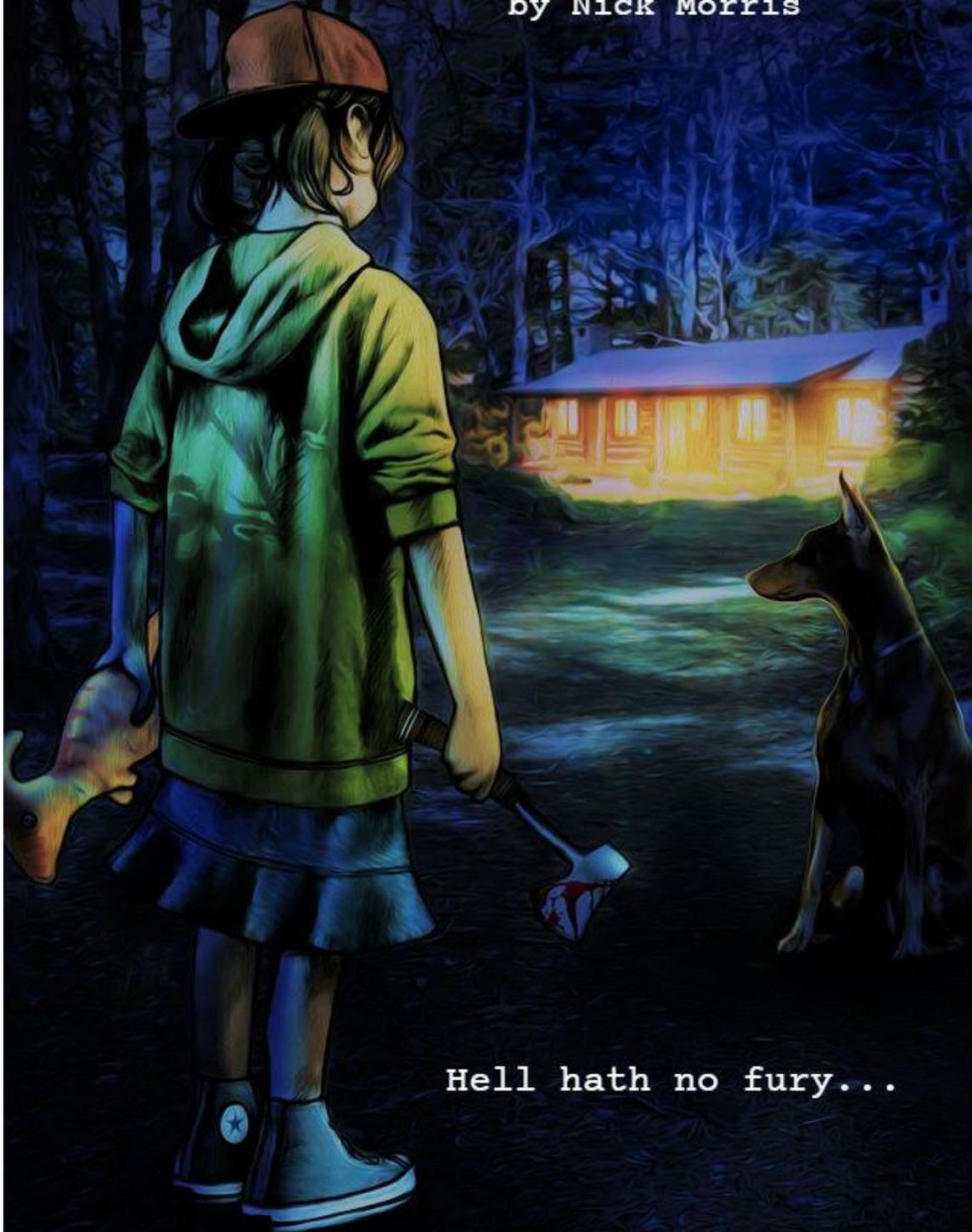


THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL

by Nick Morris



Hell hath no fury...

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by

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INT. COTTAGE - DAY

The front door BURSTS open.

Sunlight invades the darkened room. Dust particles shimmer and dance in the air around the silhouette of a gasping man as he rushes inside.

SCOTTY (30), bearded and sporting a long blond ponytail, seems pretty agitated about something.

He yanks open the curtains revealing huge bay windows overlooking a lake.

The cottage is an impressive, open-concept space. Rustic, but tasteful and all on one level.

He disappears into a bedroom and RIFLES around inside for a moment before re-emerging with a shoe box.

He drops it on the kitchen table, opens it and pulls out a small brass key on a string. He quickly hangs it around his neck and tucks it inside of his shirt.

Next, he produces a semi-automatic handgun followed by its clip. He checks to ensure that it's fully loaded before shoving it into the gun with a CLACK.

EXT. COTTAGE

A black sedan rolls down a long driveway through the woods and comes to an abrupt stop, blocking Scotty's car in.

INT. COTTAGE

Scotty hurries to the window.

SCOTTY

Shit!

Sweat beads on his forehead. He flips open his cell phone and frantically punches at its keys.

He peeks out the window as he waits for someone to answer...

SCOTTY

(into phone)

Yeah! He's here. Right now!

EXT. COTTAGE

DOMINICK (30) steps out of the passenger side of the sedan and SLAMS the door shut. He's unshaven with wispy, dark hair that hangs nearly down to his eyes.

He lights a cigarette and saunters up to the cottage, stopping directly in front.

A large figure remains in the driver's seat of the car.

DOMINICK
(yells)
Come on out here, Scotty!

INT. COTTAGE

Scotty leans against the wall next to the open front door, just out of sight. He takes a deep breath and exhales before revealing himself in the doorway.

Dominick looms large outside, puffing on his cigarette. He's of average size and build, but to Scotty right now, he might as well be The Incredible Hulk.

EXT. COTTAGE

After a moment, Scotty emerges, stepping over a gap in the unfinished front deck. A compressor, nail gun and a stack of lumber sit nearby.

SCOTTY
Dominick! Thank fuck, you found me.

DOMINICK
(scoffs)
Odd thing to say. Did you think I wouldn't?

SCOTTY
No! Of course not.

Scotty notices the guy waiting in the car.

DOMINICK
Well imagine my surprise when I land at our carefully predetermined rendezvous point and, oh -- where's Scotty?

SCOTTY
I'm sorry. I panicked. I had to get outta there fast. I figured you'd know to come here.

DOMINICK

Uh huh.

(points at the lumber)

What, are you building a new deck?

SCOTTY

(chuckles)

Yeah. Yeah.

DOMINICK

Looks good.

SCOTTY

Thanks. I'm, uh --

Scotty's phone RINGS in his pocket.

He lets it go.

RING...RING...

DOMINICK

Go ahead. Answer it. I'll wait.

RING...RING...

Trying unsuccessfully to hide his nervousness, Scotty pulls out the phone and flips it open.

SCOTTY

(into phone)

Hello?

Dominick takes another drag, watching him closely.

SCOTTY

(into phone)

Hey, Ma. Um, this isn't really the best time. Let me call you back in a bit, okay? Okay. Love you too. Bye.

He snaps the phone shut and quickly pockets it.

DOMINICK

Your mom?

SCOTTY

Yeah. Sorry 'bout that.

Dominick steps up onto the deck with Scotty.

DOMINICK
I was at your mother's funeral,
Scott. Back in ninety-seven. Don't
you remember that?

SCOTTY
Oh, no. This was my step-mom.

Dominick motions to the sedan.

APEX (28) exits the car. He's nearly seven feet tall with massive arms, a shaved head and tattoos all over, head and face included.

Scotty offers a nervous wave as he approaches.

SCOTTY
Hello.

DOMINICK
That was the cops on the phone,
wasn't it? You weren't expecting me
so soon. Are they on their way?

SCOTTY
What? Hey, now wait a min--

DOMINICK
That's what hurts the most. It's
not the money.

Dominick moves closer to him.

DOMINICK
It's this moment. Right here. When
the realization hits you square in
the fucking face...

He reaches behind Scotty and relieves him of his gun.

DOMINICK
...that trust is a luxury. One that
I can no longer afford.

SCOTTY
You've got it all wrong, Brother.
This is me you're talkin' to here.
Scott!

DOMINICK
Where's the key?

Without hesitation, Scotty pulls the key from around his neck and hands it over.

DOMINICK
 You were gonna sell me out and turn
 in the cash in order to get
 yourself off and then disappear
 with the key. Right?

SCOTTY
 C'mon. You know I'd nev--

DOMINICK
 You always had my back, Man. When
 did that stop?

Apex casually flips on the compressor. It ROARS to life.

SCOTTY
 Take the money, Dominick. It's in
 the trunk. It's yours. Okay? I'm
 sorry.

DOMINICK
 Yeah.
 (motions to Apex)
 This freak of nature here calls
 itself Apex.

Apex grins and picks up the nail gun.

DOMINICK
 We all have our passions. I like
 old cars. You like music,
 right? Apex enjoys hurting people.
 A lot.
 (laughs)
 He's a horrible, horrible human
 being. He has my back now.

Apex grabs Scotty by the wrist...

SCOTTY
 Dom. What the fuck?!

...and NAILS his hand to the wall. SNAP!

Scotty howls in shock and pain.

Apex takes his other hand and does the same, crucifying him
 to the side of his own cottage.

DOMINICK
 See what I mean?

Scotty's screaming persists.

Apex nonchalantly DRIVES a nail into tip of each of Scotty's fingers, beginning with the thumb and working his way out.

SNAP...SNAP...SNAP...SNAP...SNAP

SCOTTY
 (screams)
 FUCK! DOMINICK! STOPPP! PLEASE!
 Stop!

Apex smiles as he does the same to Scotty's other hand. He's enjoying this.

SNAP...SNAP...SNAP...SNAP...SNAP

Apex randomly pops a few more into Scotty's arms, followed by his chest.

SNAP

SNAP

SNAP

DOMINICK
 (chuckles)
 Okay, okay. That's good. Grab the money. We gotta go.

Apex drops the nail gun and steps down from the deck.

Scotty whimpers something unintelligible.

Blood rolls down his arms and drips onto the untreated pine deck boards.

Apex retrieves a gym bag from the trunk of Scotty's vehicle. He opens it and nods at Dominick.

DOMINICK
 Why, Scott?
 (holds up key)
 After all we accomplished together.
 After all we've been through! You
 knew how I'd react. Well, maybe not
 exactly, but --
 (sighs)
 Oh, fuck it.

In an instant, Dominick jams the semi automatic against Scotty's temple and BLASTS his brains all over the wall.

Even Apex wasn't expecting that.

DOMINICK
It was fun while it lasted,
Brother.

DEPUTY GORMAN (OS)
Drop the gun, Dominick!

DOMINICK
(without turning around)
FUCK!

Deputy GORMAN (45) points his service revolver at the back of Dominick's head.

Two other POLICE OFFICERS cover Apex.

DEPUTY GORMAN
Let's see some hands.
(to Apex)
You too, Freak show. Now!

Dominick tosses the gun to the ground and puts his hands behind his head. The cops don't spot the key he's holding.

Apex drops the bag of cash and raises his hands.

DEPUTY GORMAN
On your knees! Let's go!

Dominick drops to his knees. He discreetly allows the key to slip from his hands behind his head.

It falls through the gap in the deck to the ground beneath.

The cops forcefully move in to apprehend the two men.

Gorman sighs as he surveys the grisly scene.

A steady stream of blood pours from the eighty percent of Scotty's head that remains.

INT. BACKSEAT OF CAR - DAY

From her point of view, 9-year-old BECKY Hooper's feet dangle some four inches above the floor. Her pink leggings and powder blue sneakers periodically kick at the back of the driver's seat.

JEFF (OS)
Seriously, Becky? Stop with the kicking! Please.

We look up at the back of JEFF Hooper's ginger-haired head as he drives.

JEFF
 It's extremely distracting. And I'm
 pretty sure I've asked you not to
 do it before. Right?

No response.

JEFF
 Right?!

Eventually, she answers.

BECKY
 Yes.

JEFF
 Thank you.

