTABLISHING SHOT, AN IMMENSE REDWOOD FOREST OVER WHICH LARGE, DARK CLOUDS APPROACH.

A 2ND SLOW DISSOLVE INTO THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE FOREST, A SMALL COMMUNITY SITS AT THE BASE OF A MOUNTAIN.

EXT. SMALL FOREST COMMUNITY-DAY

At the edge of town, a lone road leads to a single small house..

A boy, 10 years of age rides up on his bike.

Another boy pushes his bike out to meet the first.

They both ride off towards the forest.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

The boys follow a small trail into the forest when they stop above a small creek.

They drop their bikes and descend the short distance to the creek.

They collect rocks of various sizes.

They lean on a large boulder and toss the rocks into the creek.

They jump up and begin to run in opposite directions.

THE CLOUDS OVER HEAD BEGIN TO RELEASE A SLOW DRIZZLE.

One boy hears an odd sound akin to a loud, dry cricket and peers over his shoulder to speak to the other.

BOY 1
Oh, it's starting to rain already..
Should we go home?

He hears no reply when he stops and peers around for his friend.

BOY 1
Hey, where'd you go? This isn't funny
you know.

The boy takes a step up the embankment and spots the others bike still resting on its side and scratches his head.

The boy takes another look around then begins to cry out for his friend.

BOY 1
Heyyyy! Where are Youuuuu?

TRANSITION

EXT. SMALL FOREST COMMUNITY, HOUSE- DAY

The boy returns to his friends house on bike, pensive he approaches the front door.

He rings the door bell, his friends mother answers to which he solemnly looks up at her with tears in his eyes.

She peers down with concern.

FROM A DISTANCE, WE SEE THE BOY POINT TO THE FOREST.

The mother incredulous, take a step outside and immediately pulls her cell phone from her pocket and makes a frantic call.

TRANSITION

EXT. SMALL FOREST COMMUNITY-DAY

A POLICE CAR PULLS UP AND SPEAKS WITH THE MOTHER, SOON ANOTHER POLICE CAR ARRIVES.

SUNSET, A NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND VOLUNTEERS CROWD CLOSE AS THE CLOUDS GATHER ABOVE.

HEAVY AND GRAY, THE WEATHER SHIFTS INTO A DOWN POUR AS THE SMALL CROWD, THE BOY AND VOLUNTEERS ALONGSIDE THE MOTHER ALL DESCEND UPON THE FOREST.

NIGHT FALLS AS THEY FIND THE LOCATION WHERE THE BOYS WERE LAST.

THEY SEARCH THE SURROUNDING AREA BEFORE THE OFFICERS CALL IT OFF FOR THE EVENING.

SHERIFF

All right folks, Im sorry but with this weather we cant find any scent or tracks.

He drops his head then gestures a circle above his head.

SHERIFF

We're gonna have to call this off till the morning.

The mothers face is filled with a look of pure dread.

MOTHER

But my son, he's still out here. All alone and cold.

SHERIFF

I'm very sorry Ma'am. There's not much else we can do at this point.

She peers around then reaches for the Sheriff and clenches his shoulder.

MOTHER

No, we have to stay here or have someone out here in case he shows up.

SHERIFF

I know how you feel ma'am.

He places his hand on top of hers.

SHERIFF

I'm gonna have an officer post by the trail at the edge of the forest all night, okay.

The Sheriff speaks up loud so all can hear.

SHERIFF

We'll all be back to resume the search
at first light.

EXT. SMALL FOREST COMMUNITY, HOUSE-NIGHT

The mother stands out front her home as the officers climb
back in their patrol cars and leave.

She's soaked, her hands shake and are filled with tissues.
She watches the last car pulls away then turns her head and
stares into the forest that surround her home.

EXT. WOODS-DAY

[Opening Credits]

A VIEW FROM ABOVE THE FOREST AS A FOG ROLLS IN.

PUSH OVER THE FERNS AND THE MOSS OF THE FOREST FLOOR.

A LONE, YELLOW SLUG SLOWLY CROSSES A GIANT FALLEN REDWOOD.

TIME LAPSE- LOW, TILT UP/ PEER UP, AT THE IMMENSE CANOPY OF
REDWOODS AS THE STORM OF DARK CLOUDS FLY OVER.

DEEP IN THE FOREST, A DEER NIBBLES AT THE GROUND COVER. ITS
SPOOKED BY AN UNFAMILIAR SOUND, PEERS UP THEN GALLOPS AWAY.

RAIN BEGINS TO FALL ON THE FOREST, THE DROPLETS CAUSE SMALL
RIPPLES TO SPREAD ACROSS THE SURFACE OF A CREEK.

AN VAST EXPANSE OF COASTAL REDWOOD FOREST STRETCHES ON FOR
MILES, THE FOG AND RAIN TAKE HOLD.

PULL BACK SLOWLY INTO A WS OF THE INNER FOREST. UNDER A TREE
RESTS A WEATHERED BACKPACK AND A PAIR OF BOOTS, ONE ON ITS
SIDE.

ESTABLISHING SHOT OF A SMALL TOWN AT THE BASE OF A MOUNTAIN.

A WEEK HAS GONE BY, A REPORTER AND A CAMERA MAN RECORD
COVERAGE FOR AN UPDATE ON THE "STILL" MISSING LITTLE BOY.

TRANSITION

INT. CABIN-DAY

An old Television broadcasts a report of the "Missing" boy on
the 4 O'Clock News.

T.V. WEATHER REPORTER
 What was forecast to be a fairly
 moderate fall day appears to be
 turning for the worst.

A young man in head to toe camouflage approaches.

T.V. WEATHER REPORTER (CONT'D)
 Meteorologists say they cant account
 for the freak storm that appears to be
 forming in the northern altitudes this
 afternoon.

A woman enters the house from outside, dressed in normal
 civilian clothing.

WOMAN
 Okay, I got dad and all his things
 packed in the back with him in the
 truck.

The Young man turns off the T.V.

WOMAN
 You got everything you need?

He peers around then reaches for his gloves off the counter.

YOUNG MAN
 That's what I came back in for!

He pockets them in his Camouflage jacket.

The Woman smiles and takes a step closer to him.

WOMAN
 Be careful out there and do me a favor
 will you Zack?

ZACK
 Sure mom, what's that?

WOMAN
 Please help out with your grandfather.
 You know, help him into the tree stand
 and everything.

ZACK
 Of course mom.

WOMAN

This is probably his last time going out with y'all, so try to enjoy it.

The young man warms into a smile.

ZACK

We will mom. I love you. Im sure we'll call you on the road.

WOMAN

Alright, thank you.

The young man hugs his mother then makes for the door and heads out.

EXT. FRONT DRIVEWAY -DAY

Zack joins two other men in their forties.

seated in the rear passenger with the door open and one foot out is Grandpa, strong willed yet quiet and in his more senior years.

They all stand around the rear of the vehicle as the young man approaches.

DAD

Got em'?

The young man briskly lifts the gloves from his pockets and shakes them.

ZACK

Yup.

DAD

Good, good. Your Uncle Frank thinks it's just a passing weather anomaly.

UNCLE FRANK

The forecast didn't say anything about a storm.

DAD

It's looking more and more like it's sticking around.

Dad looks to Uncle, aloof he shrugs it off.

DAD

Alright everyone, let's roll.

Dad closes the rear trunk and the three of them each find their side and climb in.

The vehicle's back up lights brighten, the SUV reverses out the driveway.

The vehicle shifts gears then drives off, a gust blows strong on the leaves of the trees.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY-DAY

A gray over cast sky clouds the sunset.

Rain falls in the far distance as they turn off onto a quiet highway that heads up and into the mountains.

DISSOLVE

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY-NIGHT

Night falls as does the rain, inside everyone stares ahead and past the windshield wipers.

EXT. DEAD END DIRT ROAD-NIGHT

The vehicle comes a slow stop and parks.

One by one they each slowly climb from the vehicle.

Time passes as they lift the trunk, remove and set up a pop up canopy complete with side walls, a few folding chairs and table, lanterns and finally rifles.

ZACK

It's a good thing we got a little
break in the rain, we almost missed
the turn off.

Uncle Frank makes hot water for coffee on a single burner gas stove.

UNCLE FRANK

We've been coming here for years, the
three of us..

Grandpa and the two brothers exchange warm nods.

UNCLE FRANK

Still in the dark with rain, it would
have been really tough to find.

Zack peers to each anxious.

ZACK

Then what would we have done.

Grandpa and Uncle Frank grow subtle smiles at each other
before they look to Zack's father.

DAD

Don't fret Son. There's an easy answer
to that one.

ZACK

Good, I didn't want to miss out on
this one with ya'll. Especially with
you here grandpa!

Again Grandpa and Uncle Frank exchange warm smiles, this time
dad joins in.

Another beat passes, impatient and innocent Zack pushes for
the answer.

ZACK

So, what is it?

DAD

Mile marker 13.

ZACK

What?

Uncle Frank removes a French press and coffee grounds from a
felt grocery bag on the table. He then pours some grounds
into the press.

DAD

It's the only dirt county road on the
left, just a ways after mile marker
13.

Zack quiets and thinks to him self.

ZACK

That's why you told me, when I started
driving. Pay attention to the mile
markers when you can.

DAD
Thats one of 'em.

Uncle Frank spots the water start to boil.

UNCLE FRANK
Yup, Ive broke down on the highway
outside of town once.

DAD
Me too.

They all turn in grandpa's direction

GRANDPA
(Ahem)
Myself as well. Only in my day, you
either had to ask a trucker to radio
help or you prayed you were on a
highway with an emergency phone likely
still miles away.

Uncle Frank nods and continues his statement.

UNCLE FRANK
Luckily, I had caught a mile marker
about 5 minutes prior. So I told the
tow truck I was somewhere about 5
minutes past the so & so marker. He
found me, no problem!

Uncle Frank turns off the stove, removes the water and pours
it into the French Press.

ZACK
Oh okay, cool. Good to know!

Dad nods.

DAD
Yup.

After a gentle Press, Uncle Frank passes out mugs of fresh,
hot coffee to each.

UNCLE FRANK
Okay Well. How's about we go over the
plan of attack for this evening.

Grandpa nods and passes a gentle smile at Zack.

DAD
Good idea. Let's.

UNCLE FRANK
I was able to make it up earlier this week so I did get that tree stand installed.

DAD
Oh you did, great. Thanks

ZACK
Of course

DAD
Did you remember to make it a little lower.

ZACK
I did the best I could.

Dad Nods as does grandpa.

GRANDPA
I'm sure it'll be fine, as long as Zack doesn't mind helping me into the tree stand.

ZACK
(Chuckles)
Of course grandpa.

DAD
Great, that's what we'll do then. Put grandpa in the tree stand on the opposite side.

Dad gestures with his arm fully extended in a point.

Grandpa and grandson look at each and roll eyes.

DAD
The three of us will retrace our steps back to this side and equidistant to each other.

He thumbs over one shoulder.

DAD
We'll all line up on the hill side and wait.

UNCLE FRANK

We'll make some calls to lure them in.
If we get one, we'll close in on it
and hopefully flush them grandpa's
direction.

DAD

(Hmm..)

Pretty sure they'll steer clear of
camp and right into grandpa's hands.

GRANDPA

That's the plan anyways, nothing new
except how much help I'll be.

UNCLE FRANK

Dad we're just happy you came.

Dad and Zach nod.

Grandpa smiles but shakes his head sideways.

GRANDPA

More like how much help I'll need.

Zack cant suppress it no matter how much he tries and bursts
into a laugh.

DAD

Zack.

UNCLE FRANK

My father is dealing with end of life
issues here and your having a laugh at
his expense.

Grandpa's face goes long.

Dad eye brows raise and mouth drops open.

GRANDPA

Yea, well. Now I see why y'all brought
me out here- to leave me in a tree.

This time grandpa elbows Zack in the side.

Zack buckles under the last one and falls to his knees in
laughter.

ZACK
(Heavy laughter)
Bwah!

Dad, Uncle Frank and Grandpa join in on the laugh.

Zack attempts to get ahold of himself but waves off another fit.

Dad pants him on the back.

Uncle Frank wraps an arm around his father's shoulder and gives him a wry, pained smile.

Grandpa winks and returns a subtle smile.

DISSOLVE

EXT. FOREST, TREE STAND-NIGHT

A half moon rises on the horizon.

Time lapse- Clouds swirl and release a short sprinkle before they blow over the mountain when another round of clouds enter.

The four men descend a path in the rut of the hillside to approach a small meadow with a large oak tree.

Grandpa hands his rifle to Uncle Frank, circles the tree stand as Zack stops near the base of the stand.

Dad hovers near.

Grandpa takes a step near the bottom of the tree.

He gauges the lowest step of the ladder attached to the tree stand with his arm extended and nods.

Zack takes another step closer himself and braces against the tree.

ZACK
I got you grandpa.

Zack half drops to one knee one arm around the tree, the free hand he extends towards Grandpa.

DAD
Right behind you as well dad.

Grandpa grips his hand to the lowest rung and takes a slow step onto his grand sons thigh.

Zack looks up at his Grand father with pride, when Grandpa glances down he nods back at him.

GRANDPA

I remember when I used to do this by myself.

Dad and Zack offer a knowing glance.

DAD

It's all good dad, you're doing fine.

GRANDPA

Yea, well you just make sure you keep your hand off my butt.

Zack grins and shakes his head at Dad.

Grandpa raises his other hand higher and attempts to lift his first foot on the the lowest step of the ladder.

GRANDPA

(Grumbles)

Get up there, I don't need this to get any more embarrassing!

Grandpa half stumbles the second foot approach onto the ladder.

Zack and dad both attempt to support Grandpa with out touching his ass.

Grandpa gives a fast glance down at them.

GRANDPA

Hey now!

Zack again near bursts into laughter.

GRANDPA

What did I just tell you!

DAD

Dad stop!

Zack cant hold on and lets another round of laughter out.

ZACK

Grandpa stop! Im not gonna be able to help you if you do fall. I'll be too busy laughing.

Zack waves his free hand in the air.

ZACK

Plus you're gonna make me scare away any hopes of a buck walking into our site tonight.

GRANDPA

Awe, you're all no fun!

Granda waves a barely free hand at them then slowly he resumes up the ladder two more steps.

Grandpa soon finds his way into the seat in the tree stand built in the crown of the tree.

Uncle Frank moves closer and hands the rifle to Dad, in turn he hands it carefully up to Grandpa.

UNCLE FRANK

You good dad?

GRANDPA

Yup, just fine.

ZACK

Sure you don't want me to hang out with ya down here?

Grandpa waives them off.

GRANDPA

How's about y'all don't worry about me and let's get this show on the road.

Zack lifts his eye brows at Dad and Uncle Frank.

DAD

Alright then dad if you have your radio, we'll check in every thirty minutes.

Grandpa moves a bit above to situate himself and his rifle.

ZACK
Check back in a bit grandpa.

GRANDPA
Y'all be careful.

UNCLE FRANK
Alright dad.

Dad waves to Grandpa.

The three men return across the small meadow and back up the rut in the hill side.

IN THE PERIPHERAL HIGH IN THE SKY ABOVE, A GLOWING WHITE LIGHT PARALLEL'S THEM UP THE MOUNTAIN SIDE.

EXT. HIGHER MOUNTAIN SIDE-NIGHT

A SKINNY STRETCH OF MEADOW IS SURROUNDED BY THICKETS OF TREES AND BUSHES.

A MOON RISES ABOVE THE MOUNTAINS BRIGHTENS THE DARKNESS.

All appears still and quiet, a hunting blind is hidden next to a tree nearby.

Behind it sits Uncle Frank, he blinks at the increase in moonlight.

Next he leans to see the moon then pulls back his camouflage sleeve and checks his watch.

Uncle Frank peers across and down the ridge at his brother.

Dad stares out attentive to the sounds in the distance, it takes him a beat before he feels his brothers stare.

He nods at his younger brother, in turn Uncle Frank taps at his wrist then holds up two hands totaling 10 fingers and silently mouths the same.

UNCLE FRANK
(Mute)
Ten o' clock

Uncle Frank nods at the moon rise and gives a thumbs up.

Dad looks up and spots the moon rise, peers out and around at the more noticeable details in the darkness.

Farthest down the ridge Zack takes notice of his families movement beneath the moon light.

Over his shoulder an owl **hoot's**, a second later a small stick cracks.

Zack's squints his eyes and slowly turns to face the sounds.

Back up the mountains side Dad and Uncle Frank both stop and turn toward the sound.

Another sound is heard as something pushes through the brush, a white spotted doe presses further into the clearing.

She stops, sniffs at the air then caulks her head in a number of directions.

After a beat she takes more steps forward.

Zack recognizes its a female deer and sighs, a little too loud.

The doe hears Zack's exhale, it quickly snaps its ears and eyes in his direction.

Dad spots the doe, Uncle Frank spies from a distance poised over his rifle his brow to the scope, he relaxes.

A rifle shot **cracks** across the quiet mountain in the night.

The Doe turns and immediately springs off in the opposite direction.

Zack stands up and throws a curious look at his father.

Uncle Frank and Dad rise from their positions.

Dad steps from his cover, Uncle Frank too.

Uncle Frank & Dad in a sprint converge with Zack.

Thunder **crackles** over head.

The Radio lights up with a Channel 02 on its display in green, Dad presses firmly at the side button and puts the radio to his mouth.

He stops and listens as he lifts it toward his ear.

A second later he puts it back to his mouth slowly.

DAD
Pops you there, over?

He lifts the radio.

Another volley of thunder sounds, a slow rain begins to fall.

DAD
Hey Pops?

A curious expression turns to worried on Dad's face.

DAD
Are you alright, over?

Dad looks to Uncle Frank, he raises his brows back at Dad.

They both nod to each other.

UNCLE FRANK
(Clears throat)
Let's move then

All three turn toward the tree stand and make off into the misty tree line.

EXT. FOREST, TREE STAND-NIGHT

The three men descend the same lower clearing towards the tree stand.

Each slows as they approach the tree stand, Zack takes his last steps only a few feet away from the tree.

Uncle Frank is close behind Zack.

Dad stops several feet away and appears to take heed that Grandpa is not in the tree stand first.

He carefully scans the area when he spots grandpa's rifle set against the tree. His eyes dart about the surroundings for clues of any kind.

DAD
(Quietly)
Stop right there.

Zack stops and peers around, Uncle Frank worriedly turns to look at Dad.

DAD

Try not to move around too much. I'm trying to spot his tracks.

Zack stops and stands erect, Uncle Frank peers around the base of the tree from where he's at.

UNCLE FRANK

Thats just it.

Zack looks to Uncle Frank perplexed.

Uncle frank removes a small flash light from a pocket within the chest of his jacket and clicks it on.

DAD

What?

Uncle frank shines the light all around the base of the tree and out ward in the obvious directions.

UNCLE FRANK

I don't see anything.

ZACK

There, behind the tree on the ground is Grandpa's boot.

Uncle Frank and Dad both step forward.

UNCLE FRANK

What the..

Dad pulls his flashlight out and clicks it on.

Uncle Frank leans down and picks up the boot, its untied otherwise undamaged.

Dad shines the flash light around the base of the tree near where the boot lays.

DAD

There's got to be some foot prints here somewhere?

Zack peers to his Dad worried.

Dad takes a few steps closer and points his light down at the ground and at the base of the tree where one and a half boot

prints remain from when Grandpa approached the tree stand.

Zack looks to his father for any indications.

Behind him Uncle Frank shines his flash light back up the tree, soon followed by dad's Beam of light.

When Uncle Frank incidentally shines his own further into the canopy, a noise is heard.

Something moves through the canopy, several leaves fall when a tree branch cracks.

From the same vicinity an odd insect like **clicking** is heard.

The three men's attention is drawn, they each listen intent.

UNCLE FRANK

What the fuck was that?

Zack is obviously frightened by the sounds, he stands rigid and fixed.

DAD

What ever that was doesn't matter,
only that we find Pops!

Zack slowly peers at his father.

ZACK

Dad, where is Grandpa?

Zack shines his light back at the tree.

DAD

I don't know but we're gonna' find
him.

UNCLE FRANK

How do you propose we do that?

DAD

I'm not.. entirely sure.

He shines his light around at the nearest perimeter of trees.

DAD

We'll split up yet stay within eye
sight and ear shot of each other.

Zack nods back at his father and glances to Uncle Frank, he

sighs and wipes the rain from his eyes and face.

DAD

Just keep your eyes out for foot
prints, tracks, blood, the other boot!
Hell anything at this point.

UNCLE FRANK

Yea, Okay.

Uncle Frank nods his head but appears to feign any hope.

Dad raises his eye brows and nods to Zack.

DAD

We'll find him. If we have any
problem, we'll leave camp for him but
go to the authorities for help in
thirty to forty five minutes, okay.

Zack fights back tears and to dips his chin then lifts his
head so he can help with the search.

ZACK

Okay.

They each dawn flash lights and break off into the
surrounding forest.

DAD

(Raises voice)

Pops!

