

Misfortune

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INT. DARK PASSAGE

A dark, cramped, filthy place.

SHAFTS OF LIGHT slice in from unseen cracks and crevices, giving us glimpses of a YOUNG MAN crawling in the dirt.

CURT, 19. He's normally considered handsome, but right now he's covered in sweat and grime.

He stops for a moment. Something is silhouetted nearby in the dark...

He clicks on a FLASHLIGHT and finds what he's been seeking --

A LEAKY PIPE

He uses a wrench on the pipe's VALVE SEAL. It won't budge.

A RAT sits nearby, staring at him.

CURT

Well don't just sit there. Give me
a hand with this.

The rat runs off. Curt manages to tighten the seal and the leaking stops.

Then the old cast iron seal CRACKS APART. Water gushes out.

CURT

Shit!

He starts shimmying backwards out of the CRAWLSPACE.

EXT. OLD RURAL HOUSE - OWATONNA MINNESOTA - DAY

Curt emerges from underneath a HOUSE. His Boss ED (50s) sits on the bumper of the PLUMBING TRUCK, waiting for him.

ED

Lemme guess, you cracked it.
(Curt nods)
Don't sweat it.

Ed looks through the parts on the truck for another seal.

ED

You mind going back under there?

CURT

Fine. Not like you're going to fit
anyway.

Ed laughs a little and nods.

ED

Better hurry up if you're gonna go see what's-her-name.

CURT

(sarcastic)

Wow. She's back in town tonight? I had no idea.

ED

Only one thing I ever learned about women - Never wait to tell them how you feel.

CURT

Oh, I don't know. What's a few more years?

Curt gets ready to crawl back under the house. Rubs his sore hands.

CURT

You ever wish you'd become something else? Like an accountant?

ED

Let me tell you something. An accountant can get rich, but they can also get fired. There'll always be work for a plumber.

He finds the replacement seal.

ED

Then again, my wife left me for an accountant, so what the hell do I know.

As Ed talks, Curt stares at Ed's HANDS --

Callused and gnarled from thirty years of manual labor.

EXT. RURAL HOUSE, OWATONNA MINNESOTA - NIGHT

Cars are parked all over the lawn of the HOUSE and a PARTY is raging inside. The high proportion of PICKUP TRUCKS gives some indication of what kind of town this is.

Another pickup arrives, but this one has a utility body on it. Writing on the side reads "SUNRISE PLUMBING". CURT drives.

INT. CURT'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Curt checks his hair in the rearview mirror. About to get out of the truck when he notices he still has GREASE STAINS on his hands. Frustrated, he grabs some DE-GREASER from the glove compartment. It doesn't do much good.

He gives up and gets out of the truck.

INT. RURAL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The PARTY is in full swing. All the local kids are back from college and a few of the girls from the nearby high school are hoping they'll fit in with this older crowd.

The center of attention in this room is a GIRL in an Ohio State T-shirt. She's standing on the couch and yelling along to a song with a bottle of beer as a microphone.

This is LYNN. She's 19, athletic and beautiful. And it hasn't gone unnoticed by the guys in the room. One of them gets up on the couch and tries to grind with her, but she uses a strong stiff-arm to keep him at a distance.

To all the guys' disappointment, she JUMPS down off the couch when she sees --

LYNN

CURT!!

She runs over to Curt who just walked in the door and gives him a huge HUG. Even wraps her legs around him for good measure.

CURT

Welcome home.

LYNN

You're late!

CURT

You're drunk.

LYNN

Jealous.

Everyone seems to know Curt and wants to say hello as he tries to walk into the party. It isn't easy with Lynn WRAPPED around him.

CURT

You can let go now.

Smiling, she jumps down. But then goes behind him and jumps on his back for a PIGGYBACK RIDE.

CURT
Where's Jeff?

LYNN
Let's try the kitchen.

He walks toward the kitchen, CARRYING her on his back. He looks around at the size of the party. People seem to be drinking and mingling in every room of the house. Most are wearing shirts emblazoned with the names of Colleges.

CURT
Kinda funny that everybody's in a rush to get back to little old Owatonna.

LYNN
That's cause you're here! You're the only good thing about this trailer park Shangri-La.

CURT
Says the girl who grew up in a trailer.

LYNN
(playful)
Shhhhh!

INT. RURAL HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

JEFF, 19 wears the same OHIO STATE T-SHIRT as Lynn. He's been drinking and he's standing near the KEG arguing with a few other guys.

JEFF
Four bucks each for the keg. I want to see you guys put in.

The THREE GUYS he's talking to don't seem to be in a generous mood. All three of them have the same BAD HAIRCUT. Maybe that's why they have a chip on their shoulder.

DAVE stands nearby, getting nervous.

DAVE
Dude, it's my place and I said it's cool.

JEFF

I don't give a shit if this is your place Dave. These pussy cheeseheads can pay for their beer.

One of the three CHEESEHEADS gets in Jeff's face.

CHEESEHEAD #1

What are you gonna do about it?

JEFF

Really want to find out?

DAVE

If you guys start any shit I'm calling the cops.

JEFF

Quit being a fag Dave.

CHEESEHEAD #1

Yeah.

JEFF

You calling my friend a fag?!

CURT

Jeff!

CURT ENTERS and steps between them all. Lynn is still on his back. She JUMPS down. Jeff gives Curt a big hug.

JEFF

Hey! You made it!

With the situation diffused, the Cheeseheads all grab a beer and leave the room.

CURT

Making friends as usual huh?

JEFF

Bunch of Wisconsin assholes weren't putting in for beer.

CURT

Yeah? And since when do you get in fights?

JEFF

There's a lot of shit you don't know about me these days.

Curt just LAUGHS at his drunk friend trying to be tough.

CURT

Well, try to chill out beer
muscles. I still have to live in
this town remember?

Lynn jumps on Jeff's back now, and grabs his cup of beer.

LYNN

Less thinkee more drinkee.

JEFF

(to Curt)

Do you remember her weighing this
much?

LYNN

(threatening with cup)

I'll pour this on your head.

CURT

She will too.

Jeff nods. Starts playfully carrying her around the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SOON AFTER

Curt and Jeff are sitting on the couch. Jeff is noticeably
drunker. Lynn is sprawled out on the couch next to them.
Mostly passed out.

JEFF

This place is stupid. I mean, don't
get me wrong, you're cool. But this
town sucks. No offense. You're my
best friend. I'm glad you're here.
But this place is ass. But not
you... Listen...

CURT

Hold that rambling thought. I gotta
take a leak. Just keep an eye on
Lynn.

STAIRS - LATER

Curt is coming out of the BATHROOM at the top of the stairs.

Suddenly, a COMMOTION down in the kitchen gets his attention.
All of the people at the party start SHOUTING.

Jeff and Cheesehead #1 spill out from the KITCHEN - there's
some PUSHING and YELLING going on. Curt shakes his head.

CURT
 (mostly to himself)
 Jeff, don't do it -

Too late. Jeff takes a SWING and BEDLAM ERUPTS. Party-goers all swarm around the FIGHT. Curt stays put. Until he sees --

THE OTHER TWO CHEESEHEADS

They're coming up behind Jeff. One of them has a BOTTLE in his hand, ready to swing it...

CURT
 Shit!

Curt makes a split-second decision and LEAPS off the upstairs railing - The two Cheeseheads crumple to the floor as Curt LANDS on top of them.

One Cheesehead WRESTLES with Curt as the third one is deciding whether to help gang up on Curt or Jeff.

The BRAWL is in full swing as Lynn sits up on the couch and looks around. She sobers up instantly and jumps into the fray.

The third Cheesehead has ganged up on Jeff, until Lynn comes up behind gets him in a HEADLOCK. Curt manages to pick up the guy he's wrestling with and SLAM him into the wall.

The guy Lynn's pounding on throws her off. She grabs a CHAIR...

LYNN
 Hey!

She hurls the chair at one of the Cheeseheads and he ducks. It brushes by his head and SMASHES a large PICTURE WINDOW. Everyone stops for a moment when they hear the SHATTERING GLASS. And that's not all --

Curt sees it first. RED AND BLUE LIGHTS outside the window. He pulls Jeff toward the kitchen.

CHEESEHEAD #1
 The cops are here!

All the kids SCATTER around the house. The underage ones drop whatever beverage happens to be in their hands.

Lynn goes to follow Curt and Jeff OUTSIDE --

EXT. RURAL HOUSE - BACKYARD - SECONDS LATER

Curt and Jeff are running through the DARK BACKYARD. Lynn comes out behind them and quickly catches up.

CURT
(to Jeff)
Nice work.

JEFF
Go for the trees!

They rush into the WOODED AREA behind the house. Jeff gives Lynn a boost up a TREE. Curt climbs another one. They seem very adept at this.

Jeff settles into the higher branches. Shouts over to Curt.

JEFF
Hey, I forgot to ask... Are we all
set for Saturday?

Curt is busy nursing a BLOODY LIP. He looks over at Jeff - 'Are you serious?!'. Then he just laughs --

CURT
Yeah.

LYNN
(whisper)
Guys! Shut up!

They can see a few COPS coming out from the back of the house with FLASHLIGHTS. They shine their beams around in the woods for a while and then give up.

Jeff gives a thumbs up to Curt, who just shakes his head.

FADE TO:

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - MORNING

Curt's PICKUP TRUCK comes into view on a quiet stretch of highway. A CANOE is strapped on the back.

INT. CURT'S PICKUP - RURAL HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Curt drives as Lynn sleeps in the passenger seat. Jeff leans in from the back.

JEFF
You been getting any climbing in?

CURT

Not really. I'm a working man these days. You?

JEFF

There's a climbing wall at the gym. Got in there a lot.

CURT

Not the same as the real thing.

JEFF

Well, we'll see who's first to the top when we get there huh?

LYNN

(sleepy)

Yeah. It'll be me.

Curt smiles at her.

JEFF

Did Lynn tell you about her last meet?

Curt shakes his head.

JEFF

I was there. Got to see her set the school record in the two hundred meters.

CURT

That's awesome. Did you tell everyone you knew her back when she was just some girl who smoked pot in your garage?

Lynn punches him in the arm.

CURT

Hey. Driver's off limits. You know that.

Lynn reaches back and punches Jeff in the arm instead. Really hard.

JEFF

Ow!

They're passing through rolling FARM FIELDS. Curt's looking for something off to the side of the road. Sees it --

CURT
Hey guys look! Remember?

Jeff sees what he's pointing at.

JEFF
Uh huh.

He doesn't seem too enthusiastic as Curt slows down and pulls over.

LYNN
(perking up)
Hey! Is that why we drove this way?

CURT
Well yeah. It's tradition right?

JEFF
When we were twelve.

CURT
Puuussssy...

JEFF
Okay. Let's do it.

EXT. HILLTOP FARM - CONTINUOUS

The three friends are trekking up the mild slope toward an OLD BARN. Lynn stops, puts her hands on her hips.

LYNN
Race you to the top.

Jeff and Curt share a look.

CURT
So... we're going to race an All American track star uphill?

JEFF
In these shoes?

Jeff points to his hiking boots. Lynn looks disappointed that she won't get to show off. Suddenly, Curt points over her shoulder.

CURT
Shit, the truck's on fire!

Lynn turns around to look at the road and the two boys take off. By the time she turns back they have a good head start.

Curt and Jeff smile at each other as they give it the best they've got, but Lynn's GAINING fast.

AT THE BARN

Lynn touches the side of the barn first, laughing. Curt and Jeff have given up and are WALKING the last few yards.

JEFF

(out of breath)

We were better off the blocks
though.

LYNN

Yeah, real mature. And I was All
State, not All American.

CURT

You'll always be All American with
us baby.

INT. OLD BARN - SOON AFTER

The remnants of the past year's HAY fill this section of the barn. It's not full, but it's still a big enough pile for --

A HAY DIVE

Curt leaps from the LOFT and lands on his back in the hay mound some twenty feet below.

CURT

Sweet!

He rolls himself out of the hay just in time to avoid Jeff JUMPING DOWN on top of him. Jeff laughs.

JEFF

Shit, I don't remember it being
that high!

CURT

That's because you never jumped off
it. You always chickened out.

JEFF

That's not true. Why would you say
that?

CURT

Look out!

Lynn is ready for her jump. They clear the way as she does a BACKFLIP into the pile.

Buried somewhere down in the hay, she thrusts her FIST up in triumph.

INT. CURT'S CAR - LATER

They're all LAUGHING and brushing hay off themselves. Curt drives, with Jeff riding shotgun. Lynn is in the back seat, trying to shake the itchy hay remnants from the inside of her shirt.

LYNN

Screw it.

She WHIPS HER SHIRT OFF and shakes it out the window, sitting there in nothing but her bra. Curt sneaks a look back via the rear view mirror. Jeff is eyeing her in the side mirror.

Then, of course, the two guys catch each other looking. Nobody says anything and they put their eyes back on the road. But the ride has gotten a little quieter.

EXT. PARK ENTRY POINT - DAY

Curt's truck comes to a halt at a large PARKING AREA and the three friends climb out and stretch.

JEFF

God it feels good to be back here.

CURT

I can't tell you the last time I had time off.

LYNN

I know. After last week's exams I really need this.

(beat)

Okay, who's ready to haul this goddamn canoe overland for a mile and then paddle for two days then climb a hundred footer?

Everybody smiles and raises their hands.

LYNN

Well shit then, let's get relaxing.

She swings her heavy BACKPACK on and starts to untie the CANOE. Curt goes around to the back of the truck to get his gear. While he's out of earshot --

LYNN
 (hushed, to Jeff)
 You didn't tell him yet, did you.

JEFF
 Right moment never came up. Why don't we just wait until the trip's over?

LYNN
 I'll do it.

JEFF
 No no. I'll do it. Later though.
 (off Lynn's look)
 I promise.

EXT. BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA (BWCA) - RAGING RIVER - DAY

The BOUNDARY WATERS is a million acre national park filled with lakes, forests and rivers.

One of those RIVERS comes around a bend here, breaking into white foam along the high ROCK WALLS that form the banks.

