

YELLOWJACKETS

Episode 104
"HEAD LIKE A HOLE"

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NATALIE
Place hasn't changed...

Natalie's eyes go to the photo. Vera clocks this.

VERA
God, weren't we a good-looking pair?
Happier days, those.

NATALIE
(darkly)
Whatever you say, Ma.

VERA
You never appreciate it at the time.
Not 'til it gets ripped right out
from under you...

Irritated by the shameless guilt trip, Natalie's gaze drifts over to the main door. We hear the DOOR CREAK OPEN and --

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TRAILER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK (1993)

Young Natalie (14) leading YOUNG KEVYN (14) into the trailer. (They're both a few years younger than in the pilot, and a bit more tentative in their counter-culture style).

Clocking YOUNGER VERA SOFTLY SNORING ON THE SOFA, Natalie gestures for Kevyn to be quiet as she leads him toward --

INT. TRAILER HOME - NATALIE'S OLD BEDROOM - FLASHBACK (1993)

Natalie uncases a cassette of Dinosaur Jr.'s "Where You Been." Puts it in the tape deck of her BOOM BOX and presses PLAY. Kevyn awkwardly leans nearby, clearly nervous to be in the bedroom of his crush.

Desperate for something to do with his hands, Kevyn picks up a SHARPIE from the DESK and starts coloring his fingernails black. Playing it cool --

KEVYN
I heard Kurt really wanted J Mascis
to be in Nirvana.

NATALIE
No shit?
(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)
 (noticing the Sharpie)
 Ugh, Kev, don't use that on your
 nails. Here -- c'mere...

She picks up a BOTTLE OF BLACK NAIL POLISH from her dresser and sits down on her bed, patting the space beside her. Thrumming with hormones and anxiety, Kevyn sits. She takes his hand, gently cradling his fingers in her own as she carefully starts painting his nails.

For Kevyn, her gentle touch, her careful attention... he's in heaven. And simultaneously deep inside the hell of his own desire. *Should he kiss her? Would she hate that?*

NATALIE (CONT'D)
 (oblivious)
 I thought you didn't even like
 Nirvana anymore.

KEVYN
 They're all right. It's just, ever
 since they left Sub Pop, they've
 gotten so mainstream.

NATALIE
 It's not their fault people love
 them.

KEVYN
 Yeah, I guess.

He turns towards her, braving direct eye contact.

KEVYN (CONT'D)
 I guess I liked them better when they
 were just ours, you know?

She nods; yeah, she gets that. Then, as Kevyn starts to move his head toward hers, a painfully tentative recon mission --

NATALIE
Shit --

Natalie suddenly pushes him to his feet as a CAR PULLS UP OUTSIDE with a crunch of gravel.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
 You've gotta go. Quick, use the
 window --

As Natalie hustles a confused Kevyn toward the window, we hear the outside door BANG open and her parents start to ARGUE in the background.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Hurry --

But before Kevyn can climb out, Natalie's very drunk and angry dad bursts in. Seeing Natalie trying to help some boy jump out her window, her dad draws his own conclusions --

NATALIE'S DAD

Oh I don't think so, buddy...

He grabs Kevyn by the shirt and THROWS him down on the floor.

NATALIE'S DAD

(sputtering)
You think you can sniff
around when I'm not here?
You think I'm fuckin'
stupid??

NATALIE

Dad, we weren't even doing
anything...!

KEVYN

No, sir, of course not, I --

NATALIE

(to Kevyn)
Just go!

Kevyn instinctively obeys her and scrambles out of the room. As soon as he's gone, Natalie's dad zeroes in on her.

NATALIE'S DAD

And you --

He roughly grips her upper arm, his other hand in a fist as he gets right up in her face.

NATALIE'S DAD (CONT'D)

-- this is what you do behind my
back, you little slut??

The DOOR WINGS OPEN behind them and, oddly, OLDER VERA stands there, looking incongruously blasé.

VERA

If you're gonna take shit, take it
all.

We REVERSE TO REVEAL --

INT. TRAILER HOME - NATALIE'S OLD BEDROOM - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Natalie rifles through a SHOEBOX of OLD TAPES in her old childhood bedroom -- fundamentally unchanged but now crowded with years worth of ADDITIONAL JUNK. A catch-all storage room. Vera's still standing in the doorway.

VERA

I'm not your goddamn storage unit.

Natalie pulls out a HAND-LABELED MIX TAPE from the box.

NATALIE

This is all I really need.

And with that, she walks out. Blowing past Vera, full of purpose that we don't yet understand...

