

A WEEPING IN THE WOODS

Written by

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PART I:

Long Day, Longer Night

FADE IN:

1 EXT. BONFIRE - NIGHT

AN IMPOSING FIGURE STANDS SILHOUETTED BEFORE A LARGE BONFIRE.

He is preaching to an audience squatted in the dirt - most wear rustic clay masks affixed tightly to their faces. Others, unmasked, reveal distorted and sagging features.

IMPOSING FIGURE

I do not want your praises. You do not want my blessings, for it has I...

The crowd shakes STRANGE POUCHES in the air, rattling the contents inside.

IMPOSING FIGURE

...and its teeth are sharp!

The imposing figure, MARKUS, holds out his arm to the crowd. BITE MARKS SCALE UP HIS ARM.

They gasp, chanting: "Mercy, Mercy" to themselves.

MARKUS looks past the crowd to a DARK ANTLERED FIGURE just out of the firelight.

He smiles at its presence.

MARKUS

(says to himself)

It is coming back... back to me.

Some of the people turn to look at what he sees. There is nothing there.

MARKUS

(to crowd)

There is a man coming. I have been told a great deal about him and believe he will be one who can see our ways clearly... as clearly as you all do.

INTERCUT TO:

2 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT, LOW TO THE GROUND - FIVE MASKED FIGURES RUN INTO FRAME FROM BEHIND THE CAMERA.

Their feet are nearly bare - wrapped with strips of leather. They whisper to one another.

MARKUS (V.O.)
His life has led him to us, and we
shall cherish it!

ONE OF THEM STEPS INTO FRAME. Streaks of moonlight cut across their rustic clay mask.

OFF-SCREEN THE RUSTLE OF A CAR DRIVING BY ON A DIRT ROAD IS HEARD.

The milky eyes of the masked figure watch the car pass by.

They let out a WHISTLE that sounds like the call of a Killdeer. The whistle is echoed back through the woods, repeated by the others.

FADE TO:

"A WEEPING IN THE WOODS" title graphic, accompanied by the sounds of scurrying footsteps through the forest.

HARD CUT TO:

3 INT./EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS/OLDSMOBILE - NIGHT

ULTRA WIDE SHOT OF A MOUNTAIN PASS. HEADLIGHTS FROM A CAR ARE SCALING THE MOUNTAIN NEAR ITS PEAK.

Fuzzy music from a car stereo breaks the wild ambiance.

CUT TO:

SHOT OF AN OLDSMOBILE'S TIRES PASSING THROUGH POTHOLES AND RECKLESSLY KICKING UP DUST ON AN UNSERVICED ROAD.

WARREN, driving the Oldsmobile alone and ragged, fumbles through his pockets for a cigarette. He is noticeably sleep deprived.

As he slips a cigarette into his mouth, a BOULDER comes into the shine of his headlights! He swerves at the last-minute, screeching to a halt - spitting the cigarette out onto the dash of the car.

He sits back in shock, SLAPPING himself to wake up.

With a swear and a sigh, he reaches for the cig and spots a sign riddled with bullet holes.

It reads: "Wallace Peak Summit Ahead, McCarthy 4 miles."

The battered sign listed local commodities - the gas station emblem is crossed out with white paint. WARREN checks his gas.

CU ON THE GAS GAUGE SHOWING BELOW A QUARTER TANK.

WARREN clicks the car's lighter and closes his heavy eyes.

SLOW PAN IN ON WARRENS GRUFF FACE. THE BACKGROUND IS DEEPLY BLURRED IN A DREAMLIKE BOKEH STYLE.

A woman's, ELENA'S, calming voice caresses his dream:

ELENA (V.O.)
(near-whisper)
Warren... come to bed. It's late.

WARREN smiles before the sound of the car lighter POPS.

He jumps back awake.

Lighting the cigarette, he sees a cloud of dust kicked up on the road ahead - someone just ran across it.

With eyes peeled, he continues over the summit.

CUT TO:

The pass declines. A FOG consumes the area. WARREN slows down, peering through the thickening trees.

WARREN (O.S.)
What the hell?

PANNING SHOT FROM THE CAR THROUGH THE DARK WOODS: SUBTLY MIXED IN THE TREES ARE SHADOWS OF THE MASKED PEOPLE WATCHING WARREN - THEIR EYES REFLECT THE MOONLIGHT.

WARREN blinks heavily through the tobacco smoke in this car. The eyes disappear.

He waves the smoke out the window, tossing the cigarette.

CUT TO:

4 INT./EXT. MOTEL EXTERIOR/OLDSMOBILE - FOGGY NIGHT

UP SHOT FROM THE ROAD OF A SPOTLIGHTED WOODEN SIGN READING:
"MCCARTHY MOTEL."

It SHINES like a beacon in the dark - WARREN putters into the parking lot.

The McCarthy Motel is entirely dark; no lights are on. The place sits like a horseshoe: the rooms form a half-circle with the Lobby detached in the middle.

WARREN pulls up to the Lobby's glass doors. His headlights shine on a note taped to them.

He steps out into the brisk cold of night. The place is eerily still, yet he feels like he is being watched.

He reads the note: "Mr. Warren Less - Room #06, the key is hanging on the front door. No loud music after 8. Showers and toiletries are found in #00."

LATER:

Lighting another cigarette, he approaches a door with chipping paint and rusted room numbers reading "06." The room key is on a hook next to a NO-SMOKING SIGN.

WARREN rolls his eyes and carelessly lets the cigarette drop from his mouth. IN THE BACKGROUND, A FIGURE STANDS NEXT TO THE OLDSMOBILE, WATCHING WARREN UNLOCK THE DOOR.

CUT TO:

5 INT./EXT. ROOM #06/OLDSMOBILE - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT OF THE FRONT DOOR.

Fog pours into the room as the door is pushed open.

WARREN hits the lights.

A derelict square room is revealed. Its walls stood cracked and grimy, with a nightstand sat next to a twin bed with a trunk placed at its foot. A heater revved alive oscillating dust... and optimistically heat.

The back wall is covered by a HEAVY, TATTERED CURTAIN spanning from the ceiling to the floor - dried mud trims its fraying edges.

B-ROLL SHOTS AROUND THE MOTEL ROOM AS WARREN TAKES IT ALL IN
- AUDIBLE TENSION RISES WITH EACH SHOT!

He finds mold on the ceiling, bugs crawling on the walls,
mysterious stains in the carpet, and a strange lock on the
trunk.

He squeezes his eyes closed as the tension climaxes UNTIL-

CUT TO OUTSIDE:

WARREN runs back to his car, unable to take the horrors of
the room sober.

WARREN
(sigh)
Okay.

He searches beneath papers and trash on the passenger side,
retrieving a FILM CANISTER OF PILLS labeled "dex" in
sharpie.

He thumbs out a pill, and rattles the FEW REMAINING TABLETS
with concern.

He pops the pill chewing it dry, AND RITUALISTICALLY PULLS
HIS WATCH TO HIS EAR, ITS TICK FILLS THE SCENE.

CUT TO:

WARREN re-enters Room #06 with a small suitcase in hand. The
surprisingly effective heater now warms the place, and it
looks less daunting through his intoxicated lens.

WARREN
(whispers)
I can do this.

TOP-DOWN SHOT OF THE BED.

He pulls back the top cover revealing stained sheets. He
lays his heavy parka jacket across the pillow.

MOMENTS LATER:

WIDE SHOT OF WARREN SITTING ON THE BED FACING FORWARD WITH
THE BIG UGLY CURTAIN SHOWING BEHIND HIM.

He kicks off his shoes and empties his pockets for the night
- THE FOCUS SHIFTS FROM HIM TO THE CURTAIN. The curtain is
TUGGED FROM THE OTHER SIDE, the fabric waves in silence.

THE FOCUS SHIFTS BACK TO WARREN, having produced a cell phone.

WARREN

Perfect.

The phone reads: "NO SERVICE."

WARREN turns to the curtain... now still.

SUDDENLY, a CROAK gurgles at his feet.

A LARGE TOAD hops out from under the BED between his legs.

WARREN gets on his knees and looks under the BED to find a SECOND TOAD laying atop a WOODEN HANDLE of something.

He reaches, unafraid, and pulls out a BALL PEEN HAMMER covered in a dark slime.

ECU OF THE HAMMER REVEALS STRANGE MARKINGS UP THE OLD WOODEN HANDLE TO THE RUSTED BALL-PEEN HEAD.

He looks at the toad expressionless, and high.

He SMASHES the hammer down onto the toad! Then calmly lifts the hammer back up, watching a STRING OF MUCUS stem from the dead amphibian.

CUT TO:

TOP-DOWN SHOT OF WARREN LYING IN BED, FULLY CLOTHED.

His watch is placed next to his ear, and the hammer rests on the nightstand. The lights are out - the scene is quiet save for the ticking watch.

WARREN'S eyes flutter in a dream.

The soft familiar whisper of the woman's voice again says:

ELENA (V.O.)

Wake up.

JUST THEN - A SCRAPPING bellows from behind the curtain.

WARREN JUMPS AWAKE.

TWO KNOCKS on the outside wall echo through the room.

Frantically, he sits up, looking at the curtain.

ANOTHER SCRAPE! The curtain moves again! This time he sees it.

IN THE BOTTOM OF THE FRAME A BARE MUDDIED HEEL OF A FOOT STEPS BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

Something just left the room.

WARREN reaches for the hammer on the nightstand - its on the floor. He tumbles out of bed, grabbing it.

MID SHOT OF WARREN, EYES WIDE IN THE DARK - HAMMER AT THE READY.

ELENA (V.O.)
(whispered)
Warren.

He jerks his head away like the voice was whispered in his ear.

TWO MORE KNOCKS BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

WARREN
(yells)
Hey!

The hammer rattles in his shaky grip as he rounds the bed.

He reaches out and pulls back the curtain revealing an ARCHWAY opening to the surrounding wilderness.

CUT TO:

6 INT./EXT. WOODS/ROOM #06 - NIGHT

Warren peaks his head out, looking down the wall of rooms. Each one holds the same strange archway behind a curtain with footrails leading out from each room into the forest.

AMONGST THE FOLIAGE ARE FIGURES WATCHING WARREN - they are barely seen.

WARREN steps out into the woods.

WARREN
(Yelling into the
darkness)
Hey!

UNAWARE, A SPOT OF BLOOD SEEPS THROUGH HIS SHIRT NEAR HIS RIBS.

He finds MUDDY HANDPRINTS rubbed against the outside wall.

HARD CUT TO:

WARREN huddled in the corner of the room, clutching the hammer to his chest.

The archway behind the curtain is barricaded with the bed, nightstand, and trunk.

WARREN takes another pill from the film canister, chewing it dry.

Slowly drifting out of consciousness, he hears ELENA whisper his name again. His eyes close to the PRE-LAP FOLEY OF SINGING BIRDS AND SOFT BREEZE.

INTERCUT FLASHBACK / DREAM TO:

7 EXT. HIKING TRAIL - GOLDEN HOUR

BOKEH STYLE SHOTS OF WARREN AND A WOMAN, ELENA, HOLDING HANDS AND WALKING A SCENIC TRAIL. WARREN WEARS A WEDDING RING, AS DOES SHE.

The place is serene; subtle ambient music accompanies the soundscape UNTIL-

HARD CUT BACK TO:

8 INT/EXT. ROOM #06/WOODS - AFTERNOON

WARREN'S eyes open softly and wonder the room.

He is pale, and his forehead beads with sweat.