Uncle Frank quickly makes it for the tree line, frantic he
scans high and low with his flash light.

UNCLE FRANK

Pops!.. Where are You?

Zack's take several feet in his own direction then cups his
hands to his mouth.

ZACK

GrandPa!..

He takes a second step to his left.

ZACK

Grandpa!

TRANSITION

EXT. AIRBNB CABIN-DAY

The sun breaks through openings in the clouds.

A large, quiet, cabin is surrounded by various sizes of redwoods. 2 vehicles crowd the driveway.

INT.AIR BNB CABIN-DAY

Inside the door shoes and boots line the entry way.

A jumbled line of suitcases stagger from the door to the kitchen.

Cheerful voices are heard from around the corner.

INT. AIRBNB CABIN, LIVING ROOM-DAY

Five long time friends in their early thirties, shuffle into a large living room with vaulted ceilings and large windows.

BEN

Huh, Eh? Not bad, eh!

THE GROUP

Awe. Awe!

One amongst them leads the group.

Ben pushes past the living room and towards the French doors that open out onto the back of the cabin.

BEN

I've only seen photos of this place.

Been peers around.

BEN

It looked epic!

May a quiet, perceptive and intelligent young lady circles the couch and reaches for the remote from the coffee table.

She points the remote, the television comes to life.

BEN

..I couldn't wait for us all to find out together.

May pushes a second button, the volume instantly drops to barely audible.

She clicks to the menu, finds the local news channel and pushes enter.

Everyone steps closer to the back doors, the pleasant day outside and Ben beckon them further.

The T.V shows a news broadcast with an "*Update on a Missing Hunter*", that vanished several weeks ago.

NEWS ANCHOR

A Mystery surrounds the body that was finally discovered in a previously searched area.

May follows the group outside.

NEWS V.O.

"There were no signs of animal predation. The coroners office reports the cadaver showed signs of advanced aging".

EXT. AIRBNB CABIN, REAR PORCH- DAY

The group of friends all step onto a wrap around wood deck.

It's complete with Bbq grill, a large glass table and chairs, dart board and spiral staircase down to the back yard.

They each cross the porch to find their own vantage of the dense, fern clustered meadows beneath the forest of towering trees.

BEN

I'm glad to admit, this place is even more incredible than I imagined.

Kim and Ryan approach Ben.

KIM

You did good Ben. This place is.. amazing!

Kim a pretty, bubbly, young woman is the first to proudly descend the steps in to the quaint back yard.

KIM

(Chuckles)

Hah. This is quite something!

Ryan, an introverted yet witty individual stops and puts his hand on Ben's shoulder.

RYAN

Yea, man. Thanks for pulling this off.
This **is** Epic!

A mountain side of trees surround the property.

From the canopy birds and crickets chirp as the shadows grow.

Joel stares up at the dense cover of trees.

He smiles at May with raised eye brows.

Overgrown brambles line the lush back yard.

JOEL

I've never.. seen anything like this!

A grass meadow lined with flower beds of herbs, wild flowers and fruit trees dot the yard.

A cobble stoned path through the meadow leads to a fire pit with a bundle of firewood off to the side.

BEN

Wait 'till you see the places we're gonna visit tomorrow..

One by one they turn and listen to Ben.

BEN

The World Famous Fern Canyon, waterfalls and the Giant Tree. A Coastal Sequoia *that is* **over** 360 feet tall!

May smiles as she follows behind Joel.

She pauses enamored by the mountain side of lofty trees.

MAY

I read the weather here changes frequently?

BEN

Yea, I guess. I came here a couple times as a kid with my family. I always wanted to come back!

May holds her phone in front of her.

MAY

The forecast for this time of year says it's usually foggy in the morning and at night with a chance for rain, most evenings.

BEN

Huh? I guess you're right.

Ben scratches his head.

BEN

Come to think.. It was foggy, gray or rainy every day we were here!

JOEL

(Chuckles)

Hah.

Ryan raises his eye brows at Ben combined with a wry smile before he glances at Joel and May.

KIM

As long as it doesn't pour, I'm in!

Kim feigns a smile large at Ben that softens as she catches the others.

BEN

I'm sure it will be fine. We had so much fun, we hardly even noticed!

KIM

(Forces laugh)

Hah! Huh..

RYAN

(Half laughs)

Hah. Awe, okay.

Kim makes eye contact with Ryan.

Ryan holds his curious smile and shrugs back at her.

KIM

So what about tonight?

RYAN

Yea, fearless leader. What do you have

up your sleeve for us this evening!

Joel peers around and smiles at his surroundings.

JOEL

Shoot, Im happy with what we have here. Good people, nature..

MAY

A fire pit!

Each turns to see May as she descends the steps and joins the group.

BEN

In fact, that is the idea.

KIM

Well, it's a good thing I stopped by the dispensary.

RYAN

Me too.

BEN

That's not all we have in store.

They peer around at each other curious.

BEN

Hah ha, this won't be like Cancun.

May and Joel catch eyes then quickly look away.

BEN

Not completely anyway.

Kim shies, Ryan glows.

RYAN

(blushes)

E'hem.

Ryan notices Kim then glances away.

KIM

(Mumbles)

What a night!

JOEL

Oh yea.

MAY
(Coughs)
Ahem.

Ben and Kim take notice of May and Joels coy antics.
Ben gives an audible chuckle in observation.

BEN
(Quips)
Heh, ha.

Kim shares the chuckle and shakes her head.

KIM
Well then, alright.

BEN
We're all friends here..

MAY
And adults.

KIM
Back to tonight, Ben?

BEN
Yea, I need someone to run with me to town. We'll pick up stuff for dinner and breakfast.

RYAN
I'll roll.

BEN
Cool, everyone else take this time to choose your rooms.

KIM
Oh, alright

MAY
Uh hum.

RYAN
Its first come, first serve but some rooms might be two to a room.

BEN
Otherwise take this time to get to know the property, if you like.

Ben thumbs back towards the rear of the yard.

BEN

I was told there is a creek that sometimes flows off the mountain just behind here.

RYAN

If you do go for a walk, take a friend.

JOEL

That does sounds dope!

RYAN

Which is why, we would do suggest the buddy system.

JOEL

Any takers?

Joel peers from friend to friend.

First to Kim.

KIM

I'd like to choose a room first. Get settled, you know.

JOEL

No worries.

Joel blushes at May.

JOEL

I just wanted to check it out before dark.

MAY

I know, know your surroundings..

Joel shrugs.

JOEL

So I don't have to walk by myself?

May nods with a soft smile at Joel.

MAY

Give me two minutes.

JOEL

Of course.

BEN

Great. Well before we head out shall we do tri-tip or pizza?

KIM

Awe, no!

RYAN

Hah Heh ha.

JOEL

I thought you said you had something special for tonight.

MAY

(Smiles)

Yea?

Ryan half laughs, Ben puts both hands up.

BEN

Alright, alright.

RYAN

Yea, don't worry. We'll see if we get lucky and get the tastiest things they have.

KIM

Fair enough!

Ben raises his wrist watch.

BEN

Cool. It's just after 4:30 now. It'll take us at least 30 minutes to get to the nearest grocery store grab a few things and back.

MAY

So we'll plan on meeting back her for dinner and drinks around 6:30.

RYAN

Perfect.

KIM

Oh yea! Perfect time for me to find my nest and catch some quick shut eye.

RYAN

A little beauty rest, eh?

KIM

Shh, don't tell nobody.

RYAN

I won't!

BEN

Later ya'll

May glances at Joel and mouths the words

MAY

I'll be right back.

Joel nods back.

They all walk back inside.

INT. AIRBNB CABIN, LIVING ROOM-DAY

Joel walks out front with Ben and Ryan.

Kim winks at May.

She then runs toward the stairs and playfully pushes past May with a stiff arm.

May pushes back as they both race up and around the corner.

KIM

Ouch!

Joel glances back at Kim and May as he pulls the door closed.

MAY

Oh, your okay!

TRANSITION

EXT. AIRBNB CABIN, FRONT DRIVE-DAY

The three men step out front together they head towards an SUV that's parked in the driveway.

RYAN

I cant believe we were able to score
this house.

Ryan shakes his head.

BEN

I seen it pop up like 2 years ago.

Ben shakes his head then smirks.

BEN

I even booked another spot but when
this came up about a month ago, I
jumped at it!

Ryan points to an enormous Redwood.

RYAN

Look at that one!

RYAN

That beautiful, bark laden beast it's
so close to us.

BEN

We're the ones in its space.

JOEL

Huh, I've never thought about it like
that.

Ben turns to face Joel.

Ryan glances over his shoulder then continues a couple more
steps and peers up at the old growth tree at the edge of the
yard.

JOEL

I mean we all seen trees before,
nature and n animal or two.

RYAN

Whole eco systems out here dude!

JOEL

I know thats what I'm saying. We ain't
even seen nothing yet and this place
is..

BEN
Amazing man.

Ryan nods, he peers around at the forest that appears as if will swallow them alive.

JOEL
Kind of yea. I mean I really do get the buddy system thing out here, fo' real.

Joel peers over at Ryan up at the elder tree then around them all in a 180.

JOEL
(Anxious)
Whew!..

RYAN
Hah, ha heh. Yea right, tell me about it!

Ben rubs at his temple then strokes his beard.

BEN
Hey that reminds me. Being out here and all..

Joel caulks his head sideways in curious anticipation.

BEN
You know how it might be out here.

Ben thumbs over this shoulder.

BEN
Everyone is pretty friendly most of the time in these communities, unless.

Ben lowers his head and puts both hands up

JOEL
Awe,..

Joel smirks and nods his head.

BEN
I know it's the 2020's but you know, rural America.

JOEL

Trust me, I get it. Ive been having these conversations with my parents since I was little.

Ryan slows, shakes his head then closes the distance between them taking his last step toward Joel.

BEN

Good. I mean no, thats..

Ben exhales and looks up at Joel.

BEN

Fucking horrible, man.

Ryan slowly lifts his hand to Joels shoulder.

RYAN

I'm ..so sorry.

Just as gently though quicker and with some refrain, Ryan removes his hand.

JOEL

I'm glad I've met people along the way, to show me some are different.

Ryan holds Joel gaze then nods.

BEN

I just want you to know, youre not my token black friend. I've always thought of you as just my friend and my brother.

RYAN

Me too.

A warm smile washes over Joel, he nods.

Ryan and Ben nod back at him.

The next beat almost turns to awkward pause.

()

JOEL

Hey um..

Joel stares between them both then back at the house with an upward glance.

CUT TO

INT.AIRBNB CABIN, UPSTAIRS- DAY

May slowly follows a hallway to its end and into the master bedroom.

Over May's shoulder in the hallway Kim is seen going from room to room.

KIM

Girl. I have to admit this place is pretty nice.

A single California king bed complete with extra warm and fluffy comforter, extra soft and large pillows surrounded by throw pillows.

Kim again crosses the hallway behind May, slows at its darkness and flips on the light just inside.

KIM

Oh, wow. Even the bathroom has matching custom floors!

A warm fire place hugs the wall no too far from an extra large television directly across from the bed.

May walks in to frame and approaches the large master bed, she runs her hand across the fluffy expansive comforter.

In the next second she allows her self to fall gently back on the bed.

MAY

Awe!

It catches and cradles her like a long lost friend.

CUT TO

EXT. AIRBNB CABIN, FRONT DRIVE-DAY

JOEL

I really cant say enough.

Joel searches for the words.

JOEL

Ben, thanks man. For always trying to pull us, keep us all together.

Joel pauses as he considers someone in the cabin behind him.

BEN

It's not all me. I just help put the deposit on a cool place. Ryan handles all the logistics.

Joel and Ben look to Ryan.

Ryan appears sentimental.

RYAN

I just want to be able to keep us all together. It's mostly Ben.

Joel glances at both.

BEN

Shoot, I'd be far too lazy to pull this off on my own!

JOEL

I was sad it didn't happen last year but I was glad when y'all tried again this year.

RYAN

I know everyone is busy doing there own thing.

Ben takes an audible breath.

RYAN

So I don't rush it and every two years, I reach out to Ben first then everyone else.

Ben exhales a sigh and nod of mutual solidarity.

RYAN

Kind man that he is. He answers and we start the process all over again.

Joel toes a pebble in the drive before he toe kicks it back to its place.

JOEL

Well,.. I'm glad ya'll do.

JOEL

I don't know if I'd, 'ehem.

Joel swallows as he finishes a vulnerable statement.

JOEL

..Would get to see her otherwise.

Ben nods.

Ryan shares the nod with them both then peers up at the house.

RYAN

Look, truth is.. I don't know if ya'll can tell or not but I'm a loner.

Joel and Ben glance at each other with a smile.

RYAN

Ya'll, are my closest friends.

They all nod and lean into each other.

Ben raises his arms and pats Joel and Ryan on the back.

BEN

I love ya'll too.

Joel puts a hand on Ryan and Bens shoulders.

JOEL

Through thick and thin.. Ya'll my peoples.

Ryan and Ben nods in agreement.

Joel pushes off Ben and Ryan.

JOEL

But if yall dont make that tri tip

happen, I'm not too sure.

They all chuckle as they walk in separate directions.

Ben and Ryan climb in the SUV and Joel heads inside.

TRANSITION

INT.AIRBNB CABIN, MASTER BEDROOM- DAY

Kim follows May into the master bedroom.

KIM
I like your style.

Kim takes a gentle step or two closer.

KIM
Fancy a roommate?

May slowly lifts her eyes and forms a smile.

MAY
.. Uhm.

KIM
That way, we get it instead of give it
up to Ryan and Ben.

Kim follows May further into the room and peers around.

MAY
I mean maybe they should get the room
they did find the place.

May tilts her head and raises her brows.

KIM
Im just saying.. Those two will take 5
minute showers and leave piles of
clothes.

May caulks her head and contemplates.

KIM
Thats not even enough time to enjoy
that hot tub over there. That requires
at least 30 minutes and some scented
candles.

May weighs her options as her head bounces left to right.

MAY
That does sound nice.

KIM
I'll tell Ben to pick some up at the
store

Kim turns the corner to face the bathroom.

KIM
I mean come on, look at that shower!

With both hands up Kim incises May closer.

MAY
(in awe)
Ohhh ahhh.

Kim turns to spot a Woden door around the corner!

KIM
Is that a walk in closet?

May leans her head to see around the corner.

KIM
Girl, don't get me started. This is
ours.

May still stands in front of the bathroom smiles and nods.

KIM
Girl lets go get our suitcases so
don't nobody take this room!

MAY
Alright should we at least..

KIM
They said choose **our** room.

Kim sports a wily smile.

KIM
If they want the room, they can have
it.

May smirks at Kim and exits the room.

INT.AIRBNB CABIN, ENTRY WAY-DAY

May descends the stairs as she hits the bottom, Joel opens the front door.

MAY
Oh, uh.

JOEL
Hey

MAY
Hey.

JOEL
Just saw Ben and Ryan off.

May nods and smiles.

MAY
Okay.

May crosses to her plain gray, no frills suitcase.

JOEL
Oh, uh here. Let me help you.

Joel attempts to walk closer and lean in to help with the single suitcase.

MAY
I got it, thanks.

Joel glances up the stairs then back at May.

JOEL
Yea, you sure?

May observes Joel size her up then glances at the stairs.

MAY
I mean, I got it.

JOEL
No worries. Of course you do.

Joel nods and hangs back..

MAY
I'll be just a minute.

May smiles then pulls her suitcase to the edge of the stairs.

MAY

Apparently we need to lay claim to the
master bedroom with our luggage.

May lowers the telescopic handle of her luggage, grabs tight
to the pull handle and lifts it to her side.

She makes her way up the stairs.

May nears the top when Kim approaches.

KIM

Watch out, coming thru!

Kim glances down the stairs and smiles at Joel.

KIM

Oh, a gentleman!

Kim raises smiles at May and tilts her head.

KIM

Not me girl. I already lugged this
thing through the airport.

Kim turns back to Joel.

KIM

So, if I may bother you good sir?

Kim makes her way down the stairs and points at the large
light pink, leather luggage with fancy trim.

May peers back at Joel.

She raises her eye brows and makes a point with a single nod.

May lowers her suitcase to the floor, raises the handle and
carry's on.

JOEL

(Chuckles)

Hmm.

Kim notices the two of them, squints her eyes at May then
stops at the lowest two steps.

KIM

Thank you so much.

Joel returns a modest smile to Kim.

JOEL

No worries. You know I got your back.

He lowers the handles and lifts.

Joel mounts the stairs the briefcase an odd shape bounces off one leg as he follows behind Kim.

INT.AIRBNB CABIN UPSTAIRS-DAY

KIM

Just a little further.

Atop the stairs Joel stops.

JOEL

(Clears throat)

Uh huh.

He puts the two suitcases down and lifts the handles for her.

KIM

Cool thanks. I can take it from here.

Joel nods.

JOEL

(Laughs to self)

Huh.

Joel starts back down the stairs when he stops and turns back at Kim.

JOEL

Will you let May know I'll be out front. Please.

Kim pulls her luggage behind her and without turning around she replies.

KIM

You got it.

TRANSITION

EXT. AIRBNB CABIN FRONT YARD-DAY

Joel approaches then reaches into his rental car and pulls out a cigarette case.

He flips it open.

JOEL

You're all I'll ever need.

Inside the cigarette case is a row of joints.

A label states **Sativa** on one side, **Indica** on the other.

Joel pulls a joint from the case.

He closes the case and returns it to his inside jacket pocket.

Joel puts the joint between his lips, removes a lighter from his pocket and sparks it.

JOEL

(Exhales)

Awe.

Along puff of smoke emotes from Joel, alongside a sigh of relaxation.

Err clunk!

The front door closes and Joel peers up from his joint.

MAY

Awe shit, what you smoking on over there stranger?

Joel raises one eye brow and caulks his head.

JOEL

Yea?

May displays a foxy grin as she moves to Joels side, she extends her arm with two fingers ready to receive.

JOEL

You sure, "This ain't no bammer weed".

MAY

Please, "We don't smoke that shit in the SLC!"

JOEL
Heh ha. Awe shit, okay Okay.

MAY
I'm saying, you better watch out.

JOEL
I didn't even know you smoke.

MAY
There's a lot you don't know about me.

Joel nods his head as takes the joint back.

He puts it to his mouth, pulls deep then releases a large exhale.

JOEL
(Through exhale)
Fair enough.

May glares at Joel as smoke trails from her nostrils.

MAY
How about that walk?

Joel takes another hit and passes it back to May.

JOEL
For sure I'd like to check to the
trail behind the house.

MAY
Let's walk down our street first, see
how many neighbors we actually have
out here.

Joel nods.

MAY
Cool.

May nods her head at the street and they walk off in that direction.

EXT.AIRBNB CABIN STREET-DAY

Joel and May pass the joint as they walk down the street.

The street continues only 100 feet further, where it ends a dirt road bends into the distance.

JOEL

Huh, what you think.. Keep going or
turn back already?

KIM

Hell if I know? At this point, I'll
admit Im just a naive city girl.

JOEL

It might be a county road..

They stop and peer in both directions.

JOEL

Hmm, last thing I want to do is to
walk down someones private driveway.

Joel takes another hit.

MAY

How about we just walk a lil ways
further.

Joel agrees with a nod and offers her the last hit..

MAY

We can always turn back.

May takes a look at the end of the joint accepts it.

A noisy large old truck barrels around the bend and onto the
dirt road.

May quickly tosses the roach to the ground.

The old truck screeches to a grinding dusty halt just as it
passes them.

May stops and glances over at Joel before she peers at the
truck side mirror.

The truck sits idle.

May squints at the truck, she shifts feet as she does she
steps on the smoking joint roach.

MAY

(Mumbles)

What the actual fuck?

Cautiously May takes a couple steps forward.

May shoots a curious glare at Joel as they they approach the truck.

The Driver abruptly rolls his window down.

MAY

Oh, Shit!

Inside an old man with a scruffy beard, intense eyes and a shotgun mounted behind his seat, stares back at them.

May stares back at the scruffy, old man.

Joel leans past her and nods at the man.

The scruffy old man takes stock of them and shakes his head.

May and Joel glance at each other then back too the scruffy old man.

MAY

(Impatient)

Yea?

OLD MAN

No, you yea!

MAY

Huh, wait. What?

They both stare back at the old man confused.

JOEL

(Chuckles)

Ha.

May glances at Joel sternly, he straightens up.

JOEL

(Clears throat)

Ehem.

Joel takes a step sideways, appraises the interior of the cab and stops when he spots the shotgun.

JOEL

Excuse us.

Joel slowly raises his hands and humbly engages the man's eyes.

JOEL

We're just taking a walk. We sure don't mean to trespass or anything.

OLD MAN

Well ya' are! Ain't nothing down this way but my house.

They both glance down the very long road.

JOEL

Oh, okay, no problem. We didn't know.

OLD MAN

What the hell ya'll doing out here anyway?

MAY

Like we said, sir. We're just taking a walk.

OLD MAN

I heard you, I meant where in tarnation did y'all come from?

May squints at the old Man.