INT. TURNER HOUSE - SIMONE AND TAISSA'S ROOM - EVENING

FROM A WEIRD, LOW ANGLE (a little creepy, as though we're spying) we FIND TAISSA, dressed to the nines, nervously sipping COFFEE.

Simone (also dressed up) quizzes her from a note on her PHONE as Taissa finishes her makeup at the DRESSING TABLE.

SIMONE

Properties?

TAISSA

Manhattan, East Hampton, Paris, Mendocino and... the Isle of Skye.

SIMONE

Kids?

TAISSA

Margo and... Flynn.

SIMONE

Ooh, sorry. The answer we were looking for is *Finn*.

TAISSA

Fuck.

In frustration, Taissa glances down -- RIGHT INTO THE CAMERA. As she STARTLES, we -

REVERSE, revealing SAMMY, standing in the doorway, silently watching them. Taissa chuckles, embarrassed by the "scare."

TAISSA (CONT 'D)

Oh. Hey buddy. Sorry for the swear.
(then)
Did you eat up all your noodles?

Sammy shakes his head "no," and Simone moves over to him.

SIMONE

Go down and finish them, Tara's gonna
be here any minute, okay?

As Sammy moves off, Simone gently shuts the door.

TAISSA

Can we go over her charities again?

SIMONE

Tai, there's no way that Diane
Rafelson's gonna expect you to know
all this stuff. She'll probably think
it's creepy if you do.

TAISSA

I just can't afford to fuck this up.
Bathurst's ads have me tanking in the
polls. If Rafelson takes a shine to
me tonight, her money, her
influence... she could turn
everything around.

SIMONE

So just be yourself. Tell her what
you really care about.
(then)
And hey, if all else fails, just
break out your Tina Turner and Hooch
bit. That thing kills.

Taissa gives her a look, clearly not in the mood for jokes.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

C'mon. You got this.

OFF Taissa, taking a deep breath.

BEN SCOTT (PRE-LAP)

Remember, slow breath in...

OMIT

EXT. WILDERNESS - A FEW MINUTES LATER - DAY (1996)

Close on young Taissa, cheek to stock, holding up the HUNTING RIFLE as Misty carefully places a PENNY on top of the barrel.

BEN (O.S.)
...then go on the exhale.

Taissa inhales, then pulls the trigger. CLICK. The penny tumbles to the grass as she DRY FIRES. Making a face --

TAISSA
Damn it...

Ben Scott is now seated on a nearby FALLEN TREE, offering guidance on this TRIGGER-PULL ASSESSMENT. His new CRUTCH is next to him; it's been partially whittled into better shape.

BEN SCOTT
It's not a competition, guys.

JACKIE
But there is going to be a winner, right?

We suddenly remember they're hyper-competitive athletes, as Taissa holds the rifle out to Jackie. Jackie grabs the rifle and raises it. Misty places the penny.

Jackie bites her lip in concentration as -- the PENNY wobbles, then SLIDES OFF, before she can even try to pull the trigger. Passing off the gun in disgust --

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Okay, this is literally impossible.

We FIND Travis waiting. Seeing JAVI come out of the cabin (and still feeling guilty about their fight in #103) Travis calls out to his brother -

TRAVIS
Yo, Javi. Come try this.

But Javi, still pissed, just walks away. It's a very public rebuke, and the girls are all watching. As Travis reddens --

BEN
Martinez, you're up.

Feeling the pressure of all the girls' eyes on him, Travis takes the rifle, lifts it. The coin is set and... CLICK -- it quivers slightly, but doesn't fall. Nobody is more surprised than Travis. Quickly recovering --

TRAVIS

Booyah! And that, ladies, is how it's done.

Smirking, he holds out the rifle Natalie. An almost imperceptible hesitation before she grabs it. Then -- Natalie raises the rifle, wedging the stock tight against her shoulder. Sighting the barrel...

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Like the man said. Nice and easy...

Misty sets the penny in place. Natalie takes a deep breath, cool and steady. When --

FLASH TO: Her father's grinning face from her nightmare -- the GAPING MESS OF HIS BLOWN-AWAY HEAD --

Natalie shudders. The penny DROPS.

Natalie silently hands the rifle to Van. Clearly pissed.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

(low, to Natalie)

Maybe stick to stuff you might actually be good at. Like, I dunno. Folding laundry. Or sucking dick.

On Natalie, gritting her teeth, reaching out for the rifle --

NATALIE

I'm going again.

JACKIE

Wait. Can she do that?

BEN

I'll allow it.

TRAVIS

This is bullshit...

Van hands the gun back to Nat, who re-shoulders the rifle, determined as fuck. Even before she pulls the trigger, we know that penny isn't going *anywhere*. CLICK. So smooth it could be a freeze frame.