LATER:

WARREN pulls back the curtain and looks out into the woods in the light of day.

He lumbers out, hunched over as though to vomit- fighting off his curling stomach with deep breaths. He looks at the canister of "dex" in a knowing way.

He throws them in the dirt.

Pauses.

He begrudgingly grabs them back and notices the MUDDIED HANDPRINTS ON THE WALL ARE GONE. He shoots an accusatory look at the drugs.

CUT TO:

9 INT. MOTEL LOBBY - AFTERNOON WARREN ENTERS THE LOBBY.

WIDE ESTABLISHING SHOT REVEALS A RUSTIC INTERIOR, WARM
THOUGH UNSATURATED.

A RECORD CRACKLES next to the front desk, playing a piano
melody. Strange trinkets and jars full of earth line nearly
every ledge.

No one seems to be in.

WARREN spots an open LEDGER on the desk.

CU ON LEDGER: "ELENA" IS PENCILED IN A FEW MONTHS AGO.

RUSTLING in a back room alerts WARREN.

A WOMAN wrapped in a ragged shawl emerges with a LARGE
CERAMIC JAR labeled: "Costigan Family Co."

Surprised to see WARREN, she moves his way.

MOTEL WOMAN

Oh, afternoon. Are you enjoying
your stay? Mr...

WARREN doesn't answer immediately. He is taken aback by her
gaunt features. Her body and movements are youthful, though
her face is wrinkled, and her eyes are sunken in unnatural
ways.

WARREN

(weak voice)

W-Warren, in room six at the end
there.

MOTEL WOMAN

Lose your key?

A youthful voice further betrays her pruned face.

WARREN

No... though I'm not sure why I'd
need one.

MOTEL WOMAN

Are you alright? You look ill.

WARREN
I'm fine. I just need a glass of
water.

She smiles, ignoring his request.

MOTEL WOMAN
Have you stayed with us before,
sir?

WARREN
Do people camp out in the woods
around here?

MOTEL WOMAN
This is your first time staying
here?

WARREN
(sigh)
Yes.

The MOTEL WOMAN perches her lips. The record ends - the
needle crackles around the center.

CU OF THE RECORD. A HANDWRITTEN LABEL READS: "ADALINE'S
SONGS."

She flips it.

Another amateur piano tune scrapes alive.

MOTEL WOMAN
Cigarette?

WARREN
Hmm?

MOTEL WOMAN
(placing a hand on the
ceramic jar)
A cigarette, I can roll you a
cigarette for \$1.50.

WARREN pats a pack of smokes in his breast pocket.

WARREN
I'm actually looking for someone. A
woman named Elena.

The MOTEL WOMAN opens the ceramic jar full of tobacco.

MOTEL WOMAN

Here... smell. Locally grown and treated here in McCarthy.

She tips the tobacco toward WARREN. He fakes a smile, smelling it.

MOTEL WOMAN

I'll roll you one on the house.

WARREN

Thanks, eh... She was here a few months ago. Dark hair, about my height -

MOTEL WOMAN

(interrupts)

I don't know who you are looking for. I've only just started this job.

WARREN

Oh. It's just that I saw in the ledger-

MOTEL WOMAN

Prying eyes, prying eyes will be pried.

A beat of silence stands between them. WARREN stares at her pruned face as she starts rolling a cigarette.

WARREN

I thought this was a non-smoking establishment.

MOTEL WOMAN

Just the rooms.

Warren smacks his dry mouth, looking at the record player.

WARREN

You enjoy classical?

She nods.

MOTEL WOMAN

A sister of mine, she played beautifully.

She clears a lump in her throat. The subject of the music is an emotional trigger.

WARREN
This is her?

She nods hiding her face from WARREN.

ECU OF THE FRESH CIGARETTE BEING ROLLED.

CU OF THE MOTEL WOMAN'S FACE - SHE CLOSES HER REDDENING EYES.

WARREN (O.S.)
(Reading record label)
Adeline's Songs.

She fights to maintain a straight face.

DISGUSTING FOLEY of cracking tobacco builds, nearly trumping the piano melody UNTIL-

The MOTEL WOMAN sharply extends the rolled cigarette out to WARREN, not making eye contact.

WARREN
(taking the cigarette)
Thank you.

WARREN grabs his lighter. Simultaneously: the MOTEL WOMAN slides the LEDGER off the desk, hiding it behind her back.

WARREN is about to light the rolled cigarette when -

MOTEL WOMAN
No smoking in the Lobby.

He looks at her dumbfounded.

CUT TO:

10 INT./EXT. OLDSMOBILE/MOTEL EXTERIOR - AFTERNOON

WARREN steps in the Oldsmobile.

He lights the rolled cigarette - puffs on it a few times, and nods in approval.

Rummaging through the glove box, he pulls out a pamphlet and handwritten letter. THE BALL-PEEN HAMMER SITS ON THE PASSENGER SEAT.

WARREN skims the well-read letter to the bottom line.

WARREN
 (reads to himself)
 "Find me at Costigan Family
 Company, McCarthy, Oregon."

He thumbs through the pamphlet of McCarthy listing several businesses: "McCarthy General Store, McCarthy Tools, McCarthy Theatre, McCarthy Motel - Voted Best in the County"

WARREN
 The only Motel in the county.

SUDDENLY- THE SOUND OF SHATTERING GLASS BURSTS FROM THE LOBBY.

WARREN looks to rear-view mirror.

Through the glass doors of the Lobby, he sees the MOTEL WOMAN SMASH the ceramic jar of tobacco on the floor.

WARREN throws the Oldsmobile into gear and speeds off to McCarthy.

CUT TO:

11 INT./EXT. OLDSMOBILE/OLD HIGHWAY/NARROW ROAD - AFTERNOON

WARREN, smoking the rolled cigarette, continues down an unmaintained highway. The Motel is oddly stationed a mile from McCarthy's city center.

A small sign more suited for announcing a campground noted a hidden turn-off just ahead for McCarthy.

WARREN turns down the narrow, overgrown road.

WIDE TRACKING SHOT BEHIND THE OLDSMOBILE DRIVING ON THE NARROW ROAD.

It is so narrow the line of fir trees on either side brush against his car. The place is wet and green.

THE TRACKING SHOT STOPS AND PANS DOWN TO A FRESH BARE-FOOTPRINT IN THE MUD.

LATER:

The thick line of trees gives way to a row of old buildings. Most are mom and pop shops and warehouses.

The place is empty. It is a land out of time with signage echoing the 1960s - strangely the buildings are maintained. Some shops even appear to be open.

WARREN looks to an upcoming building; its lights are on, and a sign above it reads: "Costigan Pharmaceuticals."

He parks in front of it.

Stepping out of the car, he flicks the rolled cigarette butt onto the pavement and notices two older men sitting across the street puffing on long churchwardens.

The two older men stare back at him.

WARREN waves to them.

No response. He enters the PHARMACY.

CUT TO:

12 INT. COSTIGAN PHARMACY - AFTERNOON

The interior of the shop revealed barren shelves and dust-laden products that expired decades prior.

Looking out the storefront windows, WARREN sees the eldest of the two men moving across the street to the pharmacy.

He (THE PHARMACIST) picks up WARREN'S cigarette butt and drops it into his BREAST POCKET before entering the building.

PHARMACIST
Passin' through?

WARREN
(nervous)
In a way.

PHARMACIST
In a way?

WARREN shifts in discomfort, having realized how oddly his response must've sounded.

PHARMACIST
Car sick?

WARREN
Yeah. I'm looking for a woman...
she works for the Costigan Company
and -

PHARMACIST
-Family Company.

WARREN
What?

PHARMACIST
Costigan Family Company. Eh, you'll
have to be more specific. Most
folks here are members of the
Costigan Family.

WARREN
Her name is Elena.

PHARMACIST
Never met anyone by that name.
Here, this might help.

The PHARMACIST turns to a stack of pamphlets and hands
WARREN a copy. It is identical to the one he just sifted
through. He takes it anyway.

PHARMACIST
(patting breast pocket)
Want me to roll you another smoke?

WARREN
Is this a tobacco company?

PHARMACIST
Not only. Mostly cannabis now. I
can roll you a special blend
cigarette for a buck ninety-nine.

WARREN
Two dollars.

PHARMACIST
Buck ninety-nine.

WARREN looks through the window - the other man is gone.

WARREN
I'd just like a bottle of water.

The PHARMACIST heads over to a dusty box.

WARREN
Any gas stations in McCarthy?

PHARMACIST
One, but there ain't gas in it.

The PHARMACIST retrieves an ages-old bottle of water - it swirls with particulate.

PHARMACIST
So, what brings you to McCarthy?

A beat of awkward silence sits between them.

WARREN
I'm looking for my... wife.

The PHARMACIST holds the bottle of water close, forgetting why he grabbed it.

WARREN
(reaching for the bottle)
I think I'll head out then.

PHARMACIST
Y'know there's blood comin' through
yer shirt?

WARREN looks to his side, finding dried blood on his shirt just below his ribs.

PHARMACIST
Beetle must'a bitya.
(laughs)
That'll be a dollar.

CUT TO:

13 I/E. OLDSMOBILE/PHARMACY EXTERIOR - AFTERNOON

WARREN sits frantically in his car, still parked in front of the PHARMACY.

He lifts his shirt - the affected area looks bruised and puffy; the center holds a small scab - like he's been stung.

WARREN grabs the film canister of drugs to pop one out of habit.

He catches himself and spits the pill onto his palm.

WARREN
(whispering to the pill)
Don't kill me.

He throws the pill back in his mouth, downing it with the old water - GAGGING AT ITS AWFUL TASTE.

He rests his watch against his ear - ITS RHYTHMIC BEAT FILLS THE SCENE.

WOMAN (ELENA) (V.O.)
(calm whisper)
Don't let me go, Warren.

Relaxed now, the ambient sound returns.

WARREN looks up.

SHOT THROUGH THE WINDOW OF THE PHARMACY.

WARREN sees the PHARMACIST reach into his breast pocket, retrieving the rolled cigarette butt. He arches backward and DROPS THE BUTT INTO HIS MOUTH, chewing it with arms dangling at his side.

END PART I

PART II: MASQUERADE

14 INT. MARKUS'S TENT - AFTERNOON

OTS SHOT OF A GRIZZLED MAN STARING AT HIS REFLECTION IN A METAL MIRROR HANGING AGAINST A CANVAS TENT WALL.

The man, MARKUS, looks as though he hasn't slept well in years. He runs his fingers across the wrinkles on his forehead, examining his age.

A LEATHER BELT is wrapped around his hand.

MARKUS unravels the belt - the buckle is looped in LIKE A NOOSE.

MARKUS rings the belt loop around his neck. He pauses with a deep exhale before WRINGING the leather noose as tight as he can against his neck!

CHOKING - his face distorts in visceral pain.

MARKUS does all of this in near silence.

MARKUS'S LOVER (O.S.)
(having just woken up)
Markus?

MARKUS squeezes his eyes shut in annoyance at her call. He releases the tension of the belt, gasping for air as quietly as he can.

He pulls back a canvas curtain separating the two rooms. His LOVER lays on a bed of furs and blankets. Her face is unnaturally wrinkled, and eyes are sunken.

He walks over to her with a NOTICEABLE LIMP and lays beside her.

MARKUS'S LOVER
You didn't sleep much last night.

MARKUS
I'm sorry. I tried not to stir too much.

He closes his eyes as she runs her fingers through his hair.

MARKUS'S LOVER
Be kinder to yourself.

