

THE MENDING WALL

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EXT. THE WOODS - DAWN

JOHN, 38, primal, walks shirtless through the damp grey woods. The handle of a large knife sticks out from his belt.

He scans the horizon.

Twigs and leaves crunch under his bare feet.

He stops.

He turns his head, his breath visible in the frigid air.

He spots something in the distance. He picks up a rock and throws it. He waits. He picks up another and throws it.

His hand, caked in damp dirt dried into the lines on his bruised knuckles, throws another rock.

And throws another.

And another.

He stops, chest heaving.

An angry growl in the distance. John pulls out the knife.

He screams back animalistically. A beast rushes towards him.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LATER

A fly sits on a brown patch of fur. It rubs its legs together. A stream of blood rolls past it.

A massive bear hangs dead, upside down, belly out, a "V" shape cut made on the lower abdomen. Blood trickles through the fur.

John's bruised hand, holding a large knife, slices the bear from belly to neck, the innards slop onto the tarp below. Hot red blood pools out, reflecting the trees and sky above.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Slice. A sharp steak knife cuts through a rare piece of meat. The radio plays a folk tune. John shoves a forkful of meat in his mouth.

The song ends.

RADIO VOICE

And now we'd like to remind you all
that God, our lord and savior is
always-

John punches the radio off.

He gnaws on the meat.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

John twitches in his sleep. Eyes rolled back in his head. He lets out a quiet growl.

He startles awake.

The faint sound of a choir. He gets out of bed and follows the sound to the open window.

John looks through his reflection, out the window into the woods.

Covering his back are fresh cuts, bruises, and claw marks. John slams the window shut, crushing several dead insects in the dusty sill.

EXT. JOHN'S PROPERTY - JUST BEFORE DAWN

John's house looks tiny, the only man-made object in a vast wooded area.

The front door opens. John exits. A howl in the distance.

EXT. THE ROAD TO TOWN

John's well-worn pick-up truck bumps down the only dirt road in the grey woods.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - CAB

DUKE and BARRON, John's Irish Setters, watch the trees pass from the passenger seat. The truck slows to a stop.

EXT. THE WOODS

Silently it begins to snow.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - CAB

John stares through the driver's side window into the icy woods.

The dogs turn to John.

John looks deeper into the woods.

Frigid white flakes land on the grey bark of a fallen log.

Duke whimpers. John snaps out of it. He looks back at the road, puts the truck in gear and drives.

EXT. THE TOWN - MAIN STREET - JOHN'S TRUCK - MORNING

John's truck rolls down the street of a small American town passing a collection of modest businesses:

TREEM'S DINER

TREEM'S HUNTING SUPPLY

TREEM'S GROCERY

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - CAB

On the other side of the road a big rig approaches. Duke and Barron watch it barrel past loudly and disappear behind them.

John pulls into a small parking lot and...

EXT. HELEN'S STORE - JOHN'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

...parks in front of the store, above which hangs a sign that reads

STORE.

John gets out of his truck. Duke moves over to the drivers seat.

John walks to the front door passing a window sign that reads

TALK SHIT GET HIT.

He opens the door and steps into...

INT. HELEN'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

...the store as a small bell rings.

HELEN, a sturdy, middle aged, curls her eye lashes from behind the counter.

HELEN
Howdy there stranger.

JOHN
Morning.

John reaches into his pocket. Helen notices under his sleeve his arm is heavily bandaged.

He pulls out his wallet.

The small bell rings.

KELLY, 15, pretty in a "Treem's Diner" t-shirt bounds through the door carrying a paper bag and coffee. She slows to a halt when she sees John.

HELEN
Morning Kelly.

Kelly looks at the floor.

HELEN (CONT'D)
On the counter is fine.

Kelly, head down, places the bag and coffee on the counter.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Thank you Kelly.

Giving one last peek at John, Kelly pushes the door open and steps out.

Through the store window we see her scurry across the street into Treem's Diner.

A large grocery bag drops on the counter.

JOHN
Didn't get my eggs last time.

Helen pulls up several more bags.

HELEN
Should have come back.

Keeping her eyes on John she pulls a carton of eggs out and sets them on the counter.

The homemade label reads BLAKE FARM EGGS.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Your mother would kill me if she knew I was letting you buy anything off Pete Blake.

JOHN
Well good thing she's dead.

Helen looks through the window at...

EXT. HELEN'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

...OX JR, 15, Cleft Lip and Palate, sucks on a hand-rolled cigarette staring into the store.

MICKEY, 16, scrawny and MARSHALL, 15, baby-faced with bright blue eyes, share a cigarette.

Ox Jr slowly blows the smoke out towards the window as...

INT. HELEN'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

...Helen turns back to John. He pulls a pot holder out of the grocery bag and places it on the counter.

HELEN
The Walnut Festival is next month.

Helen watches as the boys outside walk away smirking.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I'll be running the game booth.

John pulls a sack of potpourri out of the grocery bag.

JOHN
What the hell is this?

HELEN
"A combination of incongruous things, a miscellaneous anthology or collection, a mixture of dried flower petals and spices used to scent the air."

He looks at her.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Worth thirteen points on the
scrabble.

JOHN
Why are you always giving me shit I
don't need?

He puts the potpourri in the bag.

HELEN
I could ask you the same question.

EXT. HELEN'S STORE - OX'S TRUCK - SAME TIME

The truck door opens and out steps OX, a 40 year-old man
worthy of his name.

Ox looks over at John's truck. Inside the cab Duke and Barron
glare at him.

INT. HELEN'S STORE

John searches in the bag.

JOHN
Whiskey?

HELEN
I guess we ran out.

Ox opens the door flashing a crooked but handsome smile.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Well, well, well...big blue Ox.

She leans flirtatiously on the counter.

OX
How are you doing Helen?

HELEN
In need of some gentlemanly
attention.

OX
How *is* Eddie?

He gives her a platonic kiss on the cheek. John looks away.

JOHN
Hello Ox.

OX
(to Helen)
Just need those supplies for the
meeting.

She exits into the dimly lit back. Out of the corner of his
eye, Ox looks John over. John sifts through his bags.

OX (CONT'D)
You coming tonight?

Ox faces out the window, watching the town come to life.

JOHN
Headed home.

OX
Thought you'd be in the front row.
I know you like your privacy.

Helen returns with a cardboard box.

HELEN
We all need a little privacy.

John picks up the bags.

JOHN
Thanks Helen.

He walks to the door.

OX
They bought everything past
Carter's bend.

John hesitates at the door. Ox looks at him directly for the
first time.

OX (CONT'D)
Wont make good neighbors.

EXT. HELEN'S STORE - MOMENTS LATER

A loud big rig thunders past carrying a mountain of lumber.
John watches it drive towards the bright sun on the horizon.

A second rig rushes by carrying metal beams.

Another passes with a tarp, covering its contents, flapping
loudly in the wind.

The last one rolls past carrying an massive crucifix, laid on it's side, heavily chained down.

John shades his eyes from the sun.

In passing, the sun bounces off the crucifix in a bright white flash.

John quickly closes his eyes.

EXT. THE WOODS - LATER

John's eye peers through the scope of a rifle.

A beautiful female deer nibbles on the grass in the clearing ahead of him.

John removes the safety. He sees something out of the corner of his eye.

On the other side of a clearing, a YOUNG WOMAN in a long pastel dress silently watches him.

John's eyes return to the deer. He pulls the trigger.

The shot echoes as the doe drops to the ground.

John lowers his gun and looks to the other side of the clearing.

No one is there. The sound of a far off choir.

INT. THE TOWN - GYMNASIUM - THAT EVENING

TANNER TREEM, a clean cut man in his early forties, leans on a podium rubbing his eyes with his right hand.

His extremely clean fingers and nails pinch the bridge of his nose.

MAN #1 (O.S.)

Did no one realize who these people
were till just now? How did this
happen?

John quietly enters the back of the hall. A cacophony of whispers.

TANNER

If it had been in my control that
land never would have been sold.

Tanner notices a speck of dirt on his thumb. He pulls out a white handkerchief.

MAN #2 (O.S.)

What about the constitution.
Freedom of religion-

TANNER

(cleaning his thumb)

Our church building doesn't have twenty foot walls around it. I have no desire to spread panic or fear or entertain horrifying fantasies of cults, cult activity, cult sacrifices, cult worship, cult marriage. Everyone is aware of the stigma that creeps off that word.

He puts the handkerchief away. Someone sits the shadows behind him.

TANNER (CONT'D)

I have already contact an individual who specializes in these kinds of situations. Not FBI, but a freelance activist who with the upmost discretion will help us to remove any possible threats to our community. Ladies and Gentlemen, Miss Angela Makin.

ANGELA, 45, scrappy and no-nonsense, stands. She walks into the light. She pops her gum and crosses her arms. An old tawny braided bracelet wraps around her left wrist. Pop.

In the audience, a LITTLE BOY turns in his chair and points his finger, shaped like a gun, at John.

LITTLE BOY

(whisper)

Bang. Bang.

The town looks up reverently at Tanner behind the podium.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - MORNING

John walks along a three foot high rock wall that marks the border of his property. He stops in front of a collapsed part where several larger rocks have fallen out onto the ground.

He grabs a rock with both hands and places it back on the wall.

He rubs his forehead with the back of his arm. He grabs another rock.

On the other side of the wall, through the woods, the Young Woman, 16, innocent face, long pastel dress, notices John.

John pulls his shirt off. He continues to work, moving faster and faster.

The Young Woman, curious but cautious, watches him.

She sees the cuts and scars that cover his body. Her face grows concerned. John release a painful grunt.

John picks up another rock. Exhausted he drops it. He turns and walks away.

FAR OFF VOICE (O.S.)
(calling)
Ruth?

RUTH, the Young Woman, turns.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - SACRAMENT HALL - MORNING

THE CONGREGATION, a sea of women in floor length pastel dresses and men in grey suits, sit reverently in wooden pews.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Last Saturday evening, I took some
bread at dinner and hid it in my
room. I took the bread because...

THE CONGREGATION listens.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I was scared. I should have prayed
for strength but I did not.

The large crucifix looms over SISTER MORGAN, a small thirty year old woman in a yellow dress, standing behind a podium.

SISTER MORGAN (FEMALE VOICE)
Satan called to me and I gave in to
the temptation of the body. I
confess to the sin of theft...

She clasps her hands together but they are still shaking.

SISTER MORGAN (CONT'D)
...for breaking the fast...for my
weakness.

(MORE)

SISTER MORGAN (CONT'D)
 I ask for forgiveness from the
 congregation of God's Mercy, our
 beloved President Brother Allen,
 and our lord Jesus Christ.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN, 55, confident with bright eyes,
 steps up to the podium.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN
 Thank you Sister Morgan. We forgive
 you.

Sister Morgan sits down in a pew between her stern-looking
 SISTER-WIVES and OLD HUSBAND.

President Brother Allen looks over the congregation.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (CONT'D)
 "Above all else Faith must be the
 rod to which you hold. It is better
 that you should commit self murder
 than to doubt the truth of the
 church, the sacrifice of our Lord,
 or the love of our Heavenly
 Father."

EXT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND

Ruth and ESTHER, 17, plain looking in a pastel dress, sit on
 a bench, hand-sewing baby clothes outside the church.

ESTHER
 I have a decision to pray about.

Ruth stares out into the woods. She aimlessly pulls the
 threaded needle through the hem on the baby dress. A tawny
 braided bracelet around her left wrist.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
 Ruth?

Ester expertly threads the needle, she wears a similar
 bracelet.

RUTH
 Do you remember what it was like
 before you converted?

ESTHER
 I was a baby.

Ruth examines her flawless young hands.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
You are lucky your parents were
born into the church.

RUTH
What if your father had never heard
about the church?