VAN

Ohhh, snap.

OFF Natalie's confident smirk --

OMIT

OMIT

OMIT

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

FIND Shauna sitting on a log over the stream, biting her lip as she writes in her journal. Javi hesitantly approaches, sitting down near her.

JAVI

You're not doing the gun thing?

SHAUNA

(looking up; surprised)

Oh. I don't really think I'm meant to handle firearms...

JAVI

What are you writing?

SHAUNA

It's my journal.

JAVI

Like... a diary?

SHAUNA

Um, yeah, kinda. It's just my way of trying to make sense of what's going on, and how I feel about it.

(then)

That probably sounds pretentious, but... hey, when I'm famous, they can go in the archives, right?

(off his non-reaction)

I'm kidding.

In a slightly nervous gesture, Javi uses one finger to scratch behind his ear. Sensing his desire to give journaling a try, Shauna tears out a few PAGES from her notebook and holds them out to him.

SHAUNA (CONT'D)

Here. There's no wrong way to do it...

He takes the pages, and an extra PEN she offers. He gives her a cautious smile. OFF Shauna, getting a kick out of playing big sister to this sweet kid --

EXT. WILDERNESS - LATER(1996)

ON Natalie, Travis and MARI, standing in a line. Our marksmanship FINALISTS. About fifty yards down "range," Lottie and Van finish setting up a line of the hunter's OLD FOOD CANS on a downed tree. Makeshift TARGETS.

Coach Scott (continuing to whittle/hone his crutch) addresses the finalists; the other girls serve as spectators.

BEN

Now that we've narrowed the field, here's how this is gonna go down. One round for all the marbles; five targets, five shots each.

Ben hands the rifle to Mari.

LAURA LEE

Um, just a thought, but... shouldn't we be saving bullets?

BEN

In theory. But luckily, the nutjob who lived here was apparently hoarding for the apocalypse.

Mari lines up her first shot. BOOM -- A miss. BOOM! BOOM! Mari's second and third shots miss as well.

TRAVIS

The cans. You're aiming for the cans...

NATALIE

(side-eyeing him)
Do you like being this way?

TRAVIS

If you shit the bed again, are you gonna ask for another do-over?

BOOM! Another miss. Finally -- THUNK! Mari's last shot finds its mark. But the bar's been set low. As Mari hands the gun over to Travis --

EXT. WILDERNESS - MOMENTS LATER (1996)

ANGLE ON THE CANS as THUNK! THUNK! THUNK! Three hits in rapid succession.

ON TRAVIS as he fires again, a little too quickly this time. Getting cocky. SPLINTERS fly as his fourth shot goes low.

NATALIE

Ooh. So close, Flex...

Enraged, Travis WHIRLS on Natalie -- who suddenly finds herself on the business end of the loaded rifle.

TRAVIS

Don't. Fucking. Call me that.

BEN

TRAVIS!

The other girls DUCK and SCATTER in reaction, but Natalie stands her ground, holding Travis' gaze.

Travis gets a hold of himself. Still fuming, he reassumes the position. Takes a deep breath -- aims -- and THUNK. Another can is hit, putting his tally at four out of five.

BEN (CONT'D)

(a little shaken)

Alright. That's good shooting, Martinez.

Travis passes the rifle to Natalie.

TRAVIS

Don't choke. Again.

She throws him a humorless smile as she gets into position. A BEAT. Then -- CLOSE ON NATALIE as -- her world goes quiet. Her expression serene as she FIRES... clears... then FIRES AGAIN, and AGAIN. Spent cartridges arcing between each smooth motion. Cans bust open, one after the other...

Natalie *is in the zone*. A stunned beat after the fifth and final can GOES DOWN.

BEN

Holy shit...

And the crowd goes wild. The Yellowjackets swarm Natalie as Travis storms off, looking like he might actually implode. But we stay on Natalie, soaking in her victory...

INT. RESTAURANT/BAR - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Natalie sits across from (adult) KEVYN. They are mid-conversation, as a WAITRESS delivers their COCKTAILS (a NEGRONI for Natalie and a SCOTCH for Kevyn).

NATALIE

I'm sorry about the... how should I put this... *confusion* with the texts.

KEVYN

(chuckling)

It's been a while, but I'll admit it didn't really sound like you. That said, I'm not usually in the business of shutting a woman down when she's talking about how shapely my legs are.

NATALIE

(glancing under the table,
dry)

I mean, they're not bad. But I've seen better.