CUT TO:

15

EXT. COSTIGAN CAMP - AFTERNOON

MARKUS sits around a campfire, hunched over a mug of hot tea. His neck is red from the abuse.

JESSE (O.S.)
(walking over)
Damn, if your neck ain't red as a
beet.

JESSE sits on a stump next to MARKUS. It is the same older man who disappeared from across the street in McCarthy.

MARKUS
I slept pretty rough. My neck
rested on the inside of my elbow.

JESSE
How th' hell you fall asleep like
that?

MARKUS gives JESSE a sharp look of disapproval.

JESSE
Sorry. I come a'tell you Warren
checked into the Motel late last
night, around one or so. I's gonna'
tell you then, but I knew you were
givin' a sermon.

MARKUS
How'd he look?

JESSE
In McCarthy this morning... eh
nothin' short of spooked.

MARKUS
Mason put the gate up?

JESSE
Yep. Just in time too.

MARKUS
How's that?

JESSE
Adeline. She been stickin' around
for some time. I think she heard me
comin' over from town. Bitch
charged me.

MARKUS
 Watch your mouth, they're still
 kin. And you know the rules. Don't
 interact with them.

JESSE
 (getting up)
 I know it.

MARKUS
 Well, then be more mindful of your
 distance... Oh uh, send Elena out
 there. Have her take Warren through
 the waterway.

JESSE
 (confused)
 Elena?

MARKUS
 You know who.

JESSE
 Why for? I thought you were going
 to meet the kid in McCarthy?

MARKUS
 I have been instructed otherwise.

WIDE SHOT OF MARKUS AROUND THE FIRE, JESSE WALKS OFF-SCREEN.
 IN THE BACKGROUND, THE SHADOWY ANTLER FIGURE WATCHES HIM.

CUT BACK TO:

16 EXT. MCCARTHY/BLACK GATE - AFTERNOON

AERIAL SHOT OF THE OLDSMOBILE PASSING BY THE LAST BUILDINGS
 IN MCCARTHY. THE OLD BROKEN PAVEMENT ENDS, AND A GRAVEL/MUD
 ROAD CONTINUES.

A BLACK GATE stretches across the road ahead and snakes into
 the surrounding woods on either side.

WARREN gets out.

He peers down the left side of the gate. Its tall barred
 fencing spans miles with a narrow foot trail following
 alongside it.

WARREN
 (yelling)
 Elena!

The place is still - not even a bird dare break the silence.

WARREN starts down the trail.

He comes upon a strange white statue of a woman covering her face - black paint streams through her fingers.

SUDDENLY - A GUTTURAL MOAN CRIES BEYOND THE GATE. IT SOUNDS BOTH HUMAN AND INHUMAN.

The moan trailed off into a GARGLE and labored breathing.

WARREN ducks behind a tree. He winces at a SHOCKING pain in his side from the quick movement. Lifting his shirt, he finds the wound SWOLLEN AND PURPLE! His heart begins to race.

The labored breathing and gargling grow closer. WARREN peaks out from the tree.

SLOW PAN IN SHOT THROUGH THE BARS.

A creature is obscured behind bushes. All that can be seen is the arch of its back- spine and ribs poke through thin, pale skin.

REVELING ONLY ENOUGH TO COMMUNICATE: The top of the creature's HEAD pokes out just enough to see stringy hair hanging from a scalp that sags off the skull like a nightcap.

It moans again, this time with a discernable waver - as though it is WEEPING.

At the BREAK OF A STICK under WARREN's shoe, the ungodly moaning stops.

WARREN flattens against the tree.

He hears the creature run away.

In trepidation, WARREN starts back to the Oldsmobile. His eyes dart back and forth through the rows of trees and foliage.

CUT TO:

SLOW PAN IN FROM WARRENS PERSPECTIVE - THE OLDSMOBILE COMES INTO VIEW. IT ISN'T ALONE.

THREE RAGGED FIGURES surround the vehicle. They are pale and gaunt, wearing tattered, handmade clothing. A strange RATTLE from pockets hemmed to their belts follow their every move.

Each wear a mask designed uniquely out of clay - affixed tightly to their heads, AS THOUGH TO HOLD THEIR FACES TOGETHER.

WARREN crouches.

WARREN
(whisper)
Shit! Shit! Shit!

Back in the woods, hidden amongst the green, another MASKED FIGURE emerges.

THEY LET OUT A STRANGE WHISTLE, MIMICKING A MIXTURE OF BIRD CALLS.

WARREN HEARS THE DENTING OF METAL. He turns to find a TALL MASKED MAN atop the roof of his car - looking right at him!

Ushered out by the camouflaged figure: WARREN enters back onto the road. The TALL MASKED MAN jumps down while another scavenges the many papers on the passenger's seat.

The scavenger hands the TALL MASKED MAN ELENA'S LETTER.

WARREN
I... I was just trying to-

TALL MASKED MAN
Why you here?

WARREN is taken back by his broken English. It sounds forced.

C.U. OF THE TALL MASKED MAN'S EYES GLAZED OVER WITH A MILKY YELLOWED LAYER, STARING AT WARREN INTENSELY.

Black vein-like tendrils spire from an old puncture in his neck.

TALL MASKED MAN
(shoves the letter at
WARREN)
Read.

WARREN
(reads in shaky voice)
Uhm... Warren, there are many things I need to say, but they all resolve in: I'm Sorry...

WARREN looks up from the letter and spots the third masked figure with an OLD .32 REVOLVER strapped to their waist.

TALL MASKED MAN

Read!

WARREN

(reading)

F-find me in McCarthy, Oregon. I've found a new life I want you to experience. I-

TALL MASKED MAN

(grabbing the letter back)

You leave now.

The TALL MASKED MAN motions the others to leave. He crumples the letter, walking away.

WARREN

Is she safe?

The TALL MASKED MAN stops.

He turns back, leaning in close to WARREN. His eyes hold a deep SINCERITY.

TALL MASKED MAN

(Whispers)

Leave now. It's not too late. You have my...

His voice trails off - HIS EYES LOOK TO SOMETHING BEHIND WARREN. He stands quickly and turns back into the woods with the others.

WARREN CAUTIOUSLY TURNS -

It is a woman. Elena. She stands at the edge of the road, wearing a clay mask colored like a speckled fawn.

WARREN

(hopeful)

Elena?

She is dressed in similar handmade clothing with a pouch of pills tied to a leather strip belt. She says nothing.

WARREN

It's me... Warren I-

She wraps her arms around him, his stance un-tenses.

He found her.

WARREN

Let's get out of here. I'm taking
you home.

She lets go of her hug.

WARREN

What the hell happened to you?

She lifts a finger to his lips, then leads him by the hand
back into the woods.

Seconds later, the TALL MASKED MAN steps back onto the road.

17 INT./EXT. OLDSMOBILE/BLACK GATE - CONTINUOUS

He places his hand on the trunk of the car.

CU: OF HIS HAND ON THE TRUNK. HE LIFTS IT- A STEAM PRINT
REMAINS FROM THE HEAT OF HIS PALM. IT SLOWLY DISAPPEARS.

LATER:

He sits in the driver's seat, running his fingers over the
stereo and heating controls.

Turning the key one click, the stereo's LED display lights
up with the word: "tape."

A folk song resumes playing.

He leans back against the headrest, and takes off his mask.

Once loose, his features were now STITCHED tightly together,
as though the excess skin was CUT OFF in some barbaric skin
tuck.

Reaching into the pouch of pills at his side, he retrieves a
white cube of condensed powder, like a sugar cube.

He pops it into his mouth, swallowing it whole.

He turns the ignition, and the Oldsmobile revs alive.

C.U. OF GAS GAUGE NEEDLE ON EMPTY.

The TALL MASKED MAN sighs in defeat.

He cries silently, gripping the steering wheel as tightly as
he can before SMASHING his fists against the stereo until
the tape whirls to a stop.

He gets out and lifts the hood of the car.

CUT TO:

18

EXT. FOGGY WOODS/CREEK & CAVERN ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

TRACKING SHOT OF WARREN AND MASKED ELENA - SHE PULLS HIM AHEAD BY THE HAND. THE BARS OF THE BLACK FENCE WHIP BY IN THE BACKGROUND.

A low fog builds at their feet, and a RUSTLING CREEK is heard ahead.

WARREN
Elena stop!

She continues forging ahead.

They come upon the creek running out from a CAVERNOUS WATERWAY. FOG NOW FILLS THE AREA.

WARREN
Stop!

The MASKED ELENA pulls him into the creek, heading towards the cavern. The water is only ankle deep.

WARREN plants his foot firmly against a rock and halts her.

WARREN
What are you doing!? Where are you taking me?!

MASKED ELENA lunges back at WARREN, covering his mouth.

She points down the creek.

IN THE FOG, a GROTESQUE SHAPE lurks toward them. Hunched, it moans with each step, arching its back upward with every inhale.

MASKED ELENA calmly releases him, putting a finger to her lips.

WARREN
(whispering)
Okay.

She pulls WARREN towards the cavern.

CUT TO:

19

INT. CAVERN - MOMENTS LATER

WIDE SHOT FROM INSIDE THE CAVERN - WARREN AND MASKED ELENA RUN INSIDE.

The soundscape is buried by the echoed RUSH of the water and their panting breaths.

The waterway looks like a natural cave. Its walls are jagged black rock, and roots hang from the ceiling. The current snakes around large boulders and muddy walls, narrowing to a claustrophobic squeeze.

MASKED ELENA lets go of WARREN and runs deeper into the cavern - disappearing in the dark. WARREN is left at the entrance.

WARREN
(whisper yells)
Elena!

A REVERBERATED MOAN from the fast-approaching creature forces him deeper!

With arms outstretched on either side of the rock walls, WARREN feels his way ahead. The cries of the creature sound more like a ROAR in the echo of the cavern.

He rounds a corner, leaving the light from the opening.

THE WALLS BEGIN TO TIGHTEN - the water builds to his knees.

Another SCREECH from the creature thunders! - It's at the mouth of the cave!

WARREN trips, hitting his head against a rock.

WARREN
(yelling)
Shit! Elena!

The shadow of the creature blocks any light seeping in.

Disoriented, WARREN rounds another corner.

Pushing harder and harder through the tightening walls, he becomes sandwiched between a boulder and the muddy side of the cave.

HE IS STUCK!

TIGHT SHOT IN THE WEDGE BETWEEN THE BOULDER AND MUDDY WALL.
 The creature stops blind in the dark right behind WARREN!
 WARREN holds his panicking breath.

CU OF WARREN'S HAND CLAWING PAST THE WEDGE WHERE THE CAVERN
 WIDENS OUT.

MASKED ELENA'S HAND REACHES INTO FRAME - pulling him free at
 the last moment before the creature discovers him!

CUT TO:

20

EXT. WOODS - BEFORE SUNSET

GROUND LEVEL SHOT - A MUDDIED HAND SHOOTS UP FROM THE
 GROUND.

MASKED ELENA and WARREN crawl out a pit extending from the
 cavern.

BEAT - THE WOODS ARE NOW EERILY DARKER.

WARREN collapses muddy and wet onto the grass, clutching his
 side. BLACK BLOOD streams from the wound.

MASKED ELENA stands over him, looking through the woods.

WIDE PANNING SHOT THROUGH THE WOODS - MORE MASKED PEOPLE
 WATCH IN THE GREENERY.

WARREN'S eyes begin to defocus. He touches his fingers to
 the opening - a sharp pain jeers up his ribs.