Ruth continues to sew.

ESTHER
Nothing for you to worry about.
You were born pure.

Ruth accidentally pricks her thumb. She places the thumb in her
mouth. Esther whispers in Ruth's ear.

RUTH
Brother Aaron Suell?

ESTHER
But - a seventh wife?

RUTH
It wont be bad.

ESTHER
How would you know? You're a first
wife.

Ruth takes her hand.

RUTH
You don't have to accept.

ESTHER
I'm seventeen. I want children,
lots of children. Now.

They laugh, look down. A small smudge of blood from Ruth's
thumb has smeared across Esther's hand.

EXT. WOODS

Worn hands open a small metal trap. The morning sun glistens
on the sharp teeth.

John pushes a hand full of leaves on top, obscuring the trap.

Snap!

John turns. He pulls a hunting knife out of his belt and
walks towards the sound of an animal whimpering.

A fox writhes in the trap. John slices it's neck quickly.

EXT. TREEM MOVIE THEATRE - AFTERNOON

Angela looks up at the marquee

TREEM CINEMA

The black removable letters read

THE DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE

She walks into the theater.

INT. TREEM MOVIE THEATRE - PROJECTION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

HANK, 55, a small round man, works the projector.

Tanner sits extremely upright on a stool looking out the small window into the theater.

Through the window he watches THE AUDIENCE stare up at the movie screen. They gasp.

Angela stands in the back. She clears her throat.

TANNER

Miss Makin.

ANGELA

Angela.

TANNER

I trust everyone is being welcoming
and cooperative.

ANGELA

Most everyone.

He turns and smiles at her.

TANNER

Most.

The audience laughs. Tanner stands, he walks past Angela.

INT. TANNER'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Tanner sits at a well organized desk.

TANNER

Have you spoken with the Blakes?

Angela sits across from Tanner. She looks behind him.

ANGELA

I'm heading out there tomorrow.

On the wall behind Tanner is a map of the entire town and the surrounding properties. The map is grey aside from two highlighted sections; DAVIS and CARTER'S BEND.

TANNER

And Ox Bradley?

He arranges a file so it is parallel to the edge of the desk.

ANGELA

What exactly is your title Tanner?

TANNER

Mr. Treem.

She looks at the rest of the office walls, all covered with photos of Tanner with various town folk.

TANNER (CONT'D)

My family has been on this land since before the loggers and the miners ever found it. I guess you could call me an unofficial official.

ANGELA

Do you believe in God?
(motioning to his neck)
That a cross?

He reaches in his collar and pulls out a simple chain.

TANNER

That depends on your definition of God.

Angela pulls a pack of gum out of her jacket pocket.

ANGELA

I don't care how you define it. I don't.

She thrusts a stick of gum into her mouth.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - AFTERNOON

John, exhausted, brings a rock down on top of the wall.

With dry cracked hands he quickly picks up another and crashes it down on the wall.

Another rock cracks down.

Out of breath John takes a steps back. He looks down at the wall.

A caterpillar crawls across one of the stones. John leans over watching it closely. He stands up straight.

A rock slams down on it.

Ruth watches from a distance. John, his figure small in comparison to the vast woods, stares down at the wall.

On the other side of the clearing Ox Jr, Mickey, and Marshall watch Ruth watching John. Ox jr grins.

INT. OX'S BAR - LATER

Behind a dirty bar Ox reads the local paper. Ox Jr, Mickey and Marshall enter.

OX
Hey boys.

They take a seat on the cracked stools. Ox serves them waters.

OX (CONT'D)
Didn't clean your room this morning.

OX JR
We were just at Carters Bend-

Marshall reaches over the bar, Ox smacks his hand away.

OX
Not your property Junior.

Mickey smirks.

MICKEY
We saw one of them pioneer Jesus girls.

Ox walks to the other end of the bar, pulls a beer from the ice bucket, opens it.

OX
 Gunna get in trouble you keep going
 where you don't belong.

He places the beer in front of one of the men at the other end of the bar. He picks up the empty bottle.

MARSHALL
 John was there too.

Ox hurls an empty beer bottle in the trash, it misses the bin and crashes onto the floor breaking.

OX
 Leave it alone.

He turns.

EXT. THE WOODS - LATER

Ox Jr and Mickey pass a joint back and forth. Marshall sits on a tree stump whittling.

MICKEY
 If I were your dad I would have
 killed him already.

OX JR
 My dads been an enigma my whole
 fuckin' life.

MARSHALL
 A what?

MICKEY
 Does your dad go to church?

Ox Jr shrugs.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
 Maybe he's like, waiting.

MARSHALL
 Maybe he's scared.

Marshall blows on the piece of wood in his hand.

OX JR
 He's too big.

Marshall pushes a few shavings off the wood that he has carved into the shape of a woman.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - SIDE YARD - DAY

John chops wood.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - WOODPILE

John carries a armful of logs and dumps them on top of the growing woodpile.

Something catches his eye. He rolls over one of the older logs.

Termites run for cover.

JOHN

Shit.

John looks up.

His two story log cabin towers above him.

He reaches out and places his hand on the wall. He knocks on the wooden panel. Termites.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - PRESIDENTS OFFICE

A painting of Jesus hangs on a beige wall.

Under the painting sits President Brother Allen at a plain wooden desk.

There is a knock on the door.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN

Come in.

Ruth enters and softly closes the door behind her.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (CONT'D)

Sister Ruth.

RUTH

Hello President.

He places his paperwork to the side. He straightens it.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN

Have a seat.

She sits.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (CONT'D)
What can I do for you?

RUTH
Well, I was thinking about your
talk today.

He smiles.

RUTH (CONT'D)
I was praying about the
consequences for those who haven't
been introduced to the church.
Would God really punish someone who
was not given the chance to even
deny the word?

He purses his lips.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN
Only those who are baptized or
given the *Laying of the Hands* may
enter the kingdom of heaven.

RUTH
We are such a small congregation in
relation to-

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN
What makes you question this now
Sister Ruth?

The muffled sound of children laughing comes from outside the
window.

INT. HELEN'S STORE - AFTERNOON

John enters. Helen looks up from her romance novel surprised.

HELEN
Twice in one month, well, well,
well, I'm starting to think-

JOHN
Termites.

She drops the book.

HELEN
I got the good stuff in the back.

She exits into the dimly lit back. The small bell rings.

Tanner opens the door, handkerchief in hand as to not make contact with the door. Angela enters behind him.

TANNER
What luck, my dear.

John looks behind the counter to the back. Angela thrusts her hand out.

ANGELA
Angela Makin.

John looks down at her hand then at her determined face.

JOHN
Hello.

He looks into the back of the store.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Helen?

HELEN (O.S.)
Give me a sec.

ANGELA
I'd like to talk with you about
your new neighbors.

John rubs the back of his neck.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Your property runs right up on the
compounds, main roads blocked by-

JOHN
I know where my property runs.

Helen emerges from the back slipping two cans of Boric Acid into a brown bag.

HELEN
Hello Tanner. Miss Makin.

Angela steps forward placing her hands on her hips, revealing a gun under her left arm.

ANGELA
Do you know what goes on inside
those walls?

John pulls a jacket out of the bag.

JOHN
What's this?

HELEN
A jacket.

He glares at her.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Some of us wear them sometimes.
When it's cold.

ANGELA
The safe houses are of no use if-

John shoves the jacket onto the counter, drops cash next to it, grabs the bag and heads to the door.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Mr. Davis.

John keeps walking.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Do you have any children?

John exits.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Something's not right with him.

Helen slams the cash drawer shut.

INT. HELEN'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Through the doorway to the bathroom, under the harsh yellow light, Helen washes her face.

HELEN
I just don't know.

EDDIE, 46, portly, enters the bedroom and sits on the bed.

EDDIE
Hmm?

HELEN
John.

She lathers the soap between her hands.

EDDIE
Hm.

HELEN

I wish he'd come in more often.

She lathers her face, watching herself in the mirror.

EDDIE

Most people would prefer he doesn't
come in at all.

Eddie starts to undress.

HELEN

Poor baby's been through enough.

She rubs the soap off her face with a small pink towel.

EDDIE

(emotionless)

He shot her Helen. You're the only
dumb sucker who thinks otherwise.

She turns the faucet off.

HELEN

He'd be in jail if he'd done it.

Eddie crawls into bed.

EDDIE

You really think Eleanore shot
herself?

HELEN

It was an accident.

She dries her face with another pink towel.

EDDIE

How does a woman accidentally shoot
herself in the pregnant belly?

Helen looks at herself in the mirror.

HELEN

I wouldn't know anything about
pregnant women.

(then)

But I know about sadness and the
things it makes you do.

She turns off the light and crawls into bed next to Eddie.

EDDIE

Everyone knows he did it. Same way everyone knows those cult people are a bunch of loonies about to drink some kool-aid and fly on up to the moon.

She turns away from Eddie and hugs the blankets.

HELEN

Well the Earth ain't flat.

EDDIE

Good people do bad things all the time. Godson or not he shot his wife, and he's gonna burn in hell for it.

Helen's big eyes stare out worried.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - AFTERNOON

A waning moon hangs in the afternoon sky.

Ruth approaches the wall clutching a large black book against her chest.

A gust of wind rattles the trees, blowing her hair into her face. She stops at the wall. She looks around.

LATER

Tired, Ruth sits on the wall.

She looks up watching several grey clouds crawl across the sky.

She takes a deep breath, sets the book down on the wall.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - MORNING

John approaches, he stops in front of the book.

In gold capital letters it reads

THE DOCTRINE OF ABRAHAM THE ONE TRUE PROPHET OF THE CHURCH OF GOD'S MERCY.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

The book drops onto an wooden end table next to the two cans of Boric Acid. The dogs sleep next to the worn arm chair, in front of a stone fireplace.

They pop awake as John passes them and heads into the-

KITCHEN

which is open to his living room. He opens the refrigerator.

A carton of milk, eggs and a loaf of bread sit lonely on the shelf next to several items wrapped in white paper.

Frustrated he closes the refrigerator and walks out of the kitchen into the -

LIVING ROOM

And sits down in his arm chair. He stares at the cracked floor.

Two termites crawl along the wooden floorboards then disappear into the cracks.

INT. OX'S BAR - AFTERNOON

Angela leans against the bar and Ox pours a tall glass of water and sets in down in front of her.

ANGELA

What can you tell me about John
Davis?

Ox grabs a rag and starts cleaning a pint glass.

OX

Helen would know more than anyone.

ANGELA

He trust her?

He places the clean glass down and picks up a dirty one.

OX

She was a friend of his mothers.

ANGELA

His parents still around?

Ox shakes his head.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

What about you?

Ox notices a TALL WOMAN at the end of the bar staring at him. He turns away.

OX

My sister knew him.

ANGELA

Sister yes, Eleanore right? Where does she live?

OX

She's dead.

He sets the glass down on the bar. He picks up a clean glass and begins to wash it again.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - EVENING

John approaches the house, shot gun in one hand, two dead pheasants hanging in the other. He stops.

A black jeep is parked next to his truck on the side of the house.

As he walks closer. Angela, leaning against the porch beam, eyes John. She stands up straight.

John walks past her.

JOHN

I'm not interested.

John leans the gun against the door frame and opens the door.

ANGELA

Everyday children are forced into pleural marriage with men three, four times their age-

John keeps one foot on the door and picks up the gun.

JOHN

None of my business.

He pushes the door open with his foot and...

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

...enters the living room.

John leans the gun against a chair, barrel aimed at the front door, and walks into the kitchen.

ANGELA
 (in the doorway)
 You don't want to be directly
 involved that's fine, that's why I
 am here but-

She notices the barrel of the gun looking coldly at her and steps inside.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
 There is no abstaining from this
 sort of a situation.