Kevyn smiles, but pushes back a bit --

KEVYN

Flattery's not gonna get you off the hook here, Nat. I mean, Jesus, *B & E*? What in the hell were you *doing*?

A beat as Natalie considers... Dodging the question? Making up a lie? Finally -

NATALIE

Do you remember Travis Martinez?

Kevyn hesitates as his memory is jogged.

KEVYN

Yeah, sure. I mean, kind of. I know he was on the plane with you...

NATALIE

(nods)

It was *his* place. He had kinda gone off the grid, and we were worried about him. Turns out we were right to be. Later that night, we found out he'd... killed himself.

KEVYN

Jesus. I'm so sorry.

NATALIE

Thanks. It's..

She swirls her drink around, then she forces a smile.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Well, it's fucked.

(a beat; then, abruptly)

Speaking of which, *Officer*. How exactly did that happen?

Kevin absorbs the brazen subject-change.

KEVYN

You want the short version or the long version?

NATALIE

Give me the haiku.

Kevyn considers and decides to go with it. Counting syllables on his fingers --

KEVYN

The band was a bust... Met a girl and fucked it up... It's a job, I guess.

They share a smile.

KEVYN (CONT'D)

With two kids to put through college, I'm pretty stoked for the sweet, sweet pension and benefits.

(making devil's horns)

Punk rock...!

NATALIE

You have two kids??

KEVYN

Boys. Eleven and fifteen.

("FYI, I'm divorced")

I have shared custody, so...

NATALIE

(raising an eyebrow)

Are they as bad as we were?

KEVYN

Come on, we weren't actually bad.

NATALIE

...Says the guy who broke into the chem lab to make, and I quote, 'the sickest bong the world has ever known'...

KEVYN

Which Mr. Dessing "confiscated" and is probably still using to this day.

Off Natalie and Kevyn, bonding over their shared nostalgia with the ease that only comes from real history --

EXT. HUNTING CABIN - WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

Find Natalie, with Ben Scott and Travis. Ben holds the rifle; Travis looks at him in angry disbelief.

TRAVIS

So that makes me, what? Her fucking sidekick?

BEN

No. It makes you a team. I can't send either of you out there alone. I wouldn't send you at all if I didn't...

(lowering his voice)

Look, I'm going to talk to you like adults --

Travis winces at his dad's old catch phrase. So does Ben. It was obviously unintentional, but... Trying to recover --

BEN (CONT'D)

The truth is, we might be out here longer than we thought. So we're relying on you two. And you need to rely on each other, understand?

Off Natalie and Travis, neither one of them particularly happy about the arrangement --

EXT. HUNTING CABIN - WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

From a WIDE SHOT of the wilderness --

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING (PRESENT DAY)

We see a WIDE SHOT of an enormous, Gatsby-like mansion. The oldest of old money. A different kind of wilderness...

INT. MANSION - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

We're in an extremely exclusive party of RICH AND INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE. Taissa and Simon have recently entered when the host ROBERT GARRITY (male, white, 50s), approaches them.

ROBERT GARRITY

Taissa Turner! Robert Garrity.

TAISSA

Robert, thank you so much for having us. My wife, Simone --

ROBERT GARRITY

Ah yes, the rising star of the Comp Lit department! Our daughter's a freshman at NYU. She can't wait to take your seminar on Proust.

(re: Taissa and Simone)

Now *this* is what a power couple should look like, don't you agree?

TAISSA

(joking; mostly to Simone)

It's... the only reason we're together.

ROBERT GARRITY

Ha! And she's funny, too!

(glancing elsewhere)

I'm afraid I need to excuse myself, ladies, but please get yourselves some drinks. You're gonna love dinner -- it's *nose to tail*. A whole roast pig, from this amazing little farm upstate.

(joking)

I already told them I've got dibs on one of the ears.

TAISSA

Oh. We're actually vegetarians...

ROBERT GARRITY

Not to worry, there's broccolini, too. I'm told it's the new kale...

Garrity moves off with a wink. Reading Taissa's expression --

SIMONE

You forgot to eat beforehand again, didn't you?

TAISSA
 --There she is.

Simone follows her gaze across the room to DIANE RAFELSON (60s), polished and charismatic, chatting with another GUEST.

SIMONE
 You ready?

TAISSA
 Define 'ready.'

Taissa takes a deep breath. Nervous but determined. But as they start to maneuver toward Diane, they're intercepted by another rich white man, GERALD SUSSMAN.

GERALD SUSSMAN
 Ms. Turner -- Gerald Sussman. We spoke at the NJDSC event last spring?

TAISSA
 (no memory, but fakes it)
 Gerald, of course...