BECKY
 How much longer?

JEFF
 Almost there. How are the guys
 holding up?

We turn to the rear of the vehicle.

Two Dobermans, DIEGO (black) and DORA (brown) sit in
 separate, large dog carriers. They're anxious, but well
 behaved.

We turn back to Jeff.

BECKY
 They think this is bullshit too.

JEFF
 (louder)
 Hey! Language, young lady! You'd
 better not be talking like that at
 school!

Now again to Becky's feet and legs. She shifts uncomfortably
 in her seat.

JEFF (OS)
 Okay, Becks. I know you're not
 thrilled about it. But I need this.
 And so do you. Whether you realize
 it or not.

Kick.

JEFF (OS)
Don't you think?

BECKY
Sure, Dad.

JEFF (OS)
Dad. What happened to Daddy? I
liked Daddy better.

She doesn't reply.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

A gleaming SUV rounds a corner as it emerges from a road through the woods. It pulls up next to an impressive, one level cottage overlooking a massive lake.

Scotty's cottage.

Some time has passed. There's no visible trace of the gruesome events that took place here previously. The deck has been finished and stained.

A painted piece of driftwood nailed to the wall near the front door reads "HOOPER'S HIDEAWAY."

Jeff (34) hops out of the driver's side. He's a casually, good-looking guy in glasses, jeans and a t-shirt with a slightly receded hairline.

He grabs a well-worn Washington Redskins cap from the passenger seat and puts it on. He smiles through the back seat window on his way to the rear of the vehicle.

He opens the hatch and releases the two dogs from their confines. They instantly bound out of the car and begin exploring the yard, sniffing everything.

Diego darts off on a dead sprint toward the lake. He leaps from the end of a rickety wharf into the water without hesitation.

SPLASH! A small speedboat rocks gently, tied a few feet out from the end of the dock.

Dora just pokes around a nearby wood shed.

Jeff begins unloading the cargo box on top of the SUV. He KNOCKS on the roof.

JEFF

Gotta come out sometime.

The rear driver's side door slowly opens. The blue sneakers land on the ground and step out from behind the door.

Becky has her daddy's red hair tied up in pigtails. She wears a denim skirt over the pink leggings with a striped t-shirt and a bright yellow, hooded sweater.

Even with her impenetrable scowl, she's adorable. But she's clearly not happy about being here.

She plops down on the deck of the cottage. Dora wanders over to her and sits, resting her head on Becky's lap.

BECKY

This is our place. Why can't it just be us?

Jeff drops what he's doing and sits down as well. He puts an arm around her.

JEFF

I miss her too.
(sighs)
So much.

BECKY

Then why do you want to replace her?

JEFF

Oh, hey. I'm not replacing her! We both know I could never do that.

Becky absently pets the dog's head.

JEFF

I know it seems unfair,
(grins)
Count Beckula.

She doesn't react at all. His grin fades.

JEFF

Actually, it *is* unfair. Life can be like that. And sometimes we have to change or adapt to new things or grow up a little sooner than we thought we would.

Jeff gently guides Becky's face toward him in an attempt to establish eye contact. Reluctantly, meets his gaze.

JEFF

But it's how we handle those times that make us stronger. That's what determines who we are.

She looks away from him again.

JEFF

And hey, no matter what, you're always gonna be my little warrior princess. Remember that.

BECKY

Did you have to invite...*them*?

JEFF

Kelly really likes you! Really! I think you'd like her too if you'd just give her a chance. And wait 'till you meet Ty! You guys are gonna ge--

Becky gets up and walks off without letting him finish.

BECKY

C'mon, Dora.

Dora stands and follows the little girl into the woods.

JEFF

Where are you going?

BECKY

The tree house.

Jeff stands too and calls after her.

JEFF

They'll be here soon. Keep your ears open and come back when I call you, please!

Becky continues into the forest without responding, Dora close behind.

Jeff watches her for a moment. A visible sadness washes over his face before he resumes unpacking the car.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Becky approaches a giant oak tree with a lovingly crafted tree house nestled within its branches about twelve feet off the ground.

She stares up at it as Dora joins her and sits obediently by her side.

Becky sighs deeply and, eventually, starts climbing the makeshift ladder rungs nailed to the tree trunk.

BECKY
Stay here, Dora.

Dora lays down on the spot but continues to closely monitor Becky's ascent.

INT. TREE HOUSE

Becky emerges through a hatch in the floor.

The tree house is surprisingly well appointed with small, wooden furniture.

Books, notepads and crayons lie strewn about. A large Super Soaker water gun hangs on the wall.

In the corner is a child-sized table and chair set where several jars of paint, brushes and two colorfully decorated clay flower pots sit.

Becky sits at the table and picks up one of the pots. It was obviously painted by an adult. She examines it closely.

It features a beautiful rendering of the oak tree, complete with tree house. It's signed by "Mommy".

She gently sets it down next to the other one. It's more crudely painted with flowers and butterflies and signed by "Becky".

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Diego lounges in the sun on the deck of the cottage.

EXT. SHED

Jeff drives a ride-on lawnmower out of the shed when he notices a car making its way down the long, wooded lane.

He smiles wide, turns off the mower and dismounts.

Diego lifts his head slightly.

JEFF
(yells)
Becky! They're here!

EXT. TREE HOUSE

Dora perks up at the sound of Jeff's calling and stands. She BARKS once at the tree house.

INT. TREE HOUSE

Becky remains seated at the table. She reaches into her pocket and produces a shiny, Zippo cigarette lighter.

She opens it, closes it and opens it again. She flicks the wheel and stares intently at the flame.

She holds it close to her own flower pot, scorching the paint. Dora BARKS once again outside.

Becky snaps the lighter closed and gets up from the table with a loud sigh.

She reaches above the window, retrieves a small wooden box and opens it.

Inside is the tiny skull of a mouse or squirrel, along with various hidden treasures -- coins, some interesting looking rocks as well as a pocket knife and --

-- a small, brass key on a string.

She tosses the lighter inside.

EXT. TREE HOUSE

Dora watches from below as Becky makes her way back down the tree. As soon as she safely reaches the ground, Dora turns and runs back to the cottage.

Becky follows, begrudgingly dragging herself along the trail through the woods.

EXT. COTTAGE

KELLY (30), mocha-skinned with lots of curly, black hair exits the car. She's all smiles as she bounces over to Jeff and throws herself into his waiting arms.

Jeff pulls her in close and kisses her. They're completely enamored with each other.

JEFF

Man, have I been waiting for this.

KELLY

Me too.

(looks around)

Wow, you weren't lying. This is beautiful!

JEFF

Thanks. You found it no problem?

KELLY

Yeah, well, I found it. Your sketchy-ass directions were no help. Thank God for GPS.

They share a laugh before Jeff plants another kiss on her.

From the woods, Becky watches stone-faced while Dora waits patiently beside her.

Jeff and Kelly don't notice her standing there.

The rear passenger door of Kelly's car opens.

TY (5) hops out clutching a stuffed, toy dinosaur tightly in both arms. He's all kinds of cute in rolled-up jeans and a Batman t-shirt. He has his mother's thick, dark hair but unlike hers, his is cut short.

He gazes around at his new surroundings with the kind of wide-eyed wonder that only a small child can muster up.

Becky glares from a distance, still unseen.

JEFF

(to Ty)

Hey, big guy! Nice to see you again. Welcome!

TY

Hi.

(points at the lake)

Is that your boat?

JEFF

(grins)

Yup.

TY

How fast does it go?

JEFF
Pretty fast. Wanna go for a ride
later?

TY
Yeah!

JEFF
Your dino buddy can come too if he
wants. What's his name?

TY
Rex.

JEFF
Ah. Cause he's a T-rex, right?

TY
No. He's a parasaurolophus.

JEFF
Oh...cool!

Kelly looks delighted watching Jeff and Ty together.

Becky does not.

Jeff turns around and spots her lurking in the woods.

JEFF
Becky! Come meet Ty!

With Becky's first, reluctant step forward, Dora bolts
toward the others. She runs straight for Ty.

Ty backs up nervously and hides behind his mother, wrapping
his arms around her leg.

Kelly shoots a quick look of concern at Jeff.

He nods reassuringly.

Dora trots right up to Ty and immediately licks his face,
making him giggle.

Kelly smiles, relieved.

JEFF
Back up, girl.
(to Ty)
She's a big softy.

TY
What's her name?

JEFF
Dora. And that's Diego over there
on the step. He takes a bit longer
to get used to new people.
(to Kelly in a hushed tone)
He can be a bit snippy. Careful.

TY
Those are good dog names.

Becky finally joins them, dragging her feet.

KELLY
(smiles)
Hi, Becky! Look at you! You look so
beautiful!

Becky doesn't really meet her eyes.

JEFF
What do you say, Becky?

BECKY
Thanks.

JEFF
Ty, this is Becky. Becky. Ty.

The kids regard one another shyly.

TY
Hi.

BECKY
Hi.

JEFF
Becky, why don't you show Ty the
tree house while we get the cars
unpacked.

BECKY
But I just came from there.

JEFF
Well, Ty hasn't seen it yet. Go
show him!

BECKY
Fine. Come on.

Becky and Dora lead the way while Ty follows. He looks back at his mom.

KELLY
Go ahead, Baby. Have fun. Be careful!

Ty runs to catch up with Becky.

The moment they're out of sight, Jeff grabs Kelly and kisses her again. He can't keep his hands off her.

KELLY
Is she okay?

JEFF
It's a little tough for her. Don't worry. She'll come around.

Jeff pulls a joint out of his shirt pocket.

JEFF
Shall we?

KELLY
You know you're a bad influence on me, right?

JEFF
(grins)
Uh huh.

Jeff puts the joint between his lips and starts searching his pockets.

JEFF
Shit. You don't have a light, do you?

KELLY
(laughs)
Of course not.

EXT. WOODS

Becky keeps some deliberate space between her and Ty as she rushes along the trail to the tree house.

Dora follows her closely.

Ty looks around as if he's never been in the woods before. He suddenly realizes that he's falling behind.

TY
Wait for me!

BECKY
Well hurry up!

EXT. TREE HOUSE

Ty catches up to Becky and Dora at the base of the big oak. He marvels at the sight of the tree house.

TY
Whoa. This is yours?

BECKY
Yes.

She starts to climb.

Ty hangs back.

BECKY
You coming?

TY
Uh, not right now.

She continues up the ladder.

BECKY
Why? Are you scared?

TY
I think I might need help to get up there.

Ty watches as Becky disappears through the hatch in the floor. After a moment, she opens a window and pokes her head out.

BECKY
How old are you, anyways?

TY
Five and a half.

BECKY
You should be able to climb that no problem. Don't you have a jungle gym at school or something?

TY

Yeah.

BECKY

Come on. Don't be a baby.

TY

Stop it! I'm not a baby!

BECKY

Have it your way, then. You can be the zombie.

TY

Huh?

Becky points the Super Soaker through the window and aims it sniper style at Ty.

She BLASTS him square in the face.

Ty squeals in dismay, dropping the stuffed dinosaur to shield his eyes from the barrage of water.

TY

Becky! Don't! I'm telling Mommy!

She stops squirting him, looking annoyed.

BECKY

So? What do I care?
 (points toward the cottage)
That bitch is your mother! Not mine.

Ty erupts into tears and runs back toward the cottage.

Dora looks up at Becky for a few seconds before suddenly turning to follow Ty.

BECKY

(yells at Dora)
 Traitor!

Ty's dinosaur remains on the ground where he dropped it.

EXT. COTTAGE

Diego BARKS aggressively at something he's got cornered in a nearby tree.

Jeff and Kelly sit on the porch, laughing and smoking the joint. He takes a drag and passes it to her.

She puffs on it until Ty comes running from the woods, still crying with Dora close behind.

Kelly coughs, quickly extinguishes the joint and runs to meet him. Jeff follows her.

KELLY

Baby! What happened?

TY

Becky sprayed me with water and she called you a bad word!

She pulls the little boy in for a close embrace and glances up at Jeff. He rubs the back of his neck, exasperated.