She sees the black book on his end table next to the Boric Acid.

John, in the

KITCHEN

pulls a white package out of his refrigerator and unwraps it.

ANGELA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Mr. Davis.

JOHN
 I did not invite you in.

He drops a large bear liver into a sizzling pan.

ANGELA (O.S.)
 Have you had any contact with them?

She watches him as he shuffles the meat. Blue-yellow flames jump up around the pan. The liver sizzles and burns.

ANGELA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 What if your wife-

John's hand reaches into the burning pan and clutches the liver.

He turns around and holds the sizzling organ straight out.

Blood and oil singes through his fingers and down his tensed arm.

Angela steps back.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Asleep in bed John twitches violently.

He wakes suddenly. He looks around. He looks down at the back of his hand.

A small black spider is crawling towards his knuckles. The spider stops. John flicks it away with his other hand.

The spider lands on the afghan at the foot of his bed and crawls back towards him.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S TREE STAND - AFTERNOON

Gun in hand John sits against a large grey tree, on a wooden platform seven feet from the ground.

He stares out aimlessly. As he looks past the stone wall he sees Ruth walking.

He sets his gun down and watches as she picks something up off the ground.

He climbs down the tree and quickly walks to the wall as Ruth begins to walk away.

JOHN
(calling out)
Hey.

His voice echoes through the woods. She stops and turns.

JOHN (CONT'D)
It's cold.

RUTH
(walking towards him)
It's cold?

He puts his hands in his pockets.

JOHN
For this time of year.

He pushes his left sleeve up.

RUTH
Why aren't you wearing a coat?

She looks at the wounds on his arm. He pulls his sleeve down.

JOHN
What about you?

RUTH
I'm used to the cold.

JOHN
You left your book.

RUTH
Did you read it?

JOHN
I...not the inside.

He shakes his head and looks at the ground.

RUTH
You should read it. The inside.

John's nicked and leathery hands fail to find a comfortable position on his hip, in his belt loop, his pocket.

RUTH (CONT'D)
I am Sister Ruth.

He takes a deep breath. He turns.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Have you been-

He walks away.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Saved.

EXT. THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

John, fists clenched, storms through the woods.

He closes his eyes and harshly mumbles something through clenched teeth.

As he passes several trees he holds his arm out, allowing it to crash into the trunk of a tree.

And then another.

And another.

Another.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

John sits hunched over, naked, in an old white bathtub.

John stares down at his forearms, palms up. Raw scratches and cuts run from wrist to elbow.

He slowly lowers his arms into the water, and watches his blood disperse through the water like red/pink smoke.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - CLASSROOM - MORNING

A large painting of Jesus Christ hangs next to a slightly smaller photo of President Brother Allen on a beige wall.

Ruth stands by a desk in front of a classroom filled with a dozen six year old children at school desks, all raising their hands.

JONATHAN, a bright eyed blond, smiles widely.

RUTH

Jonathan.

The class lowers their hands as Jonathan stands.

JONATHAN

Abraham 15 verse 23 - 25.

RUTH

That is correct.

LILY, a small girl with glasses, raises her hand.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Yes Lily?

Lily stands.

LILY

Why doesn't God answer all our prayers?

RUTH

God answers our prayers, he hears each and every one. Sometimes we don't get the answer we want.

LILY

But what if he does not answer?

RUTH

That is an answer. We cannot know everything. "And He saith unto them 'Thou may not know the entirety of this universe, nor even of thine own soul, but with complete Faith you shall not fear.'" "

She smiles.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Now. Who would like offer the closing prayer?

Everyone raises their hands.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - SACRAMENT HALL - MORNING

President Brother Allen preaches from behind the podium.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN

And remember this; "We live *in* this world we do not live *of* this world." Amen.

He looks over the congregation. Ruth sits next to her husband CHRISTIAN, 20, handsome.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (CONT'D)

We are blessed today with another announcement. The joining of two outstanding members of our community, Sister Esther Roth has agreed to marry Brother Aaron Suell.

Ruth smiles at Esther who stands. BROTHER AARON SUELL, 50, stands.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (CONT'D)

The ceremony will take place next Sunday.

He closes his eyes.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (CONT'D)

Thank you Lord for your blessings for they are great and without measure. And thank you for your guidance in this holy union. Amen

THE CONGREGATION

Amen.

Ruth opens her eyes, Christian opens his eyes. They smile.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - HALLWAY - LATER

The congregation pours out from the Sacrament room. Esther exits and stands near the wall watching.

Ruth and Christian exit, as they go their separate ways, they exchange a playful grin.

Their hands slyly brush each others before parting. Esther turns away.

RUTH

Esther!

Esther attempts to smile.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - AFTERNOON

Ruth sits on the wall looking over John's property.

She watches as two birds fly in circles around each other above the trees.

She runs her hand along the wall's stones, stopping at a spot of dried blood and pressing her finger onto it. She lifts her hand and watches as the blood rushes back into her finger.

Giving one last look towards John's place she stands and walks away.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - EVENING

John sips whiskey in his arm chair, Duke and Barron at his feet, watching the fire.

He looks at the scriptures resting on the side table. He places the drink on the book.

INT. HELEN'S STORE - MORNING

BROTHER ANTHONY JAMES, a tall clean-cut man in a grey suit, waits at the counter.

MARTHA and QUINN, two thirty-somethings in jeans and long coats, watch him out of the corners of their eyes while picking up random canned goods and jars and blindly placing them in their shopping bags.

Helen places two large paper bags on the counter. She pulls another up from behind the counter.

HELEN

Well, I think that is it.

Helen looks over at Martha who quickly looks down and scurries over to the drink display case.

Quinn looks from Helen to Brother Anthony James.

Brother Anthony James nods, smiles and picks up the bags.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Have a good one.

He exits.

QUINN

What are you doing?

Quinn and Martha approach the counter.

MARTHA

Ms. Makin says they're rapists. You gunna start selling to rapists.

QUINN

Well I guess that ain't far off from murders.

Helen glares down at them.

HELEN

You gunna pay for all that?

They look down into Quinn's bag, a dozen cans of sardines three packs of condoms and four cans of shoe polish.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - ALTAR ROOM - AFTERNOON

A massive white cross hangs on a white wall.

Esther and Aaron Suell, clothed in all white, kneel down in on either side of a white altar. President Brother Allen stands in an all white robes holding a challis.

In complete silence President Brother Allen brings the challis to Aaron's lips. Aaron drinks.

President Brother Allen places the challis to Esther's lips. She drinks.

Brother Allen turns and ceremoniously walks towards the cross. He looks up at its overwhelming stature. He raises the challis to the cross then slowly brings it to his own lips.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - RELEASE ROOM - LATER

Esther and Aaron enter, followed by President Brother Allen.

The congregation bursts into applause.

Esther is greeted with a kiss on the cheek by her six SISTER-WIVES.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - EARLY AFTERNOON

John mends the wall. Ruth walks towards him.

RUTH
Good afternoon.

Ruth watches as he becomes more and more exhausted from his work.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Would you like some help?

JOHN
I'm fine.

He moves down the wall and pulls up another rock.

Ruth follows him. She looks at the rocks that have fallen on her side of the wall.

She bends down and with all her strength picks up a large rock.

John watches her. Ruth places the rock on the wall then steps back, proud of herself.

RUTH
My name's Ruth.

He hesitates.

JOHN
John.

He reaches down. She smiles.

EXT. BLAKES FARM - BARN - AFTERNOON

Angela and PETE BLAKE, an overweight man in overalls, approach a large grey barn.

PETE

It's a bit drafty but if you have
cots and blankets I think-

He opens the doors and,

INT. BLAKES FARM - BARN - CONTINUOUS

Angela and Pete step into the barn.

ANGELA

Should be fine for a night until we
can move them to the county
hospital.

Pete puts his hands on his hips.

PETE

I don't see how these kinda things
aren't shut down by the police.

Angela picks a rock up off the ground.

ANGELA

They move around, state to state.

She rolls it around in her hand.

PETE

What about the one they had out in
Arizona, you knew them?

She places the rock back on the ground.

ANGELA

Moved out the country.

PETE

Good. Maybe these bunch'll scoot
off.

ANGELA

Wrong is wrong no matter where you
are.

She walks out.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - RUTH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ruth sits in a simple chair reading the scriptures.
She proudly underlines a verse.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - LATE MORNING

John works on the wall. Ruth watches.

RUTH

The Prophet Alexander built a wall.
Have you read that part yet?

JOHN

No.

Ruth picks up a rock and sets it into place.

RUTH

After Christ was resurrected God
directed Alexander to build an
stone guide that the Lord could use
as a path to all other nations.

John takes a rest and watches her.

RUTH (CONT'D)

That's how the Lord came to this
part of the world. And baptized
Abraham. And gave birth to God's
Mercy. It's in chapter 8 of
Abraham. If you'd like to read it.

John picks up another rock.

JOHN

This wall's to keep people off my
land.

John struggles with a large rock.

RUTH

You're hurting yourself.

JOHN

Pain has it's place.

EXT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - MORNING

Ruth and Esther walk down a long row of simple cookie-cutter
houses some of which are still being built.

RUTH
(concerned)
What do you mean?

ESTHER
I thought it would be different.

RUTH
Sometimes it hurts.

ESTHER
It's not that. I just, don't like
it.

RUTH
You should tell him.

ESTHER
You can't understand what it's
like.

Ruth smiles and pushes a lock of Esther's hair behind Esther's ear. Esther pushes Ruth's hand away.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Or maybe you will.

Esther walks past Ruth, down the long row of houses.

RUTH
Esther.

Esther keeps walking.

Ruth turns around and begins to walk back to her house.

To the side she sees Christian and SISTER EVE HAIL, a tall blond haired blue eyed young woman in a yellow dress, exit the church, followed by President Brother Allen.

President Brother Allen says something she cannot hear, he brings Eve and Christian's hands together.

Ruth stops breathing.

INT. GOD'S MERCY - RUTH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Near a large curtain-less window Ruth stands slicing an apple at the counter.

Slice. She looks out the window in a trance-like gaze. Slice. Two birds land on a branch outside. Slice. The birds nuzzle.

Slice.

The knife cuts deep into her thumb.

The knife drops. She clutches her finger. Blood pours through her clenched fists, it rolls down her hand and drips onto the green apple slices.

She takes a deep breath. With no trace of pain in her face and slowly looks down at her hands.

She runs her finger along the cut. Curious, she picks up the knife and places the blade on her palm.

She takes a deep breath.

She begins to drag the blade across her skin. She presses deeper as Christian enters the kitchen. She drops the knife. A wave of pain overcomes her and she clutches her hand tight to belly.

CHRISTIAN

Ruth?

RUTH

I had an accident.

She looks at him, blood running down her arm.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - RUTH'S BEDROOM - LATER

Ruth kneels in prayer.

Her eyes remain closed as she prays, her breaths slowing back to normal.

RUTH

Amen.

Ruth opens her eyes.

Staring back at her is her wounded thumb. She runs her finger across the thick black stitches. She opens her hand and looks at the stitches on her palm.

More laughter comes from outside.

She sees the scriptures on her bedside table.

She grabs them.

She grabs paper and a pencil.

EXT. THE WOODS - LATER

A folded piece of paper clutched in Ruth's hand flutters in the breeze.

A gust of wind blows the paper up into the sky.

Frantic Ruth chases it. Leaves blow around in the wind.

Ruth looks on the ground. She kneels down and searches.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - LATER

Ruth approaches John, exhausted, sitting on the wall.

JOHN
Uh...you okay?

RUTH
I had...

He stands.

Ruth closes her eyes, breathing in silence.

JOHN
Do you...uh...you okay?

RUTH
I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Forgive me.

She tries to breathe slowly but she can't, she begins to hyperventilate. She faints.