She starts to point in the direction of the cabin.

MAY

We're your **neighbors** for the week at the big Cabin..

OLD MAN

Oh christ, not another queer bunch of three's company!

MAY

(Surprised)

Uh.

JOEL

(Snickers)

Hah ha.

May again throws a rigid glance at Joel.

OLD MAN
You two should be getting back..

MAY
Okay sir. Thanks.

May turns towards Joel.

The man leans towards them, he peers at Joel insistent.

OLD MAN
It's not safe out here, especially
after dark!

She raises a hand to block the sun shining from over the mountain, inhales and nods to Joel.

Joel nods back at the Old Man.

JOEL
(Sarcastic)
Thanks.

Joel and May glare at the truck, down the dirt road then start back towards there Cabin.

The truck's wheels kick up dirt as it takes off in the opposite direction.

MAY
Well, that was fucking weird.

JOEL
Damn right it was!

MAY
Killed my buzz too, man!

The two of them look at each other and break out in heavy laughter.

TRANSITION

EXT. AIRBNB CABIN, MOUNTAIN SIDE CREEK-DAY

River stones run the length of a small, tranquil creek.

A woman's hand dips down and scoops one up.

May turns the rock over in her hand.

MAY

Yea, this is much better.

Joel and May walk alongside the creek.

JOEL

Agreed.

May begins to give the rock a light toss in the air as they walk.

MAY

Yea? Well, who choose the street that led straight to someone's house?

May tosses the river stone into the air and catches it.

JOEL

How was I supposed to know?

May crosses her arms and nods at Joel with a smirk.

JOEL

Plus, I was the one that said maybe we should turn back.

To that May scoffs.

MAY

Pshaw!

They continue to walk along the creek.

JOEL

(Imitates voice)

Yea, you was all like, "Let's just keep going. Quit being a punk and come on."

MAY

(Laughs)

Shut up, no I didn't!

JOEL

"I'm a badd ass, I just don't give a fuck!"

They share hysterics, May slows.

MAY

Hah, heh ha. I never said anything

like that.

May turns and lands a solid punch at Joels shoulder.

JOEL

Oh, see! Billy badass over here.

MAY

Please, I don't have shit too prove to no one.

Joel slows and pauses before he speaks.

JOEL

No?

May's smile softens.

She peers away then pushes her hair to her face then glances back at Joel.

MAY

Huh, maybe a little.

Joel nods quietly.

JOEL

Maybe we all do, mostly to **our** selves.

Joel stares at May, squints then looks to the creek.

JOEL

I know Im a work in progress.

Joel fidgets, takes a breath and goes for it.

JOEL

Maybe we're just hoping someone will notice.

May stares ahead at the same creek side.

MAY

Uh huh.

May gives Joel a sideways glance.

MAY

I admit you might be a tiny bit right.

Joel slowly finds May's eyes.

JOEL
You, don't have to admit anything.

Joel swallows.

JOEL
I was mostly speaking about my self
anyway.

May peers up at Joel and smiles.

Joel attempts a smile, shy's away then blushes.

MAY
No, you're right. And maybe I was
hoping you would notice.

May turns towards the creek and takes a step closer.

JOEL
I noticed!

MAY
Did You?

JOEL
(Laughs to self)
Huh.

May stops and looks at Joel.

Joel puts both palms up.

MAY
Im just saying, Im not Kim. Im not one
of **those** type of girls.

JOEL
Good.

MAY
Good!

May takes a breath and catches Joels eyes.

MAY
Wait, what?

JOEL
Yo', Kim is our friend and I love her
but Im not looking for that kind of

woman.

May turns her head sideways.

MAY

That's what you say now but..

JOEL

Wait do you really expect that all men like one kind of girl. Or that I would be the type to only go for girls that need pink leather luggage with fancy trim?

MAY

I'm not just talking about Kim. I'm not even really talking about Kim at all.

May stops and takes breath.

Joel does the same and gives her more space.

JOEL

Just know confrontation was not my intention.

MAY

I guess but you're pretty much forcing me too now.

JOEL

Forcing you to what? Admonish that we've both grown. That you want me to know that you're not a woman who needs catered too.

Joel rolls his eyes.

JOEL

Thank christ, cause Im not the brother to cater to that shit either!

MAY

I just want you to know that I want to make all my own decisions, to be free to live my life. To discover things in my own time.

JOEL
I get that.

Joel squints.

JOEL
Listen, Im so ... thankful(?) That **You**
didn't let that day defeat you.

May pauses and has to take deep breaths.

Joel swallows again and pushes along.

JOEL
I'm thankful you decided not to give
up and Im proud that you even found
your fighting spirit.

A tear escapes Mays' eye.

Joel pauses.

JOEL
I guess you're right. I am sort of
forcing you.

Joel glances down then up at May.

May attempts to meet Joels eyes.

JOEL
Truth is, Ive been wanting to tell you
for years how I feel.

May opens her mouth then holds back.

MAY
Joel.

JOEL
I never told you because.. I know you
needed time.

Joel peers back at May, she now glances away.

JOEL
I didn't want you to think I only
needed you because we went through
that together.

JOEL

Or that I was needy or whatever or
some shit.

Joel looks around, then at May.

JOEL

I wanted to give you time. I didn't
want force you..

JOEL

I probably already waited too long.
Hell, it'll probably never be the
right time.

May glares at Joel in wait.

JOEL

The realest part is, I didn't want to
say anything..

Joel stops and takes a step closer.

JOEL

Because, I was afraid I'd loose you if
I did.

May peers back at Joel, she searches his eyes.

JOEL

So I just held it in all these years
but I cant any more.

MAY

I know how un fair that is. I just ..

JOEL

If I never said anything and you ended
up with someone else.

Joel remains idle, vulnerable.

He peers back at her then dips one hand into his pocket for
his joint case.

May places her hand over his.

MAY

Stop.

Joel looks up.

May closes the space between them with a tender approach.

MAY

Thank you.

She lifts her lips to him and places a soft kiss on his cheek.

MAY

For giving me time..

May repositions her self in front of Joel and gazes into his eyes.

They find each other.

May leans in, gives Joel a long hug and they embrace.

They separate yet still May holds onto Joel and Joel to her.

MAY

For waiting, for **me**.

They share a missed longing as they peer into each others eyes.

TRANSITION

EXT.AIRBNB CABIN, REAR PORCH-DAY

MONTAGE

A SWITCH IS FLIPPED, A STRING OF LARGE BULBED LIGHTS BRIGHTEN UP THE BACK YARD.

A LID IS OPEN THEN A STRAND OF GAS IN A BBQ SPARKS INTO FLAMES.

A ROW OF FAT STEAKS AND BOILED CORN IN THEIR HUSKS ARE PLACED IN LINES ON THE GRILL.

A BAR IS ROLLED OUT.

PLACED ATOP IS A BUCKET OF ICE, BOTTLED WATERS AND A ROW OF GLASSES.

NEXT A PLATE OF 3 LIMES; 1 WHOLE, 1 HALVED & 1 DICED.

LASTLY, BEN AND RYAN WALK OUT AND SET 3 BOXES OF DON JULIO 1942 ON THE TABLE.

TWO ARE LEFT IN THEIR BOXES.

THE LAST IS PULLED FROM IT'S BOX AND SET OUT.

BEN

I'd say that looks good, don't you?

Kim takes stock of the set up as she smokes a bowl nearby.

RYAN

Are you kidding me. I've been waiting for years to go all out like this.

Kim steps forward excited!

KIM

Holy shit! You two did go all out.

Ryan and Ben glance to Kim with a smile.

Shy yet quick, Ryan interjects.

RYAN

We do what we can.

Ben nods to Ryan.

BEN

Ryan is being his usual modest self.

Ryan spots Kim squint at them.

BEN

Everything is his idea. I'm just happy to help.

Ryan shoots a piercing nod at Ben.

RYAN

More than just a pretty face, Ben also helped sponsor today's events!

Ben shakes his head in disbelief.

Kim Raises a brow at them, joins in Ben's head shake and grins.

KIM

Well, all of **this** sure is sweet.

BEN
Yup. That's Ryan.

RYAN
Please stop.

BEN
Just a sweet guy!

Ryan puts one palm to his face.

RYAN
Shut the fuck up.

Ryan turns to Kim and blushes.

RYAN
Look in all honesty, I'm sort of a
rough neck really.

Ben clears his throat nonchalant, he chokes at Ben's words.

Ryan breaks into a grin.

RYAN
Okay, probably more of the loner type,
but still.

Kim shakes her head at Ryan then then looks over at Ben.

RYAN
Ya know, the silent, tough type.

Ryan satirizes his self as he rubs his chin.

RYAN
Loyal.. Dependable.

Ben tries not to laugh.

Kim rolls her eyes at the both of them.

KIM
Okay Mr. loyal and dependable.. We'll
see?

Ben looks over at Ryan amused, unaware Ryan glances up.

May and Joel return from the trail through the side gate in
the fence.

Ryan and Kim turn to see them.

RYAN
wait, What?

He gazes at them, their clasped hands then back at everyone.

KIM
(Approving)
Okay, okay.

Ryan appears a bit surprised.

RYAN
Where'd y'all come from.. lovers lane?

May throws a curious look at Ryan.

Ben gauges everyones response to Joel and Kim.

Ben smiles and nods at them both.

He then quickly turns and checks on the grill's temperature and the steaks.

Ryan throws both hands up.

RYAN
(Mouths)
Sorry, sorry.

KIM
Don't look so desperate Ryan.

Mouth open, Ryan clears his throat and attempts a quick reply.

RYAN
I mean, who isn't?

Kim shakes her head yet reveals a smile.

RYAN
Why, you know anyone that's interested?

Kim glances back and chuckles.

KIM
Let me get back to you after a drink or two.

Ryan scoffs yet takes it in stride .

RYAN
Oh, that hurts.

Joel and May take a few steps forward.

MAY
Whoa!

Joel closes in on the grill.

JOEL
Bro, are you guys serious right now?

May closes in on the bar and inspects the tall, sleek bottles of Don Julio, 1942 .

MAY
Oh, *they're* **serious**.

Joel peers sideways to May.

Kim gets up and approaches May near the bar.

JOEL
No shit! I'm saying, y'all really out did you selves with this one.

May glances at Kim.

Kim returns a large nod and smile.

KIM
I see ya'll already pulled a bottle from the box. How about we crack this baby open?

Ben waits for an answer from Ryan with a smile.

RYAN
Please do.

MONTAGE

THE GLASSES EACH RECEIVE A SQUARE OF ICE, FOLLOWED BY A HEALTHY POUR OF TEQUILA.

THE STEAKS ARE FLIPPED ONE LAST TIME FOR GOOD MEASURE, BEAUTIFUL GRILL LINES REVEAL NEAR PERFECTION.

KIM LIMES EACH GLASSES' RIM, THEN DROPS THE LIME IN AND PASSES IT TO THE NEXT PERSON.

Ben sniffs at his glass then peers at the others.

May and Joel in turn take their own and swirl or sniff at it and nod.

Ben spots Kim still making the last two drinks when he shrugs and Puts the glass to his lips.

May snickers at Ben as he swallows a quick sip.

BEN

Oh fuck, that's good!

MAY

Yea?

Ben nods as he stares down in amazement.

BEN

Thank god this stuff is so expensive, otherwise I'd probably be an alcoholic!

Everyone nods or laughs.

MAY

I don't drink straight liquor regularly? Arent you supposed to chase tequila with lime and salt?

KIM

No girl, this stuff doesn't even need that shit. It's fucking top shelf, sip it straight up or on a block of ice!

Kim slows and stares back at everyone.

KIM

I mean, I don't drink it all the time obviously.

Kim calms her zeal.

KIM

I've served it at the club a couple times and the customers were kind enough too, insist I try!

Each nods back at her.

BEN
Hell yea, thats awesome.

She takes one of the last two glasses she makes and hands the other to Ryan.

KIM
I would like to remind everyone.

He receives it, swirls it and takes a sniff.

KIM
Please be careful.

Kim glares at each individual.

KIM
1.5 oz of this stuff is like three
large shots of any other tequila.

Kim turns to face Joel and May.

KIM
Even compared to Patron' for you -
less civilized hooligans!

MAY
(Disbelieves)
What?

Joel gasps and shakes his head.

RYAN
Damn that smells amazing.

Ryan hangs over his glass enamored.

Ben holds his glass up.

BEN
Wait 'til you taste it.

Everyone laughs.

They each pause and peer at each other and lift their glasses.

Their smiles are defiant in the face of shared pain, their mood mellow and modest.

Ryan lift his glass, each takes notice.

RYAN

Too, *those we lost* along the way.

They clink their glasses against the person next to them.

JOEL, KIM, MAY, BEN

To Those We Lost.

Each individual pauses in their own way.

Ben leans into his and takes the final sip already.

Ryan stare into his glass.

Joel holds fast to his own glass, peers at May then others before takes a stiff sip.

Kim takes a breath then a slow, long sip.

Ryan swirls it in his hands, at last he lifts it to his mouth takes a sip. With a cool nod, he slowly pours out the back half.

No one speaks, they all watch him in silence.

RYAN

This is for ya'll.

BEN

Here here.

Joel pours out a spot of his.

JOEL

Uh huh.

Ben tilts his glass as does Kim beside him.

Joel nods, tears up then glances away.

May tilts the light amber liquid, it flows over the rim.

Side by side, one by one, they pour their drinks in memory.

A long beat goes by when Ryan slowly looks up.

RYAN

I'd give anything. I miss you sis'.

They each raise their heads and say a name.

BEN
My brother, Steven

Some say siblings, some best friends, even cousins, teachers and coaches.

KIM
Cassie

MAY
And Kelly.

JOEL
Rachel.

RYAN
Mathew.

BEN
Corey.

KIM
Daniel and Daniel

MAY
William

JOEL
Isiah

RYAN
John

BEN
Lauren

KIM
And Kyle.

They share heavy tears together as they finish the last of the names.

RYAN
We do Our best to remember Our
friends, still the hard part remains..

Ben walks over, swiftly removes the next bottle, its seal and

all.

BEN
We ..live on.

HE RETURNS WITH A SWIFT POUR TO EVERYONES GLASS.

Ryan agrees with a snicker.

RYAN
 Yes. Yes we shall.

Joel pushes through, lifts his chin and shares in the sentiment.

JOEL
 We **will**.

May nods.

MAY
 Here, here.

Kim looks at the others, wipes her eyes and joins the precession.

KIM
 Okay.

They lift their glasses **together**.

MAY
 Then, too ..Carrying on!

They toast, after each immediately sips their drink.

Kim glances at Ryan.

Ryan appears to barely hold his self together.

Kim nervous, chews at her nail.

KIM
 (Soft and torn)
 When Cassie died.

Kim swallows and re-approaches with more nerve.

KIM
 (Assertive)
 After Cassie and Kelley were killed.

Kim takes a gasp of air to hold back tears.

KIM

I was always depressed. I was always sad about something..

Ryan peers at Kim.

KIM

You want to know the fucked up thing? I realized, that I really just was mad at myself the whole time.

Ryan takes a breath and in that moment catches Kim eyes.

KIM

I just don't know why I survived that day and they didn't.

MAY

That's not being fair to yourself.

JOEL

Yea.

KIM

Oh it isn't! I was the popular girl.

She looks in the face of them each and chokes down tears.

KIM

You all **know**, how I was.

They glance at each other.

KIM

They were my own friends. I used to yell at them all the time.

Kim breaks down and barely speaks over loathed tears.

KIM

I told them I was going to get rid of them and get entirely new friends and make them popular instead.

May and Joel glance at each other.

KIM

I don't know why I said it.

May gently smiles and moves to support her.

MAY

Girl, thats just high school. We were all ugly back then.

Joel and Ben raise innocent eye brows at each other.

KIM

Don't you get it. This is all my fault I was the popular girl.

Ben and Ryan join May in attempting to console Kim.

KIM

I picked on them, Dylan and Eric.

JOEL

Not just you. There were many other "cool" people and jocks that picked on them..

RYAN

And many others, myself included.

Ryan looks down then back at everyone.

RYAN

It's not one of my proudest moments. Loner against loner I guess, I joked with 'em all the time.

Ryan teary eyed stares back at Kim.

RYAN

Usually at **their** expense.

Kim closes in on her self even more, hardly able to keep eyes with Ryan.

KIM

Did I pick on you?

Ryan doesn't immediately answer.

RYAN

You didn't, even see me back then.

Kim lowers her head as tears well.

She returns to that time, person and place.. So many years

ago.

BEN

The point if there is one? Is, we were **all** part of *that* system of thinking back *then*.

Ben glances to Joel.

JOEL

We're older now. It's easier to recognize indecency now.

Joel shy's then holds his head up.

May nods and lifts hers as well.

MAY

We were just kids.

May peers at each friend.

MAY

We can give ourselves a break.

RYAN

Hopefully we will each help to change it all, somehow.

Kim finishes the last of her 2nd glass.

KIM

That'd be nice. Cause I hurt, a lot.

They pause a beat when Ben leans at Kim.

BEN

Me too.

RYAN

That makes three.

Joel swallows and speaks up.

JOEL

Me too.

May pulls them all closer together and into a big hug.

MAY

Yup, Im pretty fucked up too.

They all chuckle and pull closer together.

Kim looks at everyone as they wrap their arms around her.

For a brief beat she starts to sob again.

They all hold her and drop their heads on hers.

After a beat they all come out of the hug stronger.

KIM

Thank you guys.

She leans into Ryan

RYAN

(Whispers)

Thank You.

Kim wipes tears from her eyes then takes a long bear hug from him.

When they let go she reaches up to Ryans face and holds him in her hands with a deep gaze.

Slowly she combs a hand thru his hair.

In one moment, Ryan and Kim share a spectrum of emotions.

BEN

Alright ya'll, Ive got good news and better news.

Ben points from one side to the next.

BEN

First is the steaks are done, even though I kinda' forgot 'em there for a minute or two. So they are medium-well.

Everyones mouth drops open or looks shocked

BEN

Fortunately, we got the thickest steaks in the house. So, actually they're perfect!

Ryan nods and cracks a grin.

RYAN

What he means to say is, dinner is served.

Ryan walks over to help serve.

BEN

Huh, yea. Exactly.

TRANSITION

EXT. AIRBNB, REAR PORCH TABLE-NIGHT

They all join together at a long, glass, out door table, each helps carry food over.

Ben brings the bottle of Tequila and plate of limes.

Everyone appears elated at the spread in front of them.

They all settle in around the table.

At last they catch each others eye and relax into shared laughter.

BEN

You dont have to wait on our account.

A small chuckle accompanies the movement that follows.

BEN

Please, everyone let's eat.

Joel helps and begins to cut long strips of perfectly cooked steak.

JOEL

(Salivates)

Whoa, My mouth is watering just cutting this up.

Within seconds it's become slices for each to grab at will.

JOEL

Y'all, have at it.

Everyone leans in and finishes their plates with steak and accoutrements.

Before long all are buzzed, eating, joking and toasting glasses that are poured, drank and refilled.

RYAN

I can't believe I ate two platefuls already.

BEN

Oh, I can..but then so did I.

KIM

I did too.

May licks her lips.

MAY

That makes three

They all nod at May before they turn to Joel.

He looks up then pushes away from the table.

JOEL

(over satiated)

Oh yea, maybe more.

Each grins wide then bust into a roar.

MAY

Awe, stop. I cant laugh any more I might throw up.

Ryan gets up, steps to the bar and grabs the final bottle of tequila then returns table side.

RYAN

(Slightly slurred)

I've got the perfect remedy for that!

He holds the bottle up in front of them.

Each reacts in their own way, mostly positive.

BEN

(slurs)

Final Round everyone!

JOEL

Oh shit. It's a good thing we've been eating like, god damned fools.

MAY

Yea, cause we about to be drunk like
some damned fools!

KIM

I'll drink to that!

JOEL

Shit, Im already drunk to that.

They all share of fit of laughter again.

Ben walks the table and pours another hefty round for each
person.

BEN

This is also the perfect time to
transition over to the fire pit.

Each has their own delayed expressions and with their eye's
follow Ben.

He stands and crosses to the fire pit, the last bottle of
1942 in one hand his glass in the other.

RYAN

Oh shit, I almost forgot!

Ryan stands and leads the others to the the fire pit.

EXT. AIR BNB CABIN REAR PORCH, FIRE PIT-NIGHT

The fire pit is already set up with logs and kindling.

Ben takes a knee and places the kindling beneath the logs.

RYAN

I got ya brother?

Ryan removes a lighter from one pocket, from another a mini
tube.

BEN

Awe. You do, huh?

Ryan squeezes it open and in one quick move pops the joint
from inside the tube into his mouth.

BEN

Glad to see you have your priorities
straight.

Ryan bends to one knee and lights the kindling beneath the logs.

RYAN
Oh, trust I do.

He next sparks the joint in his mouth.

May, Joel and Kim approach the fire pit and each pull up a seat.