SHOUTING can be heard in the distance, getting louder.

The THREE FRIENDS come into view as their CANOE hurtles around the corner.

CURT
 Brace!

They stick their PADDLES into the water like three rudders, expertly steering through the RAPIDS and barely keeping their canoe upright.

Soaking wet, they safely make it through the bend and emerge into some calmer water.

LYNN
 Hell yeah!

JEFF
 Get ready!

They steel themselves for a series of MINI WATERFALLS coming up --

JEFF
Powerstroke!

All of them paddle like mad, leaping the canoe over the small drop-offs. It's the most fun they've had in years.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PICTURESQUE LAKE - DAY

A LAKE as clear and blue as the sky above it. Nothing out here but the sound of BIRDS and INSECTS. And the occasional paddle.

Curt, Lynn and Jeff are in the canoe, making their way across the lake. Curt is at the back. He has a FISHING LINE trailing into the water behind them that he checks on as he paddles.

He sees a nasty knot in the fishing line and pulls a shiny SWISS ARMY KNIFE out of his pocket.

LYNN
Hey, nice knife. Did you get that for the trip?

CURT
Yup. Even has a fish scaler on it.

LYNN
Awesome.

Curt smiles. Lynn sets her paddle down.

LYNN
Think maybe you're ready to switch spots with me?

CURT
I don't know. Think you remember how to fish?

LYNN
Oh, it'll come back to me.

CURT
The exercise will do you some good too.

Lynn flexes her MUSCLES for Curt. Impressive.

CURT
Hey Jeff, is that what all the Ohio girls look like?

JEFF

Depends on how many beers I've had.

Lynn gives him a little KICK.

CURT

Dude, tell me the truth. Are you getting laid out there?

Lynn shoots Jeff a look. He turns back to Curt and just gives a little shrug and a smile.

CURT

That's my boy. I told you it'd be like that. College is totally different. Hey, you ever get in over your head out there, let me know. I'll come to town if there's a dangerous mission. Don't want my wingman flying solo.

Lynn leans forward and WHISPERS something into Jeff's ear. They keep paddling down the river.

Curt squints up at the SUN burning down on them.

CURT

It's pretty hot back here Jeff. You mind paddling a little faster so we can get a breeze going?

Jeff leans back and WHISPERS something to Lynn. She nods.

CURT

What is this, some kind of conspiracy?

They both turn toward him and smile - and then unleash their paddles, SPLASHING him with water over and over. He retaliates, but he's outmatched.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

Sitting around a CAMPFIRE, the three friends have finished cooking and eating a FISH. Jeff picks the last bit off the bones.

JEFF

How come everything cooked in the woods just tastes better?

CURT

Lynn, remember the first time we brought you out here?

LYNN

Uh huh. I remember drinking a whole two liter of Coke by myself and eating two boxes of Girl Scout cookies.

JEFF

And then you puked.

LYNN

(laughing)

All over my Wonder Woman sleeping bag.

They're all laughing now.

LYNN

You guys, all my parents let me have at home was healthy stuff. It was like a junk food paradise out here!

CURT

And you started crying when my Dad said he would take you home!

LYNN

I was having fun! I was okay once I stopped throwing up. At least I didn't pee on anybody...

Lynn and Curt both give Jeff a look. Lynn turns to Curt --

LYNN

How does that one go again?

JEFF

C'mon. You know it by heart by now

LYNN

I wanna hear it again!

Curt happily goes into dramatic storyteller mode

CURT

It was a dark night in the woods...
Jeff was tanked...

JEFF
Strawberry wine coolers

CURT
I was going to leave that part out.
For your dignity. Anyway... Lazy
ass keeps getting up to piss but
doesn't want to stagger to the
trees. Just zips the tent open and
pees out.

Jeff shrugs. Lynn gives him a thumbs up and a wink.

CURT
But later... in a sleepy, drunken
haze, he doesn't realize he has
stepped OUTSIDE the tent... he
turns, sticks his schnutz INTO his
own tent, and takes the world's
longest whizz.

Lynn bursts out laughing. Like hearing it for the first time.
The others join in.

JEFF
(to Curt)
Not sure what you're laughing
about, you're the one who got
pissed on.

They all LAUGH harder. Curt looks at the frying pan.

CURT
Well guess what? It's your turn for
dish duty.

JEFF
No. I did the cooking.

Jeff looks at Lynn.

JEFF
I think it's your turn.

LYNN
No, I think it's your turn.

Jeff gives her a look that says 'come on, you know...'

LYNN

I'll do it.

Lynn collects the dishes and walks down to the LAKE. As soon as she's out of earshot --

JEFF

So there's something I wanted to tell you...

CURT

How long have you guys been hooking up?

Jeff laughs nervously.

JEFF

How'd you know that?

CURT

Dude. I'm your best friend. I'm her best friend. You think I couldn't tell? Why'd you keep it a secret?

JEFF

I wasn't sure how to tell you. I mean, you know...

CURT

What?

JEFF

It's always been the three of us. Just all friends.

CURT

But it's different now. You guys are off in Ohio and... Look, I'm happy for you. Better you than some frat guy.

Lynn is walking back to camp from the lake, carrying a pan of water. She sees Curt and Jeff look up at her.

LYNN

What?

CURT

Jeff told me.

LYNN

Oh. And?

CURT

And it's no big deal. I mean, if he's impotent why should it be a secret?

LYNN

Uh huh. Right.

Lynn sits down. Jeff wraps his arms around her, keeping her warm.

JEFF

I would have told you sooner, but I didn't want this trip to be weird. We wanted it to be like when we were kids.

CURT

It is. It's all good. It's not like you guys are gonna be banging in the canoe or anything.

JEFF

I hadn't thought of that.

LYNN

Yeah, the canoe. That's hot.

Curt smiles. Lynn and Jeff are relieved that the whole issue is out in the open.

CURT

Yeah, yeah, just keep it down. I've gotta get some sleep.

Looks at the TWO TENTS.

CURT

I guess this means I can have a tent all to myself. Fun fun.

INT. LYNN'S AND JEFF'S TENT - NIGHT

Lynn wraps her arms around Jeff and gives him a kiss.

LYNN

Hey.

JEFF

Hey.

He kisses her back.

INT. CURT'S TENT - SAME TIME

Curt can hear Lynn and Jeff talking. He pulls out a SWISS ARMY KNIFE. Only this one is brand new, still sealed in plastic. And it has LYNN'S INITIALS engraved on it.

He looks at it for a moment, then throws it back into his pack.

INT. LYNN AND JEFF'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Jeff is trying to get Lynn in the mood, but she pulls back a bit. Looks in the direction of the other tent. Jeff gets it.

JEFF

We can be quiet.

She doesn't move. Jeff tries to kiss her...

LYNN

Not tonight. It's too weird.

Jeff's turn to look in the direction of Curt's tent.

JEFF

I kinda feel bad for Curt.

LYNN

Why? He's making good money. He's got a brand new truck...

JEFF

Yeah, but it's in Owatonna. Ten years from now, when we're both making over six figures, he's going to be in the same place, making about what he makes now and still trying to pay it all off.

LYNN

Minnesota's not the worst place in the world. Maybe he's happy with his life here.

INT. CURT'S TENT - NIGHT

Curt's laying on his back, listening to the VOICES from the other tent. He pulls his sleeping bag over his head and tries to go to sleep.

LYNN (O.S.)
 (to Jeff)
 Good night baby.

EXT. PLACID POND - AFTERNOON

The raging Moose River rapids eventually settle and split into many calmer waterways. One of them ends in this TRANQUIL POND.

Lynn stands near the shore, up to her waist in the water. Curt and Jeff are out in the pond, backstroking away from her.

JEFF
 Say when!

LYNN
 Are you going to the canoe and back
 or just to the canoe?

Both of the boys are TREADING WATER NOW, out in the middle of the pond.

CURT
 Canoe and back!

Jeff rolls his eyes and smiles as he gives Curt the finger.

LYNN
 Okay, first one back here to touch
 my hand wins. Go!!

Curt and Jeff SWIM AWAY from her as fast as they can.

Curt is swimming hard, and his face is too intense for just a friendly race. But Jeff has fallen far enough behind that he can't see it.

Their race takes them around a bend in the shore and out of sight. She hears Jeff yelling --

JEFF (O.S.)
 And I'm gonna touch more than your
 hand Lynny!

Lynn laughs and SWIMS out a bit into the water to watch the race, but they've gone past where she can see. She goes back closer to shore to wait.

She floats on her back and takes a moment to soak in the morning sun. It's shaping up to be a perfect day.

A WATER BUG skims along the surface. Lynn follows it with her eyes and suddenly sees --

A TWENTY DOLLAR BILL. It bobs in the water, impaled on a small branch.

She snatches it up and looks around. Where could this possibly have come from? She swims out a little to see if the guys are on their way back. But there's no sign of them.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NEAR PLACID POND - MOMENTS LATER

Lynn bounds into camp with a big smile on her face. Curt and Jeff are standing there, still soaking wet from their swim.

LYNN

You guys pussied out and stopped at the canoe huh? Too bad. There was a prize waiting for you.

(holds up the twenty)

Check it out. It was just floating in the water. Twenty bucks. Right back there.

They just stare at her blankly.

LYNN

Guys? C'mon! How cool is that?

She's puzzled by their reaction, until she looks down at their feet --

NINE WET DUFFEL BAGS sit there, freshly pulled from the water. A few of them are zipped open. Inside --

CASH. Millions.

Lynn just stares. Shock. She doesn't even notice as her precious TWENTY DOLLAR BILL slips out of her fingers and flutters to the ground.

TIME LAPSE

The three friends now sit in a circle. All the BAGS have been opened and the PILES OF MONEY are being counted.

They regularly look over their shoulders for signs of other campers. Lynn is counting stacks. She puts the last WAD on the pile.

LYNN

I get the same. Five hundred thousand in each bag. That's -

CURT
Four and a half million. Split
three ways would be -

JEFF AND LYNN
(in unison)
One and a half million each.

CURT
Yeah.

They all sit quietly, imagining life as a millionaire. Until --

CURT
If we kept it.

Silence. All wondering how realistic a proposition it is.

JEFF
Wait. Let's talk about the risks
here. We all know the upside.
What's the downside?

LYNN
You mean like if it's drug money or
Russian Mafia money or something?
And the bad guys come after us?

CURT
It might not even be real. What if
it's counterfeit?

Jeff pulls out his WALLET and removes a TWENTY. He compares
it to one of the bills.

LYNN
Does it look real?

JEFF
I think so. It has those little
fibers and everything. It's hard to
tell though. It's one of those old
style twenties.

A light goes on in Curt's eyes. He starts flitting through
one of the packs of bills. He examines the PAPER BAND around
it that says 'BEP'.

Meanwhile, Lynn takes a closer look at the bills.

LYNN
It's got to be real. And they're
not in sequence either. You know?
The serial numbers...

JEFF

What if it's from a bank robbery
and it's all marked?

CURT

This isn't from a bank. It's from a
lot of banks. B-E-P. I used to see
that when my Mom worked at First
Savings.

LYNN

Well what is it? What's B-E-P?

CURT

Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

LYNN

It's from the U.S. Mint?

CURT

No. The Mint only makes coins. B-E-
P makes the money. Did you notice
that they're ALL old twenties?

Jeff nods. He gets it.

JEFF

Shit yeah. The banks gradually take
the old money out of circulation --

CURT

And send it back to the B-E-P to be
destroyed.

LYNN

Well, you know what they say - "One
man's trash is another man's
treasure".

They all just stand there. Staring at the money. The sun has
started to drop low in the sky.

JEFF

So guys... what are we doing?

No one answers. They look at all the CASH. Mesmerized.
Finally, Curt snaps out of it.

CURT

Whatever we're going to do, we're
not going to leave it here. And we
can't take it up the climb with us,
so that means we're heading back.
Right?

JEFF

It's a three day trek back out from here. I guess we'll have time to figure it out.

Lynn hoists one of the DUFFEL BAGS over her shoulder.

LYNN

Well, we wanted a trip to remember.

The three start to BREAK CAMP.

EXT. PLACID POND - NIGHTFALL

The last remnants of light are fading behind the mountains as Curt throws the last of the NINE BAGS of money into the CANOE. They cover the bottom.

Jeff looks at his HEAVY BACKPACK - no more room on the bottom. He slings it on and steps into the canoe.

Lynn gingerly sets herself down among the money as Curt grabs a paddle and pushes off from shore.

JEFF

It's going to look weird. Canoeing at night.

CURT

Better than waiting here for the guys that stole it to come looking.

LYNN

If it's even stolen. Maybe they were transporting it and it got... dropped or something.

CURT

The U.S. Government wouldn't use duffel bags. It's stolen.

Lynn shrugs. That's probably true. They PADDLE UPSTREAM toward the fork that will join them with a larger artery. Paddling while wearing their backpacks is uncomfortable.

JEFF

Might as well be canoeing all night. It's not like we would have gotten any sleep.

EXT. MEANDERING RIVER - DAYBREAK

The MORNING SUN rises over the tree line. The three friends have been paddling all night, but they're holding up pretty well. Lynn pats the bags of money.

LYNN

Maybe I'll take an extra long vacation this Summer.

JEFF

You know where we should go? Eastern Europe. Someplace like Croatia. Right on the Mediterranean, great weather...

LYNN

And I'd bet they'd take American cash too. No questions asked.

JEFF

Shit yeah. We could buy cars there, property, whatever.

LYNN

And I sure as hell wouldn't have to worry about how to pay for grad school.

JEFF

What are you talking about? You're a star athlete. You'll get a free ride for grad school too.

LYNN

Free ride my ass. Do you know how many hours I train every day, and have to keep up my classes?

JEFF

Well if you'd start taking some pass/fails like I told you to it would get easier.

Lynn just gives him a LOOK.

JEFF

Hey, it doesn't matter now anyway. We're rich right?

CURT

Hold on. We haven't made a decision yet. I don't know that we should keep this.

JEFF

Who says you get to decide that?
You want to just pass up millions
of dollars without at least
thinking about what it would mean
for your life?