KELLY

It's okay, Baby. Come see the cottage! Are you hungry? Mommy's gonna make dinner. Can you help set the table?

TY

Uh huh.

Jeff looks at her, a bit sheepish. He squats down to Ty's level.

JEFF

I'm sorry, buddy. She's just a little grumpy today.

Jeff stands and offers a fist bump.

Ty nods and returns it.

KELLY

I'm gonna take him inside and get him cleaned up.

JEFF

Sure. It's open. I'll be right back.

KELLY

Go easy. This is a lot for her.

JEFF

(smiles)

Yeah. Thanks for understanding.

Kelly leads Ty inside as Jeff heads into the woods.

INT. COTTAGE

Dora and Diego excitedly shove past Kelly and Ty through the front door of the cottage.

KELLY

Look, Ty. You can watch the sunset from the sofa! Isn't this great?

TY

Mommy. I dropped Rex.

KELLY

Where?

TY

At the tree house.

KELLY

That's okay. We'll get him. Let's get cleaned up for dinner. Okay?

TY

Kay...

EXT. TREE HOUSE

Jeff approaches the tree house.

JEFF

Hey! Chewbecka!

No response.

JEFF

(louder)

Becky!

BECKY (OS)

(from inside the tree house)

What?!

JEFF

Can you come down, please?

BECKY (OS)

No thanks.

JEFF

You know, I thought we had an understanding here, Becks.

BECKY (OS)
You did, maybe.

JEFF
You need to come down and apologize
to Ty. And Kelly.

BECKY (OS)
I'm not coming down.

JEFF
So you're staying by yourself in
the tree house then?

BECKY (OS)
Yes!

JEFF
All week?

BECKY (OS)
Maybe!

JEFF
That's disappointing. I was hoping
you could be a little more grown-up
about this.

No response.

He turns to leave.

JEFF
Fine. Come eat when you're ready to
apologize.

INT. TREE HOUSE

Becky lays on the floor, staring blankly forward.

Ty's dinosaur sits a few feet from her face, staring back.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S HOUSE - DUSK

Sheriff Gorman (now 55) sits at the kitchen table and
watches TV while he pours cereal into a bowl.

His wife, ALICE (50) comes through the front door wearing
nurse's scrubs. She tosses her keys on a stand nearby.

ALICE
Hi, Honey.

SHERIFF GORMAN

Hey, Baby.

She drops her purse on the floor and kicks off her shoes.

ALICE

Are we having Fruity Pebbles for dinner?

SHERIFF GORMAN

I am.

ALICE

How was your day?

SHERIFF GORMAN

Shitty, thanks. Yours?

ALICE

Alright. Busy.

Alice makes her way into the kitchen and kisses him on the cheek. His eyes never leave the TV.

She suddenly looks angry.

ALICE

Have you been smoking?

SHERIFF GORMAN

Huh? No! I haven't had one in months!

ALICE

You smell like smoke.

SHERIFF GORMAN

No! Jimmy was smoking in the cruiser with me earlier --

ALICE

(interrupts)

That's bullshit, John. I'm not stupid.

SHERIFF GORMAN

(chuckles)

Nobody said you were! Seriously, it was Jimmy. He--

RING...RING...

His cell phone VIBRATES on the counter. Saved by the bell.

SHERIFF GORMAN

Hang on.

Alice looks pissed.

He answers the phone.

SHERIFF GORMAN

(into phone)

Gorman. Yeah...

(beat)

You're kidding.

(beat)

Shit.

INT. COTTAGE - DUSK

Kelly checks her phone while Ty plays with Dora on the living room rug. Dora suddenly gets up and wanders over to the front door, scratching.

Jeff opens the door to let her out and returns to the kitchen area, where he and Kelly are working on dinner together, not to mention a box of wine.

Turning her attention to Jeff, Kelly plugs her phone in to its charger and sets it on the kitchen counter.

KELLY

How ya doin'?

JEFF

Good. Good. I mean, I know she'll come around.

Kelly wraps her arms around him.

JEFF

She's just testing my will right now.

KELLY

No. I mean, how are you doing?

JEFF

Me?

KELLY

Yeah. It's okay to have feelings, ya know. This must be kinda weird for you too.

Jeff smiles and gives her a kiss.

JEFF

Better than I've been in...a while.
I'm just thrilled to have you here.
(nods at Ty)
Both of you. Thank you.

KELLY

Don't thank me. There's nowhere I'd
rather be.

She CLINKS her wine glass against his and plants one more
kiss on his cheek.

Jeff looks like he couldn't be happier.

JEFF

I'll go see if she's ready.

EXT. COTTAGE

Distinct beams from the setting sun penetrate the towering
trees of the forest as Jeff steps out of the cottage, wine
glass in hand.

JEFF

(yells)
Becky!

He strides across the yard, closer to the edge of the woods.

JEFF

(louder)
BECKY!

From out of nowhere, two tattooed arms bound by handcuffs
shoot over Jeff's head and yank the chain tight against his
neck!

He drops his wine. The glass shatters on the ground.

He struggles, trying to fight back until someone else steps
in front of him pointing a gun at his face.

Dominick.

He's handcuffed as well and wearing orange prison coveralls.
He's about forty now.

He raises an index finger to his lips.

EXT. WOODS

Becky makes her way back along the trail toward the cottage but stops abruptly, alarmed to see what's happening in the front yard.

She quickly hides behind a tree.

EXT. COTTAGE

DOMINICK
Who's Becky?

JEFF
(gasping)
The dog.

Just then, Dora trots out from the woods.

DOMINICK
That dog?

Dominick points his gun at Dora...

EXT. WOODS

BANG! Dora WHINES...

Becky watches it happen from her hiding spot in the woods.

She resists the urge to cry out. Tears stream down her face.

EXT. COTTAGE

Shocked and fuming, Jeff squirms trying to break free from the large, shackled arms restraining him.

Dominick points his weapon back at Jeff.

DOMINICK
That's a pretty stupid name for a dog. But, thankfully, poor Becky's suffering is over.

JEFF
(choking)
Motherfuc--

DOMINICK
Now don't be like that.

Dominick WHISTLES sharply.

Two more CONVICTS dart out from the shadows, one armed with a shotgun, and barge into the cottage.

DOMINICK
Ease up, Apex.

Apex (now 38) relaxes the cuff chain around Jeff's neck.

Dominick plucks the cap from Jeff's head and tosses away.

DOMINICK
Redskins? God. Really? What's your name, Snowflake?

Jeff doesn't respond.

Dominick glances up at Apex and nods, once. He snaps the chain tight against Jeff's throat and lifts.

Jeff chokes.

His feet leave the ground.

EXT. WOODS

Becky looks on, horrified. But silent.

EXT. COTTAGE

DOMINICK
That's good. Put him down.

Apex drops Jeff to his knees and delivers a devastating SMASH with both fists to the side of his head.

Jeff slumps over, barely conscious. His shattered glasses fall from his face.

DOMINICK
Wanna start over?

Dominick squats down next to him.

DOMINICK
What's your name, Snowflake?

Blood spills from Jeff's mouth as he attempts to speak.

JEFF
...Jeff.

DOMINICK
Hi, Jeff. Mind if we come inside?

INT. COTTAGE

Apex and Dominick BURST through the front door dragging Jeff along with them. They drop him on the floor with a THUD.

Kelly and Ty cower in the corner, terrified. She gasps when she sees what they've done to him.

KELLY
Jeff!

Apex closes and locks the door behind them.

COLE (25), clean shaven with long cornrows in his hair, struts over to Kelly.

COLE
Now what's a high-end piece of equipment like you doin' with this gangly-ass white boy motherfucker, huh?

KELLY
Please. Just leave us alone. We don't have anything you want here.

COLE
Hey. I been locked up a long time, Girl. You *definitely* got somethin' I want!

He sidles up closer to her and touches her hair.

COLE
Bet I got somethin' you want too.

HAMMOND (35), portly, short and balding with a dark goatee is in the kitchen area investigating the meal simmering away on the stove.

HAMMOND
Food!
(smells)
Actual food! Oh hell yes. We gotta get these cuffs off!

Poor little Ty watches nervously, clinging to Kelly's leg.

Jeff remains on the floor, blood trickling from his mouth.

Dominick stands over him.

DOMINICK
Got a flashlight, Jeff?

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Darkness has swallowed the forest as the bright, full moon begins its ascent above the tree tops.

Becky creeps out from the edge of the woods. She sobs as she approaches Dora's lifeless body.

Slowly, she draws closer and closer --

BAM!

The front door of the cottage swings open.

Startled, she dashes behind the wood shed.

EXT. COTTAGE

Dominick steps out and hops off of the deck. He crouches down next to it, flashlight in hand.

Wooden lattice now covers the space between the deck and the ground. He finds a section that's unattached on one end.

He pulls at it, making an opening big enough for a child to squeeze through.

He RIPS it away, CLICKS the light on and crawls under.

EXT. UNDER DECK

Dominick shines the light this way and that, frantically searching.

He digs around in the dirt and moves some rocks aside.

He's not finding it.

DOMINICK
Fuck me!

He shines the light up to the underside of the deck.

Scrawled in black marker on the boards are the words:

"BECKY'S HIDEOUT. TOP SECRET! GET OUT OR ELSE!"

EXT. WOODS

Diego ambles up from the direction of the lake. He stops next to Dora and nuzzles her corpse with his snout.

He suddenly lifts his head up and stares at the cottage, baring his teeth.

Becky tries to get his attention from her hiding spot behind the shed. She calls out to him as loudly as she dares.

BECKY
(whispers loudly)
Diego!

Diego's ears perk up at the sound of her voice. He turns and runs over to her.

She sobs as she throws her arms around the dog's neck.

BECKY
Diego. They shot her. And then they
hurt Daddy. What are we gonna do,
Boy?

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly and Ty look on with concern as Jeff sits up and wipes the blood from his mouth.

Apex finds a hatchet lying near the wood stove in the corner and picks it up.

Hammond watches from the kitchen area as he stuffs his face.

HAMMOND
It suits you, Apex.

Apex motions with the hatchet for Hammond to come over.

Hammond stretches the chain of his cuffs over the iron wood stove. Apex STRIKES it four times with the hatchet until the chain SNAPS.

The two convicts switch places. Hammond takes eight WHACKS before Apex's chain finally breaks.

Cole rifles through a cupboard and produces a bottle of whiskey.

COLE
Here we go, boys! Here we go.

HAMMOND

Oh, shit! Let me hit that!

Dominick storms back inside. He's pissed.

DOMINICK

(lifts handcuffed wrists)

Apex.

Apex cuts his chain as well. Just two WHACKS this time.

Finally, he frees Cole too. Apex DRIVES the hatchet into the wall afterwards.

Dominick grabs Jeff by the collar, hauls him up off the floor and shoves him into a seat at the kitchen table.

DOMINICK

Have a seat, Snowflake. Let's talk.

He sits at the table as well, holding his gun threateningly.

DOMINICK

How long have you owned this place...Jeff?

No response.

Dominick abruptly jumps up from his seat. He walks over to where Kelly and Ty are seated on the couch and thrusts the gun in Kelly's face.

He points the gun back and forth between Kelly and Ty as he speaks, eenie-meeny-miney-mo style.

DOMINICK

How. long. have. you. owned. this.
fuck. ing. place. JEFF?!

The gun lands on Ty.

JEFF

(yells)

Eight years! I bought it through an estate auction eight years ago.

Dominick lowers the gun.

Kelly grabs Ty and holds him close.

DOMINICK

Was the deck completed when you bought it or did you have to finish it yourself?

Jeff ponders the odd question for a moment...

JEFF

It was finished.

DOMINICK

Now. I'm gonna ask you this one more time. Do NOT fucking lie to me again.

(beat)

Who is Becky?

Jeff glances at Kelly...

JEFF

The dog you just killed.

DOMINICK

(yells)

Well, fuck me! I must say, that dog had remarkable fucking penmanship! It scrawled its name all over the underside of the deck with a magic fucking marker! Isn't that incredible?!