John looks down at her. He looks around then steps over the wall.

He leans over her, checks her pulse. He looks around again.

The wind blows a leaf into Ruth's hair.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Through blurry vision things come into focus.

A silky black moth pinned into a wooden frame. Ruth blinks, focusing on the moth, on the mantle.

She shifts in John's arm chair. She looks around. Noise can be heard from the kitchen. She tries to stand.

RUTH

Hello?

John enters and hands her a glass of water.

She slowly takes it. He walks away.

She examines the green and blue quilt wrapped around her. She runs her thumb over the two dogs embroidered on the corner.

As she tries to take a deep breath she begins to cough. John enters.

JOHN

Drink some water.

RUTH

I'm alright.

JOHN

Drink.

She takes the glass of water and drinks it all in one tilt then pulls the glass away breathing heavily.

RUTH

Thank you.

John takes the glass from her and walks into the

KITCHEN

He opens the cupboard and pulls down a glass that sits below a shelf of flowery tea cups. He closes the cupboard.

Under the faucet, water overflows the glass. He picks up Ruth's glass and fills it again.

John takes the glasses into the,

LIVING ROOM

And hands one to Ruth.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry if I frightened you.

He sits down in the chair across from her.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I faint. I have a great faith, and that makes me a prime target for dark spirits. But the lord lays me down, so they wont enter me.

(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)
Fainting is God protecting me...or
so my husband says.

As she takes a sip of water Duke and Barron run in and playfully jump at her.

JOHN
NO!

Ruth drops her glass. It rolls on the floor.

Duke and Barron drop to the floor and look up at John.

The spilt water runs along the floorboards and drips into the cracks.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Sorry.

Ruth watches the dogs lazily lick up the water.

JOHN (CONT'D)
That sounds... Victorian.

RUTH
What's "Victorian"?

INT. MICKEY'S CAR - THE ROAD

Mickey lazily drives an old junky car with a brand new racing stripe.

Ox Jr stares out the passenger's side window.

OX JR
What are we doing?

Marshall lays down in the backseat.

MARSHALL
Wanna go to the theater?

OX JR
I don't wanna see a fucking movie.

Mickey looks down at the gas gauge.

MICKEY
Shit.

MARSHALL
What?

MICKEY

Whatever we're doing, it better be
within walking distance.

Ox Jr. watches the woods as they speed past. Suddenly he
bursts into a screaming rage kicking and punching the seat,
the floor, the door.

Mickey and Marshall stare at him. Eventually he slowly calms
down.

OX JR

Fuck.

He turns to Marshall.

OX JR (CONT'D)

Fuck this, you got any pot?

Marshall glares at him.

OX JR (CONT'D)

Don't be fucking gay you fucking
dick.

MARSHALL

Yeah man. Alright. Shit.

He reaches into his pocket.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

A fire burns and crackles in the fire place.

RUTH

I've never lived outside the
church.

She looks around.

RUTH (CONT'D)

"And those Lost, those Fallen, the
unbaptized and the deniers shall
forever burn with the demons and
renegades."

She looks at him.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Am I talking to much?

John shakes his head.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Do you live alone?

John looks at Duke and Barron.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Do you not get lonely?

JOHN
I'm not worried about loneliness.

He drinks.

RUTH
What are you worried about?

He look at the fire. He watches as the light from the fire brightens her innocent face.

RUTH (CONT'D)
(reaching for the
scriptures)
Would you like me to read to you?

JOHN
Do you go to school?

RUTH
I teach. I teach Primary. I teach
them the scriptures.

The sound of her voice trails off as John continues to watch the fire.

RUTH (CONT'D)
(reading)
"But what does it mean to be pure
of heart? Pure of mind and body?"
Abraham asked. And the Angel took
pity on him, for he knew nothing.
Ignorance aside, he raised his
hands toward God and..."

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LATER

John closes the door behind Ruth as she leaves the house.

She steps off the porch.

Just over the far ridge Ox Jr, Mickey and Marshall watch as Ruth walks away from the house.

Ox Jr flicks his cigarette to the ground.

INT. TREEM DINER - LATER

Ox sits alone eating steak and eggs in a blue booth across from the counter.

Through the window we see Mickey, Marshall and Ox Jr get out of the car.

As they enter, Kelly looks up from her magazine, rolls her eyes and continues reading.

OX
(without looking up)
What?

Mickey, Marshall and Ox Jr sit down across from Ox.

OX JR
Guess who we saw coming outta
John's place?

OX
I said leave him alone.

OX JR
We weren't going-

OX
My house my money my rules.

Marshall smirks and throws his arm up on the back of the booth.

MARSHALL
This is a diner.

OX JR
Dad-

OX
Go home.

OX JR
Would you just listen to me-

Ox slams his fork down.

Kelly looks over at them then takes her magazine into the back.

Ox wipes his mouth with a white cloth napkin.

OX
Go home son.

OX JR

No.

OX

Get your ass home now, or don't
come home at all.

Ox Jr sits back.

OX JR

I'll move in with Mickey.

Glaring at his son, Ox uses his tongue to pick a piece of
food out of his teeth.

OX

Fine.

MICKEY

Wait, what?

OX

Don't come to me for cash.

Ox shovels food into his mouth.

INT. TREEM MOVIE THEATRE - TANNER'S OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

Angela sits in a plain wooden chair lit by the yellowish
overhead light.

ANGELA

It's not easy. You grow up being
told the sky is green...it's real
hard to come around to it being
blue.

Tanner listens from behind his desk, a soft rain tapping
against the window.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

And then there's the fear...fear
that it's all true and you're just
a monster and if you leave your
gunna spend the rest of eternity in
a hell so sick it's- if you leave.

She fiddles with an old tawny braided bracelet on her wrist.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Or worse...that it's not true. That everyone, everyone you know is a liar...is stupid enough to be fooled by a sick, sexual deviant.

Tanner shifts in his chair. Angela pulls her sleeve over the bracelet.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

They are all as innocent and naive and scared as children. They know less about the world than a, a seven year old girl.

Tanner picks up a pen and begins to write something on a piece of paper.

TANNER

Believe me Miss Makin, I have just as much desire to remove God's Mercy as you do.

ANGELA

I don't want them removed. I want them put away. But if we can't get through of the Davis property then we have no escape rout-

A knock on the door.

TANNER

(turning the paper over)
We are in agreement on that Miss Makin. Come in.

Mickey, Marshall and Ox Jr enter, wet from the rain.

TANNER (CONT'D)

Boys.

The boys politely acknowledge Angela.

TANNER (CONT'D)

What can I do for you?

Marshall turns away looking around the room.

MICKEY

We just...

OX JR
(stepping forward)
We saw something you both might
wanna know.

Tanner looks at the boys feet, the rain dripping onto the
clean beige rug.

EXT. HELEN'S STORE - MORNING

THREE CHILDREN sitting on the curb watch as John pulls into
the lot and parks.

He opens the door, steps out and walks towards,

INT. HELEN'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

Helen as she watches him through the window.

John opens the door.

JOHN
Hello Helen.

HELEN
Hey John. You seem well.

He gives her a half smile.

HELEN (CONT'D)
What have you been up to this
month?

JOHN
Same old. Repairing the house.

She stares closely at him.

HELEN
You haven't had any visitors?

JOHN
(pulling out his wallet)
Aside from that lunatic- what's her
name? Always talking about cults.

HELEN
And the very young women who live
there.

He stops.

HELEN (CONT'D)
It's getting real hard to defend
you.

She walks into the back.

JOHN
Nobody asked you to.

He slams several bills down on the counter.

EXT. HELEN'S STORE - JOHN'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

John roughly tosses two large grocery bags into the
passenger's side of the truck.

He slams the door.

He walks around to the driver's side and yanks the door open
as Angela jogs over.

ANGELA
John!

As John climbs into the truck Angela grabs hold of the door.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
You need to talk to me.

John starts the truck.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
I don't know if you are some sort
of -

JOHN
Get your hands off my truck.

ANGELA
If you are somehow involved, it's
best you-

John kicks the door, knocking Angela to the ground.

He pulls the door shut.

Angela props herself up on her elbows. She watches John speed
away.

EXT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - LATER

Ruth walks out from the woods towards the compound. Esther scurries over.

ESTHER
Brother Christian is looking for
you.

Ruth stops and looks to the ground. A small spider crawls across the front of her shoe.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Where were you?

Ruth gently kicks, tossing the spider off.

RUTH
Walking.

She quickly walk away.

ESTHER
I know about it.

Ruth stops. Esther holds her hand out.

RUTH
About what?

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - SACRAMENT HALL - MORNING

President Brother Allen stands at the podium.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN
Today we are blessed again with
another union. Sister Eve Hail has
agreed to marry Brother Christian
Michael.

They stand. Sister Eve Hail smiles modestly.

Seated next to them, Ruth looks forward, holding her hands in her lap.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - RUTH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ruth lays in bed staring at the ceiling.

Christian enters in very modest pajamas and crawls into bed next to Ruth.

He kisses her belly.

As he pushes her hair behind her ear she kisses his hand.

CHRISTIAN

You look sad.

She smiles.

RUTH

Happy.

CHRISTIAN

You're going to be a wonderful
sister-wife.

RUTH

It is a blessing.

He hugs her. Her smile fades.

INT. MICKEY'S HOUSE - MICKEY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Mickey enters followed by Ox Jr carrying a large backpack. Ox Jr looks around, the pleasantly displayed trophies, the family photos, the posters of almost scantily clad women.

MICKEY

There's a sleeping bag in the
closet.

Ox Jr drops his backpack, opens the closet, and pulls out the sleeping bag.

OX JR

Are your parents home?

Ox Jr rolls out the bag.

MICKEY

Not till late.

Ox Jr pulls a small baggy out of his pocket and tosses it to Mickey.

INT. MICKEY'S HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Mickey and Ox Jr sit on a flower patterned couch passing a joint back and forth.

They watch THE GODFATHER on a large TV in a nice wooden entertainment center.

Gunshots come from the movie. Mickey laughs.

OX JR
God I wanna kill someone. Don't you
ever just wanna kill someone?

MICKEY
Uhhh...

He ashes the joint in a pink mug on the coffee table.

A scream comes from the movie.

OX JR
(never taking eyes off the
TV)
Sometimes I dream about getting
cancer...

Another scream from the movie. Mickey looks over and exhales
in a cough.

OX JR (CONT'D)
I could like be...like no matter
what...be extraordinary, you know.
To have to live like that. Like to
suffer...

He reaches for the joint. Mickey withholds it from him.

OX JR (CONT'D)
Like people would look at ME...and
know I was important.

The sound of the front door opening. Mickey's clean-cut
PARENTS enter.

Mickey shoves the joint at Ox Jr.

MICKEY
Shit.

His parents walk further into the room and stop. They glare
at the boys.

EXT. MICKEY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ox Jr waits on the front porch smoking a cigarette. Mickey
hands him the sleeping bag.

MICKEY
Sorry.

OX JR
Whatever. I'll go to Marshall's.

MICKEY
Maybe you should just talk to your
dad.

Ox Jr flicks his cigarette.

OX JR
Fuck him.

He steps off the porch and walks into the street.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - MARSHALL'S TRAILER - LATER

Ox Jr looks up at Marshall, standing behind his MOTHER, in
the doorway of their crappy trailer.

MARSHALL'S MOTHER
You got any money?

Ox Jr takes a drag of his cigarette.

EXT. THE WOODS - LATER

Ox Jr rolls out the sleeping bag propping his backpack up as
a pillow at the base of a large tree.

He crawls inside the bag, wiggling around to get comfortable.
He stares up at the sky.

He pulls out his lighter and flips it on and off and on and
off. He flips it on and stares into the flame. He stretches
out his arm and looks through the flame into the woods.