CU: BLACK BLOOD STRINGS BETWEEN HIS FINGER LIKE MUCUS.

MASKED ELENA lifts his head and retrieves a white powdered
 cube from her pouch. She forces it into WARREN'S slack-jaw
 mouth.

She pulls him close and whispers in his ear:

MASKED ELENA
 (whisper)
 You found me.

Hers is the same voice WARREN has been hearing.

He regains focus upon ELENA'S masked face. He tries pulling her mask off.

She gently stops him.

MASKED ELENA
(whisper)
It's not safe yet.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. WOODS / COSTIGAN CAMP - EVENING

HANDHELD TRACKING SHOT: WARREN TRUDGES BEHIND MASKED ELENA, DISCOMBOBULATED AND WEARY.

The flickering light of an evening BONFIRE glistens just ahead. He hears conversation, laughter, and music.

Closer now - handmade canvas tents populate a break in the trees. Raised wooden platforms span from each tent, like spiders' legs, all connecting at the center bonfire.

A YOUNG BOY runs to meet MASKED ELENA, throwing a big hug around her waist.

He waves shyly to WARREN.

WARREN stands trembling, gripping his side like a gunshot victim - his eyes are unable to focus on anything.

The YOUNG BOY runs back to the fire.

He runs straight to MARKUS, tugging on his shirt. After only seconds of speaking, MARKUS walks over to WARREN and MASKED ELENA with a NOTICEABLE LIMP.

MARKUS
You must be WARREN!

His voice is deep but kind.

MARKUS
Elena told me you'd be visiting. I apologize, had I known it was today, I'd have been more wel...

His voice trails off at WARREN'S dire state.

MARKUS
Oh hell!

MARKUS turns and gives a whistle to others around the bonfire.

MARKUS grabs WARREN up under the arm.

MARKUS
Elena, have them get the clinic ready! Where is Susan? Susan!

WARREN, on the fringes of consciousness, is swiftly moved into a MAKESHIFT TRIAGE TENT.

CUT TO:

22 INT. TRIAGE TENT - CONTINUOUS

TOP-DOWN SHOT: WARREN IS LAID ON AN OLD MILITARY COT.

Everything in the room is far from sanitary. Three other masked people scramble through medical equipment alongside MARKUS and MASKED ELENA.

Frenzied, WARREN tries to get up. MARKUS holds him down.

MARKUS
Whoa, Warren. You don't want to move too much.

POV OF WARREN'S HAZY VISION SEARCHING THE TENT IN PANIC.

He can make out stains on the canvas walls and cot. Crates of old medical equipment sit in the corner next to a locked metal chest.

WARREN
(incoherent)
I needa... go...

A MASKED WOMAN preparing a syringe, pins it in a vial of white liquid.

WARREN
Wait! Wait! No!

MARKUS
Relax. Everything is going to be fine. This is Susan-

WARREN
Please, stop!

MARKUS
- she is a nurse; she knows what
she's doing.

WARREN squirms harder.

Another person keeps his legs from kicking.

MARKUS
(to SUSAN)
Would you stick the damn needle in!

SUSAN RAMS it into WARREN's thigh; the needle is thick
enough to pierce through his jeans.

WARREN'S kicking and slack-jaw muttering settle to a
stillness.

MARKUS
(speaking to WARREN)
...and there that was easy! You're
going to be okay.

MARKUS releases him.

MARKUS
I like you already, Warren. Elena
has told me a great deal about you.

WARREN'S eyes roll up and flutter closed.

MARKUS
(to the others)
That's the strongest reaction I've
ever seen.

They exit the tent.

TOP-DOWN SHOT OF WARREN - OUTSIDE THE TENT THE CONVERSATION
RESUMES.

NURSE (O.S.)
I'll give him another shot in a few
hours.

MARKUS (O.S.)
This strain advances a lot faster.
How'd he look coming in?

Silence.

MARKUS (O.S.)
Hmm.

FLASHBACK - MATCH CUT TO:

23 EXT./INT. GAS STATION / OLDSMOBILE / BEDROOM - DAY

WARREN leans his head against a gas station pump, resting his eyes. He is in coveralls - it's the end of his shift.

A car honks at him. WARREN opens his eyes and moves toward it.

LATER:

In the car, ELENA is behind the wheel - ANGRY. WARREN slouches in his seat, looking out the passenger window.

WARREN

Do you have any cigarettes in your purse?

ELENA

You know I don't smoke.

WARREN

I was just asking.

ELENA

Well, I *don't*.

WARREN

Please don't start this again.

ELENA

Excuse me?!

WARREN

You dissect every little thing I do or say-

ELENA

YOU just order me around all the time! You think I'm some slave to you?!

WARREN

I just asked for a cigarette!

ELENA

No, Warren! I do what you tell me all the time! I ask for one night out with my friends- who I haven't seen in months-

WARREN

This again!?

ELENA

I feel like I'm suffocating around
you! Almost year now!

WARREN

I just want to come home to my
FUCKING wife-

HARD CUT TO:

In a cheap apartment, WARREN and ELENA SCREAM back and forth at each other. ELENA yells about WARREN being too controlling. WARREN yells at ELENA for being a starving artist living off his dime. It ends in ELENA throwing her ring at him.

HE HITS HER.

HARD CUT BACK TO:

24 INT. TRIAGE TENT - DAY

WARREN awakens slowly, the weight of the drugs lifting.

He reaches down to his side expecting a bloody wound but is met with tightly wrapped bandages around his waist.

His shirt is changed, and his jacket replaced with a handmade knit sweater.

He looks surprisingly well-rested for the first time in years.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. COSTIGAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

WIDE SHOT OF TRIAGE TENT EXTERIOR.

WARREN pulls back the heavy, stained canvas flap. SUSAN sits just outside of its opening, puffing on a long CHURCHWARDEN.

PANNING SHOT FROM WARREN'S POV OF THE COSTIGAN CAMP.

SUSAN

(nonchalant)

Afternoon.

She is unmasked and bares the same pruned faced as the woman from the Motel.

WARREN
How long was I out?

She says nothing, looking over the camp.

WARREN
Where am I?

SUSAN
(snappy)
I won't speak with you, stranger.
Not until Markus says you are O.K.

WARREN
Markus?

SUSAN points to a man wrapped in a Mexican blanket, by a fire a few hundred feet away. WARREN walks towards him.

CUT TO:

WIDE SHOT OF MARKUS IN THE FOREGROUND AS WARREN APPROACHES FROM BEHIND.

MARKUS looks deep in thought. An empty clay bowl is cupped in both hands as he gazes at the fire dancing in the soft wind.

WARREN
Markus?

He jumps at WARREN's greeting, breaking his trance. He looks at WARREN puzzled.

WARREN
The nurse told me to speak with you.

MARKUS
Oh! I was trying to figure out how you got my name.

MARKUS let out a soft laugh, then gestures to WARREN to sit on the stump next to him.

CU SHOT OF MARKUS LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER AT SUSAN WITH A SUBTLE GLARE.

MARKUS
(turning back to WARREN)
Looks like you really needed that sleep.

WARREN nods, holding his hands out to the fire.

MARKUS throws Mexican blanket around WARREN's shoulders.

MARKUS

Sorry if the knit sweater isn't warm. Susan suggested we change your clothes because they were soaked with muddy blood. She didn't want to risk infection. How are the jeans fitting?

WARREN, surprised, glances down at the ragged pair of jeans he is wearing.

WARREN

Oh... good.

MARKUS

How's your side?

WARREN

I can feel a slight sting, but much better.

MARKUS

Good. I must confess, there was a little more than antibiotics in that shot.

WARREN looks at MARKUS with concern.

MARKUS

Nothing ill-minded! We just combined some pain killers and anesthesia.

WARREN grips his hand - beginning to tremor.

MARKUS

I wanted you to know. I imagine how your world must've been turned on its head last night.

WARREN

H-how long have I been asleep?

MARKUS doesn't answer, watching WARREN frantically search himself for the canister of "dex."

MARKUS'S brow furrows.

MARKUS

Elena told me about that.

He pulls out the canister of pills, shaking it in front of WARREN. Only THREE tablets rattle.

WARREN grabs them and ashamedly pops one into his mouth, chewing it dry.

WARREN
Where is Elena?

MARKUS
She waited for you to wake up. But after a few hours, I told her to return to her work. This was actually for you.

He holds up the clay bowl.

MARKUS
Some days I'm a late riser, too.

MARKUS whistles to someone off-screen, holding the clay bowl in the air.

MARKUS
I bet you have a million questions.

WARREN nods.

MARKUS
Well, I can only answer a few now, but I got a whole day ahead of me.

WARREN
What is happening to me?

MARKUS
Susan can answer that. Some sorta' infection, probably puss mixed with blood and mud... you were covered with mud.

WARREN
Last night is hazy to me. I don't even remember it getting dark. I was running into some cavern, away from... I didn't get a good look at whatever it was.

MARKUS
I know. Elena told me about it.

WARREN
What the hell was that *thing*?

MARKUS

Warren, You'll meet one of them sooner or later. They're just people. No danger.

WARREN thinks of what to say next, looking at the masked people around the commune.

WARREN

Why is everyone wearing a mask?

MARKUS

You don't like them?

WARREN

It's strange.

MARKUS

(sighing)

Trust me when I tell you all those things will be made known to you.

WARREN

Yeah, but-

The YOUNG BOY from the night before approaches - trying not to spill a bowl of oatmeal. He carefully hands it to WARREN.

MARKUS nods the kid good job, and he runs off.

MARKUS

I love that kid. I'd say he reminds me of myself, but I wasn't nearly that well behaved. Must've gotten it from his mother.

WARREN studies the oatmeal; unfamiliar berries are mixed in.

MARKUS

I don't want to talk about these things now, Warren. I can say there is a strangeness in McCarthy... a darkness. And many would choose to run from it.

MARKUS stands.

MARKUS

...and many did. But not us. We care for it and embrace it. Who else will?

WARREN spots the TALL MASKED MAN entering the commune.

WARREN
Who is that?

MARKUS lets out a sigh.

MARKUS
His name is Mason. He keeps an eye on the Costigan property from McCarthy to Wallace Peak. He... is stoic and seems to prefer the company of no one.

MARKUS turns back to WARREN.

MARKUS
But we have an understanding. Why do you ask?

WARREN
We met when he was rifling through my car.

MARKUS
(look of intense concern)
Did he speak to you?

His change in demeanor surprises WARREN.

WARREN
No, he took off when I saw him.

MARKUS'S calm posture resumes.

MARKUS
Well, now it's time for me to check-in on things down at the fields. I'll let Elena know you're up. Oh, and I'd ask you to stick around camp here, Warren.

MARKUS starts walking away.

MARKUS
We'll talk more tonight; I'm sure Elena will have more to say than I do.

WARREN sits alone with the bowl of oatmeal resting in his hands. With hesitation, he eats, looking out onto the commune.

WARREN
Where am I?

CUT TO:

26

EXT. COSTIGAN CAMP/WOODS - CONTINUOUS

WIDE PANNING SHOT BEHIND WARREN - TRACKING MASON.

MASON passes by the fire with no acknowledgment. He is carrying a bag slung around his shoulder.

He walks to a tent where the YOUNG BOY and his MOTHER are sitting. He pulls from the bag fresh pears, eggs, and a can of soda. The YOUNG BOY'S eyes light up. MASON shushes him, then reaches into his pocket.