Jeff says nothing.

Cole leers at Kelly from across the room. She notices and squirms uncomfortably.

Dominick sits back down at the table.

DOMINICK

I was here, at this very cottage, about ten years ago. And I lost something. It's a small brass key on a red string. I dropped it under the deck. That's why I'm here tonight. I just need my key back. That's it.

Dominick aims his gun back in the general direction of Kelly and Ty.

DOMINICK

Now think real hard, Jeff. Have you ever seen anything around here like the item I've just described?

JEFF

No.

Dominick glares ever more intently...

DOMINICK
Might Becky have found it?

EXT. COTTAGE

Becky sneaks up to the cottage and peeks in the side window.

INT. COTTAGE

No one inside notices Becky in the window.

Except Ty.

He looks like he's about to say something...

Becky quickly raises her index finger to her lips.

Message received. Ty remains silent.

Jeff still isn't cooperating.

DOMINICK
Alright, boys. Tear this place
apart. Every drawer. Every shoe
box. Start with the kid's room.
Find it!

Cole, Hammond and Apex all start trashing the cottage,
emptying drawers on the floor and tossing things out of the
cupboards.

Kelly and Ty watch as the assholes wreck the place.

EXT. COTTAGE

Becky runs around the side of the cottage to her bedroom
window and carefully peers inside. Apex is emptying the
contents of her dresser on the floor.

INT. COTTAGE

Dominick lights a cigarette as Cole and Hammond continue to
ransack the cottage. He keeps his gun fixed on Jeff at the
table.

DOMINICK
It would seem that you're committed
to making yourself as expendable
and utterly useless to me as you
possibly can.

Jeff stares at the floor. Silent.

DOMINICK

You think you're protecting her
from me. Regrettable, isn't it,
that you won't live to see
firsthand just how wrong you are.

Still nothing.

Dominick stretches his arm out behind him.

DOMINICK

Cole.

Cole passes the whiskey. Dominick takes a big swig.

DOMINICK

Since Jeff is unwilling to meet me
halfway, maybe you can persuade the
young lady over there to help us
find this...Becky.

Kelly looks dismayed by the prospect.

COLE

With pleasure.

Cole is already making his way toward Kelly with a sinister
smirk on his face. He grabs her by the arm and pulls her up
from the couch.

COLE

C'mere, Baby.

Hammond leers at Ty from the kitchenette.

HAMMOND

(pats his lap)

Hey, little buddy! Why don't you
come over and sit with me for a
minute?

Apex suddenly stretches his large arm out in front of Ty. He
looks at the boy and shakes his head "no".

HAMMOND

What the fuck, Apex?

Apex glares at Hammond and gives him the finger.

Hammond throws his hands up, exasperated.

Tears streak down Kelly's face as Cole runs his hands all
over her body.

KELLY
(whimpers)
Jeff...?

Fuming, Jeff rises up from his seat.

Dominick jumps up and SMASHES Jeff in the mouth with the butt of his gun. Jeff drops to the floor and spits out a couple of bloody teeth.

Dominick administers a few swift kicks to Jeff's ribs while he's down.

DOMINICK
Nope! You had your chance to cooperate.

Cole continues to grope Kelly. She doesn't react to it as she's focused on Jeff's well being, or lack thereof.

Apex watches, looking somewhat annoyed.

APEX
Jesus, Cole.
(gestures toward Ty)
At least take her in the other room!

COLE
What's the matter, big man? You jealous?

Apex just shakes his head.

Jeff stirs on the floor, trying to get to his feet.

Dominick looms over him, still working on the whiskey.

Apex takes Ty by the hand and starts to lead him into Becky's room.

APEX
Come on.

Ty looks at his mother.

KELLY
No, no! Please! Don't hurt him!
I'll do anything!

APEX
I'm just taking him out of the room, Lady.

She tearfully nods her approval.

TY
Mommy...?

KELLY
It's okay, Baby. You go wait in
Becky's room.

Dominick perks up.

DOMINICK
Becky! That name again.

Apex leads Ty into Becky's bedroom.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM

The very pink, little girl's room is now thoroughly trashed.

Apex flips the mattress back onto the bed and looks way down at Ty. He points at the bed.

APEX
Stay here.

Ty nods and sits down.

Apex leaves, pulling the door closed behind him.

Poor Ty looks terrified. Alone...

INT. COTTAGE

Apex re-enters the living area.

Cole is holding Kelly by the arms from behind.

Dominick stands in front of her.

DOMINICK
Start talking about Becky. Where
can I find her?

Hammond watches from the kitchen table while he stuffs his face with Kelly's meal.

Jeff pulls himself to his hands and knees, blood pouring from his mouth and pooling on the floor. He looks up at Kelly.

She stares down at him, sobbing.

Dominick is tired of waiting for a response.

DOMINICK
 (yells)
 WHAT'S THAT?!!
 (hand to ear)
 I can't hear you! Oh! You don't
 wanna talk about Becky either, huh?
 Okay.

Dominick lifts Kelly's chin so she's looking at him.

DOMINICK
 Take her in the bedroom, Cole. See
 if you can't get her talking.
 (grins)
 Do your absolute worst.

Cole reaches around and grabs Kelly's breasts with both hands.

COLE
 You heard the man. Let's go, Baby!

Without warning, Kelly SMASHES Cole in the nose with her elbow. He stumbles backward, clutching his nose.

COLE
 Oh, you stupid, fu--

She spins around and connects with a huge right hook to the same side of Cole's face.

He lands flat on his ass.

Apex watches silently from the corner.

Hammond bursts out laughing from the kitchen.

COLE
 Shut the fuck up, fat fuck!

Hammond throws some food at him.

Cole jumps up and grabs Kelly by the throat. He SWATS her across the face with hard backhand.

Apex stiffens a bit.

Dominick just watches for a reaction from Jeff.

COLE
 Payback time, Bitch.

Cole starts dragging Kelly toward the master bedroom by her hair. She fights back wildly.

Jeff suddenly LUNGES at Cole and TACKLES him to the ground!

He unloads a flurry of furious lefts and rights on Cole's face. Blood splatters with every SMACK.

Dominick quickly grabs Jeff in a headlock from behind and pulls him off of Cole.

Jeff manages to get himself turned around. He charges forward, SMASHING Dominick into the kitchen table. Both men CRASH through it to the floor.

EXT. COTTAGE

Becky returns to the large bay window of the main living area.

She's visibly shaken by what's happening inside.

INT. COTTAGE

Jeff picks up a broken table leg and pushes down with all his weight against Dominick's throat.

Apex gets to his feet and moves in to intervene.

Hammond just watches.

Dominick struggles to escape. He gets his left hand free...

...and finds his gun.

Apex sees and backs off.

KELLY
(screams)
JEFF!

Dominick shoves the barrel into the side of Jeff's head.

BLAM!

Blood splats across Apex's chest and face.

Jeff's body collapses on top of Dominick.

Kelly screams hysterically from the floor. Ty can be heard crying loudly in the next room.

EXT. COTTAGE

Becky SLAMS her fists against the window.

BECKY
(screams)
DADDY!!!

INT. COTTAGE

Apex catches a glimpse of Becky. He rushes over to the window.

She's gone.

Dominick shoves Jeff's corpse off and gets to his feet.

DOMINICK
The fuck was that noise?

APEX
There was a little girl. Looking
in.

Hammond quickly looks up.

HAMMOND
A little girl?

Apex turns to Dominick, ignoring Hammond.

APEX
I think she saw.

DOMINICK
Becky.

Cole finally gets to his feet too.

Kelly crawls over to Jeff's body.

KELLY
(crying)
Oh my God! Jeff! Jeff...

Apex shoots Dominick a nasty look as he wipes Jeff's blood from his face and chest.

Dominick notices but doesn't acknowledge it. He turns to Cole and Hammond.

DOMINICK

Go get her! Bring her back here.
Alive!

EXT. COTTAGE

Hammond BURSTS through the front door carrying Jeff's flashlight. He moves surprisingly fast with a look of sheer determination.

Cole follows him out, preoccupied with a badly bleeding nose. He dabs it with a white hand towel.

Hammond is already halfway across the yard before he calls back to Cole.

HAMMOND

Split up.

COLE

Yeah, no shit. How come you get the flashlight?

HAMMOND

(still walking away)
Cause I'm gonna find her first.

Hammond stops and looks back at Cole with a diabolical smirk.

HAMMOND

I been locked up a long time too,
y'know.

He continues into the woods.

Cole shakes his head.

COLE

(yells)
We shoulda X'd your bitch ass out
in the yard!
(under his breath)
Sick motherfucker.

Hammond doesn't respond. Only his flashlight is visible now. Sticks CRACK and SNAP as he stomps through the dark forest.

INT. COTTAGE

Kelly is in near hysterics on the floor, sobbing over Jeff's body. She doesn't seem to notice Ty's cries ringing from Becky's room.

Apex grabs her by the arm.

APEX
Go to the boy.

Kelly stands and shakes her arm free from Apex's grip.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM

She runs into the bedroom to find Ty sitting on the bed.

She throws her arms around him and pulls him in tight.

INT. COTTAGE

Dominick lights another smoke and looks at Apex.

DOMINICK
I need to talk to her.
(points at Jeff's corpse)
Get rid of that.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM

Kelly rocks back and forth on Becky's bed, squeezing her little boy tightly in both arms.

Dominick enters the thoroughly trashed bedroom, kicking things out of his way as he goes.

She glares up at the man who just killed her boyfriend.

Dominick puffs on his cigarette and crouches down to face her. He tries to conjure up some sort of empathetic expression and points out to the living area.

DOMINICK
That shouldn't have happened.
Believe it or not, I didn't come
here to hurt anybody.

Kelly scowls at him.

DOMINICK
I just want my key. That's all.

KELLY

What key?!!! I don't know anything about any goddamn key!

DOMINICK

Who's Becky to you?

KELLY

She's Jeff's daughter.

DOMINICK

How do I find her?

KELLY

I don't know! She was upset about us being here and she ran off as soon as we arrived. She could be anywhere by now.

DOMINICK

No. She's still here. Help me find her and you and your boy can leave, no harm no foul.

KELLY

And if I refuse?

Dominick stands up, grins and pats Ty's head.

DOMINICK

Don't.

EXT. WOODS

Jeff's Redskins cap sits forgotten on the forest floor...until Becky's hand grabs it.

She stares at it for a moment, adjusts the size and puts it on her head, backwards.

EXT. SECONDARY HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Police cars, ambulances and fire trucks are on the scene of a highway accident. A bus has left the road and is on its side, smashed.

A squad car marked "County Sheriff" pulls to a stop, lights flashing.

Sheriff Gorman steps out from the driver's side, surveying the wreckage. He approaches AGENT ZIMMER (29), an intense looking young man in a suit and tie that's busy barking orders.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Who's in charge here?

AGENT ZIMMER
I am. Special Agent Zimmer. FBI.
You are...?

SHERIFF GORMAN
Gorman. County sheriff. What have
we got?

AGENT ZIMMER
We have four escaped prisoners and
three dead guards, Sheriff. I'm
sure you have a backwoods whiskey
still to shake down or something.

Gorman rolls his eyes.

SHERIFF GORMAN
One of the convicts is Dominick
Young, right?

AGENT ZIMMER
You know him?

SHERIFF GORMAN
I put him away ten years ago.

A FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR yells out from somewhere in the
distance.

FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR (OS)
We've got another body over here!

Agent Zimmer dashes off in that direction. Gorman follows
him.

The forensics investigator climbs out of the deep ditch and
meets them on the shoulder of the road.

FORENSICS INVESTIGATOR
Civilian male. Mid twenties. Looks
like our convicts stabbed him
repeatedly in the throat with a
toothbrush shiv and took his car.

SHERIFF GORMAN
This guy's a sadistic bastard. He
never should have been moved from
State. Give him an opening and
he'll take it.

AGENT ZIMMER

(to Gorman)

You and your men can set up highway checkpoints around the county line. Stop every car.