OX JR
(under his breath)
Purified by fire.

The flame flickers.

INT. HELEN'S STORE - MORNING

Helen leans on the counter and sips her coffee. She turns a
page in the local paper.

Eddie lazily enters.

HELEN
Hello love.

Eddie drops a set of keys down on the counter.

EDDIE
Mark did it for free but he said
the transmission's 'bout to go.

HELEN
(taking the keys)
Want a cup?

EDDIE
My back hurts.

She goes to give him a loving kiss. He gives just a peck.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
See you at home.

Fiddling with the keys Helen watches him walk out the door.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - SACRAMENT HALL - LATE MORNING

Ruth, alone, stares up at the large crucifix.

Esther sits down next to her. Esther watches Ruth watching
the cross.

The crosses reflection is warped in Ruth's eyes.

ESTHER
It's inevitable.

RUTH
(startled)
What?

ESTHER
You feel scared. Like the ground
has been ripped out from under you.

Ruth's feet press against the floor.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Don't worry, you'll still be a
first wife.

RUTH
I'm not worried about that.

Esther looks up at the cross.

ESTHER
Sister Myrna told me when her
husband took his fifth wife that-

RUTH
I want to help a man. But I don't
know how.

Esther turns her attention to Ruth.

ESTHER
What man?

Ruth hesitates.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Sister.

Ruth takes a deep breath.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - HALLWAY - LATER

Esther quickly walks down the hallway clutching her
scriptures.

She stops, turns and knocks on the President's door.

The door opens and,

EXT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

From outside we see through President Brother Allen's window
as he lets Esther into his office.

We see them speak for a moment then watch as the President
slowly sits down behind his desk and listens to Esther talk.
After a moment the president leans further back in his chair.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

John sprays the Boric Acid along the frame of the house. Ruth
approaches.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LATER

John and Ruth sit by the fire. Ruth laughs. John sips a
whisky.

RUTH

I'm not too young. When our body is ready for children then we too are ready for marriage. Isn't that how nature works.

JOHN

Always thought God and Nature were at odds with each other.

She watches him finish the glass.

RUTH

God created nature.

JOHN

He also created man. But I know he doesn't like me.

He gets up and crosses to the liquor cabinet.

RUTH

There is a lot of comfort to be found in the scriptures. I hope you turn to them when you feel sad.

He pours himself more whisky.

JOHN

Sad is okay.

He stops pouring. Hesitates.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It say anything about forgiveness?

Tops the glass off.

RUTH

If you repent in your heart and confess to the congregation God will forgive you your trespasses against him.

John settles back into his chair.

JOHN

Trespasses. That words not big enough.

He stares deep into the fire.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Burning hurts real bad.

Ruth watches him.

RUTH

There is a blessing, a special blessing. Performed by the highest elders of the church. It prepares one to meet God. Like a second baptism.

She cautiously gets up and goes to John. She reaches out. He gives her a look but lets her. She places her hands on his head.

RUTH (CONT'D)

They lay their hands on you, the elders. On your head and chest. They act as a conduit for the holy spirit. And the forgiveness for our lord.

John pulls away. He picks up the scriptures.

JOHN

It in here?

Ruth nods.

INT. TREEM DINER - MORNING

Ox Jr leans on a stool watching Kelly make coffee behind the counter.

KELLY

We don't have any "extra".

OX JR

Come on just get me a burger or something.

KELLY

And I'll pay for it? No thank you.

She grabs the coffee pot and walks around to the other end of the counter. He follows.

OX JR

Just say someone ordered it, and they sent it back.

Kelly pours coffee into a mug in front of a TIRED MAN at the counter.

KELLY
Go home, Ox.

She exits into the kitchen. Ox Jr grumbles and falls onto a stool.

Across the diner Tanner watches from one of the booths.

EXT. TREEM DINER - LATER

Tanner exits with Ox Jr.

TANNER
How does your father feel about
this?

Ox Jr shrugs. They walk along the sidewalk.

TANNER (CONT'D)
I have an extra room above the
theatre. If you need a place to
stay.

TWO LADIES pass them walking in the opposite direction. They nod at Tanner, he nods back.

OX JR
No thanks, I think I'll be alright.

TANNER
I have some administrative work I
could use a hand with.

OX JR
Like a job?

TANNER
You'd be doing me a favor.

Ox Jr looks across the street as they pass TREEM'S VARIETY store.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

An axe slices through a log.

John wields the axe splitting another log. He picks up another and places it on the base stump. He chops the log in two.

He takes a step back and looks at the axe indentations cluttered on the base stump.

He looks out towards the wall.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

In his chair, John reads the scriptures. He turns a page.

He sips a glass of water and places it back on the side table.

INT. OX'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

Ox sits on his bed taking his shoes off. He takes his watch off and places it on the night stand next to a photo of him and his sister.

He exits into the,

INT. OX'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

and walks past the doorway of Ox Jr's bedroom. He stops. He reaches in and flips the lights on.

The room is a mess.

Ox takes one last look, turns the light out and continuing down the hall into the bathroom. He closes the door.

EXT. CLEARING - AFTERNOON

John, gun in hand, slowly walks with Duke and Barron.

The dogs run ahead and rustle up two birds.

John aims. Bang. Bang.

The birds drop to the ground.

JOHN

Good boys.

The dogs run to the bird carcasses.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - RUTH'S BEDROOM - EVENING

In bed, Ruth reads the scriptures. She grows more and more confused.

She crosses out a verse.

Frustrated she closes the book and pushes it away.

She thinks.

She looks down at the palm of her hand. The cut is still red, just barely starting to heal. She lightly rubs the stitches with her thumb.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LATER

John sits in the kitchen cleaning one of the birds. John pulls out several feathers revealing the entry wound.

He looks down at it.

He places his thumb on the hole and presses down into the wound. The blood seeps out around his thumb and dribbles onto the floor.

Duke and Barron come sniffing at the bowl.

A knock on the front door.

John looks up. He sets the bird aside, wipes his hands on a rag and walks into the-

LIVING ROOM

He opens the front door to reveal Ruth holding a pie.

RUTH
(in the doorway)
Hello John.

JOHN
Hello Ruth.

She confidently enters and passes him.

RUTH
I thought you might like something
aside from meat and whiskey.

John tries to stop her as she heads toward the kitchen.

JOHN
I can take it here. Wait-

She enters the -

KITCHEN

And sees the birds lying on the table, blood and feathers scattered on the floor.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I...uh...

RUTH

Would you like some help?

She hands him the pie.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

John and Ruth sit plucking the birds.

RUTH

There were lots of trees.

(smiles)

Giant trees, trunks the size of this house. It would get very hot in the summer then grow very cold in the winter. And the colors...deep greens and dark red...even in January.

She lets a handful of feathers fall into the bowl at her feet.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Then God sent us here. The trees are so gray and lean here. Before, I used to feel so small walking in the woods. Now I feel bigger...or everything else feels smaller.

She stops.

RUTH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I miss it. Feeling small. Is that strange?

John shakes his head.

Ruth returns to plucking. She takes a deep breath and tucks her hair behind her ear.

John shakes out his right hand.

Ruth gasps and places her hand on her belly.

JOHN

What's wrong?

RUTH
It kicked.

John stares at her.

JOHN
You're pregnant.

She reaches for him.

RUTH
Give me your hand.

John turns away and takes the birds over to the sink.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Hurry before it stops.

She goes to him.

Her small hands hold his large hand on her belly.

RUTH (CONT'D)
(looking up at him)
You were a baby once too.

He looks down at his dirt and blood stained hand on her round belly.

RUTH (CONT'D)
You feel it?

John's thumb, ever so slightly, rubs her belly. And again.

Their eyes meet.

She stops breathing.

He stops breathing.

His thumb rubs her slightly.

Her lips part.

He pulls away. He turns to the sink and begins to wash his hands, water splashing up off the dirty dishes.

JOHN
Cold.

Ruth slowly turns and walks into the-

LIVING ROOM

And heads to the door.

She opens it and steps into the doorway.

RUTH
It's apple. The pie.

She exits, leaving John in the-

KITCHEN

standing among the birds and plucked feathers, his back to us. The sound of the front door shutting.

STAIRCASE

John slowly walks to the staircase and makes his way up the stairs into the -

HALLWAY

and walks down the hall. He enters the bathroom and closes the door.

We watch the closed door in the still house.

The sound of a shattering mirror.

EXT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - RUTH'S HOUSE - LATER

Ruth, holding herself, briskly walks towards her house.

INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ruth opens the door, steps in and quickly closes the door behind her.

She walks through the very plain living room and enters the -

BEDROOM

She stops suddenly.

Christian sits on the bed coldly looking out the window.

RUTH
Christian...

Christian turns to her, he looks down at the bloody handprint on her dress.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - SACRAMENT HALL - MORNING

Silently we move down the center aisle of the congregation.
Then up to the podium behind which Ruth stands.

From Ruth's view, the entire congregation coldly stares up at her.

Ruth looks down at the podium.

RUTH

I...

She closes her eyes.

The congregation coldly watches her.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I confess to the sin of...of
disobedience, to my husband, the
church, and to God. I have...I
left the boundaries of the church.
I spoke several times with a man
who was not my husband nor a member
of God's Mercy. I withheld
information from my husband.

A tear rolls down her cheek.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Satan tempted me with curiosity,
and I was weak. I ask for
forgiveness from the congregation
of God's Mercy, our beloved
President Brother Allen and our
lord Jesus Christ.

President Brother Allen approaches her.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN

Thank you Sister Ruth.

He places his hand on her shoulder.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (CONT'D)

We forgive you.

Ruth slowly makes her way back to her seat.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

"Above all else Faith must be the
rod to which you hold."

She takes a seat next to Christian who keeps his eyes on President Brother Allen.

PRESIDENT BROTHER ALLEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 "It is better that you should
 commit self murder than to doubt
 the truth of the church, the
 sacrifice of our Lord, or the love
 of our Heavenly Father."

Ruth watches the congregation as they all look up at President Brother Allen with the same reverent look on each their faces.

CONGREGATION
 (except Ruth)
 Amen.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

John wraps a white bandage around his hand. Blood seeps through. He wraps another white layer around.

INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Ruth and Christian eat in silence at the large wooden table.

Christian finishes and drops his spoon on the table.

Ruth starts to stand and reach for his plate but before she can, Christian coldly stands, grabs the spoon and takes his plate to the sink.

RUTH
 Please, Christian.

He turns the faucet on.

Ruth stares down at her food as Christian washes his own plate in the sink behind her. He turns off the faucet, places the plate on the counter and walks away.

Ruth stares at her plate.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - ROOF - AFTERNOON

Boric acid sprays onto wood.

John kneels on the roof. He sprays along the shingles.

As he shifts his footing a shingle comes loose, sending him sliding down the roof.

He catches himself with his bandaged hand on the roof's edge as the spray can and several shingles fall to the ground.

John looks down past his dangling feet to the yard below.

He looks up past the roof into the gray sky.

He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes. He pulls himself up onto the roof.

He peeks over the edge to see his hammer on the ground below.

Out of breath he sits down and looks out over the woods.

INT. TREEM MOVIE THEATRE - ATTIC ROOM

Ox Jr looks out the window over Main Street and beyond into the woods.

He looks in the mirror and attempts to tie the tie around his neck.

The knot looks terrible.

He yanks it off and throw it in a pile of laundry next to a modest bed.

EXT. TREEM MOVIE THEATRE

Ox Jr, in a button up and slacks, carrying a backpack, exits the theatre.

He lights a cigarette then heads up the block.

Mickey and Marshall watch from across the street.

MICKEY

Where's he going?

Marshall makes a face at a LITTLE KID walking by with his FATHER.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

What is he wearing?