CU: HE PULLS OUT A CAR KEY AND WHISPERS TO THE MOTHER - PLACING THE KEY IN HER HAND.

MASON then stands and walks away like nothing happened.

WARREN follows MASON as he enters the woods.

MASON, aware he is being followed, stops a few hundred feet into the surrounding wilderness.

WARREN

You smuggle food for them?

MASON says nothing.

WARREN

Why did you tell me not to come here? What the hell is going on?!

MASON looks around the woods to see if anyone is watching. WARREN copies him in a paranoid effort.

WARREN

(leans in)

Get me out of here.

MASON looks at WARREN'S bandaged side.

MASON

(whispering)

It's too late for that.

WARREN

(whispering)

What?

MASON steps closer, placing a hand on WARREN'S bandaged wound.

MASON
Watch Markus, watch him close.

WARREN
What do you mean too late?

MASON
Tread lightly, Warren. Watch
closely... and wait for me.

MASON disappears in the thickening foliage beyond. WARREN is left alone.

WARREN
Too late?

UP-SHOT FROM WARREN'S BANDAGED SIDE. HE LOOKS DOWN TO THE WOUND AND PEELS OFF THE BANDAGES.

There is a YELLOW WAXY BUILDUP around the wound as though oil was forced out and dried. The once swollen area now sagged, deflated. Stranger still, it PULSATED! With each beat, BLACK FLUID DRAINS from the pin-hole opening.

END PART II

PART III: NUMB

27 EXT./INT. COSTIGAN CAMP - DAY

WIDE PANNING SHOT OF WARREN RUNNING BACK TO CAMP CLUTCHING HIS WOUNDED SIDE.

He runs right to SUSAN, still outside the triage tent.

WARREN
(panicked)
What is this? What the hell is
happening to me?!

She examines the wound, then rushed into the tent.

SUSAN
You were supposed to keep the
bandage on!

WARREN follows her in.

WARREN
Why is it is moving!? I need to go
to a hospital, now!

SUSAN unbolts the heavy lock on a metal chest.

SUSAN
Believe it or not, that is a good
sign.

WARREN
Bullshit! You have no idea what
this is, do you?!

SUSAN
(retrieves a POUCH from
the chest)
Warren, you need to calm down.

She fishes out two cubes of condensed powder..

SUSAN
Take these.

WARREN
What is this?

SUSAN
Medicine.

WARREN looks at her in distrust.

SUSAN
Take the pills! We aren't out to
get you, Warren.

WARREN begrudgingly throws the two cubes into his mouth. His
face scrunches in disgust.

SUSAN
You'll be thanking me in a few
minutes.

WARREN turns to leave.

SUSAN
Wait, Warren... here.

She tosses him the pouch filled with powder cube pills.

SUSAN
Next time, don't chew it. Take one
every hour. It'll kill the
infection... shouldn't be hard for
you.

Warren glares.

SUSAN
If you went to the hospital, they'd
give you the same thing.

He leaves the tent, seeing MARKUS carrying a burlap bag into
the WOODS ahead. WARREN follows him.

CUT TO:

28 EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

WIDE TRACKING SHOT OF MARKUS LIMPING ALONG A TRAIL, WARREN
STALKS A FEW HUNDRED FEET BEHIND - HIDING AMONGST THE TREES.

LOST WITHIN THE BACKGROUND ARE FIGURES WATCHING WARREN TAIL
MARKUS.

MARKUS hums and sings a tune to himself as he walks.

Out of sight, WARREN checks his wound.

The wound shrunk significantly and no longer squirmed or
spouted blood. The difference is drastic.

Surprised, WARREN examines one of the cube pills - crushing
it with his fingers, it combusts into a powder.

WARREN FREEZES - MARKUS is no longer humming.

PANNING OUT FROM BEHIND THE TREE: MARKUS IS STOPPED IN HIS TRACKS, STARING TOWARD THE TREE WHERE WARREN HIDES.

WARREN believes he is caught.

UNTIL -

MARKUS
 (calls to something)
 I can feel you, old friend... are
 you back? I have done what you've
 asked of me.

MARKUS listens in silence.

MARKUS
 Can you hear me?

Only the swaying of trees in the wind is heard. He turns and continues walking.

WARREN sighs with relief, looking through the sea of trees.

PANNING SHOT THROUGH TREES - THE BLACK ANTLERED FIGURE IS HIDDEN IN THE SCENE.

CUT TO:

29 EXT./INT. BEN'S SHACK - DAY

WIDE SHOT: MARKUS LIMPS TO AN OLD BROKEN-DOWN SHACK SHROUDED IN THICK BRUSH.

He whistles loudly, approaching heavy barn doors - SHUT WITH A RUSTED LOCK.

WARREN watches MARKUS enter, then rounds the building's side, peering through a crack in the rotting wood.

POV THROUGH THE CRACK IN THE WALL: MARKUS STANDS AT THE DOORWAY. DUST SWIRLS IN RAYS OF LIGHT FROM HOLES IN THE CEILING.

MARKUS
 Afternoon!

MARKUS seemed to be alone...

UNTIL -

SOMETHING UNDER AN OLD WORN BLANKET WRITHES AT HIS FEET.

It let out a LABORED EXHALE!

MARKUS leans in, lifting the blanket.

A BONEY HAND, WITH SKIN SAGGING FROM THE FOREARM AND BICEP,
JUMPS OUT AT HIS THROAT!

MARKUS recoils just in time.

MARKUS
(winded in surprise)
Nearly got me that time.

As the *thing* staggers to its feet, the CLANGING of a chain sounds with every movement. It ran from the creature's neck to a beam in the center of the shack.

MARKUS
You're not going to get a crumb if
you keep this up, Ben.

The thing, BEN, breathed as though a rock lay heavy on his chest.

MARKUS
Let me see you, brother.

MARKUS cautiously pulls the blanket off.

CU: WARRENS EYES WIDEN IN SHOCK THROUGH THE CRACK IN THE WALL. THE CAMERA DOLLYS BACKWARD TO A CLOSE-UP OF BEN'S HORRIFIC FACE.

BEN'S scalp SAGGED to the base of his neck, pulling his eyelids up to his scalp. One milky eye peered through his upper lip, stretched, and STAPLED to his forehead.

MARKUS grabs the bag and pulls from it a jar of jam, a loaf of bread, and a small tin box.

MARKUS
Got some good stuff this week.
Marionberry, rye bread and...
(He rattles the tin)
Some more sugar cubes.

He points the jam at BEN.

MARKUS
Who am I Ben?

BEN
(long pauses of painful
breathing between each
word)
Markus... mercy.

MARKUS smirks with disappointment, dropping the jam back into the bag. He then picks a powder cube pill from the tin box - IDENTICAL TO THE ONES GIVEN TO WARREN.

MARKUS
Let's hear it in plain English. You at least owe me that. *Markus the merciful*, try again.

BEN shifts in his heavy stance, hooking two fingers around the chain strapped to his neck.

MARKUS
I'll give you another pill. Maybe it'll tighten the skin around your eyes so you can see better. We can get that nasty staple outta' your forehead.

MARKUS grabs a second cube as BEN takes a deep breath.

BEN
Markus...

MARKUS
Yes, the...

BEN
...thhhuuhhhh... BASTARD!

BEN FALLS backward, choking and coughing.

MARKUS'S face WRINKLES in anger. He crushes the drugs in his hand.

MARKUS
You're trying to provoke me, Benny.

MARKUS paces with fists clenched.

BEN pulls his bottom lip down over his upper jaw to get air.

MARKUS
 Get up, you faithless pig! I've
 learned that trick. Nearly took my
 whole knee last time you pulled
 this shit.

Markus THROWS the bread at BEN.

MARKUS
 Damn you, BEN. I'm trying to help
 you!

He watches his brother wallow on the floor before exiting
 the shack, locking the heavy barn doors.

WARREN quickly rounds the opposite side.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

MARKUS carries the bag of goods a few hundred feet beyond
 the shack before his pace slows to a stop. He closes his
 teary eyes, and STRIKES himself in the stomach, falling to
 his knees.

MARKUS
 (moaning)
 I'm still here. Come back to me
 now.

He again searches the surrounding trees.

MARKUS
 (yelling)
 Why have you become silent!? Have
 you forgotten about me?!

He lays his head down in the grass.

MARKUS (PRELAP V.O.)
 I feel nothing...

CUT TO MARKUS FLASHBACK:

31 EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

A YOUNGER MARKUS and HUMAN BEN sit around a fire.

MARKUS
 (continued)
 ...I don't dream. Just blanket
 sensations of numbness.

BEN
(concerned)
Have you talked to father?

MARKUS
That man is no longer my father.

BEN
I... Markus.

MARKUS
I'm sorry. Things haven't been
going well for a long time.

BEN
Well, he worries about you. I do
too.

MARKUS
He's ruining this. All we have, all
we've worked for.

BEN
We will be fine. We have always
pulled through. What does Joan
think?

MARKUS
Joan left.

BEN
What?

MARKUS
I saw her driving over Wallace
Peak. She took everything with her.

CU OF MARKUS'S HANDS FUMBLING WITH A RING, THEN TOSSING IT
IN THE FIRE.

BEN puts his arm around MARKUS.

BEN
I had no idea.

MARKUS
Now you do.

BEN pulls a flask to his lips.

MARKUS
People are leaving McCarthy in
droves, Ben.
(MORE)

MARKUS (CONT'D)
Dad is drunk out of sense half the
time, his sermons are ramblings!
You know what he said to me? He
told me he no longer receives
visions.

BEN
Shit. How long ago was this?

MARKUS
Few months.

Ben takes another swig.

BEN
Maybe we should leave.

MARKUS
What?

BEN
Maybe we should leave.

MARKUS looks sharply at BEN.

BEN
I just think -

MARKUS SLAPS BEN HARD ACROSS THE FACE.

MARKUS
Leave?!

Another SLAP.

BEN
(gripping his now
bleeding nose)
What the Hell! You lunatic!

MARKUS stares back into the fire.

BEN
What is the matter with you!?

CU: OF MARKUS'S EYES REFLECTING THE FIRE - BEN WALKS AWAY
SWEARING.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE
(whispers to MARKUS)
No one leaves.

THE FIRE SUDDENLY GOES OUT - THE SCENE NOW BLUE WITH MOONLIGHT.

MARKUS looks up from the embers, unshaken by the unnaturally extinguished flame.

MARKUS
My vision.

REVERSE SHOT: WE SEE THE DARK ANTLERED FIGURE UP CLOSE. IT IS MADE OF EARTH. DARK ROOTS WRAP AROUND A BLACK SOIL BODY. WOODEN ANTLERS ARE MOUNTED LIKE A CROWN UPON IT'S HEAD - IT SITS ACROSS THE SMOKING CHARCOAL, STARING AT MARKUS.

MARKUS smiles.

CUT BACK TO:

32 EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

WIDE SHOT: MARKUS CURLED UP IN THE GRASS.

MARKUS
(says to himself)
I'm sorry, Ben.

He stands and begins limping back to camp. WARREN watches, confounded by MARKUS'S erratic behavior.

CUT TO:

33 EXT./INT. BEN SHACK - MOMENTS LATER

OTS TRACKING SHOT OF WARREN REAPPROACHING THE SHACK.

LOUD GROANING AND GRUNTING sound inside, accompanied by the RATTLE OF A CHAIN being pulled on.

WARREN pauses in trepidation, scrambling through his pockets for the canister of "dex". He dumps the FINAL TWO doses into his palm.

WARREN
Fuck it.