SHERIFF GORMAN

They could be a hundred miles away by now! I brought this asshole in once. Let me help bring him in again!

AGENT ZIMMER

Thank you, Sheriff. But we've got this.

SHERIFF GORMAN

What have you got, Kid? I've got coffee cups in the back of my cruiser with more experience than you have.

Zimmer smirks.

AGENT ZIMMER

These are federal prisoners, Sheriff. You have your orders. Now, please, get the fuck off my crime scene so I can do my job.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S PATROL CAR

Fuming, Gorman jumps in the driver's seat and SLAMS the door shut. He pulls out a pack of cigarettes, pops one in his mouth and lights it up.

After a moment, he grabs the radio and pulls it to his face.

SHERIFF GORMAN

All units. We're under federal orders to set up a perimeter around the county line. We're looking for four male suspects in prison peels. Three Caucasian. One Black. Get on it.

Smoke rolls around the dashboard as various acknowledgements crackle over the radio.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Apex drags Jeff's body across the deck leaving a trail of blood behind. He dumps the carcass over the edge.

It lands on the ground with a THUD.

Apex wipes Jeff's blood from his hands onto his orange coveralls before re-entering the cottage, SLAMMING the door behind him.

As soon as he's gone, Becky creeps out from behind the cottage, her eyes locked on Jeff's lifeless body lying on the ground.

She stands in place with a blank expression. Just staring. A single tear rolls down her cheek. Slowly, she starts moving toward her Daddy's body.

She kneels down on the ground and throws her arms around Jeff's corpse.

BECKY

(sobbing quietly)

No! You can't go too! Please.

Please don't leave me! I'm sorry!

I'm so sorry I was bad. I love you,

Daddy! I love you...

Suddenly, someone grabs her from behind and covers her mouth, stifling her screams!

Cole.

COLE

Shhh! Don't make a sound! There was a little key. It was lost under the front step. Did you find it?

Eventually, she nods.

COLE

Good! Good girl! Show me where it is and I'll get you out of here safely. Okay?

She nods again.

COLE

Okay. I'm gonna put you down now. You're gonna very quickly and quietly take me to the key. Then we'll go. Don't scream!

Slowly, Cole uncovers her mouth and sets her down.

Immediately, Becky starts running as hard as she can off towards the woods.

COLE

Shit!

He chases after her.

Just as Becky makes it to the edge of the woods, Cole catches up to her. He scoops her up in his arms, covering her mouth again. Becky thrashes around, trying to break free.

COLE

That was a very stupid move, little girl. Now w--

Suddenly, Diego leaps out of the woods at Cole!

He CHOMPS down on his leg. Cole drops Becky to the ground. She scrambles away from him as he tries to fight off the SNARLING dog.

At the last possible fraction of a second, Cole manages to catch Becky by the ankle.

Diego GROWLS viciously as he gnaws on Cole's leg, drawing blood.

Cole rolls around on the ground, trying to get away from the ferocious animal without losing his grip on Becky.

COLE

Fucking mutt! Get off me!!!

Becky spots something on the ground just out of reach.

She stretches for it...

Jeff's broken wine glass.

Cole kicks at Diego with his other foot, momentarily breaking free of the dog's powerful jaws.

Becky's fingers barely reach the stem of the wine glass, rolling it around on the ground...

Diego SNARLS and SNAPS down on Cole's other leg.

Cole cries out in pain and rolls over onto his back, kicking frantically at the dog.

Becky's hand finally clutches the glass stem.

In one motion, she twists herself back around and PLUNGES the broken stem into Cole's right eye!

Immediately, he lets go of Becky's ankle and screams.

Becky gets to her feet.

Cole twitches all over.

Becky STOMPS down on the base of the wine glass stem with her powder-blue sneaker, driving it deep into Cole's brain.

He stops twitching.

Diego releases Cole's leg and steps back.

Becky stands over his body, staring down. Processing what she just did...

She stomps it again.

And again.

BECKY
(screams)
I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!!!

And once again.

Cole's impaled eye socket is a gruesome mess, now.

Suddenly, the door of the cottage swings open.

It's Apex. He sees her.

BECKY
Come on, Diego!

Becky and Diego bolt into the woods.

Apex sprints across the front yard to find Cole's body.

The base of the wine glass stem looks like a big, bloody monocle staring back at him.

Apex quickly scans the forest for any sign of her. He can't suppress a quiet chuckle to himself.

Hammond comes running from the direction of the lake, flashlight in hand. He stops next to Apex.

HAMMOND
Oh, shit! What happened?

APEX
She got him.

HAMMOND
You mean...the little girl did
this?

Apex nods, still staring at Cole's body.

APEX
She's got another big fucking dog
with her, too.

HAMMOND
Sombitch...

Apex turns to leave.

HAMMOND
Where are you going?

APEX
Gotta tell Dominick. Keep looking.
She's not far.

HAMMOND
Wait! Let's go find her together.
We'll grab the key and get the hell
outta here. Fuck Dominick! How do
you know he'll cut us in anyway?

APEX
I don't...but I know what he'll do
if we fuck him over.

HAMMOND
Fine. But if I find her myself,
she's mine. Key or no key. Got it?

In a flash, Apex grabs Hammond by the throat.

APEX
Get this. If you do anything to
that child other than bring her
back here unharmed, I'll snap your
fucking neck myself.

HAMMOND
(choking)
Alright, alright!

Apex scowls at Hammond and releases him before heading back to the cottage.

Hammond winces as he rubs his throat.

HAMMOND
(under his breath)
Asshole.

EXT. TREE HOUSE

Becky and Diego hurry up to the tree house. She begins to climb the ladder.

BECKY
Keep watch, Diego.

Diego sits at the base of the oak tree while Becky makes her way up. His head shifts back forth, looking for any potential threats.

INT. TREE HOUSE

Becky pushes the hatch in the floor open and climbs through.

She gets to her feet and retrieves the little treasure box she has hidden above the window. She opens it, pulls out the key and quickly hangs it around her neck.

As she turns to leave, a book on the floor catches her eye;

"Classic Rhymes and Poems for Children".

She picks it up and hastily flips through until she finds whatever she's looking for.

She tears out the page.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Kelly and Ty watch from Becky's room as Apex continues the search in the living area.

He grabs the couch and effortlessly flips it over. He slashes the fabric stretched across the underside with a steak knife.

Dominick strolls in a bit too casually. He rubs the back of his neck, gun in hand.

APEX
So what do you think?

DOMINICK

(laughs)

What do I think? What do you think, Apex? Let's hear it.

APEX

I think this has all gotten way out of hand.

Dominick stares daggers at him.

DOMINICK

Christ. I do *not* need this shit right now, Apex. Okay? There's no time. There's just no fucking time. I've been here too long already. They'll be out searching by now. Door to door. Even if they don't remember this place, they're still gonna eventually show up here. Right?!

APEX

What about Cole?

DOMINICK

Huh? Cole? Fuck Cole! I was gonna kill him and the fat man anyway.

Apex straightens and his eyes narrow.

APEX

And me?

Dominick looks insulted by the suggestion.

DOMINICK

Apex. You wound me. You're my guy! You've got my back.

APEX

So did Scotty.

DOMINICK

(yells)

No he didn't! Scotty fucked me over! What do you think I'm doing here?! Why would you even say that shit? Is that what you're gonna do? Are you gonna fuck me over too? That the plan?!

APEX

Stop.

Dominick shakes his head and storms into Becky's room.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM

Dominick grabs Kelly by the hair, pulls her off the bed and out of the room.

TY

Mommy!

Ty jumps up to follow. Apex steps into the doorway, blocking his path.

APEX

No. Wait here.

Apex pulls the door closed, leaving Ty alone.

He looks terrified. He picks up one of Becky's teddy bears from the floor and squeezes it tightly in both arms.

EXT. COTTAGE

Dominick drags Kelly outside onto the deck. He holds the gun to her head.

DOMINICK

Call to Becky.

Kelly yanks her hair free of Dominick's grip.

DOMINICK

Don't be like that.

(motions to the cottage)

Remember, your little boy is in there alone with a monster. Now call to Becky.

After a long moment, she relents and calls out into the night.

KELLY

(yells)

BECKYYY!!! Becky, it's Kelly!
Everything's gonna be okay,
sweetheart. Okay?

Dominick pushes the gun a bit harder into her temple.

KELLY

(yells)

If you know anything about a key that was under the deck, that's what they want! Just slide it under the door and they'll go! Okay?!

DOMINICK

Alright, shut up.

He shoves her back inside.

DOMINICK

(yells)

You've got ten minutes, Becky! If that key comes sliding under this door in the next ten minutes, then we leave. And it's all over.

His unblinking eyes scan the forest.

DOMINICK

(yells)

If it doesn't, somebody else dies.

(beat)

Nine and a half...

INT. COTTAGE

Apex stands near the door behind Kelly.

Ty cries out from Becky's room.

TY (OS)

Mommy!

KELLY

(yells)

I'm here, Baby! Everything's okay!

Kelly looks pleadingly at Apex.

KELLY

Can I please go to him?

Apex nods once.

She heads for Becky's room.

Dominick re-enters the cottage and SLAMS the door shut. Apex is waiting for him.

APEX

What if she doesn't have it?

Dominick looks puzzled by the question.

DOMINICK

Didn't you hear me out there? What was unclear, exactly?

APEX

Nobody else needs to die tonight.

DOMINICK

That's up to me.

As Kelly grabs the door knob to Becky's room, her attention is suddenly caught by something on the kitchen counter.

Cole's shotgun.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

The door CREAKS open. Hammond enters slowly, shining his flashlight around the darkness.

He stops.

Becky sits huddled in the corner, sobbing.

HAMMOND

Oh. Hey...

She looks up, alarmed, like she's about to bolt...

HAMMOND

No, no. It's okay. I wanna help you. You're Becky, right?

Eventually, she nods.

HAMMOND

(smiles)

Hi...

(extends hand)

Come on. This place is way too dark and spooky for a pretty little girl like you.

BECKY

You killed my daddy.

HAMMOND

Oh...no, Baby. I didn't do that.
I'm very sorry about what happened
to your daddy. I don't like those
guys in there. Those are bad, bad
men. Sick men! But I won't let them
hurt you.

BECKY

Promise?

HAMMOND

Cross my heart.
(opens arms wide)
Come on over here.

Slowly, warily, she gets up from the floor and approaches him.

HAMMOND

There's a good girl.

Hammond wraps his arms around Becky and pulls her in close.

She stares at the floor, detached and expressionless.

He smells her hair, inhaling deeply.

HAMMOND

Lemme see you.

He holds her out at arms length.

HAMMOND

Look at me. You're safe now.

Gradually, she looks up to meet his eyes.

BECKY

Makes one of us.

INT. COTTAGE

Dominick furiously hurls the empty whiskey bottle against the refrigerator. It SHATTERS into a dozen pieces.

DOMINICK

What the hell is wrong with you,
Apex? Huh? WHAT?! How many times
did we go over this? How many times
did we discuss this night?!

Apex is getting angry now, too.

APEX

This wasn't part of the deal!
Nobody said there'd be women and
kids involved in this shit!

Dominick yells right back, even louder.

DOMINICK

Nobody said there wouldn't be
either! Don't go fucking limp on me
now, Man! There's no guarantees.
Ever. You know that!

INT. SHED

Hammond regards Becky with an incredulous look, seemingly processing her last comment.

Becky takes a step back, never breaking eye contact.

BECKY

The key that the man was yelling
about...

He perks up.

HAMMOND

Yes?

BECKY

I have it.

HAMMOND

You do?

BECKY

Yes.

HAMMOND

Can I see it?

BECKY

It's in my hideout.

HAMMOND

Can I see your hideout?

She considers it...

BECKY

Okay.

EXT. COTTAGE

Becky leads Hammond out of the wood shed and across the yard. He follows her closely, glancing over at Cole's corpse on the way by.

He tenses up a bit at the sight of the body before turning his attention back to the little girl. He looks like he's about to say something but chooses not to.