EXT. AIRBNB, REAR PORCH FIRE PITT-NIGHT

May is the first to finish her latest pour of tequila

MAY
You gonna hold that bottle hostage or
what?

BEN
hah ha, here you go.

May accepts the bottle and pours a healthy two shots more for her self.

Ryan and Kim exchange nods.

JOEL
Ya' know what I mean!

Joel leans in his chair with an air of respect.

KIM
Go ahead girl.

Ryan passes the freshly lit joint to Joel, he nods back then towards May.

Ryan glances at May curious, eye brows raised he extends the joint at her.

RYAN
(Voice fluctuates)
Oh yea?

May "so what" shrugs then extends a receiving hand.

She takes it and puts it to her mouth.

May takes couple calm, deep draws then exhales with a mini-cough then passes it to Joel.

Ryan nods at her then to Joel.

Joel smiles and nods back.

RYAN

Hell yea!

Kim points to the Bluetooth Speaker.

KIM

Does that work?

Ben turns around and peers down at the bluetooth speaker on the stack of wood a few feet away.

BEN

Oh yea, I almost forgot!

He reaches down and turns it on.

Ben then pulls his cell phone from his pocket and thumbs the password lock when Kim takes it from him.

A second later, she has typed in a (Lo-Fi House) music cue as the speakers come to life.

MUSIC CUES

RYAN

Okay

Ben the first to move in a two step fashion to the beat.

BEN

Awe, yea!

KIM

Okay, now it's a fucking party!

Each gets up and starts to groove to the beat.

MAY

Hey!

May fake passes the joint off to Joel..

JOEL

Hey!

She then does a smooth dance style twist and shakes Joel for a hand off to Kim.

Kim puts the joint to her mouth.

KIM

Hey!

In a series of cute dance pivots Kim hits the joint, busts a little move, exhales then flashes it in Joel's face before she pulls it back and hits it herself.

MAY

Hey!

In quick fashion Joel replies with joint case already in hand, he squeezes it, it pops open.

He removes a joint of his own, nods at Ryan as he swoops it into his mouth and with the other hand closes the case.

In a spin move all his own, Joel comes face to face with Ryan who then lights his joint.

RYAN

Yessir!

JOEL

Yessir!

Ben "innocent" shrugs at the ladies then throws up his hands.

BEN

Yessir!!

The ladies shake their heads, shrug it off then return to all smiles and dancing away.

MONTAGE:

Everyone freely dances around the fire.

GROUP ENERGY CONTINUES TO THE BEAT.

FIRE BURNS..

STEADY CAM: LARGE AND INDIVIDUAL CIRCLES OF GROUP

ANOTHER TWO LOGS TOSSED ON FIRE.

RYAN AND KIM DO THE BUMP.

SO DOES MAY AND JOEL.

BEN DANCES BY HIM SELF.

THE LADIES SEPARATE FROM THEIR PARTNERS, APPROACH BEN & PULL HIM INTO DANCE.

THE FIRE BURNS FULL.

EVERYONE IS ALL SMILES.

THEY ALL SETTLE DOWN, SHARE LAUGHS AND ENJOY THEM SELVES BY THE FIRE.

A BURNT LOG COLLAPSES, THE FIRE REDUCE TO SHIMMERING EMBERS..

[LOW TO HI JIB UP]

EXT. AIRBNB, REAR PORCH FIRE PITT-NIGHT

A final shot to all is poured as they wind down.

MUSIC FADES OUT

BEN

A huge thanks for making it all the way out here.

Ben and Ryan looks at each person whole heartedly.

RYAN

I love you all.

BEN

Yea, no small thanks guys.

May, Joel and Kim reply in a humble demeanor.

KIM

Thank you, both.

Joel nods and May agrees.

MAY

Yea, I really appreciate this.

BEN

Please, know for us this time together is a really big deal.

KIM, JOEL, RYAN AND MAY
Here, here.

They all share a final toast.

BEN
I love you guys.

KIM
Awe.

MAY
We love you too.

RYAN
I love you guys.

JOEL
Love ya'll too.

Ben uses the poker to turn the remaining logs and chunks of wood then sits.

BEN
(chuckles)
With that y'all, I guess we can wind
it down.

Kim and Joel stretch, yawn and smile when they eye the windows of the warm, inviting cabin.

RYAN
I can hang out here and watch the fire
till it dies down.

Everyone begins to stand up.

BEN
Don't forget, breakfast 9am. We head
out at 10AM.

JOEL, KIM, MAY
Ugh!

RYAN
(snickers)
Sweet!

Ben laughs.

BEN
It's just a couple of incredible and
amazing, **short** hikes.

Ben grins and attempts to cover his mouth.

BEN
(coughs)
Don't worry, the big one I saved for
the following day!

RYAN, JOEL, KIM, MAY
Ugh, again! Yea, what a rip man.

Ben rolls his eyes and shakes his head at them.

Joel, Ben and May walk away.

Kim stays behind and walks to Ryan's side.

KIM
Hey..

Ryan relaxes and smiles at her.

Ben nods a smile at Ryan and Kim chat Ryan kicks at the
embers.

TRANSITION

EXT.AIRBNB CABIN, FRONT DRIVE-DAY

TRANSITION

Each steps outside, Ryan drinks a bottle of water, Kim rubs
at her temples, May shades the sun from her eyes.

Brisk and peppy Ben takes the lead towards the rental SUV.

Joel and May spark a morning joint.

Kim butts in from behind too hit the joint.

KIM
Didn't your mama teach you to share.

MAY
Don't be talking about my mama!

Joel lets out a single chuckle.

Kim takes a large hit as she walks away with the joint.

JOEL
Hey, where you going with my shit?
That's my shit!

She passes it off to Ryan.

RYAN
I know its not community but you
always have the fire shit!

Joel nods then shakes his head.

JOEL
Awe, flattery will get you two hits..
Two Hits!

Joel emphasis with 2 fingers in the air.

Ben leans into Ryan

JOEL
The cost to be the boss I guess.

Mid stretch Ben calmly grabs the joint and hits it hard one.

JOEL
Hey!

RYAN
Hey.

MAY
Hey, now look who's smoking!

KIM
What!

Ben exhales leans into Joel and extends the joint back to him.

Joel nods back.

JOEL
Well, alright then.

Joel peers down sad at the shorter half of his joint.

BEN
Just hoping. That will help with my

headache is all.

RYAN

Hah, Right. Cause like that shit is actual medicine!

KIM

Y'all so silly.

Joel starts to pass it to May when he pauses and squints at her.

MAY

What did I do?

Joel reluctantly passes the joint to her with a smirk.

JOEL

No, Im just kidding.

May returns the same look as she accepts.

Ryan nudges Ben.

RYAN

Im happy to drive.

Ben rubs at his temple.

BEN

Yea, Sure. Shotgun.

Ben hands keys to Ryan.

RYAN

Cool, let's roll.

Ben crosses around to the passenger side.

Ben and Ryan open the rear passenger doors.

Ryan opens the drivers side and gets in.

INT.RENTAL SUV-DAY

RYAN

All right ramblers. Let's get rambling!

Ben shakes his head.

BEN
Couldn't help it, could you?

RYAN
(aloof)
What!

Ryan grins.

Joel climbs in last and all the doors are closed shut.

JOEL
Hah, I like it.

RYAN
See.

Kim to May.

Kim blinks back at May.

KIM
Huh.

May pauses a beat then laughs.

MAY
Oh, yea I remember that movie

KIM
Girl, get the fuck out of here!

May shrugs it off.

MAY
Okay.

May shakes her head at Kim then turns to Joel.

May challenges Joel.

MAY
What you got?

JOEL
From Dusk 'till Dawn!

Ryan lifts his chin.

RYAN
(Matter of fact)
Uh, huh.

May looks at both.

MAY
Not bad.

KIM
How you know or remember all this
useless shit girl?

MAY
It's also in Resavoir Dogs..

Ben nods at Ryan.

MAY
And Nick Cage even does his own
version in Gone in 60 seconds.

May lifts both her hands up in a Elvis like gesture.

MAY
Okay, Let's Ride!

Kim leans back and shakes her head at the bunch.

KIM
(Nonchalant)
Never seen that movie.

Ryan drops his glasses from his head over his eyes in cool
fashion.

RYAN
(Scoffs)
Come on!

KIM
Excuse you.

Ryan shakes his head, lowers his glasses and turns back
around in his seat.

RYAN
Is that on Netflix?

Kim scoffs and punches the back of Ryans seat.

EXT.OLD REDWOOD LANE-DAY

The SUV pulls out of the drive and onto a lane that leads to the county road.

DISSOLVE

EXT.REDWOOD HIGHWAY-DAY

The SUV full of friends comes down the rural road and slows as it nears.

Blinker on, the vehicle veers right onto a narrow road with a sign that states:

Old RedWood Highway.

MONTAGE

A LONG NARROW, CURVY ROAD MEANDERS THROUGH DENSE REDWOODS.

BEN PEERS UP AND HAS TO CRANE HIS HEAD OUT THE WINDOW TO SEE THE IMMENSE TREES THAT SURROUND THEM.

THEY EACH PUSH AGAINST OR LEAN OUT THEIR WINDOWS.

IN AWE, THEY SLOW RIDE DOWN THE ROAD.

PAST OLD RIVERS, SAW MILLS AND LOG PONDS, SMALL TOWNS AND DENSE FORESTED HILLS.

Eventually the Old Highway meets up with the 101 North.

EXT.HIGHWAY 101-DAY

Back on the PCH, windows down they sail.

ALONG FOREST CORRIDORS WITH DISTANT RANCHES, GREEN PASTURES AND FARMS, LITTLE LAKES AND RESERVES WHERE ELK HEARDS REST.

They slow alongside the heard.

Ben opens his door, takes one step and lifts a camera and snaps several shots.

KIM

(Joking)

You know If you get closer, you can get a better shot!

RYAN
Yea, right. Or die trying.

Joel laughs.

BEN
I swear, every time I read an article
some other tourist has tried to pet
these creatures.

Mays eyes widen.

JOEL
Seriously?

MAY
Those are huge!

Ben climbs back in and closes the door.

BEN
You think these are big, you should
see a buffalo!

They stare at the heard a minute longer.

RYAN
Easy, by a thousand pounds.

MAY
(Fathoms)
Bad ass!

KIM
They're so beautiful out here in the
wild like this.

RYAN
Every year a bunch of people think
they can approach these beast burgers!

Everyone pauses and turns to Ryan.

RYAN
What?

KIM
Okay, I have to admit that's stupid -
hilarious!

Ben fights a smile.

MAY
 (Mouths)
 Beast burgers?

Joel laughs to himself, shakes his head then returns to his window side view.

MAY
 Kind of, yea.

They all share a chuckle.

A mother and her young Elk rest and chew grass at the center.

The bull Elk stand around the edges and corners of the heard.

A baby Elk stands upright, wobbly and leaves it's mom side.

BEN
 Wow, so many.

JOEL
 I Have to admit, it's all very..
 majestic.

May watches Joel observe the Elk and smiles.

The SUV pulls off.

TRASITION

EXT.DAVIDSON ROAD-DAY

The brake lights brighten as the vehicle approaches a sign on the side of the highway.

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park - Gold Bluffs Beach.

Entry Station 4, Campground 6, Fern Canyon 8.

RYAN
 This looks like our turn off.

BEN
 Yup.

The SUV pulls onto an access road that quickly shrinks into a dirt road.

MONTAGE (CONT'D)

THE DIRT ROAD RISES, FALLS, BENDS, TWISTS AND TURNS OVER MOUNTAIN SIDES OF THICK FOREST.

THE FERNS AND TREE'S ARE COVERED IN GRAY BY THE DUST OF THE TRAFFIC.

SUN BEAMS SLICE THROUGH THE COASTAL REDWOODS LIKE STROBE LIGHTS ON THE FACES OF THE PASSENGERS.

THE SUV DESCENDS FROM THE FOREST, TO RIDE A FINAL FOOTHILL THAT CRESTS ABOVE A LONG, QUIET, GOLDEN BEACH.

THE DIRT ROAD DROPS ALONGSIDE THE BEACH, A PARKING LOT, ANOTHER SIGN. FERN CANYON - 2.

THE SUV PARKS UPON A MUDDY SHOULDER AT THE END OF A STREAM FILLED, POT HOLE LAIDEN, DIRT ROAD.

Everyone climbs out the SUV to land their otherwise clean feet right into mud.

KIM

Awe, shit!

Kim looks down at her feet

JOEL

Yea boy!

Joel care free stretches his arms above his green-camouflaged, bucket hat, his Timberlands caked in mud.

May looks down at her own new purple, turquoise and wheat timberlands.

MAY

Okay?

May shrugs and peers up at the others.

MAY

Okay. Let's do this.

Ben reaches down and tucks the laces of his hiking boots in.

Kim takes notice and does the same to her newer pink boots.

When she finishes she observes Joel.

KIM

Aren't you worried about yours.

JOEL

Who me?

He looks around then down at one boot he lifts from the mud.

JOEL

By the looks of it, there's no
fighting it.

He takes another step away from the car, water bottle in
hand.

JOEL

I knew what we were getting into..

They all close their doors and start to head towards a sign
post at the head of the trail.

JOEL

Besides I've had these old things
since at least Senior year.

Joel peeks down at his Timberlands then back up at everyone
and shrugs.

TRANSITION

EXT.FERN CANYON, TRAILHEAD-DAY

A sign post marks the trail head, they all approach.

KIM

This is it, huh?

May gazes at their surroundings.

RYAN

Hah.

Ben and Ryan share a smile.

A meager hill rises on one side with shorter yet rich green
trees, a few ferns and the beach on the opposite.

BEN

Not quite yet. Just give it a minute.

KIM

I mean we've been at it a few..

May doesn't hold back.

MAY

Barely, more like a few feet.

KIM

Oh! Okay.

They walk 15 yards further, the trail does a soft bend to the right and opens in front of them.

Everyone expresses awe.

KIM

Whoa!

They all spread out.

The walls of the canyon are 50 feet high or more.

Ferns of all kinds grow atop each other, a dense green covers its steep, vertical sides.

A small stream freely meanders through the canyon.

They're all smiles as they balance across logs and wood planks over the deeper spots.

Along the way they stop and notice a large yellow Banana Slug.

It slugs along a branch as they trudge up the canyon further still.

They come too and rest, snack, drink water and once more smoke at a huge fallen redwood.

On the way back Kim slips off a log and into the water that soaks her shoes, socks and all.

Every one fights to contain them selves.

May gives in first.

MAY

Hah heh ha, ahhh.

She covers her mouth with one hand and the other she holds up apologetically.

MAY

I'm so sorry.

Immediately they all share in the hysterics over Kims aquatic fate.

DISSOLVE

The group rounds the original corner back to the vehicle.

KIM

Okay I have to admit, wet boots and all.

A snort and a chuckle or two are heard.

KIM

That was both a dope hike and a short, easy one at that!

Ben nods with a large smile.

BEN

Good form Kim.

RYAN

Indeed but in all seriousness though.

Ryan glances to each with both hands up and a concerned look.

RYAN

If Kim falls in water every time we do a trail, this will be the fucking most hilarious day ever!

Ryan, May and Joel cant hold back, they bust into a fit.

JOEL

For real, for real. Ha heh hah.

This time Joel puts one apologetic hand out and turns around to cover his laughter and near tears.

JOEL

That was a dope hike!

They all continue to walk.

MAY

Heaven yes, it was! Whats next?

BEN

Glad You asked!

RYAN

We're off to our next brief stop, Big tree.

BEN

Wait till you see this bad boy!

They all near the SUV.

MAY

So wait. Did you two already come ahead and like scout this whole thing already?

They slow as they near the SUV.

BEN

These are places that between the two of us, We've either have been too as kids or always wanted to see.

They encircle each other as they speak.

RYAN

There's even some we just found and added to the list.

Joel glances at May and makes a sheepish grin.

BEN

Like our 3rd and final stop after Big tree, which is Tall Trees Grove.

RYAN

Yea, we are slotted for 1pm, short 4 mile trail.

They all stop and glare back at Ryan.

Ryan now makes the awkward smile back.

BEN

Thats our biggest thing on our agenda.

Ryan shoots Ben a confused expression.

RYAN

No its not, tomorrow is a 6.2 mile hike.

JOEL

Awe, what!

KIM

Wait, what?

May watches them all and laughs.

MAY

Hah ha.

BEN

Oh, quit complaining. It's the best temperature on earth here!

RYAN

Yea, ya'll got this.

Ben and Ryan approach and open the doors for everyone, they pile in.

The vehicle pulls off the shoulder, flips a U then drives up the dirt road.

JIB UP

EXT.HIGHWAY 101-DAY

The SUV pulls out from the dirt road back onto the highway.

The windows down, each stare out at the fog as it pulls through the forest and back out to sea.

DISSOLVE

Ben rides the air with his hand, beside him Ryan still drives.

May leans back, her hair blows about.

Joel rests, his eyes closed.

DISSOLVE

The SUV brakes as a modest Highway sign marks a turn into a small paved double lot, immediately off the highway.

EXT.BIG TREE, PARKING LOT & TRAIL-DAY

The group dismounts the SUV and make it to the trail marker .2 - Big Tree.

Around a gentle bend they follow Ben and Ryan, each person drops their mouth open as they all slow to a stop.

EXT. BIG TREE-DAY

In front of them is a behemoth of a tree surrounded by a short wooden fence and signpost with history and facts.

They gather in a loose line in front of the tree.

BEN

Wow.

RYAN

You can say that again.

May follows its height with her eyes all the way as high as she can see.

MAY

Then.. Oh my god, Wow!

Joel appears lethargic as he stares back in awe.

JOEL

(Agreement)

Huh.

A little to her self, Kim blinks up at the sleeping giant.

KIM

I never knew there was anything even,
remotely this awesome on this planet.

She takes a step forward and touches its fantastic form.

KIM

Mind officially blown!

Everyone peers at Kim with long nods.

KIM

What?

Ryan smiles and gives Kim a glance of recognition.

RYAN

Well said.

May nods her head.

MAY

Yea girl.

Joel scratches his chin and coyly grins behind her.

Ben expresses pride and a warm smile to Kim's remarks.

Kim returns an appreciative smile.

KIM

Thanks you guys.

Ben approves of the scene.

BEN

Uh Huh.

He takes in Kim, the group and the beautiful tree one more time then quietly he walks away.

May and Joel remain in awe-struck positions.

RYAN

Words cant explain this.

One by one they follow Ben.

Another beat and Ryan glances at May and Joel with a smile before he too walks away.

May and Joel are left, Joel blinks and comes too.

He looks at May, chuckles then nods before he walks in the same direction as the others.

MAY

How.. in the actual fuck.

May peers over to speak to someone and everyone has gone.

She looks at the path and spots Joel and the others.

MAY

You.. hah ha heh!

May peers up at the loan giant amongst giants.

MAY

You are something else.

May turns and walks away.

DISSOLVE

EXT. HIGHWAY 101-DAY

The lone SUV moves along the highway that separates the coast from the dense hillside of tall trees.

The vehicle passes a small lake with a meadow on the far side.

They pull off the highway and into a single pump gas station and stand alone coffee hut.

The crew piles out, light hearted, they order then take off with fresh, hot coffee and latte's in hand.

INT.SUV, HIGHWAY-DAY

RYAN

Our final stop is a super requested hike. So much so, they only allow 50 people in each day.

Everyone throws a mix of curious expressions.

BEN

We head to put in for the pass 2 weeks in advance.

RYAN

We have a 2:30PM time slot.

BEN

Hence why we had to get up so early.

RYAN

We wanted to fit in Fern Canyon too.

Joel, May and Kim nod at each other.

BEN

Yea sorry but not sorry.

Ryan snortels at Ben.

JOEL

That was super dope.

MAY

Incredible.

Ben smiles back at Ryan.

KIM

The Vehicle merges on to a smaller highway and into Redwoods State park - Bald Hills Road.

Thirty minutes later, they pull onto an access road fronted by a gate with a pad lock.

Ryan and Ben get out and cross the front of the vehicle to the lock.

A couple minutes later and Ryan climbs back in the drivers seat, puts the SUV in gear and rolls through the now open gate.

Ben closes it, re-attaches the lock, returns to the passenger door and gets in.

The Vehicle drives up a long dirt access road.

TRANSITION

INT.SUV TALL TREE GROVE, PARKING LOT-DAY

Ryan adjust the rear view mirror to see everyone in the back.

RYAN

Ben and I have back packs. Feel free to put you waters and anything you need in them.

Ben half turns around to better see everyone.

BEN

This hike will be around 2 hours or so. Be sure you have what you need, a hat, beanie, hoodie, whatever.

RYAN

And don't worry, we brought snacks!

Ryan thumbs toward the trunk.

KIM

Oh, thank god. I didn't bring anything.

BEN

Don't worry, its cooler weather, a

semi short hike and Ryan and I brought extra water.

Kim holds up her latte'.

BEN

In case anyone needed some.

Ben leers at Kim.

The SUV pulls into a small dirt lot off the access road and finds an open spot.