WARREN squeezes his eyes shut and throws both pills into his mouth.

INSIDE THE SHACK, BEN pulls hard on the chains bolted to the middle beam.

WARREN (O.S.)
H...Hello?

BEN stops, gasping for air beneath the pounds of flesh and loose muscle.

CU: WARREN'S EYES PEERING THROUGH THE CRACK IN THE WALL.

WARREN
I'm here to help you.

BEN turns to WARREN'S voice.

BEN
Who?

WARREN examines the outside wall's wooden boards - they are rotted. He grabs hold of the crack in the wall and pries it open. The surrounding wood peels apart.

WARREN crawls through the opening carrying the bag of goods left behind by MARKUS.

He freezes at the horrific disfigurements of BEN'S decaying body.

BEN
A... stranger...

WARREN
(apprehension)
H...here.

WARREN tosses the bag in reach of BEN, not wanting to come close.

BEN looks at the bag, then back to WARREN.

BEN
Stranger... run from here.

Ignoring BEN'S plea, WARREN takes a handful of the powder cube pills from his pouch and holds them out to BEN.

BEN'S eyes widen.

He manically races toward WARREN - snatching the pills and swallowing two whole.

BEN collapses, coughing.

BEN
It... hurts. Breathe... hurts.

WARREN
I can get you out of here.

BEN looks WARREN over.

He begrudgingly hands the remaining cube out to WARREN.

BEN
Too... late.

WARREN doesn't take it.

BEN
You... need... it.

BEN points a finger to his blackened chest. A SMALL PIN-HOLE PUNCTURE (like WARREN's wound) is shown with vein-like tendrils stretching from it like roots.

BEN
Stung.

He then points to WARREN.

BEN
Where?

WARREN cups his side - his face flushes with horror.

BEN moans knowingly and turns away from WARREN, rummaging through the bag.

BEN
Too... late. You... can't help...
yourself.

HARD CUT TO:

34 EXT. WOODS - LATER

SHOT FROM THE GROUND: WARREN RUSHES INTO FRAME - FALLING ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES - HYPERVENTILATING IN A PANIC.

His vision begins to blur.

WARREN
Not again.

He vomits a small amount of white liquid.

ELENA(V.O.)
(whisper)
Why did you let me go?

WARREN
 (mumbles)
 No... no.

POV SHOT AS WARREN'S VISION FADING. HIDDEN IN THE TREES THE SAME ANTLERED FIGURE COCK ITS HEAD AT WARREN. THE SCENE GOES BLACK.

FADE TO:

35 EXT. WOODS - EVENING

A BLACK SCREEN WITH BLURRED TONES FILTER THROUGH AS THOUGH YOUR EYES ARE CLOSED.

ELENA (V.O.)
 You hate me.

WARREN(V.O.)
 No. I don't.

ELENA (V.O.)
 Then leave me alone.

WARREN (V.O.)
 Elena, I just want-

ELENA (V.O.)
 No, Warren. Just sign!

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
 Warren, just sign the paper.

WARREN (V.O.)
 Why the hell is he even here!?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
 To protect her from you!

A tense soundscape builds as their argument grows to YELLING.

HARD CUT BACK TO:

WARREN'S eyes open to a reddening sky, trees stretch upward from his WARPED, intoxicated view.

LATER:

WARREN leans against a tree, his face pale, EYES MORE SUNKEN and mouth quivering.

MOMENTS LATER:

He looks at his fingertips, poking them with a pine needle and squeezing them tight - shaking his head at their numbness.

CUT TO:

36

EXT. BLACK GATE - EVENING

WARREN trudges through the evening woods, drowsy.

MASKED FIGURES LOOM HIDDEN IN THE BACKGROUND.

ELENA(V.O.)
(whisper)
I still love you.

He TWINGES at the whisper - feeling its breath. He spins around to find its source. He is alone.

CUT TO:

WIDE SHOT OF WARREN APPROACHING THE BLACK GATE.

Grabbing one of the bars, he looks left down the fence. Then right. He goes right.

LATER:

He stops when he sees a WOODEN BOX in the grass. It's deep, half-buried.

The engraved lid reads: "those who went ahead of us."

Inside are scribbled notes on scavenged paper.

CU ON A NOTE READING: "My dear sister, I'm sorry." Another reads, "Godspeed. I miss you, Sam."

Beneath the letters, he finds an assortment of items: An old blanket, a golden lighter, and a faded polaroid of two young women - one of them is the same woman from the Motel.

ELENA (V.O.)
(whispering)
Come back.

WARREN jumps at the whisper.

WARREN
(yells)
Stop! Stop it!

The place is still. He looks out into the woods. PAIRS OF EYES like that of wolves stare back at him.

WARREN squeezes his eyes shut, then opens them again.

The eyes are gone.

CUT TO:

37

EXT. OLDSMOBILE/BLACK GATE - NIGHT

TRACKING SHOT OF WARREN SNEAKING THROUGH THE OPEN BLACK GATE ENTRANCE - THE OLDSMOBILE IS STILL THERE - THE HOOD IS UP.

THE BATTERY IS GONE!

WARREN
(whispers to himself)
Shit! No, no, no!

HE HEARS A RUSTLING COMING UP THE ROAD.

WARREN rounds the car to the open passenger door. He crawls halfway inside, staying low.

Footsteps and the RATTLING of pills sound off-screen.

He sees the BALL-PEEN HAMMER stuffed into the seat. He grabs it.

There is a KNOCK on the driver's door window.

He looks up to see MASON'S familiar mask staring back at him.

WARREN gets out of the Oldsmobile - HAMMER A THE READY

MASON
(whispers)
Be cautious. They know we're here.

WARREN
(whisper yell)
Where the *hell* is my battery?!

MASON
Be calm. I took it.

WARREN
I- I should kill you.

MASON
Warren, you wouldn't have made it
over Wallace Peak.

WARREN
How would you know.

MASON
The woman at the Motel has a truck
with a half tank; the battery was
bad. It's our best bet.

WARREN rounds the car.

MASON
Take another pill, Warren. Your
face is beginning to loosen. I'd
take three at a time if I were you,
every hour.

WARREN comes closer.

MASON takes off his mask, revealing his GROTESQUE FACE.

MASON
You don't want to be this.

WARREN reaches for his pouch, not taking his eyes off MASON.

MASON
Elena is looking for you.

WARREN
I'm not going back.

MASON
Then you will die a horrible death.

WARREN swallows the three powder cubes.

MASON
Stay and help me just a little
longer. We can leave soon, but not
now.

WARREN
Why? Why the hell didn't you try
and stop me from coming here
before? If you're so good, why did
you let them infect me?

MASON
That boy is my son, Warren.
I have to get him out of here.

WARREN

I don't give a shit. You let them
kill me for my car battery?

MASON sorrowfully pulls his mask back on.

They hear others coming.

MASON

Hide the hammer. We *will* get out
WARREN. Not tonight.

CU: WARREN SLIDES THE HANDLE OF THE HAMMER UP HIS SLEEVE,
WITH THE BALL-PEEN HEAD CUPPED IN HIS FINGERS.

MASON

Be patient and play their game.

He places his hand on WARREN'S back leading him to the
approaching group.

Emerging from the foliage comes the MASKED ELENA with two
other cultists.

MASKED ELENA

There you are, Warren!

She wraps her arms around him.

MASKED ELENA

(Whispers in his ear)

I was afraid you were lost in the
woods.

WARREN looks into her eyes as she lets go.

FLASH ON:

CU OF ELENA'S EYES FROM HIS MEMORIES.

BACK TO:

CU OF MASKED ELENA STARING BACK AT HIM.

WARREN isn't sure.

MASKED ELENA

We're having a welcoming
celebration. C'mon, your car will
be fine here.

She grabs his hand and begins leading him back through the gate.

MASKED ELENA
Markus is excited about you.

END PART III

PART IV: MARKUS THE MERCIFUL

38 EXT. COSTIGAN CAMP - NIGHT

ULTRA-WIDE SHOT OF A SILHOUETTED CROWD DANCING AROUND A FIRE.

A drunken MARKUS chants them on, swinging a jar full of off-colored liquid in the air.

MASKED ELENA leads WARREN by the hand to the fire. Behind them, the other cultists usher MASON like a prisoner.

ECU: MASON'S EYES REFLECTING THE FIRELIGHT. HE KNOWS WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN.

MARKUS

This's how I wish e' coulda' met
las' night.

He throws his arms around WARREN, towering over him.

MARKUS

(to the crowd)
He has arrived!

The crowd roars. MARKUS waves them silent.

MARKUS

There is but one session Warren an'
I mus' complete!

POV SHOT: WARREN LOOKS AT ALL THE MASKED FACES STARING AT HIM.

MARKUS

Not to worry, we will rejoin you
soon!

MARKUS begins guiding WARREN to a tent a short distance from the fire. The crowd watches like statues as their god departs from them.

UNTIL -

MARKUS stops. He turns with a finger pointed at MASON!

MARKUS

Roast that faithless pig! Put em'
on th' fire!

THEY GRAB MASON - HE DOES NOT RESIST - FALLING TO HIS KNEES.
He only has eyes for his son, nestled in his MOTHER'S arms.

CUT TO:

39 INT. MARKUS'S TENT - NIGHT

CU CLAUSTROPHOBIC SHOTS THROUGHOUT THIS SCENE.

The tent carries a musky odor, wrinkling WARRENS nostrils - a ratty red-carpet lay under a small circle of stumps. Ash from smoked weed and tobacco decorate the floor.

MARKUS

Hav'a seat.

MARKUS sits, opening a box at his feet. He pulls out a jar of dark liquid.

MARKUS

This m'friend is my very own dark rum. Derived from an old family recipe... to which I added some improvements.

He cackles, handing the jar to WARREN.

WARREN stares into the frothy liquid, avoiding eye contact.

MARKUS

(grabs another jar)

Ah, hell it ain't like it's gonna hurtcha'. Side's this's much more celebratory.

MARKUS takes a hard gulp of the stuff. It scrunches his face.

CU ON WARRENS HAND: THE BALL-PEEN HEAD RESTS HEAVILY ON HIS PALM - THE HANDLE UP HIS SLEEVE.

MARKUS

C'mon!

He clangs his jar against WARRENS.

WARREN drinks, it's burns down his throat - he WHEEZES.

MARKUS

(laughing)

This stuff'll wake ye up and put you right backta sleep!

WARREN
(raspy)
It's surprisingly sweet.

MARKUS
Yeah? Elena told me you were a
connoisseur of rum. Betcha never
had a drink like 'is, though.

WARREN shakes his head and takes another sip.

WARREN
Elena talked about me?

MARKUS
A lot, yeah. She said you worked at
a gas station... pumpin' and
sellin' gas station sushi.
(laughs)

WARREN nods.

MARKUS
She said you 'er married for what?
A year?

WARREN
Uhhh... almost.

WARREN takes another swig, as does MARKUS - mirroring his drinking.

MARKUS grabs the stump he is sat upon and drags it closer to WARREN... uncomfortably close.

His demeanor changes.

MARKUS
Warren, I want to help you. I want
to help you become a better man...
for her.

He gestures outside. WARREN makes eye contact for the first time - his hands begin to shake again.

WARREN
What?

MARKUS
Listen, I... I'm not asking you to
trust me. Just to believe that you
are freely being given a better
life with her.

WARREN
You want me to stay here.

MARKUS
It would be a good thing.

WARREN anxiously tries shifting away. MARKUS notices.