As they approach the cottage, Dominick and Apex can be heard arguing inside.

Becky drops to her hands and knees and crawls under the edge of the deck.

Hammond stops.

She pops her head back out.

BECKY
Are you coming?

HAMMOND
No. I can't fit under there. Just grab the key and bring it on out.

She disappears under the deck again.

Hammond waits impatiently. After a moment, he can hear Becky grunting and groaning under the deck.

HAMMOND
What's the problem?

BECKY (OS)
(from beneath the deck)
It's caught on a nail or something!
I can't get it!

Exasperated, Hammond sighs loudly.

He drops to the ground and attempts to squeeze his fat ass under the deck as well.

INT. COTTAGE

Dominick stands within inches of Apex. He rubs his head in frustration.

DOMINICK
Once we have that key, our problems are over! You'll never see me

DOMINICK
again! You can go start a fucking
hobby farm in--

KA-CHACK

Kelly aims the shotgun at them.

Apex raises his hands.

Dominick just glares at her.

She glares back with steely resolve.

KELLY
This is your one chance to get the
hell out of here alive.

Dominick smirks.

EXT. COTTAGE

Trying to squeeze under the deck, Hammond blocks the entry point of Becky's secret hideout.

Becky creates another one by repeatedly KICKING both feet through the lattice on the front side of the deck.

She crawls out through it.

HAMMOND (OS)
(from beneath the deck)
Hey! Where's the key?!

BECKY
I got it.

HAMMOND (OS)
Great. Now I'm stuck under here!

BECKY
Come out this way. There's more
room.

Hammond does the grunting now as he rolls over onto his back and tries to pull himself through Becky's makeshift exit.

She hops up onto the deck and produces something from her pocket.

INT. COTTAGE

The shotgun quivers slightly in Kelly's hands.

Dominick slowly starts walking toward her.

KELLY

Stop! Drop the gun!

DOMINICK

Not happening.

KELLY

Don't test me, Asshole. It's all I can do right now to keep from painting this place with your brains.

He's still coming toward her.

DOMINICK

Well, by all means, don't hold back, Sweetheart. Let 'er rip!

Apex notices as a small, folded piece of paper comes sliding under the front door.

Kelly's got Dominick right between the eyes, point blank...

DOMINICK

C'mon. You must want to. So do it.

Kelly starts to shake a bit more...

Dominick presses his forehead against the barrel.

CLICK.

He SNATCHES the empty shotgun from Kelly's hands and jabs her in the stomach with the stock.

She falls back to the floor, gasping for breath.

Smiling, Dominick tosses the shotgun across the room to Apex.

DOMINICK

Y'know, I must say, I'm impressed. You'd have blasted my head clean off my shoulders if I'd been careless enough to leave a loaded shotgun lying around. Fortunately for me, it's been empty for hours.

EXT. COTTAGE

Hammond has managed to force his head and shoulders, face up through the lattice along the front of the deck.

He grunts as he struggles to pull himself out. He's royally stuck now.

INT. COTTAGE

Apex points to the piece of paper on the floor.

APEX

Look.

DOMINICK

Shit! Why didn't you say something?!

Dominick rushes over to retrieve it.

No key. Just paper. He curses under his breath.

DOMINICK

Fuck me.

He opens it and scans it quickly before reading it aloud.

DOMINICK

"There was a little girl who had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead. When she was good she was very, very good...

(scoffs)

...but when she was bad, she was horrid."

Apex watches for Dominick's reaction...

VROOM!

The sound of an engine ROARS to life outside.

DOMINICK

What the f--

(points at Kelly)

Tie her up!

EXT. COTTAGE

Hammond is really starting to panic now. Especially once he sees Jeff's ride-on lawnmower approaching.

Becky's at the wheel. Her face displays no emotion.

Hammond's face, on the other hand, is awash with absolute terror as he desperately tries to pull himself out from beneath the deck and the lawnmower gets closer...

...and closer...

Hammond screams with all that he has left.

Dominick THROWS open the front door just in time to see it happen.

Becky whips her head around and locks eyes with Dominick.

She bounces in her seat as the lawnmower rolls over Hammond's face with a gruesome CHOPPING sound.

Blood splatters across the entire front wall of the cottage and all over Dominick as well.

Hammond's upper body has been sliced away at a near perfect forty-five degree angle from the front of his chest to the back of his head.

Dominick jumps off the deck and races after Becky.

He quickly catches up to the slow-moving lawnmower and pulls her off by the sweater.

The mower rolls to a stop.

He spins her around to face him.

DOMINICK
(yells)
GIVE ME MY KEY?!

Becky looks him square in the eye, unfazed.

BECKY
Go fuck yourself.

Enraged, Dominick thrusts her to the ground and points the gun at her face.

DOMINICK
 Now you listen to me, you
 maladjusted little bi--
 (Looks up)
 --tch...

Diego charges across the yard at him, full-sprint. Locked on.

Dominick swings the gun around -- a half-second too slowly.

The dog CHOMPS down hard on his arm causing him to drop the gun. Dominick screams in pain.

Becky scrambles to her feet and runs into the woods.

Dominick falls to the ground. Diego releases his arm and ferociously SNAPS at his face.

Apex emerges from the cottage and rushes over to help.

Diego's teeth RIP into Dominick's left eye.

Apex wraps his massive arms around the dog's torso and wrestles it off of Dominick.

Diego immediately squirms away, his long legs kicking, and darts off into the woods after Becky.

DOMINICK
 (screams)
 Arrgh...fuck...FUCK!!!

Apex helps him get to his feet.

Dominick's left eyeball dangles from its bloody socket.

Apex looks at it, aghast.

APEX
 Oh shit!

DOMINICK
 (screams)
 FUCK!!!

INT. COTTAGE

Kelly lies on the floor, now gagged with her wrists and ankles bound by plastic zip ties. Her arms are outstretched over her head and secured to the leg of the wood stove with an extension cord.

Apex and Dominick storm back inside. Apex picks up an overturned dining chair and sets it upright.

APEX

Sit. We gotta clean it up.

Dominick sits down holding his eyeball in place with one hand and his gun in the other.

Apex grabs a kitchen towel and soaks it in the sink. He brings it over to Dominick and places it over the eye.

APEX

Hold it there.

DOMINICK

Goddammit. That bitch! That little fucking bitch.

Apex starts rifling around in the kitchen drawers. Eventually, he produces a pair of scissors.

APEX

We have to cut it away. Hold still.

Dominick removes the bloody towel, allowing his eyeball to drop down to his cheek.

DOMINICK

(winces)

Do it quick.

Kelly watches in horror from her spot on the floor.

Apex grabs the eye and lifts it up straight.

He opens the scissors and gently moves them into position...

DOMINICK

ARGHH...COME ON!!!

SNIP.

It drops to the floor.

EXT. TREE HOUSE

Dominick's screaming can be heard all the way from the cottage.

Diego stands guard at the base of the tree. He turns his head in the direction of the noise.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

The moon casts a flickering reflection across the windshield of Gorman's cruiser as he slowly drives down a long road through the woods, phone to his ear.

SHERIFF GORMAN
(into phone)
Yeah, 'bout forty-five minutes.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alice sits on the sofa with a cup of tea in one hand and a phone in the other.

ALICE
I don't understand. If it's outside of your jurisdiction then what are you doing?

INT. PATROL CAR

SHERIFF GORMAN
Just checking on a hunch. Something the feds won't think of.

He pulls the car off to the side of the road, puts it in park and turns it off.

ALICE (OS)
(filtered through phone)
You mean you're wasting your time?

SHERIFF GORMAN
Probably.

ALICE (OS)
Always gotta be the hero.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Stop it.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S HOUSE

Alice sets her tea on the coffee table and picks up the TV remote.

ALICE
You're gonna miss the start of American Ninja Warrior.

SHERIFF GORMAN (OS)
 (filtered through phone)
 I know. Record it for me, please.

ALICE
 Alright. Hurry home, Hero.

INT. PATROL CAR

Gorman pulls out a cigarette.

SHERIFF GORMAN
 I will.

ALICE (OS)
 Oh! We need toothpaste. And milk!
 Someone used the last of it on his
 dinner. Can you pick some up?

SHERIFF GORMAN
 Ten four.

ALICE (OS)
 Hey! I'm not dispatch. Don't say
 "ten four". Say "yes, Baby" or
 something sweet.

Gorman rolls his eyes.

SHERIFF GORMAN
 Something sweet.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S HOUSE

ALICE
 And don't you roll your eyes at me.

SHERIFF GORMAN (OS)
 I'm not!

ALICE
 (laughs)
 Yes you are. I can hear it!

INT. PATROL CAR

Gorman smiles.

SHERIFF GORMAN
 Alright, alright. I gotta go.

ALICE (OS)
Okay. Love you.

SHERIFF GORMAN
I love you too. See you soon.

ALICE (OS)
Hurry up!

He sets his phone on the passenger seat, lights his smoke and opens the door.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ty has fallen asleep in Becky's room, clutching her teddy bear in both arms.

INT. COTTAGE

Still bound and gagged, Kelly stares across the room at Dominick. He sits on the floor as well, leaning against the wall with a mix of gauze and rags wrapped around his head, covering his wound.

He dangles and twirls his eyeball from his fingers, examining it with the remaining one.

Slowly, he looks up at her. He stares back eerily and silent for several seconds, seemingly dazed.

DOMINICK
(snickers)
This really isn't going well. Like,
at all. Is it?

Kelly just gawks, unable to reply.

DOMINICK
(yells)
IS IT?!!!

He angrily throws his eyeball across the room at her.

It bounces off her shoulder and rolls away. She shakes her head "no" in desperate agreement.

DOMINICK
Would you believe it if I told you
that I'd been planning this night
for over a decade? How funny is
that? And now look at me.
(yells)
LOOK!

She shudders, startled.

DOMINICK
No key and down one eye.
(laughs)
How bow dah?!

EXT. COTTAGE

Apex RIPS the lattice away from the front of the deck.

He grabs Hammond's faceless corpse, pulls it free and drags it by the legs across the yard.

INT. SHED

Apex hauls Hammond's mangled carcass inside.

Jeff and Cole's bodies are already lying in the middle of the floor. He adds Hammond's to the pile.

He starts looking around the shed for something...

...and finds it.

Gasoline.

EXT. SHED

Apex re-emerges from the shed and notices that he forgot to clean up a corpse.

Dora.

He sets the gas jug down next to the door and heads off to gather up the dog's remains.

EXT. TREETOP

Becky looms high above, perched near the top of one of the property's tallest trees. The moon burns brightly behind her.

She watches as Apex carefully picks up Dora's body in both arms off in the distance.

EXT. WOODS

Diego stands at the base of the tree looking way up at Becky.

EXT. TREETOP

From her vantage point, Becky can see movement on the road leading to the cottage.

Someone approaches on foot.

Her eyes widen. She immediately starts climbing down.

EXT. SHED

Apex carries Dora's body to the shed.

SHERIFF GORMAN (OS)
That's far enough, Freak Show.

He turns to find Gorman, weapon drawn and ready to drop him.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Put the animal down.

Slowly, Apex sets the dog on the ground and stands again, hands raised.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Where's Dominick?

APEX
Inside. He's been injured.

Gorman glances over at the cottage.

SHERIFF GORMAN
And the other two?

APEX
Both dead. Look, I'll cooperate.
I'm basically a hostage here. I
helped with the escape but I didn't
know anything about this.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Bullshit. You were here with him
ten years ago.

(motions to Dora's body)
And you're still doing his dirty
work, aren't you?

APEX
Not anymore. Not after tonight.

SHERIFF GORMAN

Why'd you come back? What does he want with this place?

APEX

He's looking for a key. He ditched it here right before you arrested us.

SHERIFF GORMAN

A key? To what?

APEX

He says it opens a--

KA CHACK

Dominick appears behind Gorman seemingly from out of nowhere, gun pointed at the back of his head.

EXT. WOODS

Becky drops from the lower branches of the tree to the ground next to Diego.

BECKY

C'mon, Boy!

EXT. SHED

Dominick smiles.