The Little Kid cries. Mickey smacks Marshall.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - CLASSROOM - LATE MORNING

Ruth stands with her back to the class writing on the chalk board. The chalk breaks.

LILY (O.S.)
Sister Ruth?

Ruth turns.

RUTH
Yes Lily?

Lily stands.

LILY
Why did God makes us with the
desire to do things that are bad?

Ruth tries to rub the chalk off her hands.

LILY (CONT'D)
Sometimes I feel so hungry on Fast
Sunday and sometimes I feel like
laughing in Sacrament meeting
and...

The other students watch her.

LILY (CONT'D)
Am I evil?

RUTH
No. No not at all.

LILY
Then why do I feel like that?

The class stares at Ruth expectantly.

RUTH
I...the...
(clears her throat)
can anyone think of any scriptures
that might help Lily?

A small stream of blood slowly rolls out her left nostril.

EXT. THE WOODS - JOHN'S WALL - AFTERNOON

John sits on the wall. He holds a collection of small rocks in his left hand. One by one he throws them out into the woods.

He looks over his shoulder then down at his mud-covered boots.

He throws another stone. He hears a rustle and looks behind him but sees nothing.

He drops the rest of the stones, stands and walks away.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - HALLWAY - MORNING

The congregation files out of the sacrament hall.

Esther catches up to Ruth. They walk together.

ESTHER
Are you alright?

RUTH
I am well.

As Esther leans in close to Ruth, Ruth keeps her head down.

ESTHER
I was worried about you.

Esther stops.

ESTHER (CONT'D)
Look at me.

Ruth stops and turns to Esther.

RUTH
(stoically)
Thank you.

ESTHER
I don't believe you.

RUTH
You did the right thing.

Esther watches her walk away.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

With a large table saw John cuts a plank of wood in two.

The cut piece drops to the ground.

The saw continues to scream as John picks up the dropped wood and places it in a bucket by his feet.

John looks down at the saw, spinning and spinning and spinning, louder and louder.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

John enters with the basket of wood and drops it on the table as he goes into the -

KITCHEN

- opens the refrigerator and pulls out a carton of milk.

Duke and Barron sniff at the basket then look over at John.

John finishes chugging the milk. He looks sadly into the empty carton. He tosses it in the trash.

He looks around.

He opens the fridge.

Ruth's apple pie, untouched.

He closes the fridge.

He looks down at the dogs.

 JOHN
 Wanna play?

They whimper.

 JOHN (CONT'D)
 How about we fetch?

Duke grumbles.

 JOHN (CONT'D)
 Lets go hunt.

The dogs whimper. Barron saunters over to the chair by the fire and curls up.

John heads towards the front door.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - JOHN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

John gets into his truck slamming the door behind him.

He looks at himself in the rearview mirror.

JOHN

Fuck it.

He starts the truck, throws a look behind him then backs out away from the house.

INT. HELEN'S STORE - LATER

Through the window we watch John get out of his truck and make his way to the door.

Eddie reads the paper behind the counter.

John enters then stops abruptly.

JOHN

Where's Helen?

EDDIE

What do you need?

JOHN

I just, thought she might want to... get something to eat.

Eddie turns to the next page of his paper.

EDDIE

She don't need more eatin'.

John starts to leave. He stops and turns back.

JOHN

How are you?

Eddie looks up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

How are you doing?

Eddie closes his paper.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's been awhile...

Eddie takes the paper and exits into the back.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - HELEN'S STORE - MOMENTS LATER

John sits in his truck staring out the front window.

A knock on the window.

John looks over.

Tanner smiles at John through the window.

TANNER
Mr. Davis, might I have a word with
you?

INT. TREEM DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Kelly waits while Tanner and John awkwardly sit across from each other.

TANNER
Just a coffee.

Kelly nods.

KELLY
Sure thing.

Tanner looks to John. He shakes his head.

TANNER
Two coffees. Thank you Kelly.

Kelly quickly leaves.

TANNER (CONT'D)
Always a treat to see you in town
John.

Tanner pulls a handkerchief out of his front pocket.

JOHN
Don't see me anywhere else.

TANNER
(cleaning his glasses)
Is there anything I can do for you?

JOHN
I don't want your kind of help.

Tanner puts his handkerchief away.

TANNER
I can't imagine how hard things
have been for you.
(he puts his glasses on)
(MORE)

TANNER (CONT'D)

You have lived through something
that is far worse than any mundane
misery the rest of us could
imagine.

JOHN

Us?

Kelly slides two coffees on the table then sneaks back behind
the counter.

TANNER

Most people, live a small
existence. They go to work, they
return home, they play with their
kids, they do the dishes, they go
to bed.

(pouring milk in his
coffee)

They only know what they hear. They
make judgments, often wrong, about
people who... really are just...
misunderstood.

Tanner pours the sugar in his coffee and stirs it with his
spoon.

JOHN

Why are you so eager to get my
land?

TANNER

You don't seem very happy here. And
considering the circumstances...

Tanner sips his coffee. John cracks his knuckles.

TANNER (CONT'D)

You don't really want to live
somewhere tainted with so much...
suspicion.

(then)

It's not their fault really. Most
people have a hard time
forgiving... let alone forgetting.

John leans forward.

JOHN

Do you enjoy manipulating people
Mr. Treem?

Tanner leans back.

JOHN (CONT'D)
'Cause all I ever seem to see of
you is fake ass smiles and your fat
wallet.

TANNER
You don't have many friends left
Mr. Davis.

JOHN
I don't need friends.

John pulls out his wallet and removes a dollar.

TANNER
It's been just about a year now
since we buried her?

John stops.

TANNER (CONT'D)
Isn't that right?

John roughly gets out of the booth, knocking the table,
spilling coffee.

One of the cups falls to the floor, crashing, breaking.

Kelly looks over from the counter.

TANNER (CONT'D)
(loudly)
Don't worry. I'm sure it was an
accident. Right John? You wouldn't
do such a thing on purpose.

John pushes the door open and storms out.

The spilt coffee runs to the edge of the table. Tanner moves
over avoiding the coffee as it drips onto the booth cushion
and then onto the floor.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - RELEASE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Ruth stares out intensely, her eyes red and glassy.

The doors to the alter room remain closed.

Ruth, standing at the front of the congregation, watches
nervously.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - ALTAR ROOM - SAME TIME

President Brother Allen stands behind the altar as Christian and Eve warmly smile at each other kneeling on either side.

Christian drinks from the challis.

Eve drinks from the challis.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - RELEASE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Christian and Eve exit the altar room followed by President Brother Allen.

The congregation bursts into applause.

Ruth takes a deep breath and walks up to Eve. As she leans over to kiss her cheek Ruth doubles over, clutching to Eve's dress. Eve screams.

Christian runs to Ruth. She falls.

INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Ruth lays in bed clinging to her blankets.

In the hallway Christian speaks with SEVERAL MEN from the congregation.

Ruth closes her eyes. The sound of the door closing.

Christian sits on the bed next to her.

CHRISTIAN

You hit your head pretty hard this time. You have to be more vigilant.

Ruth opens her eyes.

RUTH

I'm sorry.

He rubs her belly.

CHRISTIAN

You'll need to stay in bed.

RUTH

How long?

Christian places the scriptures in her hands. He kisses her on the forehead.

CHRISTIAN
(standing up)
I'll see you in the morning. I'll
have Eve make the morning meal.

He leaves, closing the door behind him.

Ruth sets the book down on the side table. She runs her hands
along the stitching on the blanket's hem.

She looks at the scriptures. She turns away.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

John jolts awake from a nightmare.

The fire crackles in the fireplace.

He takes a deep breath. John pushes the blanket off himself
and gets out of his arm chair.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

John flips over a large sizzling slab of meat in a frying
pan.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John stands in front of his arm chair staring down at the
plate of food in his hands.

John looks over at the scriptures sitting on the side table.

He places the plate on the ground.

As Duke and Barron gobble up the food John crosses to the
door, puts on his jacket, opens the door and steps...

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

outside closing the door behind him.

He steps off the porch buttoning his jacket as he makes his
way into the woods.

EXT. THE WOODS/JOHN'S WALL

John sits on the wall.

A snake slither onto his boot and up his pant leg. He jumps up and kicks until the snake falls out. The snake slithers away.

John looks past the wall into the woods. He turns and heads back towards his home.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE

John gets in his truck and starts the engine.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - THE ROAD TO TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

John drives down the long empty road.

As he turns the radio on a piercing mix of static and barely audible Gospel music blasts into the cab.

He turns the dial. Nothing but static. He pushes a button -

THUD.

EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK - THE ROAD TO TOWN

The truck stops.

The idle truck sits alone on the empty road amid the dark woods and looming mountain range.

INT/EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK/THE ROAD TO TOWN

John looks in the rearview mirror at a small beige animal laying in the road behind him.

He opens the door and steps onto the -

ROAD

He walks behind the truck and over to the quivering jack rabbit dying on the pavement.

It twitches.

John walks back, leans into the -

TRUCK

And pulls a hunting knife out of the glove compartment.

He returns to the -

ROAD

and walks out of view behind the truck.

After a moment John returns.

Using the ankle of his jeans, he wipes blood off the knife.

He climbs back into the truck.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK

John drives past Helen's store, he looks out. It's closed, lights out.

John looks at himself in the rearview mirror.

INT. OX'S BAR - LATER

As John walks through the door several CUSTOMERS look up.

John looks over the room, his gaze landing on Ox behind the bar.

He slides onto a stool.

Ox stares back stoically.

John takes off his jacket, holding it awkwardly for a moment before resting it on the next stool.

JOHN

May I have a whiskey? No ice.

Ox slowly shifts his weight. He walks to the other end of the bar.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well's fine.

Ox pulls a bottle off the top shelf, pours its contents into a rocks glass, walks it back over and places it in front of John.

A LOGGER stands at the other end of the bar throws several bills down next to his half-full glass.

The Logger gives John a cold look as he walks to the front door.

John sips his drink.

INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Ruth lies in bed staring up at the ceiling.

Christian steps into the dark room.

CHRISTIAN

Ruth?

Ruth closes her eyes.

Christian slips back out and closes the door.

INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

The moon shines through the window onto Ruth asleep in her bed.

Through the wall we hear Christian and Eve having sex.

Ruth turns in her sleep. The moaning becomes louder.

Ruth wakes. The moaning continues. She gently covers her ears.

INT. OX'S BAR

John finishes another drink. He sets the empty glass down on the bar.

A COUPLE stumble out the door.

JOHN

I was hoping I might have your ear
a moment.

Ox refills John's glass and walks away.

INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

As Christian and Eve's moans grow louder Ruth clenches her hands tighter together in prayer.

RUTH

(mumbling)
...forgive my sin of doubt at your
plan and the plan of the
brotherhood whom I know does your
will-

Hands tighter, eyes shut tighter.

RUTH (CONT'D)
My sins of doubt, of...of-

The moans grown louder. Her grip tightens.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Our dear Heavily Father forgive me
now this sin of -

Christian climaxes. Ruth screams. Her hands clutch furiously together. She stops.

She looks down.

Blood on her hands.

She sits up.

She slowly pulls her thumb out of the wound she reopened on her palm.

She throws the covers off her and jumps out of bed.

EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ruth's shaking hands quietly close the front door.

She turns and looks around at the empty compound. She wraps her arms tight around herself and walks into the woods.

INT. MICKEY'S CAR - TOWN - SAME TIME

Mickey laughs leaning one arm out the window while steering.

MICKEY
Fucking dick man!

Marshall and Ox Jr pass a cigarette back and forth.

MARSHALL
I swear to god she fucking said it.
You missed it.

Ox Jr drinks from a bottle of tequila.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
The fuck you get that?

OX JR
I bought it.

He takes a swig.

MICKEY
Fuck no Helen didn't sell you that.