CURT

Wait. What if we only skimmed a
hundred grand out of each bag? We
could just put the bags back where
they were. Even if they got found,
it would take a while for anybody
to figure out they're a little
short.

JEFF

(does the math)

What, so we take three hundred
thousand dollars each? And leave
the rest?

CURT

We spend more than that and we're
bound to get caught anyway. I tell
you what, it'd be enough for me to
set up my own business. Free and
clear.

LYNN

Or you could pay for college. You
know Curt, Ohio State's always got
room for somebody paying full
tuition.

Jeff glances back at Curt. He sees Curt STOP PADDLING for a moment. Maybe the college idea has gotten some traction.

With mixed emotions, Jeff focuses on paddling again.

JEFF

That doesn't make sense. We're
taking a big risk either way. If
I'm taking a chance like this, it's
to be a millionaire, not to keep a
few hundred grand.

The others give this some thought.

LYNN

He's right. It's all or nothing.

Curt doesn't argue. They might be right. Lynn and Jeff look at him. Which is it going to be?

CURT

Wait.

Curt holds up his hand. He POINTS. They can see a BUILDING silhouetted on the shore ahead --

A RANGER STATION

Just a small hut raised up on pylons near the edge of the water.

LYNN

Is there somebody there?

JEFF

I can't tell, that might be the ranger there, over by the water.

LYNN

Yeah, he's there. I just saw him move. I think he's looking at us.

As they float closer they can all see him. He seems to be looking in their direction as they approach.

Lynn and Jeff look at the DUFFEL BAGS, and then at CURT.

No one speaks as they move toward the station. Lynn shifts her weight and the bags of money RUSTLE beneath her. Maybe she's trying to remind them. Maybe she just wanted to touch the millions one last time.

The sound gets Curt's attention. Scenarios swirl in his mind as he eyes the RANGER, clearly visible now in his green uniform. They're already within shouting distance. Paddling CLOSER.

Jeff licks his lips; anxious. Stares hard at Curt's back, trying to suss out what's in his heart.

JEFF

(whispering)
Curt...

CURT

(shouts to shore)
Hey there!

Jeff and Lynn are nervous. Lynn GRABS Curt's leg.

RANGER

How's it going?

JEFF

Fine thanks.

Jeff paddles just a bit faster, eager to keep moving. But Curt paddles backwards a bit, slowing them down.

RANGER

Saw that you're coming from Moose River. Have you been on shore at all?

Everyone STOPS PADDLING. No one answers. Finally, CURT speaks up.

CURT

Just one night upriver there, and some portages.

RANGER

Did you happen to see anybody that might look like a poacher? We had a report of somebody finding a bear trap.

CURT

No, nothing like that...

There is a pregnant pause, it almost seems as if Curt is about to say more. Jeff grips his paddle tightly.

CURT

Well, have a good one.

Curt gives a friendly WAVE as they all paddle on out to more open water.

The Ranger nods, then turns away. He doesn't bother to give them a second glance as they slip downriver into the distance.

EXT. PORTAGE NEAR RAPIDS - DAY

A series of vicious RAPIDS make this section of the Boundary Waters impassable by boat. Curt, Jeff and Lynn are WALKING their canoe over a nearby PORTAGE (a piece of land that bridges two bodies of water or bypasses rapids).

LYNN

Okay. Break.

They set the CANOE down and drop to the ground, throwing their packs aside. Leaning up against the canoe, the three of them look inside it.

All those BAGS of money.

CURT

So I'm assuming you guys aren't
into just skimming a little off the
top huh?

Jeff and Lynn shake their heads.

CURT

(starts to smile)
Well then I guess we're all
millionaires.

Jeff and Lynn look at each other. We ARE keeping all of it.

JEFF

Hell yeah!

Curt and Jeff touch fists. Lynn throws her head back and smiles.

LYNN

Whoever said money can't buy
happiness was an asshole. I am so
fucking happy right now.

Jeff puts his arm around her. She pulls Curt in for a GROUP HUG as they all start to laugh.

PORTAGE NEAR RAPIDS - LATER

The three friends are still lying back against the canoe, basking in their newfound wealth.

CURT

Maybe after we get back from Europe
I should think about joining you
guys at Ohio State. Be nice to have
a degree under my belt when I start
my own business.

He gives a good natured punch to Jeff, who doesn't look too excited about the idea of Curt joining them at College.

Curt starts to get up, and puts his knee down onto the wet ground - It sinks in five inches of mud.

CURT

(looking at his pants)
Goddamnit. I just bought these at
R-E-I. Hundred bucks.

They realize the irony. Jeff bursts out laughing.

JEFF

I'll buy you another pair buddy.

CURT

Yeah? Okay, I'll get you a new shirt.

With that, Curt hurls a handful of MUD right onto Jeff's shirt. Jeff gives a wicked smile and there is a pregnant pause as he prepares his counter attack.

LYNN

Guys...

Both of them turn and throw mud at Lynn.

LYNN

Shit! I knew it!

She takes cover behind the canoe and grabs some mud for herself. A big HANDFUL. Staying out of sight she yells --

LYNN

Hey Curt!

CURT

(holding his next clump to throw)

Yeah?

She pops up from behind the canoe and NAILS him in the head with a huge heap of mud.

LYNN

I'll buy you a day at the salon!

Jeff can't believe what just happened to Curt. He laughs and throws mud at Lynn to keep her on the defensive. It doesn't take long before they're all COVERED.

EXT. PORTAGE NEAR RAPIDS - LATER

The three friends are busy at the edge of the water, trying to get all the MUD off. They're all smiling as they move back to the CANOE.

They get ready to lift, with Jeff holding the back... And then *it happens*. Jeff loses his grip for just a moment...

The canoe DROPS, and one of the duffel bags tips out, rolling toward the WATER.

JEFF

Shit!

The bag slides right by Lynn's feet. She stands there staring at it - STUNNED as it slides into the current.

CURT

Lynn!

When she finally makes a move for it, it's too far out in the water.

Jeff and Curt quickly throw down the canoe as they watch the black bag being whipped away from them by the rushing water.

JEFF

No no no no!

The bag hits a rock, and for a moment it looks like it will stick there. All three watch it, speechless. Curt starts to take one hesitant step into the water.

Then the bag DETACHES and continues down the rapids.

JEFF

Shit!!

It pauses on its journey and swirls in one particular spot, before getting SUCKED BELOW.

Jeff grabs a length of ROPE from the canoe, ready to go after it.

CURT

Jeff, wait!

JEFF

That's five hundred grand in there!

Curt looks at the spot where the money got sucked under. He takes off his jacket --

CURT

(to Jeff)

I should go.

Jeff doesn't argue. Curt ties the rope around his waist and WADES IN as the others hold the line.

He doesn't get more than a few steps into the rapids before he's KNOCKED off his feet.

LYNN

Curt!

He goes under but quickly surfaces. Manages to pull himself along, grabbing the slippery rocks and fighting the current. He DIVES into the spot where they last saw the bag.

Tense moments go by as he doesn't come up. MORE time passes. Lynn and Jeff are getting concerned.

LYNN
Pull the rope!

JEFF
Not yet!

They watch the spot where Curt went under. Lynn's getting more nervous.

LYNN
No Jeff, pull him up. Pull him up now!

Jeff nods. They pull HARD on the rope and Curt comes to the surface, COUGHING and SPUTTERING.

LYNN
Curt! You all right?

Curt WAVES at them, but is too out of breath to say anything. They pull on the rope to keep him from washing downstream. Finally, he makes it to shore.

Catching his breath --

CURT
It's gone guys. It's not there anymore.

JEFF
We gotta go downstream. See if it washed up somewhere.

CURT
Forget it. Around that bend these rapids go to class four, then it's open water all the way to Lake Superior. It's gone dude. It's gone.

Jeff just stares down at the water.

JEFF
I didn't do it on purpose.

LYNN
Five hundred thousand... Just
washed away.

JEFF
(looks up)
Could you just shut up?

Lynn looks at Jeff as if she's about to hit him. Instead, she marches over to the canoe. Starts PULLING OUT all the bags.

Curt and Jeff share a look. Jeff helps Curt on his feet, and they join Lynn at the canoe.

JEFF
Lynn, I'm sorry okay?

Lynn is dumping her camping gear from her backpack into the canoe.

CURT
What are you doing?

LYNN
I'm making room.

Curt and Jeff don't get it at first. Then Lynn empties three duffel bags of cash into HER backpack.

JEFF
Come on Lynn. This is ridiculous.

CURT
Maybe we should split it up, you know, not keep all our eggs in one basket.

Lynn slings her backpack on.

JEFF
What? Are you saying we're splitting it up now? We all carry our own shares from now on?

Curt shrugs his shoulders. Jeff sighs, grabs his backpack.

JEFF
So how do we divide it up then? Two bags each and split the third three ways?

LYNN

As far as I'm concerned, I didn't drop the bag so I still have three.

JEFF

What? That's bullshit! We didn't decide to divide it up until just now! It was everybody's money. We should each lose a third of what was in the bag!

LYNN

We knew it was a million and a half a piece. You're the one who screwed up.

JEFF

Is that right? Like when you just stood there like a statue and it went right by your feet! All you had to do was put your foot on it and everything would have been just fine!

Lynn gives him a look.

JEFF

Or what about the fact that Curt here couldn't get it out of the water? Doesn't that figure in?

CURT

Hey wait a minute...

JEFF

Fuck you Curt! You and your "class four all the way to Lake Superior" bullshit. It's not too late, we can go after it.

Curt does a slow burn. Grabs JEFF'S BACKPACK from the canoe and tosses it to him.

CURT

You want to try for it? Go ahead, it's your money.

Curt grabs HIS backpack, empties it into the canoe and jams his money inside.

Jeff looks at the two bags left and then at where the rapids disappear around the bend. Contemplates going it alone.

But ultimately, he too empties his backpack out into the canoe...

EXT. LONG MISTY LAKE - LATER

They've crossed the portage to a calmer body of water. A low MIST lays near the surface. The canoe is in the water and they're getting in.

The duffel bags are in the bottom of the canoe, but now they're filled with camping gear.

Jeff takes the middle of the canoe, with Curt and Lynn paddling at the ends. He's quiet.

EXT. LONG MISTY LAKE - SOME TIME LATER

The rolling mist on the surface has grown into a hanging FOG. Visibility is low. They stay close to shore to keep their bearings.

Stroke after stroke, they paddle forward with no horizon in sight. They watch the fog open in front of them and close behind, as if moving through an INFINITE VOID.

Curt's eyes lock on to SOMETHING on the shore. Something that has just appeared in the mist. It's a MAN, watching them.

Lynn and Jeff see him too --

He's big, with a military haircut and a demeanor to match.

Half of his face is scraped and swollen from some recent trauma. One of his EYES is half filled with blood.

The three all stop paddling for a moment, unnerved by the sight of him. The lake noises around them seem to stop as they catch his gaze. Like they're floating through some kind of NIGHTMARE.

Then Curt starts them up again and they paddle away.

The man's name is MILLER. He watches the canoe fade into grey, then continues in the opposite direction.

He doesn't hear the WHISPERS somewhere off in the fog --

CURT (O.S.)
(hushed)
Did you see that guy?

JEFF (O.S.)

Yeah. Let's hurry up and get the hell out of here.

EXT. SLOW PART OF THE RIVER - LATER IN THE DAY

Not much of a current here. Curt and Jeff are paddling hard.

JEFF

You think that bag has stopped moving by now?

The others don't answer.

JEFF

Way I figure it, it either got caught in the rapids and sank, or it'll settle out in drop in the bottom of a lake.

Lynn looks back at Curt - "Is he still thinking of going after it?"

JEFF

Either way, nobody else is going to get it. Hey, I'm a millionaire. I can deal with losing some money. I just wouldn't want somebody else to have it.

Jeff's SMILE is a welcome break in the tension.

CURT

Yeah, because they didn't earn it.

JEFF

(laughing)

That's right. I worked my whole life for this million.

LYNN

Doing what exactly?

JEFF

Putting out good karma. That's hard work.

Lynn turns around smiling, glad that he's not still bitter.

She looks at their surroundings now that the fog has lifted.

LYNN

You know, there might be a faster way home. We could double back and cut overland to the Kawishiwi river.

JEFF

And how does the canoe get there?

CURT

You mean haul it up the side of the cliff with us?

Lynn nods. Jeff looks at Curt.

JEFF

We did it back in the scouts when we were in St. Croix.

CURT

We had about fifteen of us then.

JEFF

Fifteen little shits. We're grown men now. That's gotta even it out right?

Curt whips out a pair of BINOCULARS from his pack. He studies a nearby CLIFF. Hands his binoculars to Lynn.

CURT

What do you think? You want to try it?

EXT. SHOAL CLIFF - LATE AFTERNOON

A WALL OF ROCK looms straight up from the riverbed some fifty feet. Lynn stands on a small shoal of gravel at the bottom; a ROPE in her hand.

The rope leads all the way up the cliff to Curt and Jeff, standing among the grass and trees at the top. Floating in the space between is their CANOE.

Curt and Jeff are raising it up the side with their two ropes as Lynn tries to guide it with her rope from the bottom. It's slow going as it frequently gets snagged on rocky outcroppings.

THE CANOE

Its FRONT TIE OFF POINT smacks against the rocks repeatedly. A stress CRACK has formed, and it's widening. An overhang SNAGS the body of the canoe.

Below, Lynn positions herself underneath and whips her rope away from the cliff, trying to clear the obstacle.

LYNN

Pull now!

Up the cliff, Curt has his rope wrapped around a small tree, using it as a makeshift pulley. He gives it a good YANK --

And the tie off point BREAKS LOOSE.

The canoe suddenly swings down and DROPS. The force of the drop pulls out the slipknot on Jeff's side --

The canoe hurtles down toward Lynn, smacking against the rocks and spinning as it goes. Panicked, Lynn throws herself against the cliff wall and covers her head.

The canoe just barely passes over her, SMASHING on the nearby ROCKS of the shoal. Lynn takes a breath and uncovers her head.

LYNN

Shit!

JEFF

What happened?!