DOMINICK

Well. Hello again, Deputy.

Gorman doesn't turn around. He keeps his gun fixed on Apex.

SHERIFF GORMAN

It's Sheriff now.

DOMINICK

Uh huh. Oh, I'm sorry. Is this a bad time, fellas? Am I interrupting something here?

(looks at Apex)

Apex?

APEX

I was just explaining about how Cole lost it and started killing people, an--

DOMINICK
Christ. Save it.

SHERIFF GORMAN
Put the gun down, Dominick. Don't
make this worse than it already is.

Dominick laughs, hard.

DOMINICK
Oh, Sheriff. *That* would be
impossible.

Keeping his weapon locked on Gorman's head, he slowly steps
around and snatches the sheriff's gun from his hand.

Dominick drives his knee into Gorman's abdomen making him
double over and collapse to the ground.

He checks the clip from Gorman's gun and smiles.

Fully loaded.

He quickly looks around the property.

DOMINICK
Wow. Did you really come in here
with no back-up? You know, you
really fucked this up for me
before. I lost what should have
been ten of the most incredible
years of my life because of you.
Obviously, I can't let you do that
again.

He turns his attention to Apex.

DOMINICK
And what's your deal? Are you still
with me or not?

Apex scowls, incensed by the question.

APEX
You don't need to ask me that.

Dominick smirks.

DOMINICK
I didn't think so. But I didn't
think I'd ever have to ask Scotty,
either.

He tosses Gorman's gun to Apex.

DOMINICK

Kill him.

EXT. WOODS

Becky runs slightly behind Diego through the dark forest.

The light of the cottage comes into view through the trees as they approach the front yard.

EXT. SHED

Apex holds the sheriff's gun in both hands, staring at it. Eventually, he looks up at Dominick.

Dominick glares back with his remaining eye.

SHERIFF GORMAN

The feds are all over the county right now looking for you guys. As soon as you crawl outta the woods--

DOMINICK

(maintains eye contact with Apex)

Shut up.

SHERIFF GORMAN

(to Apex)

Please. Don't do this.

Apex stares at Dominick, unblinking...

SHERIFF GORMAN

Please.

Silence...

EXT. WOODS

Becky and Diego reach the edge of the forest, just far enough to remain unnoticed.

She quickly grabs Diego's collar to keep him from charging out at them. The dog looks back to his young master.

BECKY

(whispers)

Wait!

EXT. SHED

Slowly, Apex lowers the gun to his side.

Dominick cocks his head slightly, stupefied.

Gorman breathes a loud sigh of relief.

DOMINICK

I don't believe this. After al--

BANG!

Gorman's brains splatter across the ground.

INT. COTTAGE

Restrained on the floor, Kelly shudders at the sound of the gunshot outside.

EXT. SHED

Gorman falls over on his side.

EXT. WOODS

Still clutching Diego's collar, a stoic Becky watches the Sheriff's murder from the edge of the woods.

Diego shuffles about anxiously.

EXT. SHED

Apex stares down at the body, smoking gun in hand. Eventually, he looks up at Dominick, wild-eyed.

Dominick takes a moment to process this development.

DOMINICK

Ha! Never doubted you for a second.
Seriously!

He slaps a hand down on Apex's shoulder.

DOMINICK

Ten years, Brother. That *had* to
feel good. C'mon.

INT. COTTAGE

Still gagged and tied to the wood stove, Kelly desperately scans her surroundings. Her eyes dart around quickly before coming to an abrupt stop.

Her phone remains plugged in on the counter.

She immediately starts shuffling her body closer and stretches her legs, bound at the ankles, toward the phone.

The charging cord hangs down in a loop, just a few short inches over the edge of the counter.

With her entire body extended as far as her restraints will allow, her foot reaches to just within four inches of the cord.

She lowers her legs and starts yanking on her hand restraints. The plastic zip ties dig hard into her wrists, drawing blood.

She does her best to re-position herself and tries again. She just barely grazes the cord with the tip of her sock.

It moves. Slightly.

She drops her legs to the floor once again.

EXT. SHED

Apex pours a trail of gasoline from the shed out into the yard. He sets the jug down and pulls out a lighter.

DOMINICK

Wait. Don't light it yet.

Apex seems confused at first...until it hits him. He looks like he already knows the answer, but asks the question anyway.

APEX

Why?

Dominick lights a cigarette.

DOMINICK

We're not done.

Apex glares at him.

APEX

Done what?

Dominick takes a long drag of his smoke and exhales.

DOMINICK

Putting bodies in there.

INT. COTTAGE

Kelly's eyes shoot back and forth between the front door and the phone on the counter.

Using only her feet and the floor, she frantically tries to work her left sock off.

She repeatedly drags her foot across the floor. Her sock slips down a bit further with every swipe.

She looks over to the door again -- and back at her feet.

Finally, she manages to work the sock all the way off.

She quickly stretches her legs up toward the counter for one more shot...

...she's so close...

...barely moving the cord with the tip of her toe...

She shuts her eyes tight and pulls her arms even harder.

Blood drips from her mangled wrists.

EXT. SHED

APEX

I want no part of that.

DOMINICK

Do you want a part of the prize?
Look, I've played it out from every
angle. There's no scenario where we
get away free and clear and

(points at cottage)

they stay alive. We've come too
far. We have to see this through.

APEX

No. I can't.

Dominick's getting angry again.

DOMINICK

When the fuck did you decide to grow a conscience, Apex? Before or after I busted you outta the joint? Before or after I offered to cut you in on this and set you up for life?

(points at shed)

Before or after you blasted that fucking cop's head all over the yard?

Apex is getting hot now too.

APEX

The second you expected me to kill children! That's when! What the fuck, Man?!

INT. COTTAGE

Blood drips to the floor as the skin around Kelly's wrists begins to peel over the zip ties. It bunches up around her hands exposing bare muscle.

With one more desperate pull and a stifled wail, she finally manages to hook the phone cord around her big toe.

She carefully pulls her legs back toward her.

The phone slips over the edge of the counter. It hangs by the cord, dangling precariously from her foot.

She eases her grip on it and slowly draws her legs further and further from the counter, allowing the cord to slide between her toes.

Her feet eventually reach the end of the cord.

The phone hangs over her now, the cord fully stretched from the outlet by the counter.

She carefully lowers it down as close to her upper body as possible...

CLICK

The phone suddenly comes unplugged from the cord and drops to the floor next to her waist.

The screen SHATTERS from the impact.

EXT. SHED

DOMINICK

Fine!

Dominick tosses a set of keys to Apex.

DOMINICK

You go find Gorman's squad car and bring it back here. We'll drive it all the way to the border.

APEX

What about the key?

DOMINICK

I'll fucking get it! Just go.

APEX

(points to cottage)

And them?

Dominick suddenly whips his gun up at him.

DOMINICK

Just. Go.

EXT. WOODS

Becky and Diego watch as Apex starts walking down the long driveway through the woods.

Dominick heads for the cottage.

Becky steps in front of Diego and releases his collar.

BECKY

Stay!

The dog sits, reluctantly.

INT. BECKY'S ROOM

Ty continues to sleep peacefully in Becky's room.

INT. COTTAGE

Kelly has managed to pull the smartphone closer with her feet.

She twists and contorts her body trying to drag it within reach of her hands.

She shoves it across the floor with her knees. The phone slides to a stop next to her face.

She uses her chin to gradually inch the phone closer and closer to her hands.

Closer...

...and closer...

She's got it!

Its screen is smashed and the power is off.

She holds the "on" button...

Nothing.

She frantically taps it against the floor a few times and tries the power button again.

-BING-BONG-BING-BING-

It finally lights up.

EXT. COTTAGE

Dominick steps up onto the deck.

He touches the front door handle --

CRACK.

He whips his head back in the direction of the woods, scanning with his single eye...

INT. COTTAGE

Kelly waits for what feels like an eternity for the phone's various load-up screens to cycle through...

... Installing application updates ...

... Connecting to mobile network ...

... "Good evening, Kelly!" ...

She screams something that sounds like "COME ON!" through her gag in utter frustration and despair.

CRASH!

The front door swings open.

She turns her head.

Dominick stands in the doorway. And he looks pissed.

EXT. SHED

Becky darts out of the woods. She picks up the gas jug and quickly dashes inside the shed.

INT. SHED

Once inside, she sets the jug down.

She stares at the pile of bodies lying in the middle of the floor, including Dora and her Daddy.

INT. COTTAGE

Dominick storms across the trashed cottage and angrily snatches Kelly's phone from her bloody hands.

DOMINICK

I can't leave you alone for a second, can I?

He walks over to the washroom door and tosses Kelly's phone into the toilet. SPLASH.

She rolls over, utterly defeated.

INT. SHED

Becky tosses a shovel out of her way and wrestles an aluminium stepladder out of the far corner of the shed.

She sets it up in the middle of the room, over the pile of corpses.

She climbs the ladder all the way to the top and reaches up to a hinged skylight in the roof, disengages its latch and pushes it open.

INT. COTTAGE

Dominick squats down next to Kelly and grabs her by the hair.

DOMINICK

Well, my dear, I think we've got time for one last dance. Whadaya say?

He stands up and pulls the hatchet out of the wall where Apex planted it earlier.

He turns back to Kelly and raises the hatchet over her head.

Kelly shuts her eyes tight...

CHOP!

He severs the extension cord tethering her to the wood stove.

Dominick hooks her plastic wrist restraints with the hatchet and drags her across the floor.

An agonized scream escapes though Kelly's gag.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Apex approaches Gorman's squad car.

It's parked as inconspicuously as possible on the side of the long, moonlit road through the woods.

He fumbles with the keys momentarily before opening the driver's door and climbing inside.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S PATROL CAR

Gorman's phone is RINGING on the passenger seat.

Apex SLAMS the door shut and looks over at the ringing phone.

RING...RING...

A face smiles at him on the screen.

"INCOMING CALL: ALICE"

He stares at it.

RING...RING...

Apex STARTS the ignition and rolls his window down.

He grabs the ringing phone and throws it out.

EXT. FOREST ROAD

Gorman's phone lands on the forest floor.

It's stopped ringing, the screen now dark.

The tail lights of the patrol car pull away in the distance.

RING...RING...

"INCOMING CALL: ALICE"

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dominick drags Kelly with the hatchet by her bleeding wrists through the front door of the cottage.

He dumps her onto the deck and yanks the gag from her mouth.

DOMINICK

This is it, Girlfriend. Call Becky.

She looks up at him with pure hatred in her eyes.

KELLY

(yells)

BECKYYYY! You need to give them what they want. PLEASE! Or they'll kill us all!

Dominick jumps down from the deck and holds the hatchet over Kelly's face, poised to strike.

DOMINICK

(yells)

Hear that, Becky?! She's begging for you to cooperate! To put an end to this nightmare! For your sake! For hers and for that little boy in there! Don't be stupid, Becky! Come on out here! No dogs! No bullshit! Just bring my key out to me, right now, and it's over!

He scans the woods.

No sign of her.

DOMINICK

(yells)

If she can't get through to you, then she's of no use to me, is she?

Kelly's eyes search for Becky too...

Nothing.

DOMINICK

(yells)

Okay. We'll do it your way.

He raises the hatchet over his head.

His eye fixed on Kelly's face.

KELLY
(screams)
NO! DON'T! PLEASE!!!

The hatchet drops...

BECKY (OS)
(yells)
HEY!

Kelly and Dominick both whip their heads over.

The hatchet sinks into the deck with a THUNK, inches from Kelly's face.

Becky steps out from behind the wood shed. She keeps her eyes locked on Dominick as she walks across the yard.

Dominick stares back at her.

She stops about fifteen feet away from him.

DOMINICK
There you are. Now don't run off!

She stands in place. Silent.

He starts slowly moving toward her...

He unwraps the makeshift bandage from around his head, casts it aside and points to his empty eye socket.

DOMINICK
See this shit?
(spreads arms wide)
All of this? Just look at all the
trouble you've caused here tonight,
young lady.

She just glares at him.