GERALD SUSSMAN
 Have you given any more thought to our conversation about the county building code? Like I said before, it's nearly as draconian as it is antiquated...

A CATERER passes by with tray of CHAMPAGNE FLUTES, and Taissa takes one. OFF Taissa, keeping one eye on Diane Rafelson while feigning interest in that this blowhard has to say...

EXT. ABANDONED MENTAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

A once-imposing former mental asylum, decades gone to seed. Deteriorating and darkly beautiful.

INT. ABANDONED MENTAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Shauna stands in a corridor of the abandoned building. Peeling paint, kudzu creeping in, atmospherically touched by the moonlight.

As she takes a swig from a FLASK in a brown paper bag, she notices her WEDDING RING -- and her mind SUDDENLY FLASHES TO her time with ADAM at the hotel: ECU GLIMPSES of hands, lips, trembling skin.

Close and subjective -- Shauna's face, pressed into the bedsheet; Shauna's fingers in Adam's mouth; the back of Adam's shoulder as Shauna digs her fingernails into his back.

We spy a COOL GEOMETRIC TATTOO on Adam's back. But then we are distracted by the intensity of Shauna's grip -- deep enough to draw blood...

CLOSE ON Shauna's face, fucking *transported* -- and suddenly we're back in this strange, dark, derelict place. Impulsively, Shauna shimmyes her ring off, tucking it into her pocket. A moment later, Adam wanders toward her, looking around. Warily amazed.

ADAM

Wow, okay. When you said you wanted to go old school I thought we might go bowling or something... but this is definitely more interesting...

SHAUNA

(passing him the bottle)
When I was in high school kids would sneak in here to party and... do *bad things*. I mean, not me. I was a nerd. But --
(on his look)
You don't believe me?

ADAM

I believe you were smart. But that's not always the same thing.

Shauna narrows her eyes. His keen perception both excites her and puts her on edge. Then she turns and starts leading him slowly down the hall.

She kicks aside an empty can of NATTY LIGHT, as she regards some sloppy GRAFFITI: **ILANA B IS A SKANK**

SHAUNA

I guess slut-shaming is still alive and well...

ADAM

That could be vintage.

SHAUNA

(under her breath)
I think Callie's friends with her...

As they come to a CORNER, someone has spray -painted a large **ARROW**, and: **DON'T GO THIS WAY**.

SHAUNA (CONT'D)
So, this way?

ADAM
Obviously

Shauna smiles and leads them further in, as a MANGY STRAY DOG trots by. OFF Shauna, thrilled to be so far out of her comfort zone.

INT. RESTAURANT/BAR - COURTYARD - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

In the same restaurant that Natalie and Kevyn are in, we FIND Misty, wheeling Mrs. Singh (the old woman from the nursing home) into position at a table in the courtyard.

MISTY
Here we go, Mrs. Singh. You sit here.

As Misty sits down, perpendicular to her, we see that she's deliberately positioning herself to have a clear but surreptitious view of Natalie and Kevyn as they eat.

MISTY (CONT'D)
Doesn't the courtyard make you feel like a muckety-muck? So European.

Mrs. Singh GRUNTS her indifference, as the WAITRESS lays down paper COASTERS, waiting for their order.

MISTY (CONT'D)
I'll have a chocolate martini, and my friend will have --

MRS. SINGH
Crown Royal, rocks. Make it a double.

Mrs. Singh raises a challenging eyebrow at Misty.

MISTY
Hey, go nuts, I'm not stopping you.

While the waitress moves off to get their drinks, Misty studies Natalie and Kevyn, who are laughing. *What the hell is Natalie up to?*

Then her gaze drifts to the bar area where, seated at a stool, is JESSICA ROBERTS -- also watching Natalie. WTF??

Misty grabs her phone and TEXTS Natalie: THAT REPORTER IS WATCHING YOU RIGHT NOW. Misty sends the text, but she can see Natalie's phone on the table, SCREEN-SIDE DOWN. Natalie doesn't touch it.

So Misty tries calling. She watches as Natalie lifts up her BUZZING phone, sees who it is -- then puts the phone back down again. *Fuck*.

OFF Misty, frustrated that her vigilance is being ignored...

INT. MANSION - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Taissa plucks another CHAMPAGNE FLUTE from a passed tray.

Though all she really wants is to meet (and make a great impression on) Diane, Taissa is continually trapped in a round robin of schmoozing. QUICK POPS as --

She nods at a pompous, young TECH BRO, DAVEY BRONSON (30s) --

DAVEY BRONSON

Like, I didn't just want to *change*
the world through innovation, I
wanted to earn enough so I could
afford to seriously *give*, you know?