LYNN

What does it look like?!

She steps over to the canoe. Large GASHES have opened in the fiberglass skin.

LYNN

We're screwed!

Up above, Curt and Jeff can see it. They shake their heads in dismay.

EXT. PLACID POND - DAYBREAK

Miller is standing at the spot where the pond goes around a bend. This is where the three friends found the money.

He knows that if his bags did float down this way, they would have stopped here. He quickly finds --

EXT. CAMPSITE - NEAR PLACID POND - SOON AFTER

Miller is holding the single TWENTY DOLLAR BILL that Lynn dropped earlier. He examines the ground.

He can see that someone camped here recently. A canoe was dragged here, into the water.

In his mind he flashes back to:

EXT. LONG MISTY LAKE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Moving through the fog are CURT, JEFF AND LYNN in the canoe. They spot Miller staring at them and stop paddling.

Jeff's eyes flit down at something in the bottom of the canoe. Then they all start paddling again, fading into grey...

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CAMPSITE - NEAR PLACID POND

Miller swears under his breath and moves off quickly from the campsite. He's on the hunt now.

EXT. PINE GROVE - NIGHT

Lynn and Jeff are setting up camp by FLASHLIGHT. Jeff unpacks their tents as Lynn starts digging a FIRE PIT. Curt is absent.

LYNN

You sure we should light a fire?
Maybe we don't want to call
attention to ourselves.

JEFF

If somebody's looking for us
they'll find our camp either way.
At least this way we won't look
like we have something to hide.

LYNN

I just want to get home. I kinda
feel like we should just keep
moving...

JEFF

We can't take any more risks. We
have to be patient and do this
right. Stick together. Just think
about all the money we'll have when
it's over.

Lynn looks over at their BAGS.

JEFF

I can actually pay off my student loans without using my elaborate plan to fake my own death.

LYNN

(looking at their gear)
You know we have to carry all this crap now.

Jeff puts his arm around her.

JEFF

I can carry some of your gear if you need me to.

LYNN

Curt was saying we should drop everything and just bring a couple of emergency blankets and whatever food we can put in our pockets.

Jeff stops hugging her, goes back to setting up camp.

JEFF

Yeah, he's probably right. Always knew what to do in a crisis...

Stops working on the camp and turns back to look at her.

JEFF

You really think he'd be happy in Ohio?

LYNN

I don't like him living hundreds of miles away. I thought you said it sucked here?

JEFF

Well yeah, for us. But it's different for him. He's got a career going here.

LYNN

He's your best friend. Don't you want us all to hang out more?

JEFF

Maybe it would be awkward for him now. Because of us.

LYNN

That's stupid. We're all still friends. That's the best part about this whole thing, we all get to be rich and we all get to share the secret. I mean, if I had found the money on my own, you guys are the ones I'd want to share it with.

Jeff narrows his eyes at her.

JEFF

But not the money I dropped in the water right?

LYNN

I thought you were over that?

CURT (O.S.)

Well, that sucks.

Curt appears, holding a small TROUT at the end of a fishing line.

CURT

Pike bit off two of my hooks and all I got was this guy.

Curt throws the little fish down in a frying pan. He gets the sense that maybe he interrupted something with Lynn and Jeff.

CURT

I'm gonna go get some firewood.

LYNN

(breaking away from Jeff)
I'll come with you.

EXT. FOREST NEAR THE PINE GROVE - SOON AFTER

Curt and Lynn are gathering dry wood for the fire. They pass an old DEAD TREE with a PROTRUDING STUB of a branch.

CURT

What does that look like to you?

From where they're standing it looks a lot like a man with an erect penis. Lynn smiles and BREAKS OFF the stub.

CURT

Damn! That's just wrong.

They laugh. It feels good to break the tension.

EXT. PINE GROVE - SAME TIME

Jeff is making sure the backpacks are disguised under a foliage-covered TARP. He hears Lynn's LAUGHTER from somewhere off in the woods. He can hear CURT talking too.

Though he can't quite make out what's being said, it sure SOUNDS like his best friend and his girlfriend are having a good time.

He opens CURT'S BACKPACK and stares at the money inside. He flips through one of the banded packs of bills...

Notices something. A PHOTO is tucked into the front pocket of Curt's backpack.

Pulls it out. A snapshot of the three of them standing together, smiling. Happier times.

Feeling a twinge of guilt, he starts to put the photo back...

Then he sees that it's CREASED on one side. A heavy crease from the photo being folded over countless times --

Folded so that it TAKES JEFF OUT of the picture and becomes a photo of just Curt and Lynn.

EXT. FOREST NEAR PINE GROVE - CONTINUOUS

Lynn and Curt have gathered up most of the BRANCHES they need. Curt sits down on an OUTCROPPING of rock. Lynn joins him, happy to set down her load of wood for a moment.

CURT

I was thinking about what happened... with the bag Jeff lost. Maybe we can split things up a little more evenly.

LYNN

Maybe. But I don't mind making him sweat about it a little longer. He can be a real dick sometimes.

CURT

Yeah?

LYNN

You know how he is. He thinks everything needs to be done his way, thinks he knows how everybody else should be living their life.

Curt shakes his head.

LYNN (cont'd)

It's like I have to listen to two coaches, my track coach and my 'life coach'. That's what he calls himself... Well, no relationship is perfect.

He nods. Lynn stands up. Looks away from him.

LYNN

What about you? Are you seeing anybody? You never tell me about your personal life anymore.

He doesn't answer.

LYNN

Curt... The other day, I was looking for another can of sterno in your bag. I wasn't trying to snoop around, but I found that Swiss Army knife you got for me. With my initials...

CURT

(hesitant)

Um, yeah... the thing about that -

LYNN

That was really sweet of you.

CURT

Kind of seems like a stupid idea given the current circumstances.

LYNN

No. No it wasn't.

CURT

It's cool Lynn. I get it. We both know what it was like to grow up the way we did. A guy like Jeff... he can offer a life that's more secure.

LYNN

That's what you think? That I'm some kind of gold digger?

CURT

Maybe that came out wrong. Look, I just was wondering what happened.

(MORE)

CURT (cont'd)
How you guys ended up together.
And why you didn't want to tell me.

LYNN
Because it's not that big a deal.
We're not getting married or
anything. This thing with me and
Jeff... It doesn't have to change
anything.

She steps toward him, reaching out her hands --

CURT
It already has.

Curt gets up and gathers his pile of wood and walks BACK TO
CAMP. Lynn is starting tear up...

LYNN
Curt...

He doesn't turn around. Disappears into the woods.

Lynn starts to CRY. Then stops herself. Looks in the
direction he went --

LYNN
You could have called. You could
have come to visit me.

She wipes her eyes.

LYNN
Fucking men.

EXT. PINE GROVE - NIGHT

Sparks from the FIRE float up into the night. Curt watches
them as they fade out below a canopy of pine branches and
stars. Lynn and Jeff sit across the fire from him. No one
speaks.

Lynn stares at Curt for a moment, and then reaches into her
bag.

LYNN
I was saving this for the top of
our climb, but I think we could use
it right now.
(no response)
I know I could.

She pulls out a JOINT and holds it in the fire to light it. Takes a big drag on it and holds it. Offers it to Jeff.

JEFF

Is that a good idea? I mean, don't they give you guys drug tests?

LYNN

Not until September. It'll be out of my system by then.

He takes the joint from her. She waves for Curt to come closer. He hesitates, then sits down next to her. She passes the joint over to him.

CURT

No, that's cool, I...

LYNN

C'mon. We need to chill out if we're gonna get through this.

Curt nods and inhales. As he exhales, Lynn leans in close and sucks in his smoke, almost KISSING him. Jeff stares at them. He puts his hand on her shoulder and turns her toward him. Breathes in her exhale.

Curt lays against on his backpack and watches the STARS twinkle as the pot starts to take effect.

SOME TIME LATER

Curt's eyes are a little red. He takes one more hit and passes the joint back to Lynn. He's still looking up at the night sky. Realizes Lynn hasn't taken the joint out of his hand. He looks over and sees her making out with Jeff.

He watches them with groggy eyes. Lynn turns, as if she sensed him watching. She passes the joint to Jeff and sidles over to Curt.

With her back turned to Jeff, she takes Curt's hand - and puts his finger in her mouth. He's not sure how to react. She smiles at him and pulls away, turning back to make out with Jeff some more.

Curt closes his eyes.

SOME TIME LATER - VIEW FROM THE TREES ABOVE

SOMEONE is up in the trees, staring down at --

CURT. Sleeping by the dwindling fire.

Curt WAKES UP. Sees that Jeff and Lynn aren't next to him anymore. A thick MIST hangs in the night air.

He hears NOISES coming from their tent.

It's the sound of Lynn and Jeff having sex. Curt rolls over, pulling a sleeping bag over his head - trying not to listen.

INT. LYNN AND JEFF'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Jeff and Lynn are going at it in their tent. As it starts to get noisier, she puts a pillow over her mouth to cover the sound.

Jeff stares outside, in the direction of Curt and tears the pillow away, letting her CRIES echo around the campsite.

FADE TO:

EXT. PINE GROVE - BEFORE DAWN

It's still a few hours before sunrise. The mist has lifted and a few stars are visible in the dark PRE-DAWN SKY.

Lynn gets out of her tent. Starts unzipping her pants, heading for the trees to pee. Something makes her look up --

She SCREAMS.

The twisted DEAD FACE of the Old Fisherman stares down at her. His body lies across the tree branches above.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Jeff awakes to the sound of Lynn SCREAMING. He scrambles out of the tent.

OUTSIDE

Curt is awake now too. He and Jeff follow Lynn's gaze up into the trees.

The WIDE-EYED CORPSE of an old man stares down at them.

Then they see two more MANGLED BODIES. All of them wearing hunting gear, soaked through blood from countless stab wounds.

All three of the hunter's bodies are draped through the branches in the trees above, limbs dangling like grisly marionettes.

Lynn grabs onto Jeff, still screaming. Curt scrambles for a FLASHLIGHT and flips it on.

Light does not help the situation. They can see the blood soaked bodies more clearly now.

Curt casts the light into the WOODS around them, looking for more danger. Jeff is trying to gather up their gear.

Lynn pulls on Curt now, trying to get him to run --

LYNN

C'mon!!

JEFF

What the fuck happened to them!

CURT

We gotta move!

Jeff gives up on the tents and sweeps up the BACKPACKS full of money. Lynn helps him as Curt slings on their bag of CLIMBING GEAR.

EXT. CRAGGY HILLSIDE - MORNING

The SUN has risen and Curt, Lynn and Jeff are RUNNING with their backpacks up a rough ROCKY INCLINE.

JEFF

We left all our food back there.

CURT

A couple of days without food won't kill us.

Curt regrets saying "kill us" as soon as it slips out.

LYNN

Whoever murdered them... it has to have something to do with the money.

JEFF

But what kind of sick fuck would leave them like that?

CURT

Somebody who didn't want them found right away, but didn't want to take the time to bury them.

They all double their efforts, hauling their gear as fast as they can.

As they clear the incline - Curt points at their destination. An imposing CLIFF in the distance.

In their immediate future however, is a large OUTCROPPING of rock that cuts across their path.

Lynn reaches it first and grabs the top. Her pack weighs her down and she's having trouble pulling herself up. Jeff comes up behind her and puts his hands on her butt. Helps shove her up high enough.

Jeff joins her at the top of the rock. Pulls her close for a second and WHISPERS something reassuring in her ear. She nods. Holds his hand as they move forward.

Curt watches the little scene, jealousy welling up inside. Jeff is smiling. He happens to look back as he scales the boulder, and sees Curt's withering GAZE.

EXT. BOTTOM OF CLIFF - DAY

The hot sun beats down on the three as they reach the bottom of the HIGH CLIFF. They're sweaty and exhausted. If this cliff looked imposing from a distance, up close it's positively menacing.

CURT

We should tie off the bags and pull them up after.

Jeff nods. They all get their climbing gear ready. Curt puts on his HARNESS.

CURT

I'll go up first and set the line.

Jeff watches as Curt moves up closer to the cliff, slinging a ROPE over his shoulder.

JEFF

Why should you go first?

Curt gives him a look.

JEFF (cont'd)

You think you're the best climber?

Jeff walks to the base of the cliff, ready to start. He glares at Curt as if to say "Let's see you prove it". Curt is not about to back down. He takes a position a few yards away.

LYNN

Jesus Christ. You two need to grow up.

CURT

(locking eyes with Jeff)
Let's do it. Say the word.

JEFF

Go for it.

Jeff grabs the wall and starts CLIMBING. So does Curt. Despite what she said earlier, Lynn watches with interest.

Up on the CLIFF, Curt and Jeff are both skilled at this and they make good progress. Frequently, they look over at one another, hoping to take the lead.

But Jeff's obviously been practicing. He's going to be the first to the TOP.

Curt is scrambling to close the distance - then his hand SLIPS. A few pieces of loose rock fall away as he barely gets another hand hold.

He settles himself down and starts climbing more safely.

Jeff looks down, triumphant. He has won the race and is the first to reach the SUMMIT. Stops gloating long enough to lower a long ROPE for Lynn to tie the bags off on.

Curt is getting close to the top. Lynn is beginning her climb. Jeff stands at the summit, monitoring her progress.

JEFF

You're extending too much.

LYNN

(barely audible below)
Uh huh.

Jeff watches some more, shaking his head.

JEFF

Move to your right, there are some easier holds there.

Lynn is frustrated but doesn't say anything. She reaches for a hold, but misses and DROPS down a foot.

JEFF

Whoa! C'mon Lynn, focus!

CURT

Why don't you let her do something
for herself for once? You're not
her coach!

Jeff glares at Curt.

JEFF

Why don't you mind your own
business?

Curt looks down at Lynn, but if he was expecting any backup,
he won't get it.

She stares up at him, angry that he sold her out. It's
obvious to Jeff now that Lynn was talking to Curt behind his
back.

Curt has a few difficult yards left before he reaches the
summit.

Lynn isn't in the mood to climb any more and lets Jeff
basically pull her up.