Dominick grins.

DOMINICK
You have my key?

BECKY
No.

His grin fades quickly.

DOMINICK
Where *is* it?

She points to the shed.

BECKY
In there.

He glances over at the wood shed and back at her.

He raises his gun at her.

DOMINICK
Where in there?

BECKY
Hanging on the wall. By the
crescent wrench.

DOMINICK
Where's the dog?

BECKY
Tied up. At my tree house.

DOMINICK
Sit down. Do. Not. Move.

She does as she's told and takes a seat on the ground.

Dominick keeps his gun and his eye fixed on Becky as he makes his way toward the shed.

Kelly lays tied up on the deck, visibly shaken, but watching closely for some kind of opening. She attempts to make eye contact with the little girl.

Becky sits quietly on the ground, never letting Dominick out of her sight.

EXT. SHED

Dominick warily approaches the shed door.

He grips the handle and cracks the door open, but only about an inch. He peeks in, clearly expecting to find that fucking dog waiting for him.

Nothing. Just the pile of dead bodies in the middle of the floor, exactly as he left it.

Becky's ladder is gone.

EXT. COTTAGE

Stone-faced and silent, Becky watches from her spot on the ground as he yanks the door open and steps inside.

Kelly tries again to get her attention.

KELLY
(whispers loudly)
Becky!

Becky pays her no attention and keeps her eyes on the shed.

INT. SHED

Dominick's eyeball scans the walls.

Hammer...garden shears...pliers...

Crescent wrench. And to its immediate left...

...the key!

It's still on its red string and hanging from a nail.

He walks around the bodies and grabs it from the wall. He examines it closely in his hand. And smiles.

He hangs the key around his neck.

BAM!

The door suddenly SLAMS shut behind him.

He spins around, fast.

EXT. SHED

Becky drops a board into the brackets on either side of the door, locking him inside.

She runs around the corner to the back of the shed.

INT. SHED

Dominick furiously SMASHES his fist against the door.

DOMINICK
(yells)
BECKYYY!!!

EXT. COTTAGE

Kelly stares at the wood shed.

KELLY
(screams)
Becky! What are you doing?!!

INT. SHED

Dominick throws his weight against the door.

SMASH...SMASH...

DOMINICK
(screams)
BECKY! Open this door or I will
FUCKING TEAR YOU APART!!!

Some sort of liquid splashes the back of his head from above.

He turns around and looks up.

Becky stands on the roof of the shed, looking down at him through the opened sky light.

She has her Super-Soaker aimed straight at him.

Dominick touches the wet spot on the back of his head and sniffs his fingers, realizing it ain't water.

DOMINICK
Little girl, you'd better damn w--

She BLASTS him in the face with it, right in the eye hole.

He drops his gun and clutches his face, howling in pain.

Becky watches as he screams in agony and thrashes about below.

Suddenly, she kicks the gas jug through the sky light. It bounces down the pile of bodies, splashing fuel all around, before landing on the floor. Gasoline pours out freely.

DOMINICK
(screams)
STOP!!! STOP! Let me out!

He looks up at her.

DOMINICK
You win! I'll give you anything!
OKAY?!

She pulls Jeff's Zippo out of her pocket.

Dominick's eye widens.

DOMINICK
(screams)
NO! DON'T DO IT!!!

CLACK...

She holds the lighter up, looking down at him through the sky light with an icy glare. Stone cold.

BECKY
Die in a fire...
(flicks lighter on)
...Snowflake.

DOMINICK
(screams)
NOOOOOO!!!

She drops it.

It falls down through the sky light...and smacks Dominick square in the face.

BOOM!

A blaze ERUPTS from Dominick's eye socket! He screams like someone with their head on fire.

In a flash, Dominick is completely consumed by the flames.

The pile of bodies goes up next...

...then everything.

EXT. SHED

The raging fire EXPLODES through the sky light.

Becky leaps from the roof of the wood shed to the ground some ten feet below.

She lands hard, falling backwards on impact. Using the wall of the shed for support, she scrambles to her feet.

SMASH!

Dominick BURSTS through the shed's only window, fully engulfed in flames. With his burning arms outstretched, he lunges at her...

Becky jumps back, just out of reach.

She spots the key still dangling from his neck. She reaches out and snatches it by the string.

Dominick flails around in the window.

Becky watches him burn for a moment...and raises the shovel.

She CRACKS him hard with it, right in the face. Dominick falls back inside the burning shed.

Becky catches her breath as his screams ring out from within the raging inferno.

EXT. COTTAGE

Kelly looks on from the cottage deck in shocked disbelief.

INT. SHERIFF GORMAN'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Apex can see the flames as he slowly approaches the cottage in Sheriff Gorman's car.

APEX

Fuck.

EXT. COTTAGE

The squad car pulls to a stop. Apex gets out. He stares at the burning wood shed for a moment before scanning the area.

Kelly's on the deck, still bound at the wrists and ankles. No sign of Dominick. Or Becky.

He makes his way over to her.

APEX

Where's Dominick?!

She looks over to the shed.

KELLY

In there.

He follows her gaze over to the burning structure.

APEX

Becky?

Kelly nods.

Apex looks around the yard, seemingly unsure how to proceed.

He climbs up onto the deck, grabs Kelly by the ankles and drags her back inside the cottage.

INT. COTTAGE

Apex pulls Kelly across the floor through the rubble and debris. She winces in pain.

TY (OS)

Mommy?

Ty stands in the doorway of Becky's room.

Kelly does her best to keep it together.

KELLY

(fighting tears)

It's okay. Mommy's okay.

TY

But you're bleeding.

Kelly glances at her wrists.

KELLY

Don't worry, Baby. It'll be fine.

Ty stares up at Apex.

Apex stares back at Ty.

He props Kelly up against the wall in a seated position but doesn't untie her.

APEX

(to Ty)

Stay here with your Mom. Don't go anywhere.

Apex storms off.

Ty sits down next to Kelly and wraps his arms around her neck. She can't hold it in any longer and bursts into tears.

EXT. COTTAGE

It starts to rain as Apex emerges from the cottage.

He spots her almost immediately.

Becky stands in the yard, watching him, the flames from the wood shed RAGING behind her. If Death itself were inhabiting the body of a nine year old girl, it would look like this.

She holds Ty's dinosaur by the tail in her left hand.

And the hatchet in her right.

Apex steps down from the deck and slowly approaches her.

They never break eye contact.

BECKY

That's far enough.

Apex stops with about ten feet between them.

APEX

I'm not gonna hurt you.

BECKY

I know.

They regard each other for several, silent moments...

He raises his hands as non-threateningly as possible, pulls out Gorman's gun and removes the clip.

He tosses the gun to his right and the clip to his left. He spreads his massive arms out wide, showing his hands.

APEX

I know I don't deserve it, but
there's something I want to say to
you. I *need* to say.

No response.

APEX

I never knew my Daddy. And I lost
my Mommy when I was even younger
than you. She was taken from me.
Raped and murdered by scumbags just
like these guys...

(beat)

...like me.

Becky says nothing.

APEX

I know how angry you are. And you have every right to be. But it's how you handle the anger and the pain that determines who you are.

...A single tear runs down her cheek.

APEX

I let my rage for those bastards turn me into...a bad person. But it doesn't have to be that way for you. You're much stronger than I ever was.

(beat)

Please. Becky. Don't let your anger decide who you are. You can still be...you don't have to become a piece of shit like me.

Becky just stares at him.

APEX

Here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna go get in that squad car over there, drive myself to the nearest police station and turn myself in. I'll go back to jail for the rest of my life.

(motions to cottage)

The lady and the little boy are fine. The cops will come and get you all out of here.

Still nothing.

APEX

Nobody else needs to get hurt tonight. This can all be over right now if you want it to be. It's up to you. You're in charge here. Okay? You're in charge.

Becky remains silent for another tense moment...

Apex watches her closely, looking for any sign of...anything.

BECKY

(yells)

Here, Boy!

Diego emerges from the woods, as if he's just been waiting for her to call.

Apex looks nervous.

Diego joins them in the front yard, acting as the third point in some crazy Mexican standoff.

He sits, but keeps his attentive eyes on Becky.

APEX

Okay. Let's all just take it easy.

Diego lets out a slight whine, eyes fixed on her.

Her eyes remain locked on Apex.

Apex's eyes shift between the dog and the little girl.

APEX

I...

(sigh)

...I'm sorry.

Diego whimpers again, and stands.

Becky quickly nods her head, once.

Diego immediately charges at Apex, growling and snarling!

Apex instinctively steps back. He can only brace for it...

Diego jumps up at him, going straight for the throat. His teeth sink into both sides of Apex's thick neck.

Becky remains stoic as she watches Diego attack.

Apex falls to the ground while Diego relentlessly SNAPS at his neck and face, drawing blood with every strike.

Apex howls in pain.

He tries to defend himself against Diego's ruthless onslaught, using his forearm to shield his face and throat.

SNAP

SNAP

SNAP

The dog mangles the big man's face quickly.

APEX

(screams)

STOP! STOP!!! PLEA--

The dog manages to break through Apex's defenses long enough to CHOMP down hard on his jugular.

Diego RIPS a large chunk out of Apex's throat. Apex screams, to the best of his ability.

BECKY

Enough.

Diego immediately backs off, chewing on the piece of flesh before eventually spitting it out on the ground.

Apex is on his back, clutching his shredded throat with both hands, gasping for air.

He looks up at the rainy, night sky. Strangely peaceful...
until...

Lightening sears the sky. Thunder CRACKS loudly.

Becky invades his field of view, looming over him.

She lifts the hatchet so he can see it.

Spitting up blood, Apex makes a gurgly attempt to speak...

APEX

(whispers)

Please...

She glares down at him.

BECKY

(screams)

AAARRRGGGHHH!!!!

THWACK!

Becky buries the hatchet deep into Apex's face with every ounce of strength and rage that she can summon.

Diego looks on as Apex's extremities twitch and then stop.

Standing above his head, she releases her hand from the handle of the hatchet, heaving as she fights to catch her breath.

Suddenly, she grabs the hatchet and RIPS it out of his face.

She looks up to the sky as the rain beats down on her.

INT. COTTAGE

Kelly holds Ty between her arms, still bound at the wrists and ankles, sitting on the floor.

BAM!

The front door BURSTS open.

Both Ty and Kelly quickly look up.

Becky stands ominously in the doorway. She holds Ty's dinosaur, dripping from the rain in one hand and the hatchet in the other.

The thunder CRASHES and the night sky lights up behind her.

Her clothes are stained with blood. She looks like she's been to hell and back.

KELLY

Becky!

(sobs)

Are...are you okay?

No response.

Becky enters the cottage and slowly makes her way over to them. Diego follows her inside.

Kelly and Ty can only watch as she approaches.

She stops in front of them, standing at Kelly's feet...

KELLY

Becky? Say something! Please!

Becky raises the hatchet over her head.

And swings.

KELLY

(screams)

BECKY!!!

TY

(screams)

NOOO!!!

THWACK!

Becky severs the zip ties binding Kelly's ankles.

Kelly looks up at her, at once shocked and relieved.

She sighs loudly.

So does Ty.

Becky looks down at the little boy.

He looks back at her, eyes wide.

She hands him the dinosaur.

Ty quickly accepts it, squeezing it tightly in both arms.
Water drips from its tail.

TY
Thanks, Becky.

Becky's eyes well up with tears.

BECKY
I'm sorry I was mean to you.

Ty smiles.

TY
It's okay.

Tears stream down Kelly's face as well.

Becky points to Kelly's bloody wrists.

Kelly lays her arms out straight on the floor. Becky CHOPS
her wrist restraints as well.

Kelly immediately throws her arms around the little girl and
pulls her in close.

KELLY
I'm so sorry, Sweetheart.

Becky stares at the floor for a moment, but eventually...

She returns the embrace.

Ty wraps his arms around them both.

The three of them hold each other, together, on the living
room floor. Diego makes his way over and sits down beside
them. Thunder CRASHES as the sound of the pounding rain
intensifies outside.

END