Enduring this, Taissa drains her champagne a little faster that she probably should -- especially on an empty stomach.

The SOUND AROUND HER FADES INTO A VAGUELY MENACING DRONE as we CUT TO ANOTHER POP: Taissa -- re-filled CHAMPAGNE FLUTE in hand -- listening to a red-faced FINANCE GUY (40s) (MOS)...

Taissa a bit drunker now... IN HER POV as everything grows somewhat exaggerated; a bit blurry around the edges...

Meanwhile Taissa keeps one eye on her partially-obstructed view of Diane Rafelson, who is talking and laughing with a GROUP in the far corner of the room.

Taissa excuses herself and starts to move off in Diane's direction. As she goes, she catches a glimpse of a SEVERED STAG'S HEAD, being carried on a silver tray. What in the fuck? But, when she looks again, it is just the roasted HEAD OF A PIG. (The "nose" of "nose to tail"...)

When she turns back, Diane is no longer there. Off Taissa's unsteady frustration we -- CUT TO ANOTHER POP:

Taissa now surrounded by Robert Garrity and an older wealthy couple, CALVIN and THISBE VAN DOREN (70s; 10% Lynchian/Rosemary's Baby vibes). The room is TELESCOPING slightly...

CALVIN VAN DOREN

What have Bathurst's supporters been chanting?

THISBE VAN DOREN

(weirdly gleeful)

"Spill, spill, spill!"

CALVIN VAN DOREN

They're no better than Neanderthals.
I mean, here I thought it was the
year 2021...

A WAITER glides up with a tray of PUFF PASTRIES. Desperate, Taissa takes one, pops it in her mouth. There's a momentary flicker of pleasure as she chews -- then she abruptly SPITS IT OUT onto her napkin. To the Waiter -

TAISSA

Is this... meat?

He shrugs and moves on, blank-faced. MEANWHILE --

CALVIN VAN DOREN

Don't you think that it would come across as strong if you, say, wrested back control of your own story? People already know that you're tough, and they love that. They just want to know a little more about, well, *how exactly* you survived out there...

THISBE VAN DOREN

Yes -- *what did you really have to resort to?* I mean, we're all friends here, aren't we?

The whole group is STARING at Taissa with big, hungry eyes. Taissa even senses that other PEOPLE around them are listening, too. Desperate for some sordid tidbit.

Across the room, she spots an unexpected movement -- a WOLF, weaving its way amidst the crowd. No one else seems to notice it...

Taissa only glimpsed it for a moment, but her heart is pounding. She is sweating. Swaying.

THISBE VAN DOREN (CONT'D)

Are you all right, my dear?

HARD CUT TO:

INT. MANSION - "GREEN ROOM" - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Taissa pulls a CIGARETTE and LIGHTER from her bag, her hands trembling slightly. She lights up. Takes a long, soothing drag. Finally, a moment of fucking peace...

THROATY VOICE (O.S.)

Can I bum one of those?

Taissa turns to see -- Diane Rafelson.

TAISSA

Oh. Of course...

As Taissa fumbles to pull out another cigarette, she cannot help but laugh at herself.

DIANE

Something funny?

TAISSA

It's just, I've been desperate to talk to you all night, and when I finally get my chance I'mmm --

I'm a fucking disaster. Taissa shrugs.

TAISSA (CONT'D)

Too much champagne on an empty stomach.

Diane smiles, drawn in by Taissa's honesty.

DIANE

Never enough of the right food at these things/ I mean, did you see that damn pig? I get the concept, but if you ask me, it's fucking barbaric...

Diane pulls a CLIF BAR from her PURSE.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Split it?

TAISSA I would love to.

Off Taissa, lighting Diane's cigarette, desperately hoping that she can pull herself together to impress this woman...

INT. COURTYARD - RESTAURANT/BAR - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Natalie and Kevyn, now pleasantly tipsy and nostalgic, are crossing the restaurant to leave. As they move toward the exit, Kevyn pauses.

KEVYN
Is that... *Misty*?

Natalie looks and -- yup, there is fucking Misty, chatting up a very bored-looking elderly woman. Natalie sets her jaw and storms over to Misty.

NATALIE
What the fuck are you doing here??

Misty pulls her close, trying to whisper --

MISTY
Okay, *don't look now*, but that reporter, Jessica Roberts, is sitting right over there...

Natalie turns to look, and sees Jessica Roberts calmly paying her check, acting completely uninterested in Natalie.

MISTY (CONT'D)
She's been watching you.

NATALIE
And what have you been doing?

MISTY
Backing you up.

NATALIE
Backing me...? How'd you even know I was here?