MARKUS
It's alright. I mean, what do you see out there that you don't want? All of those people have found solace here. They smile and converse, they gather and console one another.

MARKUS grabs WARREN'S shaking hand.

MARKUS
(says very softly)
It's alright, Warren.

WARREN stops shifting.

MARKUS
It would be a good thing. I can get you to love this life. Everything I've heard about you... it makes me sad. I can't help but relate to a lot of what you've been through.

SLOW PAN IN ON WARREN'S CONTEMPLATIVE FACE TRANSFIXED ON THE JAR OF RUM.

MARKUS (O.S.)
She was everything you had, wasn't she?

WARREN nods.

INTERCUT TO QUICK FLASHBACK:

40 EXT. CAFÉ - DAY

WARREN sits at a table in a metro area. He watches a woman seated outside a café a few stores down. It is ELENA. She is with another man.

MARKUS (V.O.)
You couldn't let her go.

CUT BACK TO:

41 INT. MARKUS'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

CU: MARKUS GRIPS WARREN'S HAND TIGHTER.

MARKUS

Warren, I can't take you out of this hurt. If I could snap my fingers and it be over, I would. I would've done that for myself a million times, but that's not what makes a man.

A loud yelling erupts outside. WARREN looks at the door from the corner of his eye.

MARKUS

(refocusing WARREN)

Hey, I can't take you out of this, but I can be there with you when you're in it. Yeah? God knows nobody was there for me when the love of my life walked out.

WARREN lifts his head to MARKUS.

MARKUS nods.

MARKUS

In that sadness... is when I found it.

QUICK SHOT OF ANTLERED SHADOW FIGURE APPEARS - STARING AT WARREN ONLY INCHES FROM HIS FACE, BUT WARREN CANNOT SEE IT.

MARKUS

Let's try something. Elena loved doing this. I'm going to close my eyes, and I want you to do the same.

MARKUS closes his eyes and bows his head. WARREN does not.

CU OF WARREN'S HAND STILL CUPPING THE HAMMER UP HIS SLEEVE.

MARKUS

Think back to the last time you saw Elena before she came to me. Where are you, and what do you see?

WARREN stares at the top of MARKUS'S head.

CU OF HAMMERHEAD RESTING IN WARRENS PALM, SLIDING DOWN TO HIS FINGERS.

WARREN

Uhm... I'm at a park. It's kind of late.

MARKUS

Yes, and what do you see?

CU: WARREN'S FACES DANCES BETWEEN SADNESS AND ANGER.

WARREN

I see Elena and another man. They don't see me, but they're walking my way.

MARKUS (O.S.)

What are you thinking?

WARREN

I'm... uhhh... I'm thinking, why are they holding hands?

MARKUS

Keep going.

WARREN

Elena sees me first. She turns to the uhm... man she's with and says something. I can't hear it, but he starts yelling at me.

MARKUS (O.S.)

Can you see his face?

WARREN

No, I just see Elena.

MARKUS

What is he saying?

WARREN

He's cussing me out. He calls me a pervert. He's close enough to hit me.

MARKUS

What about Elena?

WARREN

She looks scared, like I've gone too far.

(MORE)

WARREN (CONT'D)

At least, that's how I feel at the time. I just stand there, looking at her.

MARKUS

What do you feel?

WARREN

I feel guilt.

MARKUS

Why do you feel guilt?

WARREN

I failed her time and time again. I just wanted to convince her that I could be better - and I was better then.

MARKUS

Good. Do you feel what she feels in that moment?

WARREN

Yeah.

MARKUS

Good. Today, are you glad to have found her again?

WARREN

No.

MARKUS

Why?

WARREN

I found out someone was deceiving me.

MARKUS pauses, thinking of how to respond.

CU: WARREN SLIDES THE HAMMER'S HANDLE DOWN TO HIS HAND.

MARKUS

(clears throat)

Do people see value in you?

WARREN

I... I don't know. No.

MARKUS

Would you say you think about what others think of you more than you think of yourself?

WARREN

I don't think people think about me at all. That's what you must've thought about me.

MARKUS

(still calm)

Warren -

MARKUS shakes his head.

WARREN

You must've thought no one would care.

MARKUS lifts his head to look at WARREN.

MARKUS

Warren... I want you to refocus. You have no idea how much I care.

WARREN

You can keep her.

MARKUS

I want you to-

IN ONE FELL SWOOP, WARREN SMASHES THE HAMMER DOWN ON MARKUS'S SKULL! He falls to the floor - groaning, and twitching.

WARREN shuffles over to the front of the tent, looking out to the raving crowd.

SHOT THROUGH THE TENT FLAP: HE SEES THE UN-MASKED ELENA DRINKING FROM A JAR.

It isn't ELENA - It's MARKUS'S LOVER.

MASON is on his knees, unmasked before the RAGING flames. The YOUNG BOY cries at the sight of MASON'S mutilated face.

CU: MASON'S MASK BURNING IN THE FIRE.

WARREN turns back to MARKUS on the ground - His head streams a thin trail of blood.

WARREN
Where is she?!

MARKUS
(dazed)
Eh... Elena.

WARREN
Where is she!?

MARKUS
She's... you'll meet her soon.

The commotion outside grows louder.

WARREN grabs MARKUS by the hair and rests the hammer on his skull.

WARREN
Tell me, you bastard!

MARKUS
She's... just... a weeping in the woods.

WARREN raises the hammer.

MARKUS
(near-whisper)
She... set you up Warren, you may not like what she's-

WARREN again CRASHES the hammer on MARKUS'S head.

His body falls limp.

SUSAN (O.S.)
Markus! We are ready for you!

CUT TO:

42 EXT. COSTIGAN CAMP/WOODS - CONTINUOUS

WARREN emerges from the tent.

The imposter Elena turns to see him - shuffling on her mask.

She drunkenly stumbles over to him.

MASKED ELENA
(laughing)
I knew Markus would love you.

She braces herself on his shoulder.

MASKED ELENA
Sorry... here, help me to the fire.

WARREN looks to MASON with a vacant stare, hoping somehow his plan could still work.

A BATTLE CRY BOOMS BEHIND HIM!

MARKUS
Stop!

Having crawled out on his belly, MARKUS SCREAMS with a damning finger pointed at WARREN:

MARKUS
Traitor!

SLOW MOTION: WARREN AND THE MASKED ELENA BOTH LOOK OVER THEIR SHOULDERS.

She cries at the sight of MARKUS.

CU: MASON'S EYES SHOOT TO WARREN WITH A LOOK OF HOPE — A SILVER LINING.

WARREN SPRINTS OFF INTO THE WOODS.

THE DRUNKEN MASKED CULTISTS CHASE AFTER HIM.

MARKUS
Get him!

The MARKUS'S LOVER rushes over to her master, throwing off her mask.

MARKUS
I'm okay, my love. Make sure they don't kill him.

BACK AT THE FIRE: MASON watches more and more people run after WARREN — leaving only TWO to guard him.

MASON lunges at the closest guard, pulling a KNIFE from their belt. He STABS one and WRESTLES the other to the ground.

The YOUNG BOY wails louder.

MASON chokes the last guard out and retrieves the knife.

MASON looks at the YOUNG BOY burying his face in the MOTHER'S cradling arms. Tears are streaming down their faces.

MOTHER
(in shock)
You killed young Daniel.

MASON
Go into McCarthy. Go to the warehouse just off the road. It will be marked.

GROUND LEVEL SHOT: MARKUS SEES MASON NEAR THE YOUNG BOY.

MARKUS
(screaming plea)
Don't you touch my son! Don't you hurt him, you bastard!

MASON
(to the mother)
I will lead them away.

MASON runs off.

BACK TO: MARKUS looking up at SUSAN and his LOVER tending to him.

MARKUS
Is my son safe?

MARKUS'S LOVER tearfully nods.

MARKUS
You cry for me?

He places his hand on her cheek.

THE DARK ANTLERED FIGURE STANDS OVER HER.

MARKUS
He stands next to you. I see him.

She turns to look, but MARKUS stops her.

MARKUS
No. He is far from done with me. Warren is headed to the Motel. Get Elena and bring her there.

She runs off-screen.

CUT TO:

43 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

FAST TRACKING SHOT BEHIND WARREN RUNNING.

Brush from trees and plants whip-by. The place is blue under surreal moonlight.

He checks over his shoulder - rapid footsteps and the rattling of pills echo his.

AERIAL SHOT THROUGH THE TALL PINES - TWENTY CULTISTS CHASE WARREN.

The forest floor gives way to a steep decline - WARREN loses footing and FALLS, tumbling under a BUSH.

One of the MASK PERSUERS turns to pounce on WARREN BUT -

WITH GARGLING A SCREAM - A DISFIGURED CREATURE BURSTS INTO FRAME, CARRYING THE MASKED PERSUER OFF WITH IT!

Voices in the distance yell:

CULTISTS:
Weeper! Weeper!

SOUNDS OF WAILING AGONY AND GUTTURAL SCREECHES CONTINUE OFF-SCREEN.

Other cultists breeze past WARREN, hidden under the bush.

One stops just before the bush!

CU: WARREN HOLDS HIS BREATH.

The cultist lets out a strange whistle, then scatters in another direction.

WARREN waits until it is silent.

WIDE SHOT: WARREN CAUTIOUSLY RISES FROM THE BUSH.

Screams from the WEEPER echo far in the distance.

AN AX SOARS IN FROM BEHIND THE CAMERA, FLYING ONLY INCHES OVER WARREN'S HEAD!

A CULT MEMBER BURSTS INTO FRAME, TACKLING WARREN TO THE GROUND!

WARREN is easily outmatched.

The man straightens his arms - CHOKING WARREN - WARREN CRASHES the hammer against the side of his head.

He grunts with pain, PUNCHING WARREN hard in the face, the other hand still locked around WARRENS neck. Another blow to the face! TWO MORE!

WARREN POV SHOT: MASON'S HAND SHOOTS INTO FRAME AND PULLS THE CULTISTS' HEAD BACK BY THE HAIR!

MASON drags a knife across his throat! BLOOD SPURTS! It flows down his chest like a waterfall!

The man falls back against a tree gripping his throat.

MASON kneels to him, pulling his mask off.

The dying cultists' face warps with shocking betrayal as he sees who slit his throat.

DYING CULT MEMBER
(gagging, raspy)
Mason?

MASON trys to remain stoic.

MASON
No more.

DYING CULT MEMBER
I... I would've followed you.

MASON'S façade breaks. In deep sadness, he watches his dying friend give one last grunt and twitch before death takes him.

MASON turns to WARREN.

MASON
Meet me at the Motel, the woman
there is with us.

WARREN writhes on the ground, cupping an offset-broken nose.

MASON

I have to go back and get supplies,
or we won't make it far.

A WHISTLE calls in the distance - MASON whistles back.

MASON

The Motel, Warren. Meet me there.

He runs off.

WARREN tries to stand. His lips are torn and bleeding.

CUT TO:

44

EXT. WOODS CLEARING - LATER

WARREN trudges from tree to tree in pain. HIS FOREHEAD AND CHEEKS LOOK HEAVIER, SAGGING SLIGHTLY.

He stops at the sound of a familiar piano melody echoing through the woods. IT IS THE SAME TUNE FROM THE RECORD IN THE MOTEL LOBBY.

A break in the trees gives way to a patch of grass spotlighted in the moon. Atop a worn blanket, the MOTEL WOMAN sits with a portable record player and a wicker basket of goods.

He spots the same WEEPER moving through the trees toward the MOTEL WOMAN.