AT THE TOP

Curt is at the summit. Jeff stands over him and offers him
his hand. When Curt takes it --

JEFF

You know what Curt? Stay the hell
away from my girlfriend.

Curt angrily lets go of Jeff's hand. Gets up over the edge by
himself as Jeff continues to help Lynn climb up.

She arrives on the scene to find the two GLARING at each
other. They only break their gaze when it's time to bring the
backpacks up to the top.

No one speaks as they sling their backpacks on and get ready
to move out. Lynn marches on ahead of both of them, wanting
no part of this.

FADE TO:

EXT. SHOAL CLIFF - NIGHT

Miller is standing over the BUSTED CANOE, looking up the
cliff. He's been running all night and looks exhausted. He
pulls out a bottle of AMPHETAMINES and takes one.

Shaking off his fatigue, he sizes up the cliff and makes ready to climb up in the pitch black.

A low RUMBLE of thunder is audible in the distance.

EXT. ROCKY FOREST CAMPSITE - LATE NIGHT

A flash of LIGHTNING arcs through the night sky, illuminating CURT'S FACE for a brief second.

He's awake, huddled in a lean-to of pine branches. He turns on his side, trying to get comfortable. Without a tent or a sleeping bag, it's not easy.

He peeks out to where the backpacks have been stashed. Against a tree, covered with brush.

RAIN starts to fall. The forest comes alive with NOISES, as the heavy drops hit the foliage. The shower soon escalates into a torrential DOWNPOUR.

Curt pulls the hood of his jacket over his head. The rain is coming down so hard, he can barely see the backpacks anymore.

As another FLASH runs across the sky, he sees --

JEFF

By the backpacks. He grabs one of them, looks around suspiciously, and then walks back to the PINE LEAN-TO where he and Lynn are sheltered.

Curt watches him carefully. Then, he too gets out of his cover and walks over to --

THE BACKPACKS

Curt kneels down. Grabs his pack and looks over toward Jeff and Lynn's lean-to. Lynn is stirring underneath her cover, but Jeff's gone.

Curt spins around - and there's JEFF right behind him. Curt is startled, but quickly composes himself. Stands up, throws his backpack on and marches back to his lean-to.

Curt lays down, huddling with his pack. Looks over to the other lean-to...

And there's Jeff, sitting beside Lynn; both of them staring at Curt. She has pulled in her backpack as well. Jeff WHISPERS something in Lynn's ear as she pulls her backpack closer.

Another FLASH blinds Curt for a moment, and when he can see again both of them are laying down, shielding themselves from the rain and trying to sleep.

EXT. ROCKY HILLSIDE - RAINY MORNING

It's POURING. The three companions trudge along, hungry and soaking wet. Feeling the weight of their bags with every step.

No one speaks. They stare straight ahead. Any fun they were having on this trip and any excitement about finding the money seem to have washed away a long time ago.

Curt is a few steps back as Lynn and Jeff walk together ahead of him. He looks over his shoulder when he hears a low rumble of THUNDER. There is a flash of LIGHTNING. And maybe something else...

A MAN. Just for a second... It looked like someone silhouetted against the sky.

There it is again. Someone is definitely moving among the trees far up the slope.

CURT

Guys, look. You see that?

Jeff and Lynn squint into the rain. Jeff sees it too.

JEFF

Yeah. Somebody's walking down this way.

LYNN

He's not walking. He's running!

They all instantly have the same realization - HE'S COMING FOR HIS MONEY.

CURT

Shit. C'mon!

Curt leads them now as they move as quick as they can to get away from --

EXT. UP THE HILLSIDE - SAME TIME

The MAN running toward the three shapes in the distance --

MILLER

Soaking wet and determined. His one blood-filled eye makes his gaze seem that much more intense.

EXT. ROCKY RAVINE - MINUTES LATER

Lynn keeps looking behind them for Miller as Jeff ties a ROPE to their backpacks. Curt gives Jeff a hand --

They quickly lower the bags down a STEEP RAVINE. Lynn has a climbing rope ready.

Each one loops the rope around themselves and they hop over the edge. RAPPELLING down one by one, they reach the bottom of the ravine safely. It's quite a ride, but they're in no mood to enjoy it.

Jeff looks at their ROPE, now tied off at the top of the ravine.

JEFF

We just left him a way down!

Curt looks up the rope. Then, he takes off his pack and hands it to Jeff.

CURT

You guys go ahead. I'll catch up.

LYNN

What are you...

CURT

Just go!

Lynn and Jeff grab their packs and tear off in the direction of a nearby stream.

WITH CURT

He's CLIMBING back up the rope. When he gets halfway up the ravine, he grabs onto the rocks and CUTS the rope. He keeps an eye out for any sign of Miller as he FREE CLIMBS back down as fast as he can.

When he's close enough to the bottom, he JUMPS the rest of the way to the ground - then takes off RUNNING.

EXT. JAGGED RAPIDS - MOMENTS LATER

Curt catches up to the others. They've stopped at a STREAM blocking their path.

The water has risen here, swollen by the torrential rain. The babbling brook has turned into a RAGING RAPID.

JAGGED STONES jut out from the water. Trying to get across looks like suicide. Jeff looks at Curt --

JEFF

You think it's his money? You think he's coming after us?

Curt is looking behind them. Watching for --

MILLER

He appears at the edge of the cliff. Backs away from it, then takes a running start...

Miller LEAPS off the edge of the cliff, barely reaching the top of a tall TREE that stands twenty feet away.

He half climbs, half crashes down through the tree toward the ground.

CURT

(pointing)

Yeah, he's coming after us all right.

The three of them run along the edge of the water, until they see it --

A LOG BRIDGE

A tree has recently fallen across the water. It shifts slightly in the rapids. Jeff is the first one to the LOG BRIDGE. He scrambles onto it, but the way it's moving makes him hesitate.

LYNN

Jeff!

CURT

(fierce)

Move!

Jeff starts making his way across, Lynn is behind him, practically pushing him to the other side.

Curt is the last one to go across and the tree DRIFTS SUDDENLY from a big rush of water. Jeff and Lynn try to steady it, but they can't hold back the momentum of the swollen stream.

Curt is near the end of the tree trunk as it starts to ROLL --

He SLIPS OFF, hitting the surging water a few feet from shore.

Jeff dives forward and GRABS his hand. With Lynn's help, he manages to pull Curt to safety.

All three are now on the other side as MILLER comes into view. He stares intently at them as he nears the water. They get a good look at his face, realizing that they've seen it before - the nightmare from the fog.

Curt throws himself against the tree bridge.

CURT

Push!

The others join and manage to DISLODGE the fallen tree from the rocks. It turns perpendicular to the stream and WASHES AWAY, trapping Miller on the other side.

MILLER

(intense)

Just drop the money!

Curt fingers the strap of his bag. Suddenly, Lynn runs off into the trees.

CURT

Wait!

Curt and Jeff have no choice but to follow her. Miller grits his teeth as they disappear into the woods.

And there he stands in the rain. Out in the middle of a million acres of wilderness, and without his money. Hell no. He's not giving up now.

He studies the RAPIDS. A man would be crazy to try and get across...

He runs upstream a short way until he finds the spot that looks the least deadly - And THROWS HIMSELF IN.

EXT. PINE FOREST - SAME TIME

Curt and Jeff catch up to Lynn who's RUNNING through the forest.

JEFF

Lynn! Wait!

She slows down a little. Perhaps to let them catch up, perhaps just from exhaustion.

CURT

This is crazy! Let's just give him the money! It's not worth it.

LYNN

If we give him the money he'll kill us anyway!

CURT

You saw that guy! You really think we're gonna get away from him?

LYNN

Maybe he won't be able to cross the rapids.

JEFF

Maybe?! Did you see him do his Superman routine off the cliff?

LYNN

We can't just give him our money...

CURT

(interrupting)

Lynn! It's not our money.

LYNN

It's not his either.

Curt grabs her by her shoulders.

CURT

It's not about the money. It's about our lives.

Lynn is shaking. Tears welling up in her eyes.

CURT (cont'd)

You put us all in jeopardy. We could have ended it. Got away clean. We still have lives to go back to.

LYNN

I don't.
(off their looks)
I lost my scholarship.

Jeff is shocked.

JEFF

What?

Lynn bursts into tears.

LYNN

I lost it. I don't have it anymore.

JEFF

What did you do?

Lynn doesn't answer. Jeff's not willing to let up.

JEFF (cont'd)

What did you do? You failed a drug test, didn't you! They got you for smoking pot. I told you you'd get caught, and you went and did it anyway!

LYNN

Fuck you Jeff! I didn't smoke any pot all year!

JEFF

Well then -

LYNN

HGH okay? That's what I took. Because if I so much as lose a tenth of a second I don't just lose a race, I lose my scholarship. I lose my whole life!

JEFF

And it happened anyway.

LYNN

And that's why I'm keeping this money!!

CURT

It doesn't matter.

JEFF

What do you mean it doesn't-

CURT

Because she's right. This guy's going to kill us no matter what we do! So we either stick together and escape from this place or we're dead.

They both look at Curt, and they know he's right. Lynn nods, she's ready to get moving again. They start through the WOODS.

CURT

We have to assume he'll find a way across the water. You can run Lynn. If you get out ahead of us, don't look back. We'll find you.

JEFF

(re: their surroundings)
I recognize this.

CURT

And if it comes down to it, you'd better be ready to drop that backpack. No matter what you're thinking right now, it's not worth dying for.

Jeff comes to a halt.

JEFF

Guys, wait. I've been here before.

They stop and look - He's pointing at a MOUNTAIN a few miles away.

JEFF (cont'd)

You see that notch in the mountain? If you go to ground level straight below it, there's a hidden cave. It cuts right through the side of the mountain. If we go through and he has to go around, we'd get a day's jump on him.

EXT. PINE TRAIL - LATER

Jeff leads them toward the MOUNTAIN. Curt walks to the rear, occasionally looking back. They're all nervous.

Jeff moves some brush aside carefully, holds it until the others pass and then lets it swing back slowly. They're trying to be as silent as they can.

Curt looks back one more time --

CURT

(hushed)
Shit!

They all stop. Curt whips out and adjusts a pair of BINOCULARS.

CURT'S POV THROUGH BINOCULARS

He's looking at a few bushes shaking up on a crest. Then more movement farther down. And then, filling his whole field of view --

MILLER. Heading straight for them, soaked and bloody, clothes torn up from --

CURT
He got through the rapids!

LYNN
Shit!

CURT
(harsh whisper)
Go! Go!

They all run for the mountain. It's still a ways off.

JEFF
How close is he?

CURT
Just go, go!

They grip the straps on their backpacks and run as fast as they can, no longer concerned about making noise. Lynn takes the lead.

The terrain is rough here. HILLS and DITCHES make running with the heavy packs even more difficult. Lynn is showing her athleticism and really starts to put some space between herself and the guys.

As they traverse pine groves and gullies, they lose sight of her.

LYNN

She's obviously done some cross country running in addition to track. And if her coaches could see her, they'd be impressed. She seems to move effortlessly through the trees.

Finally, she looks back. There's no one there. She can HEAR Curt and Jeff running somewhere off behind her. At least she assumes it's still Curt and Jeff. She's not going to wait around to find out.

She looks through the trees at the NOTCH in the mountain and keeps going. Occasionally looking back for signs of the others as she runs. And that's why she doesn't see --

A STEEP RAVINE

Lynn turns and looks a second too late, she SLIPS down the edge of the RAVINE; her heavy pack makes her tumble down the side even faster...

EXT. STEEP RAVINE - CONTINUOUS

Fifty feet down a STEEP SLOPE, Lynn rolls over the rocks and brush, finally coming to a halt against an outcropping of stone at the bottom.

She isn't moving.

EXT. PINE TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER

If Lynn could see up the ravine, she would see Curt and Jeff skirt the top of it as they run, oblivious to her fall. They bypass the ravine and keep on course for the mountain.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - SOON AFTER

Curt and Jeff have reached the foot of this small mountain. The sprint with heavy packs has taken a toll.

CURT
(out of breath)
Where's Lynn?

Jeff is too winded to speak. He hunches over, trying to catch his breath. Points to a cluster of BUSHES --

JEFF
Maybe... she went... inside.

He pulls the bushes aside and reveals the entrance to a CAVE. Curt peers inside.

CURT
(loud whisper)
Lynn!

They take a few steps inside, shining FLASHLIGHTS.

EXT. STEEP RAVINE - SAME TIME

Lynn still lies in a heap at the bottom of the slope. Far above her --

MILLER peers over the edge. He sees her and starts to CLIMB DOWN.

Descending, he grabs on to some saplings, avoiding the kind of tumble that Lynn took.

LYNN

Opens her eyes, groggy. HEARS something above. Turns over and sees --

MILLER - only a few yards away.

She rises to her feet, adrenaline kicking in - and tears off into the woods. Branches whip against her face as she RUNS WILDLY.

BEHIND HER

Miller let's himself slide down the rest of the way. He lands on his feet and gives chase immediately. From behind his back he unsheathes his LARGE KNIFE.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Curt and Jeff are behind the bushes that conceal the cave opening. Curt scans with the binoculars.

CURT

I'm going out there to look.

JEFF

Wait! Don't. If he sees us come out of here... If we reveal the entrance to him, she won't have any place to hide. Give her a chance. Wait another minute.

Curt bites his lip and keeps a lookout with the binoculars.

EXT. PINE TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Lynn is no longer running like a champion. She's running for her life. The fall down the ravine didn't help matters. Tired, hungry, and panicked, she struggles to run with the heavy backpack on.

Miller is GETTING CLOSER. He has his big knife at the ready --

AND THROWS IT

It skims a tree trunk right next to Lynn's head. She hears the CLANG as it takes a chunk out of bark and falls into the brush.

The SOUND is like a starter pistol for her. Her speed seems to double, desperation and fear driving her legs harder than she ever thought possible.

Miller runs past where his knife glanced off the tree. He hesitates, but it's LOST somewhere in the brush. No time to look for it. He continues the pursuit angrier than ever.