RYAN

This is a good point in time to stress tomorrows hike will be both an earlier start and as we said a longer hike.

BEN

So we'll all be sure to pack a small lunch and take more water tomorrow.

Joel and Kim nod, May remains stoic.

RYAN

Any questions?

MAY

Naw, let's do this now and talk about tomorrow, tonight.

Ben and Ryan glance at each other then back at May with a smile.

RYAN

Fair enough.

Ben and Ryan nod at each other and lean into their door handles.

BEN

Alright then.

They all exit the vehicle.

EXT.TALL TREES GROVE, PARKING LOT & TRAILHEAD-DAY

At the trailhead is a weather worn, moss covered hut with bench seats, fronted by an information board.

A few feet away bear box, bear proof trash can and another

trailhead info and marker stand.

Ryan and Ben approach the info boards, the others stop just shy of the trailhead.

KIM

Hey hey, what you boys doing over there.

BEN

Just making sure we're not missing anything important.

RYAN

Yea, readers are leaders sweet heart.

At that Kim makes a smug expression at Ryan and turns to May.

KIM

Oh, just when I was beginning to like you.

May lets a chuckle slip when Kim peers back she straightens up.

JOEL

I'm glad someone is reading the information.

Joel waits for the guys to wrap up at the board when they turn towards him, Joel starts down the trail.

May glances to Kim.

MAY

(Nonchalant)

He has a point.

May turns and starts down the trail.

Kim looks up and spots a few gray clods that appear to gather loosely over head then to Ryan and Ben.

KIM

What do we do, if it starts to rain?

BEN

Maybe, walk faster?

RYAN

Hah.

Kim gives Ben and Ryan the evil eye.

Ryan puts up his hands

RYAN

Im sorry.

Ryan takes a step closer to Kim.

RYAN

I apologize, Im used to having to be defensive and you're being sincere right now.

Kim exhales.

KIM

Thank You.

Kim takes a step closer to Ryan.

KIM

See now this communication..

Kim points at the both of them.

KIM

It's nice.

She peers into his eyes with a soft smile.

RYAN

Yea, I guess it is.

Ryan gazes back at her.

The two smile at each other then turn to join the others.

EXT.TALL TREES TRAIL-DAY

At the front Joel and May stop and peer back.

Joel has lifted a joint from his case, lights it, pulls from it then passes it too May.

They observe the interaction at the rear, May smiles then passes it back to Joel as she walks past.

The group set out on a well maintained widening dirt path that meanders into the heavy wooded forest.

Ferns and various trees of all sizes grow at every angle and all around them.

The group approach a fallen giant that has a trail wide hole cut through it.

JOEL

Hah.

They each pass thru with youthful smiles.

KIM

Cool.

Kim grabs Ben and Ryan.

KIM

Hey guys, hold up!

May and Joel return, they all huddle together for a selfie.

DISSOLVE

SOFT ANGELIC MUSIC CUE

The path shrinks and the shade grows as moss enshrouded trees surround them.

Bens curiosity peaks as he drops back.

BEN

Wow..

RYAN

That's really trippy.

KIM

And creepy.

Kim peers around then up at the tree closest to her.

KIM

I feel like their is a group of spiders, hidden about to come out of here and pounce on us all.

May and Joel slow their pace and glance back at Kim.

MAY

On that note.

May and Joel chuckle and continue forward.

DISSOLVE

Another bend and the sound of a river begins to brighten.

JOEL
You hear that?

MAY
Yea.

A few more feet and the path begins to open up in to a tree grove that sits on a bank of a river.

MAY
Whoa look at that one.

At the forefront of the grove sits one massive giant of a tree.

May, Kim and Ryan stare up, Joel and Ben approach the massive giant.

They appear to shrink in front of the sheer size of the massive tree trunk, its volume simply dwarfs them.

Joel reaches his hand out to the tree.

JOEL
Can you believe this?

Ben gazes up at the tree.

BEN
Barely.

They walk away, the giant remains as it was.

A short walk further a couple of bright, yellow flowers contrast the forest.

The sky becomes overcast, soon after a light drizzle starts.

BEN
Okay I'll admit I forgot my hoodie.

Ben stops and drops his back pack from his shoulders.

BEN
Even though it just sprinkling, I only

have a t shirt on. so I guess I'm gonna' rock my poncho!

Proud Ben pulls a bright yellow poncho from his pack.

RYAN

It's not as cool as Ben's..

Ryan and Joel start to laugh when Ben dawns an aloof expression.

RYAN

But I do have some cheap, clear ponchos if anyone else needs one.

Ryan slightly lifts a single, small, clear poncho from his pack for them to see.

JOEL

Good looking out bro!

KIM

I sure didnt bring anything like that.

MAY

I brought one, I dont think I need it. You want it?

RYAN

I grabbed 4 of them. They're only like 2 bucks each, so no biggie.

KIM

Awesome, see now that was the kind of answer I was looking for earlier.

RYAN

I know.

KIM

Well, why didn't you just tell me that.

RYAN

I don't know.

Ben watches and with a chuckle he returns pack to back and then faces May and Joel with a smile.

May continues on the trail with Joel in line behind her.

Ben behind Kim and Ryan takes up the rear.

They stop briefly in front of a burnt out hollow of an extraordinarily tall redwood.

One by one they each get inside the tree hollow.

Joel relights his joint and puffs at it, the smoke fills the inside of the trunk then slowly rises to the top.

May pulls her phone out, raises one arm, a light flashes from her camera.

They group perks up, May snaps a semi dark photo of the group snug inside the tree trunk.

Each steps from inside the burnt out hollow of the tree and rejoins the path.

Ben steps onto the path when he hears an *Insectoid like clicking*.

He stops in attempt to identify the sound, it stops so Ben turns and joins the others.

DISSOLVE

EXT.TALL TREE GROVE, RIVER BANK-DAY

A placid river and its gravel banks meander through redwood forests, hints of yellow, burgundy and red dot the landscape.

From the forest line, the group emerges to stand on the river bank.

The group fans out as they approach the creek and the trunk of a fallen giant redwood.

KIM

Can we climb up this giant thing.

Kim nears and champions one foot on the lower side of the giants trunk face down in the river bank.

BEN

Thats a great idea!

Ben steps onto the giant tree trunk and next to Kim.

RYAN

Yea, thats a girl.

Ryan follows suit.

Kim leads Ryan then Ben up and onto the fallen tree.

May and Joel approach the edge of the tree trunk.

They exchange glances.

May smiles then puts one foot on the tree trunk and with a swift step up she's atop the giant.

JOEL

Hah ha.

Joel nods then does the same.

near top up the tree trunk, Kim takes a seat.

KIM

Come on y'all, let's take a seat.

Ryan and Ben peer up as they near.

They both smile at Kim then slow and take a seat next to her on the trunk.

May and Joel approach arms out, both dawn grins.

MAY

I have to admit, this is dope.

KIM

Yea, I've never done anything like this.

JOEL

Damn sure, not over a creek on the back of a a giant Sequoia!

Ryan and Ben share smiles of pride.

Kim pats the tree beside her.

KIM

Me neither.

BEN

Just relax, take it all in for a minute.

May and Joel close in and take a seat next to the others.

MAY

Huh, wow!

JOEL

This is a trip.

May and Joel settle in.

They all take off packs, lean back and stare at the view.

The forest is calm around them; crickets, frogs, insects and birds are heard as well as a soft trickle of water beneath them.

They're awe struck as they sit and take in the ever expanding forest.

THE FOREST SILENTLY WATCHES THEM BACK.

MAY

Wow! ..Just Wow.

May nods and Kim concurs.

KIM

This is way cool.

Ben just shakes his head as he peers around.

Kim shuffles her weight, with one hand to brace her the other she shoves into her pocket and fishes out her cell phone.

KIM

Come on y'all. One more!

She flips the settings into wide and lifts the phone into the air.

KIM

You're all going to have to scrunch in here.

The others attempt to move closer.

May and Ryan exchange eye rolls as they close in on Ben and Kim in the front.

KIM

Almost there.

Kim peers up at the phone, she tries her best to fit everyone

in.

JOEL

I got ya.

Joel glances over at the phone as he takes the closest possible spot.

Joel remains a little taller to be seen at the edge of frame and peers back up for the picture.

KIM

Alright everyone. The old man says what?

BEN, RYAN, MAY, JOEL

What?

KIM

Chicken Butt!

They each giggle or snortel when Kim takes the shot, 2 times quickly for good measure.

RYAN

Awesome.

Ben peers over the edge, down at the ground.

Directly under Kim is water, near Ben it narrows and becomes the river rock bank almost 10 feet below.

BEN

I think I have a fun shot, hold on.

Ben scoots himself to the edge of the trunk then glances at everyone.

He slips over the edge and down the few feet to the river bed below and lands with a gentle yet quirky sounding shift of the rounded stones.

BEN

Want me to use your phone or mine?

Kim smiles down before she lets go.

KIM

You sure got it?

BEN

Yup.

She drops the phone to him, Ben swiftly catches it mid-flight.

BEN

Alright everyone. One more time.

Ben lifts the phone up to frame the shot.

MAY

I wish you could be in here.

BEN

Awe, no worries. One of y'all will take the next one.

Ben takes a half step back and bends at the knees.

KIM

Awe, thanks Ben.

BEN

Alright I'm a little old school.

Starting with Kim they lift their arms over each others shoulders and smile back.

BEN

Very good, I love it!

He raises his other hand and thumbs up the group.

BEN

Now say cheese!

KIM, RYAN, MAY, JOEL.

Cheese.

Ben snaps the photo.

BEN

Oh, too cool!

KIM

Awe, I bet!

Ben looks at the photo a beat longer, smiles then begins to lift it towards Kim.

KIM
Can you just hold it till we get to
the other side.

Ben hears the sound of walking over river rock.

BEN
No worries. Take your time.

He does a double take in the direction of the sound.

KIM
Thanks.

BEN
If you guys want to just follow the
log across to the other side, the
trail should pick up there.

They all stand up.

Joel attempts to peer past them to spot the trail.

JOEL
Oh, too cool.

They all start across the massive tree.

Ben steps back and starts to find a way across the small
creek when he stops and watches everyone and lifts the phone
for another quick shot.

BEN
Hah heh.

He catches them all in motion, arms stretched out they follow
Kim.

A RESILIENT GROUP OF YOUNG FRIENDS ENJOY A GREAT TIME.

Ben finishes the photo and smiles up at his friends.

He crosses the creek bed on the back of a few larger stones
and branches to meet the others.

They each descend the higher side of the tree trunk.

Not far away a small trail leads into the forest.

Ben finds a nearby access trail up and waits.

They all easily transition down the giant tree and onto the trail back into the forest.

Ben starts to follow when a gentle breeze blows his way, he stops and takes notice.

A noisy flock of birds fly off from within the canopy on the far opposite side.

BEN

Hey, did any of y'all see..

Ben glances over to see no one next to him.

Ben turns to watch the birds in flight before he stares down at where they came from.

BEN

(Clears throat)

Hmm.

Ben slowly turns, follows the trail and steps into the canopy of the forest.

THE FOREST STILL WATCHES.. FROM OPPOSITE SIDE.

EXT.TALL TREE GROVE, TRAIL-DAY

Ben catches up with the others.

The canopy rises by two hundred feet, far below dense tufts of ferns thrive.

A humbling sentiment shared by all, tunes them into the forests splendor.

KIM

Holy shit, look at this place.

They gaze, gander and absorb into their surroundings.

RYAN

This place is like a movie set!

JOEL

I was just going to say that.

One by one they walk around the bend.

An odd angled, old growth, Oak Tree -green with moss stands alone.

Ben registers a sound like a long hiss behind and parallel to him in the under growth.

BEN STOPS, TURNS HIS HEAD AND STARES.

BEN

What the..

The sound stops.

Ahead, the group steadily moves along.

BEN

Okay.

Ben peers up the trail to watch them disappear into the next bend.

He glances back then turns and rejoins his friends.

Around the bend everyone slows, the trail ascends a gentle hill with roots that jut from out the ground.

Ben looks back, nothing.

He starts up the rooted hill, when something of size shuffles through the bushes parallel to him.

Ben slows and turns his head and spies for the source.

A low **growl** and slow **clicking** like noise emanates from only a few feet away.

RYAN

Hey, you coming?

Ryan startles Ben.

He looks up, glances sideways then to Ryan and finally makes it over the hill.

RYAN

You alright?

Ben peers back nervous, feigns a smile then raises one arm to usher Ryan forward.

BEN
Hey guys, uh.

May, Joel and Kim glance back.

JOEL
'Sup?

Ryan notices Bens anxiousness.

KIM
Everything okay?

Ben puts both hands up, palms up.

Ben appears anxious, his face flushes as he slows his breathing.

BEN
I don't want to alarm anyone..

KIM
(Worried)
Uh, too late!

BEN
I think.. somethings trailing us.

MAY
Huh?

Ben puts his hands down and shakes his head as he raises one digit up to his friends.

BEN
I'm pretty sure its just a black bear.

KIM
Wait, what?

May, Joel and Kim glance back.

JOEL
Yea, that might be something to be worried about.

RYAN
You sure man?

Ben nods adamantly back.

RYAN
Thats *odd* usually they just run away!

BEN
Exactly, still it followed us across
the river bed.

Everyone hard stops and scans their field of view, Kim looks
from Ben to Ryan then to May.

MAY
We're not the only ones out here,
right.

BEN
Yea, I'm not entirely sure.

Ben glances at each one of them.

BEN
And I'm pretty sure, I heard **something**
growl at me.

Ben thumbs back over his shoulder.

KIM
For real?

JOEL
Look, its not chasing us right now.

BEN
Maybe it smells food or something.
Anyone have anything?

MAY
Just water.

KIM
nothing.

JOEL
Y'all have the snacks, remember.

Ryan chuckles

RYAN
Yea, **I** have them.

BEN
They're all still sealed and little

smell I think, right.

RYAN

Look, if we have too I'll ditch the bag!

BEN

Fair enough.

RYAN

I think the trail passes through the actual grove just ahead.

BEN

We've already done about 2 miles. So yea, you've gotta be right.

May, Joel and Kim listen with hopeful intent..

JOEL

At least it's not raining.

KIM

Just a sprinkle here or there.

RYAN

Alright then.

MAY

Let's just keep our eyes open, stick together and keep it moving then.

RYAN

Yup.

BEN

Agreed.

Ben leads the others in another glance around.

BEN

If you see anything, unless its absolutely necessary. **Don't run.**

RYAN

A predatory instinct will kick in.

JOEL

(sarcastic)

Hahhh, got it.

Kim admits.

KIM
Yea, I'll try.

BEN
I'm serious Kim.

Kim returns a frantic stare.

KIM
Okay!

BEN
I'll bring up the rear.

Ryan gives him an ill advised glare.

BEN
I want to see if I hear it again!

RYAN
Dude, you sure?

BEN
I'm trying not to be overly worried.

Ryan pauses, dips his head then glances at everyone else.

RYAN
Alright.

BEN
With a little luck, we'll be out of
here in thru the loop and on our way
with out issue.

RYAN
Sometimes these things happen, it's
very rare anything becomes of it.

THE GROUP PUSHES FORWARD.

DISSOLVE

EXT. TALL TREE GROVE-DAY

The group crests a second hill when the trail widens before
it forks at a sign.

<- Tall Trees Loop ->

The trail enters a dense grove of old growth redwoods on the right, they follow it.

A large grove, some tall and skinny, others multi-truncated and over sized, many cracked, burned or moss covered.

MAY

You got to be kidding me?

RYAN

What you see something.

May points up into the tree.

MAY

There is another tree, growing out of the branch half way up.

TILT UP.

POV OF A GARGANTUAN TREE, THE VIEW SLOWS OVER HALF WAY UP THE TRUNK.

Growing up, out of a gigantic branch is a thirty to fifty foot tree.

JOEL

Oh, shit

BEN

Hah heh ha.

KIM

I thought you meant the bear or what ever.

RYAN

Yea, Me too

Kim waves them off.

BEN

Well, the good thing is this is the high point.

Ben waives his hand in the air, he gestures something no one gets as he stalls for a breath.

BEN
After this it should be all down hill.

RYAN
Oh yea, Okay. Getting better!

KIM
Why's that?

BEN
We naturally walk faster down hill.

RYAN
Yea, a sixty minute hike up hill is
fifteen to thirty minutes down.

May nods her approval.

KIM
Oh, hell yea. Thats the best news all
day.

Kim becomes excited, she peps up and regains her composure.

JOEL
so in our case..?

Joel raises one eyebrow at Kim.

Kim slumps her shoulders and looks to Joel.

JOEL
It's still..

Kim looks saddened.

Joel glances to May, she returns an apprehensive expression.

JOEL
..A little more than half an hour.

Kim perks back up

KIM
Oh, okay.

Kim shrugs it off.

KIM
It beats 2 hours up hill.

They all start to walk.

May nods and with her index finger she points at Kim.

MAY
That's my girl.

Kim nods.

KIM
I mean, I see you girl.

May dips her head then lifts it proud, she makes a heart with her hands.

Kim smiles.

They put their arms around each other and traipse past Ryan in the lead.

Ben nods at Ryan.

Ben closes the distance to Joel and Ryan.

BEN
I'd say our plan is working.

RYAN SMILES AND NODS BACK AT BEN.

MAY AND KIM POINT TO A TREE, THEN BREAK OUT IN LAUGHTER.

JOEL
(Approves)
Heh ha.

Joel and Ryan share in their own observational humor.

RYAN
Good stuff.

JOEL
Yeah.

Ryan modestly dips his head and let's Joel pass.

The group finds an even larger fallen tree.

It crosses down a valley at a steep angle, into the center of a flowing creek.

Ryan and Ben climb up for a second adventure and stick a hand

out for Kim.

KIM

Um, I'm cool Ive already done that today.

Ryan nods.

BEN

Cool, no pressure.

RYAN

Yup, just going down and back.

JOEL

Cool then, I'll post here too.

Ryan looks back at Joel.

JOEL

It's cool.

Joel peers over at May.

JOEL

Someones got to stay here with Kim, while May goes with ya'll.

May smiles to Joel.

Joel and Kim smile proud at May as she walks past and reaches for a root to pull her self up.

The guys have to stand back to let May up and over.

Ben and Ryan share raised eyebrows and nods.

May steps past them and measures the behemoth of a tree, it vertically descends into the banks below.

Ryan and Ben start to take a step when May puts both hands out and runs down the tree in a confident stride.

MAY

Hah hah ha!

They all watch with admiration.

To Kim and Joel it appears May goes over the edge and out of sight.

They all move closer to see her descend the bottom half safely and in good form.

CUT TO:

Hand Claps are heard from below.

A second later, pounding footsteps as Ben and Ryan descend with matching fervor.

May wears a large smile across her face.

CUT TO:

JOEL
They're Fucking nuts.

KIM
Yea, I concur.

Joel makes a silly expression at Kim's word choice.

KIM
What? I do.

CUT TO:

Ryan and Ben both show elated expressions.

RYAN
That was fucking cool.

BEN
Yea it was.

May over come, smiles so large tears form.

May, Ryan and Ben gasp for air, yet move in for a group hug.

CUT TO:

Joel and Kim watch the three hug below.

KIM
Hah ha. Thats my girl.

Kim claps again.

Joel grins as he peers down.

CUT TO:

The three let go of each other carefully then take a breath and each peer around.

The sound of gurgling water, dragon flies and frogs, draws May to dip to one knee near to the water.

A minute later she peers over her shoulder at the boys.

MAY

Thanks guys.

RYAN

Thanks, for coming.

BEN

Yea, this wouldn't be the same without you.

May smiles at Ben.

MAY

Awe.

Kim peers around and at the Grove they're still in.

CUT TO:

KIM

How long uh, you think they're gonna be down there anyway?

JOEL

Hell, those bunch of nature nuts. There's no telling.

Kim lets out a single laugh.

A long beat later, the sound of wooden footsteps rise up the trunk to reveal the trio's return.

DISSOLVE

EXT.TALL TREE GROVE, BACK END-DAY

The group descend a steep, rocky incline where the Tall Tree

Grove loops back to the trail.

Shoes shuffle then a foot fall is heard at the rear of the group.

The group turns around to spot.

Ben on one knee, mid- slip.

RYAN

Hey!

Joel reaches back with a quick hand up.

BEN

Whoa!

Joel turns back latent.

JOEL

You alright?

BEN

(Embarrassed)

Huh, yea thanks.

Ben gains steady ground, glares back at the path then up at his friends.

RYAN

(Grins)

No worries.

A small cloud of dust tumbles in the air above the trail.

BEN

I don't know. I must've slipped?

Ben reaches down and rubs at his ankle.

BEN

Crazy..

Ben takes a knee, feels at a tender spot then pulls up his sock.

BEN

(Mumbles)

Kind of felt like, something grabbed me.

Ryan and Joel glance at each other then back at Ben.

JOEL

What?

Ryan peers down the trail.

Ben stands back up.

BEN

Nothing, I guess.

He shakes his head, dusts himself off and takes a final glance back.