OX JR
In Corksville you shitface.

MARSHALL
(blowing smoke out the
window)
When were you in Corksville?

OX JR
Tanner and I met with some business
guy opening restaurants up, like a
chain.

Ox Jr grabs the cigarette out of Marshall's hand and takes a
drag.

MICKEY
He'll buy us liquor?

OX JR
I bought it.

Out the window Ox Jr sees Ox's bar.

OX JR (CONT'D)
Hold up.

He hands the cigarette back to Marshall.

EXT. MICKEY'S CAR - OX'S BAR

The car pulls to a stop on the side of the road.

EXT. OX'S BAR - PARKING LOT

Ox Jr jumps out of the car and approaches his father's truck.

Marshall opens the back-seat car door and sticks his head
out.

MARSHALL
Ox?

Ox Jr kicks the passenger side door of Ox's truck.

MICKEY
Shit.

MARSHAL

What the hell is he doing?

Ox Jr kicks the door again.

He kicks it again.

And again.

Mickey jumps out of the car. He runs to Ox Jr and grabs him. Ox Jr pushes him away, he lands on the ground.

MICKEY

You fucking crazy?

They look at the huge dent in the door of the truck.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Come on.

He helps Ox Jr up, they quickly get into the car and drive off.

EXT. WOODS NEAR JOHN'S HOUSE

Ruth clutches herself while walking through the woods towards John's house.

She makes her way to the front door and softly knocks.

The wind whips up her dress, she shivers and knocks again.

INT. OX'S BAR

John drinks till his glass is empty then places it lightly down on the bar.

JOHN

Could you sit a moment?

Ox fills John's glass.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE

Ruth sits huddled on the large wooden porch chair.

She feels her belly.

She stands and knocks on the door. Duke and Barron bark from inside.

She looks out into the dark woods then back at the door.

She puts her hand on the door knob, turns and pushes the door open.

INT. ANGELA'S JEEP - ROAD

Angela drives, chewing a wad of gum.

On the other side of the road a car approaches with its headlights off.

Angela flashes her high beams.

As the car passes they turn on their headlights.

ANGELA

Good girl.

She smacks her gum.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE

Ruth closes the door. The dogs whimper at her feet.

She pats their heads and looks around the empty and quiet room.

RUTH

Hello?

She walks slowly towards the kitchen and looks around. She goes to the stairs.

The dogs run up the stairs ahead of her. She looks up after them.

RUTH (CONT'D)

John?

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Holding on to the banister, Ruth takes the last few steps up.

She walks down the hall and peeks into the bathroom.

She continues to the end of the hall and enters the

BEDROOM

looking around the sparse room she wanders over to the dresser.

She picks up a photo of a much younger John posing with Eddie, Helen and Ox behind a mammoth size dead boar.

She looks at another picture.

A pregnant young woman smiling in a yellow dress standing in front of John's house.

Something crawls across Ruth's arm, she quickly brushes it off. She startles at her reflection in the mirror.

INT. OX'S BAR

John rubs his eyes, watching his reflection in the mirror behind the bar.

The place is empty aside from a trashy woman who waves at Ox and stumbles out the door.

John wavers on his stool.

OX
Time to go.

JOHN
It's early yet.

OX
Sunday.

John looks at his feet.

JOHN
God's day off.

Ox takes John's glass away.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Courage for the long road ahead.

Ox comes out from behind the bar. John throws his arms up and stands. He stumbles to the ground.

Ox glares down at him.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - FIRST FLOOR

Ruth slowly comes down the stairs.

She looks over the empty living room, she notices the scriptures on the end table.

She shivers.

EXT. THE WOODS

Ox Jr walks through the trees, Mickey and Marshall following a few steps behind.

Marshall stops.

MARSHALL
Fuck this.

Mickey stops.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
Ox!

Ox Jr stops.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
Fucking tired man.

Mickey pulls a joint out of his pocket and lights it.

MICKEY
Here.

Ox Jr walks over, Mickey sits at the base of a tree, he puffs.

Marshall eyes Ox Jr.

Ox Jr grabs the joint and takes a long drag, holds it, then blows the smoke out.

MARSHALL
Where are we going?

OX JR
I don't know. I sense something.

Marshall takes the joint.

MICKEY
Boy scout bullshit.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - ANGELA'S JEEP

Angela pulls up to John's house between the rusted camper and wheelless dodge. The engine cuts and Angela steps out of the car swiftly shutting the door.

She walks up to the porch.

As she is about to knock she hears screaming from inside. She sees blood on the door handle.

Pulling her gun from her holster Angela kicks the door open and -

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

bursts into the living room gun drawn.

Ruth stops screaming, holding the scriptures over her head above the fire in the fire place.

Ruth looks at Angela, the gun, and faints.

ANGELA

Shit.

EXT. OX'S BAR

As the lights in the bar shut off, Ox exits with John slumped on his shoulder.

Ox drags John over to his truck.

He sees the dented door.

OX

Fucker.

INT. OX'S TRUCK - ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Ox stares coldly at the dimly lit road ahead of him as he drives.

John, slouched in the passenger's seat, tries to sit up straight. He looks over at Ox and watches him drive.

Ox keeps his eyes on the road.

Eventually John looks away.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS

Angela sets her gun on the kitchen table.

Angela stands over Ruth.

ANGELA

What are you doing here?

She checks her watch. She looks around.

Angela squats down and picks Ruth up.

INT. OX'S TRUCK - ROAD TO JOHN'S HOUSE

Out the side window John watches the road rushing underneath the truck. He watches and watches...

Closer...

And closer...

Ox locks the doors.

INT. WOODS

Snap.

Mickey, Marshall and Ox Jr stares down at a squirrel quivering in a claw trap.

Marshall gestures to Mickey.

Mickey hands his knife over to Marshall.

Ox Jr blows cigarette smoke out slowly.

Marshall kneels down.

OX JR

No.

Marshall stops.

OX JR (CONT'D)

Let it suffer.

Ox Jr kneels down watching intensely as the animal quivers.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - OX'S TRUCK

Ox's truck slows down before getting too close to the house.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE

Angela lays Ruth down on the couch. Positions her gently.

She checks her watch.

ANGELA

Shit.

She pulls her cell phone out. No service.

She looks around. Peaks into the kitchen. Heads upstairs.

INT. OX'S TRUCK

Ox brings the truck to a stop.

OX

Close enough.

John looks down, inspecting his bruised hands.

JOHN

You know I did it.

OX

Tanks almost empty.

John looks at Ox.

JOHN

I never told you...

Ox looks away.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

John tries to say more but he can't.

OX

(looking out the window)

I still see her face.

Ox unlocks the doors.

JOHN

I loved her. I need you to forgi-

OX

No.

John waits, watching Ox stare out the window.

John reaches out to put his hand on Ox's shoulder. Ox turns to him, eyes sharp as daggers.

John stops. Ox looks away.

John turns away, opens the door and...

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - OX'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

stumbles out of the truck. Ox quickly drives away.

John staggers up the porch to the door.

He fumbles with the door before opening it and entering...

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

the living room where he walks quickly into the kitchen.

He notices the gun on the table. He looks at it.

He turns and sees Ruth, unconscious on the couch.

He walks over. He looks down at her.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Angela sits on the bed, the phone receiver held to her ear with her shoulder.

ANGELA

(into phone)

I already called the ambulance.

She looks around while adjusting her boots.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

(into phone)

She's got bruises and cuts. I want-
No, we keep our schedule-

She looks at her watch.

EXT. WOODS

Mickey and Marshall whisper behind Ox Jr who kneels down intently.

He watches the squirrel take it's last breath.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE

John kneels down in front of Ruth. He slowly reaches out with shaking hands.

He adjusts her hair.

He leans in and whispers something in her ear. He looks as if he's about to kiss her-

ANGELA (O.S.)

Hey-

Angela races down the stairs.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Get off her!

John ignores Angela, he closes his eyes.

JOHN

I'm gunna find you.

Angela grabs her gun and aims at John.

ANGELA

Get off of her.

John stands. He turns. He wobbles towards Angela.

JOHN

I didn't invite you in.

He holds up his hands to her. As she lowers the gun he grabs it knocking her to the ground.

She crashes on her ankle and groans.

EXT. THE WOODS

The sound of three consecutive guns shots.

Ox Jr, Mickey and Marshall look up.

MICKEY
Fucking hunters.

Another shot.

OX JR
That was a hand gun.

Ox Jr runs towards the sound.

MARSHALL
Dude it's just some drunk-

OX JR
Come on.

Mickey and Marshall jog after him.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE

Four bullet holes in the floor by John's feet.

Angela looks from the gun to the door.

John turns from Angela and moves towards Ruth on the couch.

Angela pulls a swiss army knife out of her back pocket.

John reaches for the scriptures on the floor- Angela plunges the knife into his side.

ANGELA
(stepping back)
Oh god.

John calmly looks down at the knife. Blood seeps into his shirt.

He pulls his shirt off, revealing a torso of scares and bruises.

He pulls the knife out with peaceful satisfaction. He holds the knife out to Angela.

Angela stumbles back.

JOHN
Please.

He tosses the knife to her. He waits.

Angela slowly crosses against the wall, towards the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Come here.

She continues towards the door. He jumps at her.

ANGELA

No!

She pushes the knife up against his neck.

JOHN

Come on!

Angela kicks his knee sending him to the floor.

She runs limping to the door.

John jumps at her and shoves her head into the wall. She crumples to the ground.

EXT. WOODS - NEAR JOHN'S HOUSE

Ox Jr with Mickey and Marshall behind him jog towards the house.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE

Ox Jr burst through the door.

John, standing between Ruth and the fireplace, looks up.

Mickey and Marshall freeze in the doorway.

MICKEY

Holy shit.

Marshall looks down at Angela, up at John, he turns and runs.

Mickey turns and runs.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

(over his shoulder)

Come on! Ox!

Angela moans.

Ox Jr keeps his eyes on John, kneels down and helps Angela sit up.

John slowly, gun in hand, walks over to Ox Jr.

His hand on the barrel, he holds the handle out to Ox Jr.

Angela manages to crawl out the door way onto the porch.

ANGELA

Come on.

Ox Jr and John stare at one another.

JOHN

Please.

Ox Jr takes the gun.

Angela attempts to get to her feet.

Ox Jr puts John in his sights. John closes his eyes. He waits.

OX JR (O.S.)

Let it suffer.

John takes a breath.

He braces tighter. And tighter.

He begins to shake.

RUTH (O.S.)

John.

He opens his eyes.

INT. ANGELA'S JEEP

Angela starts the engine. In the passenger seat Ox Jr stares down the barrel of the gun.

OX JR

What about the girl?

ANGELA

There are a hundred more just like her.

She peels out.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

John's eyes burn desperation.

JOHN

I thought you left.

RUTH
I don't know how I got here. I had
nowhere else to go.

He step towards her.

JOHN
You came back.

RUTH
I'm so confused, I-

JOHN
Show me. The hands.

He grabs her hands and places them on his head. Ruth steps
back.

RUTH
What?

John's eyes flicker as he steps towards her.

JOHN
Do it.

RUTH
Only the elders-

JOHN
Then take me.

He stumbles, Ruth instinctively goes to catch him.

RUTH
I can't go back.

JOHN
I took her life. These hands sent
her away.

RUTH
I can't.

JOHN
Take me.

RUTH
No.

He pulls the hunting knife out of his boot. Keeping his eyes
on Ruth he jabs the knife into his belly.

Ruth screams and covers her mouth.

JOHN

Save me.

John's legs give out as the pain lurches up, his eyes flicker.

Ruth runs out the door and...

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

out into the moonlight night.

She screeches to a halt looking up.

A flickering black swarm engulfs her. She screams and turns, round and around waving away the swarm.