But up ahead, Lynn is starting to pull away from him. His eyes widen a bit. He wasn't expecting that.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Curt and Jeff nervously scan the surrounding WOODS. Curt has the binoculars.

CURT

I see her! She's running this way
and he's right behind her.

Jeff pulls the binoculars away and looks for himself.

JEFF

She's looking around.

Then it sinks in --

CURT

She can't see the cave!

Curt isn't sure what to do. He doesn't have much time to decide.

CURT

I have to get her in here.

JEFF

What? What are you doing?

Curt slips out of the cave, carefully stepping on patches of rock so that he doesn't leave any footprints. He hides in some nearby BUSHES.

Jeff desperately tries to find Lynn again with the binoculars.

JEFF'S POV

Lynn is a good distance ahead of Miller, running up sharp INCLINES and weaving in and out of thick GROVES OF TIMBER.

Suddenly Miller takes a nasty FALL --

EXT. PINE PATH - CONTINUOUS

Miller tumbles on the ground, does a quick roll and springs back up ready to continue his chase. But something's not right. He's LIMPING.

He swears at himself under his breath and starts to run again, using sheer willpower to overcome the pain.

EXT. NEARBY CAVE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Lynn reaches the area of the cave, looking around desperately. She has to stifle a scream when CURT suddenly pops his head out -

CURT
(hissing)
Lynn! Step on the rocks!

She follows his instructions, leaving no tracks as she makes her way inside the BUSHES. He grabs her and practically TACKLES her to the ground, pulling her out of view.

INT. JUST INSIDE THE CAVE - SAME TIME

Jeff peers out at --

MILLER

He's coming closer. Sweaty. Angry. He's slowing to a jog now, looking around, trying to figure out where she went.

Jeff also sees --

CURT AND LYNN

They're LYING DOWN behind some nearby bushes. If Miller gets a little closer he'll spot them for sure.

Jeff swallows hard. He pulls a JACKKNIFE out of his pocket and clicks open the blade. Then he looks out at Miller.

He's big and menacing, with ferocity in his eyes as he hunts for Lynn. Jeff closes his eyes and PUTS AWAY his little knife.

He slumps to the floor of the cave and starts to cry. He happens to look over at Curt's bag and sees a glint of something. It's the SWISS ARMY KNIFE with Lynn's monogram on it.

The crying doesn't stop. But his expression changes as he stares at the MONOGRAM and the wheels of his mind start to turn.

OUTSIDE

Miller whips out a MAP. Studies it, and then hurries past Curt and Lynn, tracking her likely path AROUND THE MOUNTAIN.

Curt breathes a sigh of relief as he and Lynn get up and join Jeff in the blackness of the CAVE.

INT. CAVE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Jeff jumps back as Curt and Lynn come in. But then sees who it is.

JEFF

Jesus. You made it.

Jeff wipes his eyes, eager to conceal the fact that he'd been crying. Curt doesn't notice that Lynn's MONOGRAMMED KNIFE is no longer among his things as he gathers up his bag.

Jeff quickly motions for them to follow him --

FARTHER IN

Water runs down the cold sandstone walls. The SOUND of DRIPPING WATER on rock is everywhere.

Safely away from the opening, they click on their FLASHLIGHTS to illuminate their path as Jeff leads the way.

LYNN

(to Jeff)

You sure about this?

JEFF

Positive. My cousin and I went through it twice.

Jeff moves off ahead. All light from the entrance fades away behind them. Lynn brings up the rear, frequently shining her light behind them to check for Miller.

INT. HIGH CORRIDOR - LATER

The three are making their way through a v-shaped corridor of wet rock. Their small flashlights don't reach very far into the blackness.

Suddenly, Jeff stops. Curt stumbles into him --

JEFF

Whoa!

Jeff's flashlight tumbles into a BLACK HOLE beneath his feet. He gingerly takes a step back.

CURT

Don't move Lynn.

LYNN

What's up?

Curt and Jeff back up a little. Curt shines his flashlight on the floor - they've come to the edge of a VOID.

JEFF

There used to be a rope bridge here... I guess it's gone.

Curt gives him a look - 'no shit'. They shine their lights ahead, but can't see the other side of the chasm, nor can they see the bottom.

LYNN

Now what?

JEFF

We're screwed. Without a rope across I don't...

CURT

One of us will have to take a rope across. Free climb along this wall here. How far is it to the other side?

Jeff stands up, but as he takes a step toward the edge he halts. He's still shaken up from nearly falling to his death in the dark.

JEFF

I don't remember.

CURT

Jeff! How far is it?

JEFF

(snapping out of it.)
A hundred feet. Give or take.

Curt nods. Looks at Jeff, leaning weakly against the wall. Turns to Lynn.

CURT

Put a rope around my waist. I'll tie it off once I get to the other side.

Lynn is looking at the WET WALL near them, shining the flashlight to look for hand holds. Not many. She looks at Jeff. He winces. Starts to slump down to the floor again. Shame welling up inside of him.

He sees Lynn start to tie a rope around Curt.

JEFF

No. I should go.

They look over at him. He stands up with new determination. He takes Lynn's flashlight.

JEFF

I can do it.

OVER THE PIT - SOON AFTER

Jeff is spread eagle against the wall of the cavern. Inching his way across.

He relies on the others to shine some light ahead of him, aware that just below his feet, unseen, is a DEADLY VOID.

Sweat from his forehead drips down, like the rivulets of water coming down the cave wall - making every new HAND HOLD a deadly gamble.

When it seems like he's been climbing forever --

JEFF

I should be almost there.

He has gone into almost complete blackness now, their flashlights can't illuminate any farther from the edge behind. Jeff reaches out his left hand - and it SLIPS.

The shift in weight causes his whole body to come off the wall. Lynn hears it and SCREAMS.

But they hear a quick GRUNT from Jeff. He was over to the other side. A faint point of LIGHT appears from Jeff turning on the flashlight in the dark up ahead.

JEFF

(shouting back)

I went past it by about ten feet. I can see where to tie the rope off!

Jeff starts to anchor one of the climbing ropes. He pauses, hearing Curt and Lynn TALKING somewhere off in the dark. It even sounds like they might be laughing. He can't quite make out what's being said.

He shines the flashlight in their direction, but the light doesn't reach. The conversation stops.

JEFF
 (yelling to them)
 Hey guys? We should test the rope.
 Why don't you put the bags across
 first.

INT. THE FIRST SIDE OF THE PIT - LATER

Curt stands at the edge of the pit. The money has already gone across to the other side. Lynn is currently fading from view as she shimmies across the rope.

Curt watches the rope vibrate until it stops. Indicating that she reached the other side.

LYNN (O.S.)
 (shouting)
 Okay, your turn!

OVER ON THE OTHER SIDE

Lynn is watching the ROPE shake a little as Curt starts coming across to join them. Jeff is pulling something out of his backpack.

JEFF
 Maybe now you want to tell me about
this.

LYNN
 What are you...

Jeff waves the MONOGRAMMED SWISS ARMY KNIFE in her face. And then THROWS it down into the abyss.

LYNN
 What the hell are you doing?

JEFF
 I was going to ask you that.

LYNN
 Is this some kind of a joke?

JEFF

Does it look like I'm joking?

CURT

Is making his journey across. Arm over arm into the blackness. He can't see anything as he hangs under the rope. He hears Lynn and Jeff though. ARGUING in hushed tones.

Now it's his turn to be paranoid. He stops moving on the rope for a second, and the voices cease. Then he catches a snippet of something. Lynn saying something to Jeff. He can't hear what it was, but she sounded angry.

It's hard to make out because of the ECHOES in the cave. But he HEARS --

LYNN

... Don't! Just don't!

Curt starts shimmying down the rope as fast as he can.

ON THE FAR SIDE

The argument seems to have ended. Lynn is sitting down against the cave wall, getting the bags of money ready to move again. She isn't paying attention to Jeff. Maybe she should be --

Jeff is squatting near the rope. He watches it twitch as Curt makes his crossing. Jeff has his JACKKNIFE out, and he lowers it menacingly toward the rope as he glares out at Curt - unseen in the dark.

He looks over at Lynn and the money, then the rope. Still thinking.

WITH CURT

He can see their FLASHLIGHTS now. JEFF is standing at the edge of the pit, staring down at him.

CURT

Guys? What's going on?

Curt's eyes go wide as he sees that Jeff has a KNIFE in his hand...

But when Curt reaches the end, Jeff steps aside and Lynn helps him to his feet. Curt keeps his eyes on the POCKETKNIFE...

And watches as Jeff uses it to cut the ropes across the chasm. Curt doesn't let the others see his big sigh of relief.

JEFF

If he does manage to follow us in here, I'd like to see him try to get across.

They throw their gear on and get moving again. Curt coils up a length of rope and puts it over his shoulder.

CURT

One rope left.
(he turns to Lynn)
What was going on with -

JEFF

Just stay out of it.
(walks ahead)
It shouldn't be too much farther now.

EXT. FOOTHILLS OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Miller is trudging through the rain and mud, making his way around the mountain.

He limps along with a makeshift SPLINT on his BAD LEG. Still moving quickly.

With shaking hands, he pulls out the bottle of PILLS and takes the last couple of amphetamines.

INT. UNDERGROUND RESERVOIR - SOME TIME LATER

The largest CHAMBER in the cave. There is light here. From the ceiling high above their heads, a few small openings let in shafts of SUNLIGHT from the surface.

They also are letting in a DELUGE of rainwater. Jeff is the first one to enter.

JEFF

Shit.

Curt and Lynn are right behind him. They see what he's looking at. Sunlight reflecting off a huge POOL OF WATER. The chamber is mostly FLOODED.

LYNN

Let me guess -

JEFF

Yeah. The exit's down there.

LYNN
Maybe we should go back.

CURT
We can't go back.

LYNN
(to Jeff)
I can't believe you led us in here.

CURT
And he's going to get us out too.
Right?

He puts a reassuring hand on Jeff's shoulder. Jeff tries to muster his courage. He takes his pack off. Gets ready to jump in the water.

JEFF
(gives a nod to Curt)
Be right back.

He takes a deep breath and DIVES down, flashlight in his teeth. Curt and Lynn watch as the light fades out under the dark water.

It's a tense wait before Jeff finally splashes back to the surface.

JEFF
I found the exit tunnel. It slants upwards so it's only partly flooded. But it's going to be a tight fit.

Curt looks up at the water still POURING into the cave.

CURT
Well, it's only going to get worse.
We'd better hurry.

UNDERGROUND RESERVOIR - SOON AFTER

Within a few minutes they have their gear tied off to the rope. Jeff DIVES first, taking the end of the rope with him.

MOVING UNDERWATER

The FLASHLIGHT barely lights a few feet ahead in the murky water. The exit is a nearly invisible opening far below the surface. Jeff CRAWLS IN.

BACK ABOVE

Curt puts his hand on the rope leading underwater, takes a deep breath, and SUBMERGES.

UNDERWATER

Curt slides his hand on the rope until it leads him to the EXIT. His eyes go wide - This is going to be even tighter than he expected.

INT. CAVE EXIT SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

Curt is crawling up a forty-five degree inclined TUNNEL. If it weren't claustrophobic enough, it's also completely filled with water.

He moves frantically upward, almost out of air. Finally, his head breaks the surface of the water and he sucks in a big breath. Jeff calls from somewhere up ahead --

JEFF (O.S.)

You out?

CURT

Yeah.

JEFF (O.S.)

We should get some light farther up.

(beat)

God. Oh God.

CURT

What is it?

JEFF (O.S.)

It's tighter up here. It's getting smaller!

Curt notices it too. He's completely out of the water now, but the tunnel seems to be getting NARROWER as he crawls higher. It's a claustrophobic's ultimate nightmare.

CURT

Just relax. You've gone out this way before.

JEFF (O.S.)

(barely audible)

Uh huh.

Curt tried to sound reassuring, but as he feels the WALLS close in, he's close to losing it himself.

Farther up, SUNLIGHT from outside starts to creep in. It's reassuring at first, but it also reveals just how tight things are going to get.

CURT

Oh God.

He closes his eyes and presses on. He's flat on his stomach now, wriggling his way forward. The rope he's following is twitching now. It might be Lynn coming up from below.

He can see Jeff's feet up ahead.

CURT

Jeff?

No answer.

CURT

Jeff!

JEFF

... Yeah.

Curt breathes a sigh of relief. At least he's not unconscious... or worse.

CURT

Are you stuck?

Curt can almost touch Jeff's feet now. His BREATHING starts to get panicked again. If Jeff is stuck, they're all dead.

CURT

Jeff, can you hear me?

JEFF

... Yeah.

CURT

Listen, I'm going to push on your feet and then I want you to crawl forward okay?

JEFF

... Yeah.

Curt puts his hands out and pushes against the bottoms of Jeff's FEET. He starts to move forward. He wasn't stuck, just having a panic attack.

Curt mumbles a silent prayer to himself as the two of them continue forward.

EXT. CAVE EXIT - DAY

From a concealed crevice on the side of a wall of stone, two HANDS EMERGE into daylight. Jeff pulls himself out into the sun. He's pale and shaking.

He flops to the ground as Curt's head appears from out of the shaft. Curt breathes open air, glad to be alive. As he pulls himself out, he realizes --

CURT

Lynn.

He sticks his head into the tunnel and yells --

CURT

Lynn!!

From somewhere far below he hears her GASP for air.

CURT

Lynn! Are you okay?

A few GROANS are all he hears in response.

DOWN IN THE TUNNEL

Lynn is just barely above the surface of the water. She stares up at the LIGHT at the end of the tunnel, far away. Her LEFT ARM is folded under her body, awkwardly.

LYNN

I'm stuck! My arm's stuck! I can't
move!

OUTSIDE THE TUNNEL

Curt and Jeff are listening with horror.

CURT

(yelling inside)
Hang on to the rope!

Curt HEAVES on the rope to try and pull her out, but it doesn't budge.

LYNN (O.S.)

It's not working! Help me!

CURT

(to Jeff)
We have to get her out of there.

Jeff is sitting on the ground, shivering. He looks up at Curt.

JEFF
I can't go back in.