MISTY
I am a citizen detective.

NATALIE
I hate to break it to you, Misty, but we're not Rizzoli and fucking Isles. *I do not need you.*

MISTY
But --

NATALIE
Go the fuck home.

Natalie strides toward the exit, followed by a puzzled Kevyn. We STAY WITH Misty, simmering, as Mrs. Singh regards her.

MRS. SINGH

You remind me of my granddaughter.

(then)

Nobody likes her, either.

Ignoring her, but unable to contain her anger any longer, Misty barrels over to Jessica Roberts, who just looks up at her, infuriatingly impassive.

MISTY

I don't know what you think you're doing, but I've got my eye on you.

JESSICA

Hello, Misty.

Jessica stands up to leave, holding Misty's gaze.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Tell me, how'd your little road trip go?

Misty reacts with surprise, which quickly hardens into rage.

MISTY

I know when you look at me, you see someone who you don't think you have to be afraid of. But you're wrong.

Jessica takes that in. Then with a smirk, exits. Once she's gone, Misty picks up her empty glass and SNIFFS it. As she examines Jessica's bill, suspicious as hell...

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

Natalie (toting the rifle) struggles to keep up with Travis, who is hiking like he's on a mission.

NATALIE

Travis, wait up.

(as he ignores her)

Coach said we should be looking for tracks. And scratches on the trees, like antler marks or whatever...

(getting pissed)

Travis.

TRAVIS

Look, you can follow me or not. Just don't slow me down.

OFF Natalie, furious. No choice but to follow or go it alone.

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

Misty, Jackie, Taissa, Lottie, Van, Akilah, and Laura Lee wander the woods, trying to forage for anything edible.

LAURA LEE

Are any of these, like, maple syrup trees?

Misty picks up a MUSHROOM that's growing on the ground. She's about to take a bite, when Akilah GRABS it from her hand.

AKILAH

Don't eat that kind, it's poisonous.

VAN

You mean, like, "kill you" poisonous or just, "It'll make you trip your balls off?"

AKILAH

I don't know. My Girl Scout troop leader didn't get all that specific about it.

As Akilah tosses the mushroom, we see Misty making a mental note of what it looked like. Meanwhile Akilah points out a small bush of BERRIES.

AKILAH (CONT'D)

Now those I know for sure will make you puke.

MISTY

(getting irritated)
Um, maybe you could point out something that's actually *edible* so we can get back already?

The other girls exchange a look. Smirking --

TAISSA

What's the big hurry?

VAN

Coach need a sponge bath?

As Misty ignores their teasing --

FIND Lottie, bringing up the rear. Lottie pauses, as she spots a SYMBOL carved into the bark of a nearby tree -- it's the same symbol that we saw carved inside the attic in #103.

Lottie stands in front of it for a long beat, mesmerized; as though unsure if it is even really there. She's slowly, tentatively reaching out to TOUCH it when --

JACKIE

Um, guys??

Curious, Lottie and the girls hurry to join Jackie --

EXT. PROP PLANE - WILDERNESS - MOMENTS LATER (1996)

-- and find her standing in front of small PROP PLANE, half-hidden in the overgrowth.

GIRLS

Whoa!/Holy shit!/Are you fucking kidding me??

It's partially grown over with ROOTS and BRUSH but is otherwise in remarkably decent shape. The girls swarm around it, curious.

JACKIE

It must have belonged to the dead guy...

Riding the tide of their collective excitement, Laura Lee climbs up into the cockpit, and Van playfully tries to SPIN the propeller --

Which suddenly and unexpectedly STARTS THE FUCKING PLANE! The PROPELLER is a DIZZYING BLUR and the airplane in LURCHING FORWARD -- right toward Jackie and Van!

It all happens *fast*. Not even thinking, Jackie PUSHES Van out of the way, but the plane's now coming straight for Jackie.

The girls are screaming as, INSIDE, a panicked Laura Lee tries to make sense of the controls...

TAISSA

Turn it off!

LAURA LEE

I'm trying!

Jackie stands there, frozen, the propeller about to make a smoothie of her face --

But then the plane miraculously STOPS just a few inches in front of her. Jackie staggers backward, in shock. Laura Lee finally pulls the red "FUEL CUT OFF" knob, and the plane goes dead again, the propeller slowing.

AKILAH

(rattled)

Fuck...

With amazement, Taissa reaches out to touch a TWISTED, VINE-LIKE ROOT that snakes all the way through the landing gear of the plane, holding it in place. It's one of several.

As the girls all take this in, Lottie stares at the roots and intones spookily --

LOTTIE

It didn't want him to leave...