As her eyes adjust she looks down at her pale white hands.

A black termite flickers its wings and crawls across her delicate knuckles. Then around to her injured palm.

She looks back at the house. Termites engulf the entire outside of the porch.

Agonizing screams from inside. She runs in.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Ruth kneels next to John and cups her hands around his face. He looks up at her pleading.

He shakily reaches for her hands and places them on his head.

RUTH

I can't.

He coughs up blood.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I'm not-

His body shivers, convulsions.

She steps back. She looks out the door, at the cold woods beyond. She looks down at John.

EXT. THE WOODS - JUST BEYOND JOHN'S HOUSE

Far off in the distance, the open door of John's house provides a rectangle of light through the darkened woods.

A strange silhouette obscures the light.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - PORCH

John's bare heels drag against the wooden porch.

A trail of blood smeared across the porch, back into the house.

EXT. WOODS - OUTSIDE OF JOHN'S HOUSE

John's dirt covered heels drag through the leaves, twigs and foliage.

His body, limp and bloody, is pulled steadily through the woods.

Ruth, out of breath, arms hooked under John's armpits, strains as she continues to drag his body.

She begins to cough.

EXT. WOODS - NEAR THE WALL

Ruth staggers ahead, now dragging John behind her.

She stops, eyes ahead.

She sets John fully down, her breath exhausted and looks ahead.

The stone wall blocks her path.

EXT. WOODS - THE WALL

Ruth approaches the wall.

It comes up to the mid of her pregnant belly. She looks down the wall as it extends forever in the distance.

She bites her lip and looks back at John.

John mutters something inaudible and coughs up more blood.

Ruth grabs one of the large top stones making up the wall. She strains to lift it up and drop it off the side.

She looks down at the small dent in the wall. John moans.

She kicks at the wall. Nothing. She pushes the wall. She looks down at her belly.

She turns her back to the wall and leans all her weight against it. She pushes hard, harder. She begins to scream, pushes harder until the rocks give way.

She tumbles through the wall, landing on her back. She winces clutching her back then her belly.

John screams.

EXT. WOODS - THE WALL

Ruth, in her white bloomers, and colonial style undergarments ties her bloody pastel dress around John.

Using her dress as a harness, Ruth drags John towards the wall. She steps over several rocks and pulls.

John's body drags over the rocks. He screams.

Steadily she takes step after step, over and around the fallen rocks. She drags John through the wall and into the denser woods on the other side.

EXT. WOODS - GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND

The main building gets closer and closer as Ruth struggles to pull John's body towards the church.

As the tower blocks the moon, Ruth stops. Breathing heavy she looks around.

All the cookie cutter houses are still.

She takes a step towards her house. She stops. She looks towards the main hall. John moans. She tries to pull her wind blown hair from her face, blood smears on her porcelain cheeks.

INT. GOD'S MERCY COMPOUND - SACRAMENT HALL

Ruth, with great effort, lays John down by the sacramental fountain.

His coughs echo through the empty hall.

She cradles his face and tries to catch his eyes. Eventually he focuses on her.

RUTH
I have to wake them.

John opens his mouth but cannot speak.

Ruth gently rests his head on the cold cement floor. She hurries out the open door and disappears in the moonlight.

John reaches after her, his bloody, dirt-caked hand shakes towards the open door.

JOHN
Lillies.

The pain swells in him and he begins to cry.

He turns his head and looks...

Through the open door a beautiful female deer comes into view. She turns and looks at him.

John's breath calms.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(barely a whisper)
Hello dear.

The doe stares back at John with bottomless black eyes.

John takes a deep breath and looks up.

The massive cross looms above.

Sweat drips down into his eyes. The sound of men approaching.

The doe stares at him, the moonlight glistening on her silky fur. A large brown bear approaches from behind the deer.

John's eyes widen, he tries to speak but nothing comes out.

The bear closes in on the deer, who is still watching John.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Hey...Hey!

The doe blinks unaware as the bear gets closer.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Turn around.

His body jerks and he tries to get up but he cannot. As if something were pressing him to the ground, he writhes and screams. He throws his fists towards the deer, whose gaze is locked on him.

Far off mumbling is heard.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Turn away from me! Get away!

The doe calmly watches John as the bear descends upon her.

John screams animalistically at the bear, yet his body remains pinned to the ground. With all his might he struggles.

John blinks heavily. The mumbling grows louder. He looks out the door...

The deer and bear are no longer there. Ruth, covering her body with a home made afghan, is in the deer's place.

John looks up.

Six men stand and kneel above him, their hands on his head and his chest. All have their eyes closed and mumbling prayers.

John looks around. A few feet away Christian watches coldly.

The mumbling prayers continue.

Christian looks back out the door at Ruth. Ruth pulls the afghan closer round her body.

Christian storms out the door and grabs Ruth's arm.

John screams. A sudden bright light illuminates everything.

John's screams echo, he squints into the light.

A cacophony of screams. Scattering footsteps. The light forces John's eyes closed.

A far away choir singing.

John opens his eyes. The men of the congregation are being dragged away by a dozen FBI SWAT Team members.

JOHN (CONT'D)
No. Wait! Let them finish!

John coughs, clutches himself in pain. He reaches out towards the door as the men are dragged away. John screams.

Through the door dozens of the members of God's Mercy are pushed onto buses and police vehicles.

John uses the last of his strength to push himself onto his feet. He steps towards the door, his innards slopping out onto the floor of the church.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 (screaming incoherently)
 Come back! Forgive me!

Ruth gets pushed onto a bus.

A bright light turns towards John. He reaches forward.

The white light consumes him. The light consumes everything.

WHITENESS.

INT. HOSPITAL - RUTH'S ROOM - DAY

Ruth lies in a hospital bed staring out the window.

Past Ruth's bed, out the door, in the hallway two men in suits and an officer talk with a DOCTOR.

Ruth looks up at the TV mounted on the wall.

The television plays news footage of the Congregation of God's Mercy being lead out of the church and into several buses by the riot police.

The picture cuts to an aerial view of the compound, it moves down the land showing John's house.

Ruth looks away.

INT. OX'S BAR

Several CUSTOMERS sit at the bar watching the television.

On the screen plays a news report, Angela is being interviewed.

ANGELA
 (on TV)
 ...For the past ten years. And now,
 with my ongoing collaboration with
 the FBI, finally we have rescued
 these children and women from the
 evil that is God's Mercy and the-
 that deviant pervert Allen Graves.

We pull back to see Ox behind the bar putting glasses away.

He picks up the remote and changes the channel.

INT. HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM

A NURSE pulls the dressing gown up over Ruth's belly. Ruth slaps her hand away.

NURSE
Don't you want to see your baby?

Ruth's glare at the Nurse.

NURSE (CONT'D)
How old are you?

INT. HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM

The Doctor stares at the sonogram screen stunned yet bored. The Nurse looks up at him confused.

NURSE
(whisper)
Where did it go?

The Doctor looks at Ruth, who glares in the other direction.

DOCTOR
It was never there to begin with.
Pseudocycosis. False pregnancy.

Ruth places her thumb in her mouth.

EXT. JOHN'S PROPERTY

Tanner stands with a LAND SURVEYOR who adjusts a Total Station Tripod.

The Land Surveyor points out to the woods and then over to John's house.

Tanner nods and smiles. Ox Jr, stands near by, adjusts his suit. He looks at the house.

Tanner looks over at Ox Jr. Ox Jr smiles. Tanner turns back to the Land Surveyor. Ox Jr's smile fades.

EXT. HELEN'S HOME - BACK YARD - GRAVE YARD

Helen hammers a wooden cross into the ground.

She stands back and wipes her forehead with the back of her hand.

She looks at the cross, small in comparison to the four other old cement headstones.

She looks out over her land.

She puts her hands on her hips and walks towards the house.

INT. HELEN'S HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Helen washes her hands in the sink.

She turns off the faucet and dries her hands on a pink rag.

She drops the rag on the counter and walks through the -

LIVING ROOM

Towards the Hallway.

Eddie slumps on the couch drinking a beer, watching TV.

He looks up as Helen passes.

EDDIE

What have you been doing?

HELEN

Fuck off Eddie.

She walks down the hall and turns out of sight into the bedroom.

INT. HOSPITAL - RUTH'S ROOM

Ruth struggles but finally pulls a pair of jeans on.

She goes to the mirror.

She looks at herself in the mirror, in a long sleeve shirt and jeans.

She runs her hands along the clothes. Uncomfortable she pulls at the jeans.

She stares at herself, something terribly off in the contemporary clothes.

A knock. The Nurse opens the door.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - LATER

Ruth sits stoically, occasionally adjusting her clothes.

PSYCHOLOGIST (O.S.)
It's rare but it does happen. But
I'd like to get back to the
original question.

Ruth watches through the window as a bird builds a nest in a tree.

PSYCHOLOGIST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
When where you first abused?
(then)
Sexually. Or otherwise.

Ruth continues to stare intently out the window.

RUTH
Do you believe in God?

PSYCHOLOGIST(O.S.)
(taking a deep breath)
I know this must be hard for you. I
can't imagine what you've been
through. But no one can hurt you
now. You are safe now.

She looks at the Psychologist.

RUTH
Lies are like locusts.

The Psychologist clears her throat.

PSYCHOLOGIST (O.S.)
Why did you leave the compound and
go to the home of...John Davis?

Ruth looks down at the wound on her palm. She runs her finger across it.

INT. HOSPITAL - RUTH'S ROOM - NIGHT

She picks up her robe, folds it and places it on the foot of the bed.

She walks to the doorway and peeks out into the hallway before quietly sneaking out.

EXT. THE WOODS - DAWN

Ruth walks through the woods.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LATER

Ruth stares up at the house.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The front door opens. Ruth stares at the empty living room.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Ruth stands in the empty kitchen.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR

Ruth slowly makes her way up the stairs.

BEDROOM

She steps lightly towards the end of the bed.

Ruth falls backwards onto the bed and places her hands on her belly.

She closes her eyes.

Darkness.

A soft whimper. Another. A howl. Ruth opens her eyes and looks past the door frame down the long hallway.

Scratch scratch.

She walks into the

HALLWAY

Past two closed doors to the very end.

She places her hand on the closed door.

Scratch scratch.

She opens the door.

There sits Barron, looking up with his big hunting-dog eyes.

Yip.

Behind him in the porcelain claw tooth tub sits Duke.

RUTH
Hey puppies.

She kneels down and runs her hand through Barron's fur.

RUTH (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry. But-

The dogs run out.

RUTH (CONT'D)
You know.

Ruth looks at the tub.

Ruth climbs into the tub and lowers herself into the white container.

She looks at the walls, faded stains of blood streak down them.

She reaches out and tries to wipe them away. They remain.

Her hands begin to shake, she looks down past her belly at her feet and begins to cry.

The crying grows out of her control. She shakes. She screams. She screams again. Attacking her own tears she screams again, till anger dries her eyes.

She looks up at the wall above the tub.

The light streams through the window throwing the shadow of a crucifix on the wall.

RUTH (CONT'D)
"By water and fire so shall you be purified. My children, my love, for whom this earth I made. You are not perfect but I can make you so."

The sound of the shower turning on.

Ruth stares forward. She begins to hum. She steps into the water. Her voice soars as the water washes over her.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE

Ruth, wet, stares up at the house. The dogs sit quietly by her side.

The house burns. All of it. Consumed. Black billows turning, wafting, racing up into the clear morning sky.

EXT. THE WOODS - AFTERNOON

Ruth walks through the woods. She stops. She stares out at something in the distance.

She walks towards it. She slowly bends down. Rustling.

A shiny red droplet rolls through pure white fur.

Ruth's scratched hands pull apart a claw trap.

Ruth watches the white rabbit hop away. Wounded but alive.

FADE OUT.

THE END