It is gentle as it approaches. It arches its gnarled, boney spine down to wrap its arms around her. Despite its morbid appearance, she does not flinch but embraces it back.

WARREN

Help. Help me.

IMMEDIATELY, the WEEPER turns its melted face to WARREN. Its hands and body are bloodied, telling of the massacre moments before.

CU OF THE WEEPERS' MILKY WHITE EYE PEERING BACK AT WARREN - IT LUNGES OFF-SCREEN AT HIM.

The weight of the WEEPER'S sagging skin forced it to run with a hunch - boney hands at the ready.

WARREN braces himself.

MOTEL WOMAN

Adeline stop!

The WEEPER stops only feet from WARREN.

MOTEL WOMAN (O.S.)
It's okay, Warren. She won't hurt
you.

MOMENTS LATER:

WARREN and the MOTEL WOMAN stand a distance from Adeline.
They watch as she lifts the skin from her mouth to eat a
loaf of bread.

WARREN
(gestures to his brain)
Is s-she all there?

MOTEL WOMAN
No. She seems to come back when she
hears her music... I think she
remembers me then.

The MOTEL WOMAN sees WARRENS face in the moonlight.

MOTEL WOMAN
You need to take care of yourself.
I can see a changing in your eyes.
They look more recessed.

WARREN reaches for a powder cube pill - finding them crushed
to dust.

WARREN
No, no, no!

He shovels the powder into his mouth.

MOTEL WOMAN
Hey, wait, wait... You'll choke
that way.

She grabs a tin of rolled cigarettes from the wicker basket
and hands one to WARREN.

WARREN
Special blend?

MOTEL WOMAN
(nodding)
An inhalant is more potent.

BEAT - WARREN realizes something.

WARREN

Even then, you knew they'd poisoned me?

MOTEL WOMAN

Warren, there was nothing I could've done. You have no idea the depths -

WARREN

You just let them have me?! I come here looking for the my WIFE, and you - you fed me to them!

MOTEL WOMAN

No, Warren, please listen!

WARREN

You knew I was coming?

MOTEL WOMAN

Yes.

WARREN

You knew why?

She nods, backing away.

WARREN

Then where is she?

He points the hammer at her.

MOTEL WOMAN

Warren, we need to -

WARREN

Where is my wife!?

MOTEL WOMAN

She wanted out Warren! You have no idea what grip they have on us! Elena just wanted out!

WARREN cocks his head.

WARREN

What happened to her!?

CU: ON THE WEEPER RUMMAGING THROUGH THE WICKER BASKET. IT PAUSES - LOOKING OUT INTO THE WOODS.

IT HEARS SOMETHING.

SUDDENLY A BUCKSHOT BLAST RIPS THROUGH THE MOTEL WOMAN'S CHEST! It picks her up and throws her back a few feet.

A RINGING fills WARREN'S ears.

Adeline SCREAMS, racing over to the source of the blast.

WARREN bolts in the opposite direction.

VOICE (O.S.)
Don't shoot the Weeper! Leave it
be!

SLOW PAN IN ON THE RECORD PLAYER - THE MELODY ENDS - SCREAMS, AND THE TEARING FLESH FILL THE SCENE.

CUT TO:

45 EXT. WOODS / MOTEL EXTERIOR - MOMENT'S LATER

Chaos echoes behind WARREN as he stops just before the old highway, looking across to the McCarthy Motel.

An OLD TRUCK is parked next to the Lobby; its hood is up.

WARREN looks at the special blend cigarette. He pats himself for the lighter that would have been in his other jacket.

He shakes his head - throwing the whole cigarette into his mouth, chewing it in disgust.

CUT TO:

WIDE SHOT OF THE OLD TRUCK IN THE FOREGROUND AS WARREN STEALTHILY APPROACHES.

He looks under the hood - No battery.

CUT TO:

46 INT./EXT. MCCARTHY WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT OUTSIDE AN OLD BOARDED-UP WAREHOUSE IN MCCARTHY. A WHITE CHALK SYMBOL IS DRAWN ON ITS DOOR. THE TOWN IS EMPTY.

YOUNG BOY (V.O.)
Mom?

MOTHER (V.O.)
Shh... just stay close to me.

TRACKING SHOT INSIDE THE WAREHOUSE: THE MOTHER AND YOUNG BOY WALK BY CANDLELIGHT.

The place is full of crates, boxes, and boards. Dust and cobwebs layer every inch.

A gas can sits on a RAGGED TARP. The MOTHER notices a TIRE poking out from under it.

MOTHER
(to son)
Help mom move some of this. Be
silent.

They unveil an beater car made of scrapped parts from a multitude of vehicles.

THE HOOD IS GONE, AND AN OUT-OF-PLACE BATTERY IS WIRED-IN.

INSIDE THE CAR are boxes filled with powder cube pills, blankets, and stale bread.

The MOTHER sees a note on the cracked windshield reading: "Don't stop until Washington. Follow the coastline."

She looks at the key MASON had given to her.

MOTHER
Let's get in the car, kiddo.

BACK TO:

47 INT/EXT. MOTEL EXTERIOR/ ROOM - NIGHT

POV SHOT: WARREN SCANS THE MOTEL PARKING LOT - NO ONE IN SIGHT.

He rounds the truck to the driver's side and tries to open it. It is locked - NO SUPPLIES.

WARREN
(whisper yells)
Mason! Mason!

OFF-SCREEN: A SHUFFLING IS HEARD.

WIDE SHOT ON ROOM #06: MORE RUSTLING NOISES ECHO FROM IT - THE DOOR IS OPEN - THE LIGHT FLICKERS.

WARREN squints at a man standing inside.

From a distance, it looks like MASON, but he can't be sure.
The figure leaves the room through the curtain.

WARREN
(Whisper yells)
Mason!

WARREN moves toward the room.

CUT TO:

48 INT. ROOM #06 - NIGHT

TRACKING SHOT THROUGH THE DOORWAY: WARREN ENTERS - HAMMER AT THE READY.

The place is a mess. The bed is overturned, blankets are sprawled on the ground, the nightstand drawers are thrown out... but in the middle of the room sits the TRUNK, with the metal lock loose on the floor.

WRITTEN IN WHITE PAINT on the trunk lid reads: "YOU GET WHAT YOU DESERVE."

WARREN opens it.

UP-SHOT FROM INSIDE THE TRUNK - WARREN APPROACHES IN TERROR.

REVERSE PAN IN ON A MASK LAYING IN THE BOX.

The mask's eyes are molded in anger; the mouth is arched downward in sadness.

Petrified, he pulls out the mask.

ELENA (V.O.)
(whispers in his ear)
Do you love me?

A voice BOOMS from behind the curtain!

MARKUS (O.S.)
Warren!

A cult member stands in the motel room's front doorway with a SHOTGUN. They motion to the curtain.

CUT TO:

49

EXT. MOTEL EXTERIOR - NIGHT

MID SHOT OF THE ARCHWAY LIT BY TORCHLIGHT. WARREN PULLS BACK THE CURTAIN.

The butt of a rifle FLIES IN - STRIKING WARREN in the stomach!

He falls to the floor, dropping the mask and hammer.

WARREN frantically reaches for the hammer - another cultist cocks their rifle. WARREN freezes.

MARKUS (O.S.)

No! No, let him keep it. It's his only comfort.

WIDE SHOT REVEALS A CIRCLE OF TWELVE MASKED CULT MEMBERS WITH MARKUS IN THE CENTER. HIS HEAD IS BANDAGED.

At MARKUS'S feet sit a DEFORMED WOMAN - HALF-TURNED WEEPER, and MASON: on his knees, badly beaten.

MARKUS

How are you feeling? I'm sure your face feels heavy right about now. That's a nasty nose break... we'll have to reset that soon.

MARKUS squats in front of WARREN, picking up his mask.

MARKUS'

(examining the mask)

The mask helps hold everything in place - keeps the skin out of your eyes.

WARREN can only look to the ground in agony.

MARKUS

(turns to the DEFORMED WOMAN)

I'd say this is your best one yet, Elena.

SHOCKED, WARREN lifts his head to the DEFORMED WOMAN.

It is her, the real Elena.

WARREN

(whispers to himself)

Elena.

MARKUS
 (tosses the mask at
 WARREN)
 Put it on.

MARKUS stands, WARREN continues to look at ELENA. She does not make eye contact.

MARKUS
 (yells angrily)
 Put it on!

The cult member closest to ELENA points a RIFLE at her head.

WARREN puts on the mask.

MARKUS
 (tone softens)
 Good.

He turns to MASON, who can barely sit upright.

MARKUS
 (to MASON)
 How far did you think you'd get?
 We've got family from here to
 Portland, and I'm betting that old
 truck would never make it over the
 mountain. But you know that... and
 that's not even the worst part. No.
 The worst part is you deceived this
 man. You planted the seed that I am
 a liar, a false prophet.

MARKUS senses himself getting angry. He stops himself, and turns to WARREN.

MARKUS
 (Calm voice)
 I'm not mad at you, Warren. You did
 what any cornered animal would do.
 I'm not going to hurt you... the
 worst of it is almost over.

CU ON THE MOUTHS OF THE MASKED CULT MEMBERS WHISPERING A
 CHANT: "MARKUS THE MERCIFUL"

MARKUS
 (to MASON)
 I never want to kill anyone. I have
 really tried with you, Mason.
 (MORE)

MARKUS (CONT'D)

I have tried to get you to see clearly. But... I have to let you go now.

He turns to the crowd.

MARKUS

My friends, he is too dangerous to be cast out. Becoming *the weeping* is sacred. He would squander it with vengeful acts. He has already killed two of our brothers.

The chanting stops.

MARKUS solemnly nods to the cult member behind MASON. THEY FIRE A REVOLVER AT HIS HEAD.

The bullet passes through and impacts the dirt below.

MASON FALLS DEAD.

WARREN jumps at the shot, trembling.

MARKUS quickly kneels to WARREN.

MARKUS

That was it. It's over. The worst of it is over.

MARKUS holds WARREN like a father holds a crying son. He lifts WARREN's chin to look at him.

MARKUS

Before, I said to you I was going to give you a better life. Make you a better man. Look at her.

WARREN looks.

MARKUS

We both opened our hearts to love this woman. And she ran out on both of us. Warren, look at my life; I am a lot like you. We love too deeply and have lost much peace.

WARREN looks back at MARKUS, he nods.

MARKUS

When a love left me the first time, I had to accept it and let her go. She took everything.

(MORE)

MARKUS (CONT'D)

Love tricked me again. I hadn't it in my heart to forgive Elena until I heard of you. You who have loved and lost all. I kept her for you. I'm giving you a chance I never had to hold on to her. She may not love you, but... she will learn. Nurse her to health. I will give you all you need. Learn forgiveness as I never could.

MARKUS whistles to the twelve cult members. They leave.

MARKUS

We are here to help you, but her life is in your hands.

MARKUS walks into the surrounding dark wilderness, peering over his shoulder. He sees the DARK ANTLERED FIGURE standing between WARREN and ELENA in the cold of the blue moonlight.

SHOT OF WARREN'S EYES: ONE LOOKS MILKY — THEY DART TO THE HAMMER SITTING IN THE DIRT.

SHOT OF ELENA'S HEAD, HANGING IN DEFEAT.

CU: WARREN'S FISTS TIGHTEN.

WIDE SHOT: THE TWO SIT IN THE COLD DARKNESS.

HARD CUT TO BLACK.

THE END