Then, from down in the tunnel, the situation gets worse --

LYNN (O.S.)
The water's rising! Help me!!

JEFF
Oh God. Oh God. She's gonna die.

Curt starts tying a rope around his ankle.

JEFF
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Curt grabs Jeff by the shoulders.

CURT
No. You got us through the cave.
You did it. It's almost over. But
not yet. You have to help me now.

Jeff looks up at him.

CURT
When I tell you to, I need you to
pull. Can you do that?

Jeff nods. Curt takes a deep breath and starts climbing BACK IN the tunnel.

DOWN IN THE TUNNEL

Lynn's head and shoulders are above water, but the level is RISING. Suddenly, the light shining down from above her is OBSTRUCTED. She freaks out and starts SCREAMING.

CURT (O.S.)
Lynn, it's me! I'm coming down to
get you!

Lynn stops screaming. The fact that the tunnel got darker because Curt is coming to save her calms her down a bit.

LYNN
I screwed myself Curt. I came in
wrong and my arm is underneath me.

CURT (O.S.)
 (getting closer)
 Can you back up a little and get
 unstuck?

The water is up to Lynn's NECK now. She shakes her head,
 starting to sob.

LYNN
 I'll drown!

Curt can see her now, lit by the flashlight. He sees the
 water RISING.

LYNN
 Don't let me drown!!

CURT
 Listen to me, I want you reach out
 your free hand.

She does. He's inching closer. The water is close to her
 mouth.

LYNN
 Hurry!!

CURT
 I'm coming. But you're going to
 have to hold your breath in a
 second okay? If you go underwater,
 don't panic. I'm going to pull you
 out.

She nods. Starting to hyperventilate a little. The water is
 up to her mouth as she tries to take a deep breath. She
 COUGHS and sputters it out.

Focusing, she closes her mouth and takes a deep breath
 through her nose, just before the water covers that too.

Curt finally reaches her outstretched hand. Lynn's whole head
 is UNDERWATER.

He grabs her HAND and she grips him as tight as she can, her
 arm shaking.

CURT
 Pull Jeff!

Nothing.

CURT
 PULL!!

Just as Curt is about to scream again, he feels the rope go taut. Jeff starts pulling them out. Then --

Curt's shoulder SNAGS on a jagged edge of rock. It TEARS through his skin as Jeff pulls harder.

Lynn's head is still under water.

CURT
(wincing with pain)
Keep pulling!!

Curt manages to hold on to Lynn despite the pain. Her head finally EMERGES from the water.

She can breathe again.

CURT
I've got her! Keep pulling!

EXT. CAVE EXIT - SOON AFTER

Curt collapses out of the end of the tunnel. Both he and Jeff help pull Lynn to safety. She HUGS Curt, crying.

CURT
You're okay now.

Lynn doesn't want to let go. She CLINGS to Curt, crying as he grabs the rope and starts pulling their bags up out of the tunnel.

JEFF
I'm sorry Lynn. I couldn't do it. I
couldn't go back in. I tried, I
just...

She's not even looking at him. He sits on the ground and stares off into space.

JEFF
(to himself)
I couldn't save you. I'm always
useless.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY

It's RAINING, but not as bad as before. It doesn't matter much since they're all SOAKED from diving through the underwater cave.

Curt has his shirt off. Lynn has their meager FIRST-AID KIT open, trying to do something to help his SHOULDER WOUND. She has a bandage on it and starts wrapping tape around his arm.

LYNN
Does that hurt?

CURT
Only when you touch it.

Jeff looks on. He sees the way she's looking at Curt. The way she's touching his hand. As Jeff stands over them, a shiver runs through him. Maybe it's from the cold rain. More likely, it's something else.

Curt stands up and checks his WATCH.

CURT
If we can keep moving I don't think there's any way he can catch up.

LYNN
We should be out of here by tomorrow.

JEFF
So I guess he's out of the picture. Nothing else to worry about. Just us and our money. One big happy family.

Curt ignores him and starts them moving again.

EXT. HIGH TRAIL - DAY

The rain has finally STOPPED. The three companions are making their way up a hill. It's slow going.

Finally, as they reach the top, Jeff drops down and FLOPS onto his back.

CURT
What is it?

JEFF
I need to rest.

Lynn sets down beside him.

CURT
We should try to keep going.

Lynn looks up at him. It's not just the physical exhaustion. Mentally, they've been through the ringer. She shakes her head.

Curt's too restless to sit down with them. He looks farther up the TRAIL --

CURT

I'm going to head up a little and get a look around. Make sure he's not coming up behind us somehow.

JEFF

And we're going to sit here and wait until you get back?

CURT

Yeah...

JEFF

Why don't you leave your backpack then. You'll move faster without it.

CURT

You think it's all about the money.

JEFF

Prove me wrong.

He throws his BACKPACK down in front of Jeff.

CURT

Here's how much I still care about this damn money.

JEFF

Bullshit. You want it more than any of us. Cause you need it more than any of us. And if that had been your five hundred grand that had fallen in the river you would have gotten it!

Curt starts walking up the path.

CURT

You know what dick? You want that five hundred? Go ahead and take it out of my bag while I'm up there looking out for our asses.

LYNN

Curt. Wait.

Curt shakes his head and walks up toward the RIDGE. Lynn turns to Jeff.

LYNN

You're being an asshole.

JEFF

You can't see through this? You don't see what he's trying to do?

LYNN

What could he possibly be trying to do?

Jeff gestures to Lynn and himself.

JEFF

This! He's trying to turn us against each other!

LYNN

Shut up. I'm done. I don't want to hear about any more of your ideas, or your plans, or your delusions...

JEFF

And don't think I haven't seen what's going on between you two. The way you've been looking at each other.

LYNN

He pulled me out of the cave! Not you. He did.

JEFF

Because you were blocking the money! Are you really that blind? If we couldn't get you out of there he wouldn't be able to pull out his money. Don't you see that!?

LYNN

And then he just leaves it here and walks off.

JEFF

Open your eyes! It's because he's trying to turn you against me!!

LYNN

No Jeff, you're doing a good job of that all by yourself.

She walks away and sits down against a nearby TREE.

JEFF

How long did I have Lynn? I mean,
if we hadn't found the money. How
long was it going to be before you
told me you were moving back home
to be with Curt?

She doesn't look at him.

JEFF

It's nice to have one on deck huh?
You lose your scholarship and all
of a sudden Owatonna's not such a
bad place to be right? Might as
well line up the next guy too.
Especially when it can be a guy
you've already had.

LYNN

What the hell are you talking
about?

Jeff walks over to Curt's backpack and zips it open. Lynn
stays over by the tree, refusing to look at him.

He transfers FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND from Curt's pack into his.

JEFF

I'm talking about the fact that you
guys hooked up that night after the
junior prom.

LYNN

What!? Where the hell's that coming
from?

JEFF

You gonna tell me something didn't
happen?

Lynn turns and gives him the finger. Jeff shakes his head and
makes ready to leave.

JEFF

Yeah, well... that's it then. You
two have fun.

She hears him STOMP OFF into the woods but doesn't turn to
watch him go.

EXT. HIGH RIDGE - SOON AFTER

Curt is lying prone on top of a RIDGE, scanning below with his BINOCULARS.

CURT'S POV

Sweeping over seemingly endless patches of green. Tracing along TRAILS for signs of movement. Something grabs his attention - A SHAKING BUSH.

Curt tries to focus on the MOTION. Something moving through the brush - Is it Miller?

EXT. RIDGE TRAIL - LATER

Jeff's face is still red with anger as he marches through the wilderness. He looks back once as if to check for Lynn following behind. She's not.

Keeps going forward until he hears --

A NOISE UP AHEAD

He stops. Was it just his feet on the leaves that made that sound, or was it someone else? He holds his breath, listening for the slightest...

There it is again.

FOOTSTEPS

SOMEONE is coming through the woods and heading his way. He starts breathing fast.

He unslings his BACKPACK. Sets it down out in the open. Moves behind a nearby TREE. Footsteps getting closer now. He picks up a gnarled BRANCH. Eyes trained on his backpack. Using it as bait.

He's starting to freak out now, trying his best to hyperventilate silently as the sound of movement is almost right on top of him.

Whoever it is, they haven't reached his backpack yet, but they seem to be heading right for it...

Out of the corner of his eye, SOMEONE emerges - and Jeff pounces. He swings the GNARLED BRANCH down on --

CURT

Who ROLLS AWAY from the attack, shocked.

CURT

Jesus!

Jeff raises the branch again, ready to bring it down on Curt's head. Curt lunges for Jeff's knees and TACKLES him to the ground.

CURT

What the hell are you doing?

Jeff's head hits the ground hard. He's dazed as he looks up at Curt.

JEFF

I thought you were the guy...

Jeff's head lolls from side to side. He's looking at Curt strangely. It's hard to tell what he might do next. Curt pulls the BRANCH out of his hands.

CURT

Bullshit! You saw it was me!

Jeff looks up at Curt, menacing him with the branch and shakes his head. Curt's not sure what to make of it all. He steps back from Jeff a little.

Jeff struggles to his feet. Curt could take an easy shot right now if he wanted to. But instead, he FLINGS the makeshift club into the trees.

CURT

What are you doing out this way?
Where's Lynn?!

JEFF

You guys are all teamed up now huh?

CURT

What? You're nuts.

JEFF

Am I? You wanted her your whole
life. And you couldn't handle the
fact that she chose me!

Jeff sees that he's gotten to Curt a little. Keeps going.

JEFF

It was real easy back in high
school when I was just your wingman
huh? Well you know what?

(MORE)

JEFF (cont'd)
I'm the one that got out of
Owatanna, I'm the one who's got a
life and I'm the one that's fucking
Lynn.

Curt's getting angry.

CURT
You don't love her do you. You just
needed to finally be better than me
at something. Didn't you Jeff?

Suddenly, Jeff winds up and PUNCHES Curt right in the face.
Curt staggers, about to retaliate...

But he stops himself. Jeff has his fists up, ready to go. Red
and shaking.

CURT (cont'd)
Is this what we're gonna do now? Is
this it? Fuck this. It's stupid.
We're all out here in this shit
together.

JEFF
No.

Jeff grabs his BACKPACK and puts it on.

JEFF
Not anymore. You guys wanted to
divide it all up? Well fine. Done
deal. I'm taking my share.

He starts walking away.

CURT
Hey! Just use your head for a
second. We all still need to stick
together.

JEFF
Why? So you can keep pretending
that none of us have changed since
we were kids? Like you've been
doing on this whole bullshit
camping trip?

Curt just stands there staring as Jeff walks off into the
woods.

EXT. HIGH TRAIL - SOON AFTER

Curt RUNS back to where the others had been. But there's no sign of Lynn or her gear. He sees a note SCRAWLED in the dirt:

"C - LOOKING FOR YOU - L"

He sees that his BACKPACK full of money is still there, tucked out of sight in the bushes. His eyes flit in every direction, not sure whether to go off looking for her or to stay put, hoping she'll return.

Just then, he hears a VOICE from somewhere in the distance. A voice that makes his blood run cold. It's MILLER.

MILLER (O.S.)

I know can hear me out there! The game's over! You're going to bring me the rest of my money. The ranger cabin a mile North in one hour. Or I kill your friend.

Curt is stunned. Even more so when he hears the bushes RUSTLE nearby and someone steps into the clearing with him --

LYNN

He runs up to her --

CURT

Thank God. I thought -

They hear a horrible YELL from off in the woods. It's JEFF.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Miller stands over Jeff as he CRIES OUT in pain one more time. Miller's twisting his arm behind his back.

Satisfied that he's got their attention, he ties a GAG around Jeff's mouth and knocks him to the ground. Quickly BINDS his hands.

MILLER

(yelling into the woods)
You hear that?!

Miller starts to shove Jeff through the woods.

EXT. HIGH TRAIL - DAY

Curt and Lynn stand there stunned, listening to Miller's demands --

MILLER (O.S.)
(faint)
One hour!

Curt snaps out of it. He takes a few steps up the PATH, only to stop when he realizes Lynn isn't moving.

CURT
C'mon.

LYNN
What are we doing?

CURT
What the hell do you think we're doing?!

But Lynn just SITS there, pensive.

LYNN
You said it yourself. If he gets the money, he's just going to kill us anyway.

CURT
We don't know that!

LYNN
He walked out on us. Jeff took some of your money and he walked out on us.

CURT
I don't care. We're not going to let him die.

Lynn wrestles with what to do.

LYNN
If it was you out there right now, what do you think he would say? Do you think he'd risk his life and his money for you?

Curt doesn't answer. The truth is, he's not sure. He looks out into the woods, then back at Lynn.

CURT

All I need to know is that I'm
gonna it for him.

Curt heads for the RANGER CABIN. Lynn hesitates for a moment,
then follows.

EXT. FARTHER ALONG IN THE WOODS - LATER

Curt and Lynn are walking side by side now. She pulls
something out of her pocket. It's Jeff's JACKKNIFE.

CURT

Where'd you get that?

LYNN

He was starting to freak me out so
I grabbed it out of his bag.

CURT

Let's hope you don't need it.

EXT. RANGER CABIN AREA - DAY

The lonely RANGER CABIN stands on pylons twenty feet in the
air. A ladder leading up provides the only way in or out.

This small green house on its lofty perch provides an early
warning station for forest fires, a platform for viewing
nature's majesty and a beacon of hope to those that have lost
their way in the wilderness. But not today...

INT. RANGER CABIN - DAY

Jeff slowly regains consciousness. Tries to move. But his
hands and feet are BOUND behind him. The gag over his mouth
MUFFLES his screams.

He rolls on the floor, wrestling with the ropes, but to no
avail. Looks around the cabin. The ranger's RADIO has been
SMASHED. No help there...

A FIRST AID BOX is screwed to the wall. He rolls over closer
to it, then kicks at it. The box stays screwed to the wall,
but the lid swings open. A few MEDICAL SUPPLIES fall out, but
there's something else still in the box:

AN EMERGENCY SIGNAL FLARE

He kicks at it, trying to knock it loose.