May experiences an immutable intuition, she stops and glances around.

Sweat covers Ben's forehead, he wipes it away stands straight then pushes past Ryan and Joel to take lead amongst the group.

May watches Ben, she takes a final glance around and follows close behind.

DISSOLVE

EXT. TALL TREE GROVE, TRAIL-DAY

The group manages the trail back fairly quickly.

Ben's canteen bounces loosely to his wrist as he falls back to the middle.

May and Kim throw looks over their shoulders at Joel and Ryan.

Joel and Ryan bring up the rear.

Ben unsteady, Ryan steps forward and places a hand on his shoulder.

DISSOLVE

EXT. TALL TREES GROVE, LOT & TRAILHEAD-DAY

THREE SETS OF SHOES TRUDGE ALONG.

THE GROUP WORKS TO KEEP BEN UPRIGHT AND IN FORWARD MOTION.

PALE AND SWEATY, BEN FIGHTS TO KEEP HIS HEAD UP, HE STUMBLES

WITH ASSISTANCE.

THE SUN DIPS BEHIND THE TREES, IT BACK LIGHTS THE FOREST AND
CREATES TALL SHADOWS THAT GROW.

The group gets Ben to the Trail head hut.

KIM

Let's let him relax here.

They lead Ben to the Trail Head Hut and sit him upon the
benches inside.

RYAN

Relax here buddy.

Ryan and Joel exhausted help lower Ben.

JOEL

I got ya.

May steps in too help Joel brace Ben.

Ryan breaks away to stretch out a muscle spasm in his leg and
catch his breath.

May dips into Bens pocket and removes the Rental' Fab.

MAY

Kim get the truck and bring it here,
please.

Kim nods.

KIM

Uh Huh, Okay. Okay.

Kim fatigued attempts to sprint.

Ben takes his own exhausted attempt at a deep breath.

Ryan wheezes beside him, places a brief hand on Ben and
concurrs with the bobbing of an outstretched finger.

Joel takes a deep breath and nods at Ben.

JOEL

I hear ya brother.

Joel gently puts a hand on Bens lower back while he
straightens Ben's shoulders.

JOEL
Slow, deep breaths.

Ben labors to pull in his first deep breath.

BEN
Hmm, Huhhhh!

May doughy eyed glances from Ben to Joel.

JOEL
There you go brother, good job.

The black SUV pulls up to a stop beside them.

The window rolls down, Kim un-locks the doors.

KIM
Is he alright?

Kims concerned before she shares a hopeful expression with May.

MAY
I don't think he would've made it much longer.

Ryan moves to open the truck's rear door.

Joel and May help Ben into the back seat.

Nearby **Something** peers from the vantage of the first tree branches of an elder Redwood.

Ben feigns a smile before his head dips.

BEN
(anguished)
I was doing just fine ..with out you,
thank you.

Joel lifts and slides Ben over in the seat and climbs in behind him.

May runs around to the opposite rear.

Ryan and Kim take the front and drivers side.

BEN
I'll be alright just get me home.

Everyone agrees but with doubt and worry.

THE BRAKE LIGHTS DIM, DUST CLOUDS RAISE INTO THE AIR, THE TRUCK DRIVES AWAY.

FADE OUT

INT.AIR BNB CABIN, LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

SLOW FADE IN

THE FRONT DOOR OF THE CABIN IS SHUT AND ALL IS QUIET.

THE MUFFLED SOUND OF A VEHICLE PULLS UP, CAR DOORS OPEN AND CLOSE.

FEET SHUFFLE CLOSER, VOICES ARE HEARD WHEN THE FRONT DOOR IS SHOVED OPEN THEN HELD BY KIM.

RYAN
Careful, careful.

May gives Ryan her serious face.

JOEL
I got him.

May leads them through the door, her hands extend to stabilize Ben.

MAY
Right here, at the couch.

Ben barely holds his head up or stands on his own yet still holds some self awareness.

BEN
I see it.

Ryan moves to help brace Ben.

JOEL
Almost there.

BEN
Yup.

Together the three achieve the landing of a drunkard.

Ryan lets go as May finds the arm of the couch and Joel plops down next to Ben.

BEN

..Ugh.

Joel completely spent leans back.

JOEL

Oh shit.

Ryan throws a grin to Ben then Joel.

RYAN

You're telling me buddy.

JOEL

Whew. Im just glad you alright Ben.

BEN

Huh, yea.

KIM

What can we get for you Ben.

Bens head floats still he's quick to reply.

BEN

Water. A cold compress.

JOEL

A what.

Kim walks to the nearest bathroom.

KIM

A cool rag!

May follows to help.

RYAN

You alright? You had me scared there for a minute.

BEN

Hmm, yea. Feels like when I was sick in Africa.

Joel throws a confused look at Ryan.

JOEL

Africa?

Ryan nods and take a step closer to Ben.

RYAN
You mean the Congo, when you got
Malaria?

Ben pale, sweat covered falls asleep.

RYAN
Shit.

JOEL
Malaria?

RYAN
Yea, thats crazy.

JOEL
No shit thats crazy.

Ryan steps away to think.

Kim and May return with a wet wash cloth.

KIM
How's he doing?

They approach him.

JOEL
He just fell asleep.

May pats Kim shoulder.

MAY
Its okay.

Kim leans over and gently places the cool cloth over Ben's forehead.

BEN
Mmm.

Ben appears to relax and settles in his chair.

They all stand around and exhale.

May places a glass of water on the end table next to the couch.

KIM
Oh thank god.

MAY

We're not in the clear yet.

May expects resistance, so shies as she speaks.

RYAN

Yea we're gonna have to keep an eye on him all night.

JOEL

What? Why?

Joel lifts his head.

RYAN

He eventually needs to take something for his fever.

KIM

That right.

RYAN

He's had the chills since we brought him in the house.

MAY

Does anyone have any Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

KIM

I do.

RYAN

I do too.

Joel has a curious expression when he looks to Ryan.

RYAN

What? I get swollen ankles when I hike.

Joel lets up.

RYAN

Weed doesn't cure everything.

Joel puts his own hands up.

JOEL

Aight, I hear you.

MAY

Good, then can one of you please put two of whatever on a napkin beside his water.

Ryan lets Kim move to get hers.

KIM

Yea.

MAY

I'll go grab him a blanket.

RYAN

I saw one in the closet over there.

Ryan points across the room.

JOEL

I'll go see what we have for dinner and get that started

RYAN

There is stuff in the fridge, we got for tonight.

Ryan takes a seat next to Ben

RYAN

I'll help you in a minute.

JOEL

No worries, I got it.

Joel peers at each, everyone is worried or fatigued.

JOEL

Y'all take a load off. Turn on the t.v. or whatever. Just hang there with our guy.

May and Joel exchange nods and take off in separate directions.

Ryan leans back yet keeps an eye on his friend.

Kim returns, sets two pills on the end table then takes a seat beside them.

DISSOLVE

INT.AIR BNB CABIN, KITCHEN-NIGHT

Everyone is seated rather quiet.

Joel brings the last item and a pitcher of tea to the table.

JOEL

(Clears throat)

Hope everyone is okay with sweet tea.

Ryan listens and watches the living room.

Kim tired, peers up at Joel.

KIM

That sounds great.

MAY

Yea, thanks. This looks amazing.

RYAN

I'm starving, thanks bud. I'm sorry I should've helped.

JOEL

Awe, you're all good brother.

Joel glances then humbly waves away Ryan's gesture.

JOEL

Plus we all know you can't cook.

RYAN

What, I make a mean grilled cheese.

Kim raises one eye brow at Ryan and snortels.

RYAN

Unless I'm high, I'd probably burn that shit.

They all share a smile and a laugh.

A rustle is made and feet shuffle when Ben stutter steps from around the corner.

Ryan stands and rushes to help him.

RYAN

Hey hey, how you feeling bubba?

BEN
(Mumbles)
Um, thirsty and my heads pounding.

KIM
I cant believe you are up already?

BEN
(Slurs words)
Are you guys eating, without me?

MAY
We just sat down.

May gets up, crosses to the living room.

RYAN
We wouldn't think of it.

KIM
Come on in, join us.

JOEL
Yessir please do. Take ya' time
though.

May returns with the glass of water and two ibuprofen.

They all sit down and begin to pass around food.

MAY
After you get a bite, take these okay.

Eyes squinted Ben peers down at the table.

He reaches for them, pops both followed by a quick sip of water.

In moments they each have plates of food, are in higher spirits and start to eat in earnest.

Ben is a third of the way through his plate when he slows and wipes at his forehead.

He puts his silverware down and wanes a beat in his seat when everyone takes notice.

MAY
Ben, you okay?

Ben peers away to collect himself.

A beat later a cough comes over him that he attempts to hold back.

RYAN

You need anything?

Ben begins to hold up one shaky hand.

In the next beat Ben takes a large heaving breath and doubles over himself at the table.

Everyone leans in and attempts to help him.

In the next instant Ben stands then doubles over again before he sits back down and works to prop him self upright.

At this point all are confused.

Ben opens his mouth and begins to heave large amounts of projectile vomit.

They all try to stand or fall back wards to avoid it.

Kim unable to escape takes the brunt of the outbound puke.

A beat goes by, they all stand about.

Kim is more distressed then the others when Ben again starts to moan and gurgle.

KIM

Oh god!

Kim extends one arm out.

Ben heaves more vomit, this time he stands when an even larger pass of projectile vomit follows.

This time Kim escapes the wrath, they watch Ben who appears to have a never ending stream of vomit.

Afterwards he falls into his seat at the table and passes out onto his plate.

Joel and Ryan leap up.

JOEL

Can you get me the rag off the stove,
please!

Ryan crosses to the stove, removes the hand towel then quickly returns to hand it off to Joel.

Joel places it under Bens face then shrugs.

Joel peers to Ryan then to May.

JOEL

What the actual fuck was that?

Ryan shakes his head in return.

JOEL

Is that normal. I've never seen anything like that before.

MAY

Neither have I?

RYAN

He mentioned Malaria?

JOEL

Thats right, he said he felt like Africa.

RYAN

He caught malaria that trip. It was crazy he almost died from it too.

JOEL

What?

RYAN

Yea.

MAY

How would anything here in the states have him feeling like the Malaria in Africa?

RYAN

Thats just it, I don't know.

May and Joel nods, Kim stands by distraught covered in throw up.

RYAN

I don't know.

Joel glances from May to Ryan then to Kim.

JOEL

Kim.

Completely grossed out and unable to move.

KIM

Huh?

JOEL

Go upstairs, take a shower.

In shock Kim does an about face and moans her way to the bathroom.

Joel turns to Ryan and May.

JOEL

We'll ..clean this up.

Joel shakes his head as he peers around.

Ryan checks Ben's breaths

RYAN

There's cleaning stuff in the closet
in the kitchen.

Joel leans into Ryan and May.

JOEL

We'll keep an eye on him, he seems to
have gotten whatever it is out of him
now.

May gasps.

JOEL

We'll call an ambulance if anything
like that happens again.

Joel looks from Ben back to them both.

JOEL

Otherwise, I don't know.

MAY

Do the best we can to make him
comfortable.

May and Ryan return quiet, worried nods.

DISSOLVE.

INT. AIRBNB CABIN, LIVING ROOM-DAY

THE LIVING ROOM IS FILLED WITH A SOFT LIGHT OF THE MORNING.

Passed to on the couch next to each other and sharing a blanket is Joel and May.

On the love seat passed out with another blanket is Ben.

The sun rises further when Ryan comes down and checks on Ben.

He takes a large breath when he's joined by Kim as she descends the stairs.

KIM

How's he doing?

Joel takes a large breath then exhales.

JOEL

Better, I think.

Kim approaches, takes a look at Ben, lifts the blanket up to his chin then smiles at Ryan.

KIM

The color is returning to his face,
thats good.

Ryan agrees in an attempt to project a positive outlook.

KIM

Come on, let's find some coffee.

Kim extends a hand to Ryan.

RYAN

Okay.

Ryan nods and joins her.

INT.AIR BNB CABIN, KITCHEN-NIGHT

Kim pours a cup of steaming coffee for Ryan, lifts then carries it to him.

RYAN
Awe, thanks.

Kim crosses back to the kitchen, pours her own then joins him at the table.

Kim pauses then leans into Ryan.

They settle against each other in the quiet of the moment, May and Joel walk into the room.

KIM
Hey.

May notices the two and waves a hand.

MAY
Morning.

Joel nods at Ryan as they approach.

RYAN
Morning.

Kim lends a hopeful smile back.

RYAN
We just got up too.

KIM
Maybe 10 minutes ago.

Joel nods, May crosses to the coffee pot as Joel takes a seat at the table.

MAY
Coffee?

JOEL
Please.

May pours as they all sit in silence at the table.

A minute later she joins them and hands a mug to Joel.

JOEL
Thanks.

THEY ALL SIT QUIETLY, THE BIRDS OUTSIDE SING, THE SUN SHINES THROUGH THE WINDOWS.

Ryan sits and simply holds his mug, at last he begins to take a sip when they become aware of a stir in the living room.

The 4 friends turn to look.

BEN
Is that coffee I smell.

Everyone gets up and quickly makes for the living room.

INT. AIRBNB CABIN, LIVING ROOM-DAY

Ben moves in slow motion to sit up.

BEN
Cough, cough.

Ryan circles the corner first, everyone else is just behind.

RYAN
Oh man, am I glad to see you awake!

Kim becomes faint when she spots Ben awake.

KIM
(Sobs)
Oh, thank god.

The emotions range, each person steps closer to Ben their fear less and charismatic friend.

With some effort Ben moves his legs to the floor.

May catches his eye with a gentle smile.

MAY
How are you feeling?

May takes a step to the side to let Joel in.

BEN
A little beat, honestly.

Joel last to approach, steps forward with a glass of water in hand he gently extends towards Ben.

BEN
And thirsty.

Ben peers up at the water then to Joel.

Joel steps forward and hands him the glass of water.

Ben accepts the water and peers back at Joel with thankful gratitude.

JOEL

Take your time.

Ben takes a deep breath, exhales then sips the water.

The group of friends encircle Ben, idle and quiet.

He peers back at them slowly as he finishes his glass.

BEN

Honestly guys, I'm okay.

Everyone loosens up.

They each take a place around around Ben on to the couch.

KIM

I really cant believe you're awake and alright.

RYAN

Yea buddy, we were seriously worried..

Ryan emphasis with another silly gesture.

RYAN

We didn't know if you were going to make it through the night or if we should take you to the hospital?

Ben graciously regards them all.

BEN

Thanks, all of you for taking care of me.

MAY

We all **know**, you would have done the same.

Bens' eyes gloss over as he appreciates his friends.

BEN

Eh, hmm. Thanks y'all.

Ryan stands and moves for the kitchen.

Ryan returns with some coffee.

Ben raises him self up tall and receives it.

JOEL

Anything else we can get you brother.

Ben take a long sip of his coffee then wearily answers.

BEN

Yea, I am starved.

The four glance at one another.

BEN

What?

RYAN

I bet you are buddy?

BEN

What's that mean?

Joel flashes a grossed out expression at Ryan.

BEN

What?

KIM

You don't remember?

Ben scratches the back of his head.

BEN

Not, really.

They each glance at Ryan then back to Ben.

RYAN

Come on, let's get something in you.
Maybe you can tell us what you
remember

KIM

..And we'll tell you what **really**
happened.

Ben nods as the group transitions into the kitchen.

INT. AIRBNB CABIN, KITCHEN- DAY

EVERYONE ENTERS THE KITCHEN.

Most take seats save Ben who stands next too May by the coffee pot.

SHE POURS COFFEE THEN HANDS THE MUG TO BEN.

MAY
Cream or sugar?

BEN
Not today, thx.

May watches then follows Ben to the table where they join the others.

Ben sets his mug down then seats himself.

After a beat Ben reaches for his mug, takes a sip then stares back at everyone.

BEN
Alright, color me curious?

Ben takes a sip then continues.

BEN
All I remember is feeling weak and faint somewhere toward the end of the trail.

Ryan and Joel lean in.

May squints her eyes, curious.

RYAN
Yea, we had to help you finish the trail and make it back to the car.

Kim glances around at everyone.

KIM
I never seen **anything** like that before!

May nods in agreement.

RYAN
She's right. It got so extreme, so

fast I thought you had malaria?

Ben strokes the stubble on his face.

BEN

Come to think of it.

Ben peers to his side in deep thought.

BEN

I've never been black out sick from anything before this.

RYAN

Even in Africa?

BEN

Not even in Africa.

Everyone curiously stares at Ben.

BEN

That was a "mild" case of Malaria. Even while bedridden, I was some what coherent, of course weak and sick as hell.

May steps forward.

MAY

Sick, how sick?

JOEL

Yo', you was sick last night bro. Let me tell you.

Kim makes a stank face, raises a finger over her nose plus shakes her head.

Ben surveys person to person, each shakes or nod in their own grossed out way.

BEN

That bad?

RYAN

Man, I **never** seen shit like that!

Joel points his finger at Ryan.

May slowly nods with wild eyed affirmation.

RYAN

It was like you reached some, new
level of projectile vomit!

Ryan extends his arm and hand from his mouth in an over
enthusiastic attempt at a visualization.

Kim makes her own grossed out expression as she smacks Ryan.

KIM

Ugh!

Ben glances at Kim confused?

RYAN

Fucking exorcist style!

KIM

Calm down.

RYAN

What?

KIM

That shit, was gross enough. I'm not
trying to re-live the whole thing.

MAY

Ugh. Me neither!

Ben peers around.

MAY

It was bad.

JOEL

You don't remember?

Ben continues a hazy scan of the kitchen.

BEN

Honestly, I don't.

JOEL

That's crazy.

RYAN

You woke up, decided to sit and eat
dinner with us.

Ben thinks for a second and comes up empty.

BEN

Thats crazy, I want to say I vaguely do but the second half of yesterday is like a deep fog.

MAY

Thats really.. something?

RYAN

Let me tell you what buddy, it wasn't just one time either.

Joel makes a disgusted expression at Ryan.

KIM

It just kept coming and coming.

MAY

We just finished cleaning the kitchen at like 3 this morning.

Ben raises his eye brows.

JOEL

Yea, ain't no towels, wash clothes, paper towels or otherwise left in this house!

Ben blushes.

BEN

Wow, Im so sorry. Thanks guys.

Ben peers down and reveals a pained expression.

He turns sideways, lifts his calf to his side and presses at a pale imprint that wraps around his ankle.

BEN

Well, thats not all.

Everyone follows Ben eyes.

KIM

What do you mean?

Kim follows everyone gaze.

BEN

Take a look at this?

Ben stands up, as he does he lets his foot rest on his seat.

There is a deep, green and yellow bruise on the back of Ben's calf that extends from one ankle to the next.

Everyone falls silent

Kim watches everyone confused.

KIM

It just looks like a really gross
bruise.

Joel leans in then peers from the bruise to the others.

Ryan takes a second closer look then steps back.

RYAN

Um buddy, that looks like a hand
print.. of some kind.

May leans in for a closer examination.

Joel looks to Ryan and nods in agreement.

May barely nods her head, she stares down at the sickly colored imprint with three fingers.

Ben peers down and over his shoulder at May.

He slowly returns to a normal posture then sits back down.

Everyone else returns back to their respective seats.

They're all mostly quiet or in thought to them selves.

KIM

All I saw was a gross yellow bruise!

All break their silence.

Joel laughs.

Ben lets out a nervous, single laugh, goes inside himself then peers around.

May laughs too, she returns to her line of thoughts that lead to Ben.

RYAN

It does but it also looks like..

JOEL
(Matter of fact)
A skinny, weird 3 fingered hand print?

MAY
Do you remember, where you picked that
up at?

Ben tries to recall.

He peers up at them.

BEN
The last thing I remember is.. that
thing that was following me in the
forest.

Everyone stares back at Ben.

Kim speaks up.

KIM
The bear?

Each stands beside the next in anticipation.

May turns her head from side to side.

MAY
I'm not entirely sure.. that was a
bear.

Joel looks from May to Ryan.

Joel refrains from saying a word.

Ryan exhales and speaks bluntly.

RYAN
(Mutters)
Yea. Well, no shit.

Ben looks around himself before he returns his eyes to the
group.

BEN
I heard sounds.

KIM
Sounds?

BEN
First, it was in the bushes parallel
to me.

Joel stops and turns towards Ben.

Ben tries to follow the sequence of events in his head.

BEN
Then there were the **sounds**.

Ben turns his head, like he's listening to something.

BEN
Like a clicking sound, like a **..big**
insect?

Kim turns from Ryan to Joel then to May in search of a
friendly clue.

BEN
I felt like *something* was watching..
us.

May quietly nods to her self.

MAY
I think I did too. I just didn't know
what to make of it!

Ben turns slowly to face May when they catch eyes.

The group watches the two of them and in turn exchange
curious glances.

Ben shakes his head.

BEN
I have no idea what it was but I have
to admit, I'm more curious now than
ever.

KIM
Wait, what? You've got to be kidding!

Joel squints at May.

She stares back at Ben.

RYAN
Yea, you know we don't have to go back

out there today.

Ryan thumbs over his shoulder then glances to the others for support

RYAN

We weren't sure if we should take you to the hospital, a few hours ago.

Ryan protests with his hands raised.

MAY

I mean I'm a little curious too but we don't have to do anything.

KIM

Yea, I'm sure we'd all be just fine with bumping around here today.

Joel watches person to person.

BEN

I mean we weren't even really going to the same area. It's a whole other park from where we were yesterday.

RYAN

I'm sure the odds of us seeing a bear were one in a million..

Ryan peers back down at Bens legs and stops only to shake his head.

RYAN

Let alone bumping into what ever the fuck that was. Still.

Ryan pats the air with his same open palms.

KIM

We have no real need to leave here, let's just stay here chill. Maybe go get a bite in town.

Kim exhales a sigh of relief.

BEN

Let's all take our time, take a shower and we'll get us a bite on the way.

Joel's eyebrows raise.

Kim pops back up and faces Ben.

KIM

What?

Ben peers at Ryan who appears surprised then regrettably accepts.

Kim remains the odd one out and observes the others with disbelief.

KIM

I cant believe y'all.

Kim throws both her hands up.

KIM

This man almost dies yesterday and the whole group has gone mad.

Kim turns and walks away.

KIM

Fuck it, let's all go back again they say.

The others in the kitchen watch Kim leave.

Ben stands up from his chair.

Ryan pats him on the shoulder.

RYAN

Take your time okay.

Ben nods and walks off.

Ryan stands and walk away after Kim.

May and Joel remain.

May takes a long sip

Joel empties the last pre roll joint from his cigarette case, audibly exhales, throws it in his mouth and lights it.

Upon exhale he holds it out, May snatches it and takes a deep drag.

She nods while she exhales a rather large cloud of smoke.

DISSOLVE

EXT.HIGHWAY 101- DAY

Slow droning music builds.

THE SUV DRIVES DOWN A LONG CORRIDOR OF HIGHWAY, ENSHROUDED BY STRIPES OF FOG AND SUN LIGHT.

THEY PASS OVER AN OLD CONCRETE BRIDGE, OVER GROWN WITH VEGETATION AND DILAPIDATED.

EVERYONE SILENTLY PEERS OUT THE WINDOW.

THEY TURN OFF THE HIGHWAY AND ONTO A LONE DIRT ROAD FURTHER INTO THE FOREST.

EXT.PARKING LOT, OLD REDWOOD TRAIL-DAY

THE VEHICLE PULLS INTO THE PARKING LOT AND PAST A MAN THAT APPROACHES A COUPLE OF HIKERS.

The hikers attempt to bypass the man with the flyers when he shoves a flyer at them and raises his voice.

RYAN

Sheesh.

Ryan, May, Joel and Kim watch out the car windows as they drive past

KIM

What's that guys problem?

Joel and May continue to eyeball him as they pull into a parking spot.

MAY

I have a feeling we're gonna find out in a minute.

EXT. PARKING LOT, OLD REDWOOD TRAIL HEAD-DAY

The gang climbs out of the car as the last couple people walk away from the frantic man.

Without skipping a beat the man peers around, spots the group and approaches as they encircle.

Joel and May watch him near.

Ben barely takes notice, he's last to get out and bee lines for his back pack in the trunk.

Ryan and Kim step forward.

ZACK

Hi, I'm Zack. Im sorry for approaching you like this.

They all shuffle about or turn to face him.

The Man with the Flyer takes a minute to look at each.

RYAN

Um, it's all all good man. What's up?

ZACK

It's just that..

Zack exhales, takes a breath and attempts to keep their attention.

ZACK

My family and I were not far around the corner and up the mountain side, from here.

Zack puts a hand to his brow.

ZACK

About, just over a month back.

Everyone listens and or examines Zack.

Zack pauses, glances down to his side then shakes the paper in his hand.

ZACK

Uh, this is a picture of my grandfather.

Zack lifts it up into view and faces it at them.

Ben raises his hand to shadow his eyes.

ZACK

He went missing, *unexplainably*.

Everyone glances at the photo then to the rather young man with growing hair and facial stubble.

Kim shakes her head.

May turns her head and peers at Ryan then to Joel.

ZACK

We were all together hunting one minute then the next, he was gone.

RYAN

I'm sorry, We haven't seen him.

KIM

Did he get lost or something?

ZACK

That's just it. We found his gun and his shoes but he was no where to be found!

The group is at a loss for words.

ZACK

Please, do me a favor. Our number is on here.

Distressed Zack implies anyone take the flyer.

ZACK

Maybe you can just take a photo of this flyer and keep an eye out.

BEN

Of course.

May removes her camera and takes a quick photo of the flyer.

MAY

Thanks, I hope you find him.

ZACK

I really appreciate it!

JOEL

Yea man.

Ryan takes the back pack from Ben then begins to shuffle past Zack and wave the others forward.

RYAN

We'll most definitely keep an eye out!

They all follow Ryan's lead and continue past Zack.

Zack steps aside then after he peers out at the foggy forest he re approaches them with both hands up.

ZACK

Please. **Be** careful out there!

KIM

We sure will.

Zack stares back at Kim.

ZACK

If anything weird or funny happens out there, you get out immediately.

BEN

All right. We will.

KIM

Thank you

May nods and mouths a thank you to Zack.

The group marches forward.

Zack stands and watches them till they disappear around a corner.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL-DAY

The group starts in earnest down the trail.

Ben soon takes the lead from Ryan and Kim.

It doesn't take long before May & Joel catch up, with a grin May passes Ben.

A minute later Joel does as well and pats Ben on his shoulder.

JOEL

Take your time.

When Kim catches up, she speaks up.

KIM
How are you feeling?

Ryan glances from Kim to Ben.

BEN
I'm alright.

Ben glances from Kim to Ryan.

BEN
Not as strong as usual, I guess.

Ben exhales, accepts it then shrugs it off.

KIM
Want the last bit of my coffee?

Kim's coffee cup in hand, she thrusts it at him.

KIM
It may just give you the kick you
need.

Ben's meh expression changes to a gentle smile.

They both slow to a stop.

BEN
You know what, why not? I'm sure I
could use the sugar.

Ryan slows as they all turn to face each other.

RYAN
We brought plenty of snacks in case
any of us need any.

Ben takes the cup, sips at it and nods.

BEN
(Pucker faced)
Whoa! That's sweet.

Kim raises her eye brows?

KIM
Sorry.

BEN
No, it's good.

Kim smiles.

RYAN
When you finish it, feel free to chuck
it in my bag.

Ben takes a final sip.

BEN
Thanks Kim.

KIM
Uh huh. No problem.

Ben removes the lid, turns the cup upside down and shakes it twice.

He turns to Ryan, unzips the back pack and folds the cup before it's zipped inside.

Ben, Kim and Ryan pace themselves.

Ahead May and Joel lean against a large boulder that props up an even larger tree.

Another couple minutes along the trail, the group comes to a slow rise.

KIM
What do you think about that story
back there? You guys believe him?

Ben is quiet.

RYAN
Not really much to debate..

Kim passes a quizzical look at Ryan.

RYAN
I mean, he seemed sincere. The flyer
appeared to have a photo, name, dates,
the county and area he went missing.

KIM
You don't think he could've faked
that?

Joel speaks up from a few feet away.

JOEL

Of course he could've. But why?

Kim slows just behind and starts to speak then stops her self before she peers person to person.

MAY

He sure seemed upset.

KIM

Im saying, thats what worries me.

Ben glances to each then out at the mountains that rise up around them.

BEN

The spot he said his grandpa went missing, is on the opposite mountain side.

RYAN

And at least 5 miles away..

Ben nods his head.

KIM

Am I the only one thinking that maybe what ever happened to Ben yesterday.

Kim points from Ben then thumbs up to the parking lot.

KIM

Might be connected to that kids missing grandpa.

RYAN

Hah ha.

Ryan bites his tongue.

JOEL

Huh?

May seriously ponders he friends theory.

MAY

Umm.

JOEL

Don't you think thats a bit of a stretch?

RYAN

Yea, we don't even really know what happened yesterday?

Ben quietly observes everyone, scratches the back of his head then leads the group on up the trail.

They each watch him then in turn follow behind.

Several minutes further they start to crest the mountain in earnest, more mountain tops can be seen in the distance.

The last of the morning fog burns off or swirls in the valleys below as they climb.

KIM

Does anybody have any idea how long this will last..

JOEL

This time I must concur, Im not sure how far I can go today.

They all begin to slow again or look to Ben when he turns around his arm outstretched.

BEN

Just around the next bend.

Ryan throws a smirk at Ben who plays coy before he reveals his own subtle smirk.

BEN

Take your time.

Ben slows himself.

BEN

There's supposed to be a view point ahead before it drops back down and around the mountain to circles back around the other side.

RYAN

Let's take a sip of some water and then we'll continue on.

The group each reaches into the back pack and grabs their water bottles.

A slow minute of sips and the bottle return to the bags and

they continue on.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, CREST-DAY

The trail emerges out of thick line of tall redwood trees that blow in the wind.

Grass covers the ridge as they approach a single bench that faces the picturesque view.

Ben takes a seat, the gang leans against or sits on the bench next to him.

Speechless, they gaze at the forest covered mountains as far as the eye can see.

KIM

Okay, I'll be the first to admit. This is incredible!

May nods her head.

Joel's wonderstruck, at first attempt he misses when he reaches out for the side of the bench to prop him self up.

Ryan smiles at the group, is proud of Ben then nods as he too joins in basking of the view.

JOEL

Ben.

Joel clearly moved peers down at Ben.

JOEL

I think I see, why getting up here is so important to you.

Ben glances up at Joel.

JOEL

Im not sure I've ever seen anything, any place like this.

Ben grows a soft smile.

KIM

Me, neither.

JOEL

It's just so..

May too has humble tears building in her eyes.

MAY
Incredible!

A minute passes when a strong gust stirs them with a blast of cool wind.

RYAN
Who hoo, thats a tad bit chilly!

May turns and peers up at the sky to the west, where large gray clouds sock in from the coast.

RYAN
Looks like we have a little something coming in off the coast.

BEN
Then we'll get moving. The trail just circles around this mountain.

RYAN
The map looked like it crosses over a couple trails on the far side and continues back around.

BEN
I'd say we're approaching half way now.

Kim follows statements back and forth between Ben and Ryan.

RYAN
At least a third of the way.

Kim shoulders slump as a glum expression spreads across her face.

BEN
Look at it this way, at least its likely all down hill from here!

Joel smiles then chuckles at Ben's rebuttal.

JOEL
It's all good man. Let's just be present and enjoy each others company.

RYAN
Here, here.

MAY

Cool.

KIM

Okay.

They walk away from the bench and begin down the trail.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, OPPOSITE SIDE-DAY

ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE, A SMALL BABBLING BROOK DESCENDS THE VALLEY BETWEEN THE MOUNTAIN SIDES.

Birds chirp and a wood pecker sounds over the gentle flow of the water

MAY

This is **so** pretty back here!

THE GANG DESCENDS INTO A SMALL VALLEY.

JOEL

And we haven't bumped into anyone on this whole trail.

A LITTLE STREAM MEANDERS WITHIN REACH OF THE TRAIL.

Ben walks over, kneels by the water and scans the rocks in the creek bed.

KIM

I know right, its like we have the whole place to ourselves!

Ben picks up a dark blue, round river rock with a swirl thru it, he stands up and rolls it over in his hand.

A BREEZE BLOWS THROUGH THE VALLEY THAT SENDS A CHILL THRU THE ENTIRE GROUP.

OVERHEAD, HEAVY CLOUDS GATHER AND SHROUD THE SURROUNDING FOREST.

Kim rubs at her shoulders.

KIM

Ok, that got dark fast.

May glances at Kim.

MAY

Well, at least we knew it was coming.

BEN TOSSES THE ROCK BACK INTO THE CREEK, REJOINS THE PATH AND AGAIN TAKES LEAD.

They follow.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, TRAILS XING-DAY

THE TRAIL CROSSES TWO PATHS.

One ascends the opposite mountain, the other continues up the valley and around their mountain.

BEN GIVES TIME FOR EACH TO INTERPRET.

JOEL

Huh, that's a lot of trails.

Ben peers ahead at their options.

They join Ben at the cross roads.

KIM

Which way?

MAY GLANCES AT THE OTHER TWO PATHS THEN NODS UP THE TRAIL THEY WERE ON, BEN AND RYAN NOD AND SMILE.

BEN

Yeah, we just continue on around this same mountain.

Ben points up the valley, further up the same trail and to the right.

AN EERILY FAMILIAR CLICK, **CLICK, CLICK**, NARROWLY AUDIBLE OVER THE WATERS TRICKLE GIVES THEM ALL PAUSE.

MAY HEEDS THE SOUND AS SHE PEERS OUT PAST THE OTHERS.

RYAN STOPS ABRUPT THEN LISTENS INTENT.

BEN AND KIM LEER IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS.

A DISTINCTLY LURID **CLICK, CLICK, CLICKING** SOUNDS AGAIN, LOUD ENOUGH FOR ALL TO HEAR!

RYAN
(hushed)
What the fuck is **that**?

BEN
(Whispers)
Shhh.. Listen.

Ben steps forward and cups one hand to his ear.

May listens and watches, she rotates to find the sound.

JOEL
(deadpan)
I've never heard anything like that.

KIM
Maybe we should get moving.

Joel and Ryan share head nods, May steps toward Ben and away from the group.

THE REST GLANCE AT EACH OTHER THEN FOLLOW BEHIND MAY.

EVERYONE PASSES THE INTERSECTING TRAILS.

May joins Ben at the front as they gaze out upon the forest together.

MAY
What do you think it is?

Ben shakes his head.

BEN
I don't think we've ever, met this.

May side eyes Ben then slowly returns her eyes to the forest.

A **DEEP GROWL** SOUNDS FROM THE TREES IN FRONT OF THEM.

BEN AND MAY INSTINCTIVELY TAKE A HALF STEP BACK THEN LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

BEYOND THEM, AN **INVISIBLE FORCE** LANDS IN THE BUSHES BENEATH A GIANT REDWOOD.

The group falls over each other as they turn to run away, unable to process the obscure movement.

The still unseen **force** bursts through a small swath of bushes

and trees.

The panicked group each runs up separate trails.

BEN REMAINS WHILE THE OTHERS FLEE.

A **click-ing** sound is audible.

Ben caulks his head.

An aggressive **growl**.

Ben takes a a step backwards with barely time to flinch.

FWOOP!

THE BUSHES SHAKE, BEN'S SHOE FLIES INTO FRAME.

A fleeting *click, click, click* is heard.

All is quiet.

THE ONLY SOUNDS OF THE FOREST IS THE BREEZE AND THE SOFT FLOW OF WATER.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, OPPOSITE SIDE-DAY

KIM STOPS AND TURNS AROUND FIRST.

Shaken, out of breath and on the verge of tears, she listens then looks for Ben.

KIM
(Cries)
Ben..

JOEL AND MAY PEER OUT FROM BEHIND SEPARATE TREES JUST OFF A NEARBY TRAIL.

Ryan gasps for breath against a tree several feet up from Kim, he motions for her to be quiet.

KIM
(Screams)
Ben!

EACH EMERGE FROM THE HIDING SPOTS.

Ryan approaches, his hands raised and his expression

sympathetic.

RYAN
Shh. Calm down.

KIM
 What the fuck was that?

RYAN
Calm down.

KIM
 Where the fuck did he go?

RYAN
 I don't know what just happened.

THEY CONVERGE.

JOEL
 Let's.. just keep it down, okay.

Kim focuses on her breaths, panic shifts as her eyes begin to dart about.

KIM
 Is that Bens shoe?

KIM POINTS A SHAKING FINGER PAST THEM AT THE **SHOE** ON THE GROUND.

Joel approaches and with a hand on her shoulder attempts to console her.

MAY SWEEPS THE AREA.

Ryan picks up the lone shoe.

MAY LISTENS INTENT AND SCOURS THE TRAILS AND THE LARGE TREES THAT ENVELOP THEM.

Ryan reaches out to Kim.

KIM
 Oh my god!

RYAN
 Don't worry we'll find him.

She resigns herself into his arms.

Joel turns and takes a step toward May.

JOEL
DO you **see** anything?

May still searches.

Joel follows her gaze.

JOEL
Do you **hear** anything?

May remains vigilant, at last she turns her eyes to Joel.

MAY
The question is.. Should we continue
up the trail or go back the way we
came?

Behind them Ryan peers up at the mountain then speaks.

RYAN
Im pretty sure, we're half way now.

May nods.

MAY
Exactly.

Kim appears more frightened that last statement.

JOEL
Okay then.

KIM
We're not leaving Ben out here!

Everyone pauses.

A LONG SILENCE GIVES WAY TO QUIET STARES.

Joel gulps then exhales.

JOEL
We have to consider all our options.

Kim starts to sob again.

Joel drops his head, May steps forward.

MAY

No one wants to leave Ben out here.

May takes a last step toward Kim and puts a hand on her.

MAY

If we stay out here, one of us might
be next.

May exhales.

May shakes her head, she resigns to her own words.

Joel steps forward with a deep breath and a solid stance.

JOEL

The sooner we get back to the lot, the
sooner we can get help.

Joel nods at Kim.

She sits a beat, a long tear falls down her cheek when she
looks up and nods back.

Ryan has reservations yet nods and pushes forward.

TRAUMATIZED THEY MOVE UP TRAIL TOWARD AN OVERLOOK OF TREES
AND BOULDERS.

JOEL

What do you think?

May listens before she turns to face them.

MAY

Do **You** hear that?

Ryan lifts his head and listens.

KIM

Hear what!

Joel peers into the distance.

MAY

Why did it get so quiet?

JOEL

Did **It** only want Ben?

Ryan responds.

RYAN
Maybe.. It's baiting us?

They all stare at Ryan.

KIM
Or gonna' pick us off one by one?

They ponder the implications.

MAY
Could be any of those.

May glances from the group back up the trails.

MAY
The **real** question is, should we go
back or continue forward?

Everyone stares at the next person without answer.

RYAN
Does it even matter?

The group moans at the thought.

KIM
What do you mean?

Ryan glances at their options then back at them.

RYAN
We didn't even see.. what ever that
was!

JOEL
Whats your point?

RYAN
I mean, it literally could be
anything, or **anywhere?**

The group falls stiff.

LEAVES FALL FROM THE TREES IN THE BREEZE.

MAY
Ryan's right. Let's keep our eyes and
ears open.

Joel nods.

JOEL

This time let's **try** to stay together.

Each nods back at the other.

MAY

It's almost sunset. We should probably keep moving.

THE FRENZIED GROUP TAKES NOTICE OF THE LIGHT VISUALLY DIM.

OVERHEAD THE SUN PASSES THRU ITS FURTHEST POSITION AND STARTS TO FALL BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN.

Each peer out with dread, no one person takes the lead.

MAY

I'm not sure how much further it is but we came quite a ways to get here.

RYAN

Yea, I think we said we had just got half way.

MAY

We know the way back at least it's familiar vs going ahead we don't, but it could be shorter?

KIM

What about that thing? Isn't it ahead of us?

RYAN

At this point, we don't know where or what it is.

A low **click-ing** is heard.

They each reflexively duck low and together.

KIM

Did you hear **that!**

JOEL

(Gently)
Shhhhh.

ANOTHER LONG ODD **CLICK-ING** IS HEARD, THIS TIME FROM BEHIND THEM.

They each shift their weight and stare back in the direction they came from.

KIM
Is it behind us now?

RYAN
What the actual fuck!

Joel glances from Kim and Ryan to May.

JOEL
Alright, let's try to stay together

Kim fights flight yet holds tight to Ryan.

RYAN
Whatever that is, seems like it's
pushing us forward.

May nods her head then looks up at them both.

MAY
I think you're right, we might not
have a choice.

They cautiously stand, their heads on swivel.

Crunch!

THE FOUR WHIP THEIR ATTENTION TO THE SOUND OF THE TREES SNAP BEHIND THEM.

JOEL
Forward then?

Joel is the first to slowly lean in the next direction.

RYAN
Forward it is.

Ryan, quickly takes the first step.

May nods as she high steps to take lead.

Frozen, Kim listens to the sounds around her wide eyed and frantic.

A kind yet strong hand grabs Kim's arm.

JOEL

It's okay. You're okay, come on. I got you.

Joel assists Kim and they soon catch up.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR OPPOSITE SIDE-DAY

THE GROUP AGAIN PASSES THROUGH THE CRISS CROSS OF TRAILS.

THEY RISE OUT OF THE VALLEY FROM BETWEEN THE MOUNTAINS.

KIM

Is it still behind us?

May glances back and listens, she comes to a stop next to a broken redwood surrounded by a cluster of ferns.

RYAN

I haven't heard anything since we started up.

The four friends Scooby doo together and listen.

JOEL

I hate to say it but I think I heard something parallel to us.

Kim glances from side to side.

Joel peers past their shoulders to the far tree line.