EXT. RANGER CABIN AREA - SAME TIME

A tall BUSHY PINE stands near the cabin's pylons. It would take some very close scrutiny for anyone to notice Miller standing within its branches.

He's motionless. Calm. His eyes are scanning the woods all around from his perch ten feet in the air. His eyes stop searching. Staring straight at --

CURT AND LYNN

Approaching cautiously on the TRAIL that leads to the cabin.

CURT
(yelling)
We brought the money!

Miller doesn't respond. He waits as they keep cautiously walking toward the cabin.

He has a HATCHET in his hand. Curt and Lynn are going to be right under him soon...

INT. RANGER CABIN - SAME TIME

Jeff lies on the floor, exhausted from trying to kick the SIGNAL FLARE. He closes his eyes, prepping for one more effort.

He contorts his body, swings his legs up to the wall and finally kicks the flare free. He scrambles to it and GRABS it with his bound hands.

He grips the flare in his hands and puts the hanging string under his chin. Aiming it at the open window he manages to PULL the string --

The flare GOES OFF. It shoots toward the window - but hits the sill. Jeff ducks as the bright burning signal RICOCHETS around the cabin.

It comes to rest on a pile of BLANKETS in the corner. They begin to SMOLDER.

Jeff rolls over to try and put the flare out, but by the time he gets close, the blankets have ignited into a small FIREBALL. He rolls back away. The flames are SPREADING to the wall.

Scraping his face along the floor, he finally manages to dislodge the gag - and YELLS.

EXT. RANGER CABIN AREA - CONTINUOUS

Curt and Lynn are startled by Jeff's voice YELLING from the cabin. SMOKE is rolling out of the window.

They RUN in his direction. And they're about to pass under the tree where MILLER stands waiting.

INT. RANGER CABIN - CONTINUOUS

SMOKE is filling the cabin and the FLAMES are spreading. Jeff rolls to the opposite side of the room to try and get away. He bumps the door of a UTILITY CLOSET and sees that it's ajar.

He kicks it OPEN and the body of a DEAD RANGER falls on top of him.

Wide eyed, he rolls out from under it. Breathes in more smoke and starts COUGHING. Looks over the body. There is a HATCHET SHEATH on his belt, but it's EMPTY.

Desperate, he looks at his own bound hands and feet, and then at the FLAMES across the room.

EXT. RANGER CABIN AREA - SAME TIME

Miller DROPS down from the tree - and knocks Lynn to the ground. Raises his HATCHET. Lynn manages to swing her arm up to protect herself.

Miller's hatchet comes down on Lynn's ARM, cutting deep and BREAKING the bone.

He raises his HATCHET again. Curt swings one of the heavy backpacks and KNOCKS Miller off of Lynn just before the hatchet strikes.

INT. RANGER CABIN

Jeff has his bound feet over the flames, BURNING himself free. He SCREAMS as the heat blisters his skin. When he can't take it a second longer, he pulls his legs away from the fire.

Tries to break loose. Not quite. It's going to take another try...

Smoke brings tears to his eyes. He happens to squint over at the RANGER'S BODY. Sees something --

The ranger's pant leg is lifted up a bit, revealing a previously unseen ANKLE HOLSTER. And in it - A GUN.

EXT. RANGER CABIN AREA

Miller scrambles to his feet after being knocked down by Curt. Lynn is MOANING on the ground, holding her bloody, SHATTERED ARM.

Curt squares off with Miller, enraged. He has his SWISS ARMY KNIFE OUT. Miller smiles, flipping the HATCHET around.

Curt runs straight at him. Miller winds back and THROWS the hatchet --

At the same time, Curt swings his backpack around in front of him. The hatchet plants deep into the wads of money.

Miller SCREAMS in agony - Lynn has just sunk Jeff's JACKKNIFE into the back of his one good leg.

Curt plows him over. Miller and Curt roll onto the ground. Curt loses his Swiss Army knife somewhere in the mud as they wrestle. Both of them claw for the HATCHET.

Curt rolls on top, causing the jackknife in the back of Miller's leg to BURY itself deeper. He HOWLS with pain and rage.

Curt gets hold of the hatchet. But Miller rips it away. Swings it --

Hits Curt with the dull side, BREAKING HIS NOSE and knocking him a few feet back.

Miller winds up with the hatchet, ready to throw it at Curt lying on the ground --

But he's hit in the head by a ROCK thrown by Lynn. It only seems to make him more angry. He turns on her.

BEHIND MILLER

Curt is getting up. He's feeling around for something in his pockets. Has it --

Curt pulls out a tangle of FISHING LINE.

Lynn is rolling on the ground, the pain from her arm becoming unbearable. Just as Miller is about to reach her, Curt whips the fishing line around his neck, STRANGLING him.

Miller swings his elbows back into Curt, but he just absorbs the pain and pulls the line TIGHTER.

The lines cut deep into Miller's throat. He drops to his knees. Behind him, Curt pulls as hard as he can, and the fishing lines SLICE into his HANDS.

Miller reaches back and manages to pull the JACKKNIFE out of his leg. Tries to stab it into Curt behind him - hits nothing but air.

With a last desperate effort, Miller snakes the knife up to fishing lines around his neck --

SNAP! He cuts the lines and breaks FREE, just before he would have strangled to death.

Curt falls back and Miller rolls onto the ground, struggling for breath and holding his bloody throat.

Curt tries to get upright, but he's completely spent - blood runs from his HANDS and his NOSE as he fights to stay conscious.

Miller staggers over to Curt on his two bad legs and raises the KNIFE, about to plunge it into Curt's heart.

That's when he sees JEFF - Aiming the GUN.

Miller THROWS THE KNIFE at him, at the very instant that the GUN GOES OFF.

Miller falls over. SHOT in the stomach. But the knife has found its target. It's BURIED IN JEFF'S NECK and he collapses to the ground.

CURT

Jeff!!

No answer from his friend. Jeff is DEAD.

Miller is CRAWLING now, with whatever strength he has left. Crawling menacingly toward Curt.

Lynn throws herself onto Miller's back, flattening him into the wet earth. With her one good arm she grabs him by the hair and holds his head down.

He swats at her, trying to shake her off, but she slams her knee into his back and throws the weight of her upper body against the back of his head.

Lynn screams like an animal as she DROWNS Miller in two inches of MUD.

It's the last thing Curt sees before he finally PASSES OUT.

FADE TO:

EXT. RANGER CABIN AREA - DUSK

Curt comes to, and finds himself seated against the TRUNK of a tree. The remains of the cabin are smoldering in the background.

Lynn has propped up ALL THE BACKPACKS of money in front of him, sitting next to them. The RANGER'S GUN is sitting on top.

The SPLINT that Miller had on his leg is now wrapped around her BANDAGED ARM.

LYNN

Hey.

CURT

Hey.

Curt looks around. The burned CORPSE of the ranger can be seen over by the cabin. MILLER'S BODY lies not far away, as does JEFF. Curt stares at his friend's lifeless body, transfixed.

Lynn moves closer to Curt. He turns away from Jeff and locks eyes with her.

LYNN

There's a small boat by the cabin with an outboard motor. We'll take it to Canada.

CURT

We can't do that.

LYNN

(not listening)

I figure, once we get to Canada we can just lay low for a little while. Then, when we're ready, we could drive to Mexico.

Curt puts his hand up to push her away, but stops when he sees that both his HANDS are wrapped with cloth. Stained through with blood.

LYNN

Your hands were pretty bad. But I took care of them. It's over now.

She looks over at the BURNED CABIN.

LYNN
Think someone will see the smoke?

CURT
It'll be dark soon.

Curt stares at Jeff again.

CURT
We shouldn't leave him out like that. We should bury him.

LYNN
Look at us. That's not going to happen.

Curt looks at his HANDS and at her BROKEN ARM.

CURT
Let's at least cover him with a sheet or something.

Lynn nods but doesn't move.

LYNN
I need to rest a little more.

Curt nods.

LYNN
Maybe the Caribbean. Think about it. We could get a boat and just sail off together.

CURT
Lynn, we're not going anywhere. Jeff's dead. This has gone too far. It's over.

Lynn is taken aback.

LYNN
We've gone too far to not keep the money now.

Curt shakes his head.

CURT
No. It was one thing when we were all going to get away clean...

LYNN

You and I can still get away.

CURT

That's not the life I want.

Lynn is quiet for a moment as this sinks in.

She looks at the MONEY. At JEFF. At the BOAT that could carry them to Canada.

Curt musters what strength he has left and gets to his feet. Takes off his JACKET. Staggered over to Jeff.

Jeff's EYES are open. Curt reaches down to close them, but they won't close. He puts the jacket down, covering up the body. He's crying.

He goes back and sits down. Looks over at the body one more time. Somehow seeing his feet sticking out from under a jacket makes it look even worse.

Lynn is lying next to her backpack. She may be asleep already. Curt looks at where the ranger's gun had been sitting on top of the bags. It's NOT THERE anymore.

CURT

Lynn?

LYNN

(sleepy)

When the sun comes up we should take the boat and turn the money in at the next ranger station. It'll be faster than walking.

Curt looks at her suspiciously. He makes his way over to where she is and lies down nearby.

But he snakes his arm through one of the BACKPACK STRAPS as he lies down. Covers himself with a blanket. If anyone tries to move his bag, he'll know. He peers out at Lynn with half closed lids as he pretends to sleep.

EXT. RANGER CABIN AREA - LATE NIGHT

Lynn startles awake and opens her eyes. Quickly turns over to check on --

CURT. He's still lying there, with his eyes closed. Slowly, carefully, Lynn starts to get up. She's holding the GUN. Tears are welling up in her eyes.

FADE TO:

EXT. RANGER CABIN AREA - MORNING

Curt wakes up from a deep sleep to feel the sensation of a GUN being PRESSED AGAINST HIS TEMPLE.

MARSHAL

Easy now son. Let go of the gun.

Curt is looking up at a U.S. MARSHAL. The Marshal has a gun to Curt's head.

A couple of PARK RANGERS stand nearby with shotguns. One of them is the RANGER that they passed on the river two days ago.

Curt looks over into his own hand and sees the REVOLVER that Lynn planted there. He winces. Lets the gun DROP. His other hand is still intertwined with the strap from his backpack, only the pack is not there. It's been CUT LOOSE.

The Marshal slaps CUFFS on him as the rangers keep him covered. Curt looks around for Lynn. She's gone. So are all the BACKPACKS.

MARSHAL

Where's the money?

CURT

This isn't what it looks like.

MARSHAL

Looks to me like double homicide.
Probably triple once we find where
you hid the girl. Where is she?!

Curt looks down to where the CANOE used to be.

CURT

You'll get her. Something's bound
to turn up.

EXT. SAGANAGA LAKE - NEAR ONTARIO - MORNING

In the middle of the LARGE LAKE is a small green BOAT. LYNN motors across the huge expanse of water, approaching the FAR SHORE. A beautiful morning and not another craft in sight.

She looks up at the LOONS flying overhead and almost smiles.

EXT. CANADIAN SHORE - SOON AFTER

A canoe rental area, with a small SHACK and rows upon rows of CANOES stacked up on the shore. A sign reads 'JACK'S CANOE RENTALS'.

Lynn beaches the boat. Hops out and starts STRUGGLING to pull it ashore with her one good arm.

IN THE ADJACENT PARKING LOT

The door opens from one of the only cars and a man steps out. It's a Canadian MOUNTIE.

He walks over to where Lynn is struggling with the boat. She's startled to see him.

MOUNTIE

Let me help you with that miss.

His gives her a reassuring smile and helps her DRAG the boat onto shore. Takes a closer look at it.

MOUNTIE

This belongs to a ranger.

LYNN

I couldn't find him... and I needed medical attention.

(shows her arm)

It's broken.

The Mountie looks at her injuries and nods. A MAN has emerged from the canoe rental hut, wondering what's going on. The Mountie calls over to him --

MOUNTIE

Hey Jack! Can you take care of this boat for me? I'm going to drive her to the hospital.

JACK nods and grabs the boat. The Mountie reaches to pick up one of the three BACKPACKS from the boat.

LYNN

I'll get it!

She slings one backpack on and grabs for the other two.

MOUNTIE

Don't be ridiculous. I've got it.

He hoists up two backpacks. Feels the WEIGHT. Starts walking he back to the car.

MOUNTIE

(laughing)

Not exactly travelling light, are you?

LYNN

I don't think I need a hospital. I have some family nearby. One of them's a doctor...

JACK (O.S.)

Hey!

MOUNTIE

(not hearing the yell)

You sure?

Lynn nods.

JACK (O.S.)

You need to take a look over here!!

The Mountie turns around. Sees --

Jack has pulled the boat farther ashore, revealing a ROPE tied to the stern. At the end of that floats a BODY, wrapped in Lynn's sleeping bag...

It's the CORPSE OF THE PARK RANGER from the cabin.

The Mountie's face turns cold and he draws a GUN on Lynn. She closes her eyes as the ramifications sink in.

FADE TO:

EXT. PORTAGE NEAR RAPIDS - DAY

Curt has returned to the place where Jeff lost his bag of money.

Some time has passed. His HANDS have healed.

Curt eyes a spot in the RAPIDS. He pulls out a rope and tethers himself to a tree onshore. WADES out into the water.

EXT. PORTAGE NEAR RAPIDS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Curt, Lynn and Jeff are getting ready to lift the canoe with the bags of money inside. Jeff shares a playful look with Lynn.

Curt catches it.

Images flash through his mind --

Jeff and Lynn getting into their tent together at night..

Jeff holding her next to the fire...

Jeff shaking Curt's hand just before he left for college...

As the three of them lift the canoe, Curt bumps it Jeff's way on purpose, causing him to drop it...

Causing the bag of money to roll out into the rapids.

UNDER THE WATER - MOMENTS LATER

Curt finds the BAG under the rapids, but doesn't bring it to the surface. He TIES THE STRAP around the branch of a submerged tree and piles rocks on top of it.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PORTAGE NEAR RAPIDS - DAY

Curt emerges from the rapids with JEFF'S BAG of half a million dollars and begins to pull himself toward shore.

FADE OUT.