RYAN

That's exactly what Ben said.

May nods.

An inviting glow brightens their peripheral.

THE PATH CURVES AROUND TREES AND JUST AHEAD OF THEM, A SOFT, WIDE **BEAM** SHINES UPWARD INTO THE SKY.

In the same space a **Songbird** whistles.

Kim caulks her head up at the sound and becomes entranced by the ephemeral radiance.

KIM

Wow, it's so peaceful.

May, Joel and Ryan watch as Kim turns and starts right up the path.

Kim lifts her hand and points as she stumbles along.

Joel wavers and stares at the odd light that penetrates the canopy into the sky.

The **Songbird** whistles

RYAN DOUBLE TAKES THE BEAM LIT AREA, IN HIS PERIPHERAL ARE MAY AND JOEL STILL HE FOLLOWS KIM.

Joel snaps out of *it* when Ryan starts past him.

JOEL
(foggy)
What ..the hell ..is that?

MAY
(dazed)
I ..**don't** know.

May and Joel glance at each other then back to the glow.

After another beat both seem to shake *it*.

MAY
Where are they going?

May rolls her eyes then cautiously follows them, Joel signs then resigns to follow her.

May and Joel take a few steps, a **mechanical sound** is heard.. Akin to an large metal door.

May, Joel, Ryan and even Kim slows as each hear.. *something*.

A DRY, MECHANICAL SOUND REVEALS A LOW, BULLISH **HORN** THAT SEEMS TO REVERBERATE FROM THE CLOUDS ABOVE.

The final hue's of daylight fade.

Once more the forest falls eerily silent.

KIM
Hey, where'd it go?

Ryan Stops and looks around.

RYAN

Wait, what were we doing?

JOEL

Exactly. What the fuck were y'all doing?

RYAN

More importantly, **what** the fuck was that sound?

May pats Ryan and Kim on the back, she attempts to move the heard forward.

MAY

I don't know but it sure doesn't sound good.

JOEL

No the hell it didn't.

They continue up the trail and around the back side of the mountain.

JOEL

Thats it, we're just not gonna talk about that light.

RYAN

And that **sound**?

A deep fog socks through mountain tops as they arduously ascend.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR MOUNTAIN RISE-DAY

RYAN

Hey guys, slow down!

KIM

Yea, we can barely see you.

May and Joel push up the trail ahead of Ryan and Kim as they step thru another thick spot of fog.

RYAN

Something about this fog, doesn't feel right?

Kim glances around the forest barely visible through the fog, she sniffs at the air.

JOEL

This fog sure moved in fast.

May turns her nose away after getting a whiff.

KIM

And what is that smell?

A repulsed expression forces Kims to turn her nose up.

MAY

Ugh, it's really metallic. Kind of burnt smelling.

RYAN

Yea, I almost smell..

Ryan takes another sniff mid sentence.

RYAN

Sulphur, like matches?

JOEL

Almost like a gas or **something**.

Kim's enchantment appears to wear off.

KIM

Why all of the sudden, it doesn't smell like forest anymore?

MAY

Uh huh?

Shaken they carefully forge to the mountain top together.

JOEL

Remember, stick together.

Joel throws a pleading glance at each.

JOEL

It's likely as wide across if not more as when we crossed the other side.

Kim's shakes her head.

Ryan appears to turn the thought over.

RYAN
(mutters)

Fuck.

KIM
What does that mean?

MAY
It just means, we should pace
ourselves.

Joel nods and Ryan feigns a smile.

THE TRAIL SKINNIES INTO A STAND OF PINE TREES UPON THE
RIDGETOP.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR CREST- NIGHT

The group ascends further with no other sound then a breeze
that sway and bend tree limbs.

Ferns, old growth and tall trees dominate.

The four of them naturally group closer as the night falls.

May peers through the darkness as they near a hill top, the
fog remains in patches.

MAY
I've got a weird feeling?

JOEL
Like someone is watching us?

They crowd tight and exchange vexed expressions.

MmmmmNaa NNnnAaa.

It closes in on them.

Zzzzznnnhhh!

Kim and Ryan glance at each other then peer out into the
darkness.

Schhnick!!

May turns her head as she listens, the sound grows as it
nears.

Craaackle!

Joel instinctively reaches his hand in front of May.

May frowns before she follows his eye line to the tree's parallel to them.

The group back up as they catch sight of an electric, **Green Glow** that approaches.

The **Glowing Object** bounces along, until it notices them.

A **Green Orb** appears and veers from the tree line and bobs about as *it* observes the group.

Every one *stares*, no one *moves*.

Each experiences their own reactions; *mystified*, *awe-struck*, *fearful and cautious*.

The **Green object** is emboldened when joined by a second smaller, **green orb** from the tree line.

RYAN

(Murmurs)

What the Fu.. ?

JOEL

It sure the hell aren't Tinker Bell.

The three friends share dreadful expressions.

The **two glowing objects** venture from the tree line towards the group when the larger one draws close then encircles Kim.

KIM

It's like a fairy.

Joel faces Kim in dis belief.

Kim reaches out in the direction of the **Green Orb**.

May grabs at Kim so hard it startles her.

MAY

Don't!

The two **Green Objects** intertwine then fancifully fan out in an similar direction.

Kim giggles then follows them into the tree line.

RYAN
(wines)
Come on, Kim.

Ryan is first to follow after her.

RYAN
Not again.

Thunder **crackles** from above.

May and Joel steal another side glance.

JOEL
Ugh, ..

MAY
I know, right!

A patch of heavy fog swirls around a sparse break in the bushes at the tree line.

Ryan trips his way through where Kim entered.

May and Joel soon follow suit.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR CREST "TRAP"-NIGHT

RYAN
Fuck me.. Kim? **Kim!**

Ryan takes a couple steps further, slows and surveys.

RYAN
What.. Where is this girl?

A step further, Ryan peers around a loose break of ferns and bushes when he spots Kim trail the green orb.

RYAN
Kim!

Each step Ryan pursues Kim, the surroundings take on a more foreign appearance.

RYAN
Stop!

Kim takes a final step then slowly returns to awareness.

SMASH CUT

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR CREST-NIGHT

May stomps into the distance, past the break in the bushes
Ryan and Kim disappeared through.

MAY
Ryan? .. Kim!

Joel returns to the thicket of ferns, trees and bushes
nearest where they entered then peers at May.

MAY
Where the fuck did they go?

Joel shakes his head

JOEL
I don't know.

SMASH CUT

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR CREST "TRAP"-NIGHT

Ryan puts his hand on Kim shoulder.

RYAN
Are you back with me?

Kim discerns their predicament.

KIM
Where (on earth) **are** we?

Ryan squints at their surroundings.

KIM
And what is that smell?

Above and around them, a heavy fog and shadow gathers.

RYAN
It **looks** like the forest but I'm **not**
sure it is.

Mmmnnnnnnn.

RYAN
What the fu..

Pshhhhhh!

The ground shakes accompanied by a sound of clunky, heavy, metal [doors] followed by a pressurized hiss.

RYAN

We should **really** head back the way we came.

Aghast, Kim nods in return.

Ryan grabs her by the hand, they sprint back in the direction they entered.

A **Dark Fog** swirls as **it** shrinks ahead of them.

Ryan and Kim loose grip as they trip there way over the same ferns and bushes they entered through.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR CREST -NIGHT

RYAN IS FIRST TO RETURN TO VIEW, HE TRIPS HIS WAY BACK THROUGH.

Joel leaps.

Ryan falls over his pack as he attempts to turn around.

UP THE PATH MAY TURNS AROUND.

From the ground Ryan stares in wait for Kim.

Ryan fixes on the void where Kim should emerge, tears form in his eyes.

RYAN

Kim?

Joel assists Ryan up.

May proceeds to re-examine the break in the bushes.

Joel picks up on Ryans trepidation as they close in on May and the bushes.

Ryan watches May step over the very same spot in the bushes.

Ryan quickly raises a hand toward her shoulder.

RYAN

(muttered)

Careful!

May turns to Ryan.

MAY
Where is she, Ryan?

RYAN PUSHES OFF JOEL AND STOMPS THROUGH THE BUSHES IN A
FRANTIC SEARCH.

RYAN
Kim!

May too thrashes around the same area.

MAY
Kim!

Stoic, Joel observes both with a grimace, he lowers his head.

Ryan soon realizes then slowly turns 'round.

RYAN
I was holding her hand.

May stops and listens.

RYAN
We were both running, together.

RYAN PEERS AT THE THICK OF FOREST THEN TO THE BUSHES BELOW
THEY STUMBLED INTO.

RYAN
We **tripped** our way through this
fucking thicket of god damned ferns.

Ryan stops, peers up then back at the thick of ferns and
bushes.

RYAN
She was right here with me.

Ryan starts to sob.

Small drops of rain start to fall.

Ryan collapses to his knees.

MAY DRAWS NEAR RYAN, SHE PLACES HER HAND ON HIS SHOULDER THEN
HIS HEAD.

Joel lifts his head then.. joins them.

THE SOFT TRICKLE BECOMES A DREARY DOWN POUR.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR CREST- NIGHT

The trio huddle together, they trudge forward.

THE MOUNTAIN IS UNENDING.

They're exposed at heights to wind, through dense forests before a stiff down slope only to rise soon after.

THE THREE NEAR A THICK, SHADOWED GROWTH OF LARGE TREES.

RYAN

Whoa.

JOEL

Ugh..

IN FRONT OF THEM EMERGES A VERY REAL FORK IN THE ROAD.

RYAN

We're not going in their are we?

Their trail continues around the mountain level with the ridge, the lower drops into a whole other valley.

MAY

Um,..

May kindly glances at both options.

MAY

You know this is the likely way, right.

Ryan advances toward the lower trail.

RYAN

I mean this path is just as good as any?

May and Joel pan their view over the shadow filled, formless valley below.

JOEL

(insistant)

Ehem, No brother it's not.

RYAN

I know.

Ryan shoulders go slack.

RYAN
Just look at that and tell me you want
to go in there?

They each cringe at the sight of the thick grove ahead.

MAY
Agreed.

JOEL
me neither.

RYAN
If you don't want to go this way, **how**
about we wait here 'til sun up!

Ryan pleads as he attempts an eye to eye with each.

RYAN
Then we can make a choice!

Joel sighs, May returns her eyes to Ryan's.

MAY
If we weren't already freezing,
missing friends, in danger and at
least a little dis-oriented, I'd say
okay.

JOEL
(mumbles)
DO I have to add being stocked.

RYAN
That is what it feels like, doesn't
it.

May glances from Ryan to Joel.

She steps closer to Ryan and reaches out with a hug.

MAY
I don't want to leave her either.

RYAN
Im.. afraid she's still out here.

MAY
I *know*.

Joel extends his hand to his friends shoulder.

JOEL

Then let's go get them some help.

Ryan returns his sights to the trail ahead then glances back at Joel and May with a nod.

RYAN

Okay, alright.

They trek in anguish through the cold, a wet mist and the shadows that cling to the trail.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR CREST (OLD GROWTH)- NIGHT

May, Joel and Ryan cross into older growth forest.

SOMETHING WATCHES THEM FROM ABOVE.

The trio moves together in single file.

Ryan behind May and Joel glances back and notices a **shimmer** run across the trail.

RYAN

Wha?

Ryan glances forward to May and Joel then back.

The trail is empty.

May sluggish, looks back at him.

MAY

Did you say something?

Ryan holds his stare.

RYAN

(mumbles)

Did you see ..that?

May peers over Ryan down the trail, shakes her head then rejoins Joel to keep the pace.

Ryan shakes his head then quickly falls back in.

A couple leafs flutter fall in front of Ryan.

He peers up.

IN THE TREE ABOVE, A *TRANSLUCENT SOMETHING SITS* INTO A CROUCH POSITION..

Ryan gawks at it.

The **eyes** are illuminated Red as *It stares* back.

After a curious exchange, the **thing** *stands* up.

Ryan scrambles and immediately knocks into May and Joel.

Caught off guard, May and Joel stumble back a step.

JOEL

Whoa?

May intuits the threat, peers back then past Ryan.

MAY

What did you see?

May and Joel keep a hand on Ryan to keep him calm.

RYAN

(huffs)

Up there, in the tree.

They each turn and stare into the tree.

JOEL

Where exactly? I don't see anything.

Ryan *wedges* himself between his friends and extends one arm, index finger pointed.

RYAN

Half way up, the *big* branch.

May fixes her stare, she squints up at the large branch.

JOEL

You May?

Fixated, May doesn't reply.

Joel lifts his brows at Ryan when he's interrupted by her reaction change.

May spots a **Shimmer** in the tree, she leans forward and tilts her head.

RYAN

Do you see *It*, now?

May gives a slow, subtle nod.

Joel and Ryan fall behind May to reassess when the trio spot a **translucent shimmer** leap the distance from one tree to another.

Ryan immediately rotates on his heels then pushes and pulls on May and Joel.

RYAN

Awe, shit!

JOEL

Go, run, run, **run!**

The trio abruptly turn and bolt down the trail.

MAY

Oh my, oh my god!

Something crashes down into the bushes parallel to Joel, he peers over.

JOEL

What the fuck is that?

Ryan and May both shake their heads.

In the distance above the vast expanse of valleys, the moon begins its steady descent.

MAY

We've got to keep going!

Ryan nods.

Joel pants and joins in the head nod.

They both follow May.

JOEL

Fuck!

Adrenaline pushes them further across the wide ridge.

MAY

Come on!

They sprint through varying growths of bushes, trees and brambles.

RYAN
(huffs)
I can't, keep this up ..much longer.

The trio run out of steam and stumble into a mossy patch of forest.

EXT.OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, FAR SIDE MOSSY FOREST-NIGHT

Ryan finds and sprawls atop a large boulder.

RYAN
(between breaths)
Fuck ..Me!

Joel leans against a green textured tree nearby and takes a knee.

JOEL
(frustrated)
Oh ..my god.

May cautiously peers up at the same tree as she searches for a breath.

MAY
(pants)
Did anybody, see anything?

Through exhaustion they each attempt some awareness.

Joel stands up and peers around.

Ryan rolls over and slides to his feet.

RYAN
Not once we started running.

JOEL
I heard something beside us!

Spooked, Ryan's head darts about like a bird after every sound.

May continues to clock her surroundings.

MAY
I think, it's pushing us down the

mountain.

Ryan and Joel share worried expressions.

JOEL

It's got to almost be dawn, if we can just stay together til then..

RYAN

We have to be almost all the way around the mountain by now?

MAY

This kind of green, mossy stuff does means we're back at a lower elevation.

JOEL

All we need is a little sun light and for all we know we're already back near our..

A heavy, metallic **scrape** is heard all around

(*An *Unlock*, drag then *slam back closed*.)

RYAN

There it is again!

JOEL

What, the fuck?

MAY

What is that?

Ryan pleads with Joel then May.

RYAN

That's the sound I was talking about.

Grraaaaawwww!

The trio react simultaneously, they *reel* in horror.

JOEL

Fuck, not again.

RYAN

I don't want to know what *that* **sound** is.

May reels back.

They edge away from the sound together.

RYAN

Run!

Out of view a large, translucent craft hovers above.

MAY

Oh shit, oh shit , oh shit!

PULSING ACCOMPANIES A RADIANT **LIGHT** THAT DOUSE THE TRIO.

They duck and run for cover, their arms crossed over their heads to shade them.

Several feet down a natural fork happens between the ridge and the trail itself.

Joel and May stay to the descending trail.

EXT. REDWOOD FOREST, RETURN RIDGELINE-NIGHT

An orb appears in front of Ryan and separates the trio.

He dodges it up the higher ridge line.

Ryan finds himself upon the upper ridge, exposed and alone he peers around confused.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, RETURN DESCENDING TRAIL-NIGHT

Over head Bright lights hover then dim as **something** *flies* away.

May and Joel slow.

JOEL

Where's Ryan?

MAY

Wait, what?

May peers around.

MAY

Where did he go?

JOEL

Ryan.

They both face opposite directions

MAY

Ryan!

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, RETURN RIDGE LINE-NIGHT

AN OVERHEAD WIND BLOWS THE TREES AND BUSHES AROUND RYAN, FRAUGHT HE GLIMPSES FROM SIDE TO SIDE.

HE TURNS WHEN A BRIGHT LIGHT BEFALLS HIM FROM A SKYWARD POSITION.

A thunderous, apocalyptic horn sounds from all around.

RYAN FLINCHES AND PUTS BOTH HANDS UP.

FADE TO WHITE

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, RETURN DESCENDING TRAIL-NIGHT

May and Joel back track for Ryan.

MAY

(cautious)

Ryan?

May takes a step or two further and peers up the ridge.

JOEL

(apprehensive)

Ryan!

They both take long glances in each direction then back at each other.

JOEL

..What the **fuck** was that sound?

MAY

(whispers)

Where is he?

Joel pleads with May.

JOEL

I, don't know.

Their eyes equally heavy with doubt and tears.

MAY

What do we do?

JOEL

I swear it was like, some kind of
horn?

May spies the ground around them and spots something.

MAY

I'm pretty sure those are his *shoes*.

JOEL

What! Where?

May points to the soft ground just up the ridge line from
them.

MAY

I mean his shoe *prints*.

Joel nods, steps forward to see.

JOEL

I think you're right.

They glance from the prints to each other.

JOEL

Either way, they're fresh.

May nods.

Joel nods back.

JOEL

Let's double check for Ryan then head
straight down.

May returns her eyes to Joel from the footprints and nods.

Joel puts out his hand.

May grasps his palm, undeterred they forge the ridge line
together.

EXT. OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, RETURN RIDGE LINE-NIGHT

May steps out first, she pushes aside bush as they approach
the edge of the ridge.

JOEL

Huh?

MAY

Look!

THERE IS A FAINT **GLOW** THAT BOOMERANGS ACROSS THE HORIZON.

The two of them pause, they observe the curious phenomenon.

MAY PEERS TO JOEL.

Joel Peers back at May.

They mourn yet find solace in one another.

Hummmmmmmpphh,

May pulls Joel near her.

Hummmmphhhh..

Startled, they duck for cover under a tree and both cover their heads with their arms.

JOEL

Holy Shit!

WITH HIS HAND STILL RAISED JOEL GAZES UP AROUND A TREE AND INTO THE SKY.

May follows his eyes.

Above them, **something** cloaked returns to the sky overhead.

A long look proves an amazing sight, a translucent **craft** the size of a football field holds its position over head.

MAY

(mouthes)

Oh. My. God.

Terrified,

Joel immediately backs up and pushes May under the closest tree.

Auuuummmmmmmmm!

Tears build in May's eyes.

Terrified, Joel reaches out for her hand.

He stares at the valley below.

Joel appears to float up before he is *taken* into the craft.

The craft rotates onto its axis

HummMMPHhhh.

An incredibly bright **flash**.

The craft moves at a high rate of speed into the pink and purple horizon.

May sobs as she watches..

After a beat she *stumbles* down the trail.

EXT.OLD REDWOOD TRAIL-DAY

A QUIET, HIGH ESTABLISHING SHOT OF THE OLD REDWOOD CANYON IN THE EARLY MORNIN ENSHROUDED BY MIST AND FOG.

HEAVY PANTING REVEALS SHAKY AND TREMBLING STEPS THROUGH DIRT AND GRAVEL.

MAY'S BREATH PLUMES THROUGH THE COLD MORNING AIR.

Worn, tattered and shivering, May wills her self ahead.

A breeze blows past, May slows and glances back in fear.

A LONG, QUIET SECOND LATER SHE CONTINUES ON.

EXT.OLD REDWOOD TRAIL, PARKING LOT-DAY

A VEHICLE TURNS OFF.

The doors open and a **couple** early 30's step out.

THEY DAWN BACKPACKS, CLOSE THE DOORS, AND WALK AWAY..

Their vehicle beeps twice.

THE **COUPLE** WALK PAST THE ENTRY POINT TO THE TRAIL AND SIGN POST.

EXT.OLD REDWOOD TRAIL-DAY

May begins to falter with each step..

IN A CONSTANT STATE OF FEAR MAY STUMBLES FORWARD WHEN SHE HEARS GRAVEL AND BUSHES MOVE AHEAD.

The Young Couple proudly hike along when they notice May.

THE YOUNG WOMAN QUICKLY RECOGNIZES MAY'S CONDITION.

MAY SPOTS THE COUPLE.

She slows, her body slumps and a wave of emotions flow over her.

May begins to collapse, the Couple rush to her side.

THE YOUNG LADY HOLDS MAY, MAY CAN'T HELP TO SOB.

May breaks into a quiet, un-consolable fit of tears.

She attempts to cover her face with one hand.

The Young Lady, pulls May in to a hug.

The Young Man stands up and begins to cautiously pan around.

A LONG BREEZE BLOWS THROUGH THE FOREST, THE FOG STARTS TO CLEAR.

THE VIEW SLOWLY RISES TO REVEAL AN EVER EXPANDING FOREST AND MOUNTAINS.

ROLL CREDITS..

..FADE TO BLACK.