The girls aren't quite sure what she means, but the statement unsettles them. OFF Taissa, trying not to feel shaken...

INT. MANSION - "GREEN ROOM" - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Find Taissa and Diane, who have now been smoking and talking for a while. Really connecting. Unlike all the other people at this party, Diane is warm and self-aware.

We even find Taissa opening up about something personal --

TAISSA

If you'd asked me what I was scared of, I don't think I would've even been able to articulate it...

We wonder -- *is she talking about the wilderness?* But then --

TAISSA (CONT'D)

But things are so different now. That a kid can look at someone like *me*, in a happy marriage to a woman, and think --

(MORE)

TAISSA (CONT'D)

(casual shrug)

"Okay, so that's a thing." It makes me hopeful. All that change, in just a generation.

(a beat, then)

Sorry I'm rambling...

DIANE

No, please, it's refreshing. *Genuine* positivity. That's rare.

As Diane continues, we spot Simone pausing at the patio window, observing that Taissa is finally having her moment with Diane. Simone smiles, before moving back into the party.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I certainly don't have it. It's why I've never run for office. But you -- you *rise above*, Taissa. I've seen it.

(off Taissa's surprise)

Oh, sure. I've had my eye on you for years. And I have to say, I'm impressed.

Diane smiles. Taissa is practically breathless.

DIANE (CONT'D)

As far as I'm concerned, there are no limits to how far you can rise. You just need to find the people who truly want to help you. And then trust them.

TAISSA

(eager and grateful)

Oh, I do. I mean, your endorsement would be --

DIANE

It would be my honor. I'll do everything I can.

Taissa keeps her cool, but we can see her practically thrumming with the thrill of the possibilities unfolding before her.

DIANE (CONT'D)

All I ask in return is that you show me *who you really are*.

TAISSA

Of course. Absolutely.

DIANE

Good. That's settled, then.

They grin at each other. Taissa is elated. Diane takes a long pull on her cigarette, then --

DIANE (CONT'D)

You know, you'd be shocked at the things that people have confided in me over the years.

Taissa looks at Diane, not sure what she is getting at...

DIANE (CONT'D)

Of course, I'd never share. I'm like whispering your secrets into a well.

Realization starts to dawn on Taissa -- Diane wants her to talk about the wilderness. With a perverse casualness --

DIANE (CONT'D)

So tell me, dear. *What really happened out there?*

Taissa blinks, her head spinning. Diane's pitch is weirdly seductive...

TAISSA

I'm -- I'm not sure anyone else could understand. It was...

Hearing a low and sinister GROWL, Taissa turns toward the distant woods. She can't see anything. Just darkness.

DIANE

(greedily)

It was *what?*

TAISSA

I -- we scavenged, and we starved, until --

DIANE

(impatient)

I've heard the official story.

(then; leaning in)

You said you trusted me...

Though Taissa's trying to hide it, her heart is breaking to see that Diane is really no different than the rest of them.

TAISSA

Why? Why should you have this? Just because you're rich and powerful?

Diane straightens her back. A beat, as she gives Taissa a haughty look. Icy as hell.

DIANE

Are you really this naive, Ms. Turner? All those so-called "changes" you were talking about? You have me to thank. All I've done for women's causes, for Black causes, for Black women's causes... so if I were you, I'd watch my tone.

Taissa takes this in. The utter, horrible condescension.

TAISSA

Okay. Yes, ma'am.

Taissa knows she's probably setting fire to her campaign, but she cannot help herself --

TAISSA (CONT'D)

I'll perfectly calibrate my tone, as I tell you to *go fuck yourself*.

As Taissa turns to walk away, leaving a stunned Diane in her wake -- we see her resolution quickly morph into anxiety, as she realizes: she just probably fucked *herself*.

We watch FROM THE TREELINE, from our familiar but still UNKNOWN POV. Like someone (or something) is watching as Taissa strides away...

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT(PRESENT DAY)

Natalie and Kevyn share a CIGARETTE in the alley behind the restaurant.

A beat of silence as they pass it back and forth. Then, she reaches into her pocket, as though just now remembering --

NATALIE

I almost forgot, I brought you something...

She pulls out the old MIXTAPE she found, and offers it up. He takes it. With a wry smile --

KEVYN

No fucking way...
(playfully sarcastic)
I was literally just looking for this.

He turns the tape over in his hands, nostalgic.

KEVYN (CONT'D)

Jesus, Nat. Last time I saw you, you were getting out of my car, saying you'd call me tomorrow. That was twenty-two years ago.

(then)

You were my best friend, and you just...

You fucking ghosted me. He looks at her.

KEVYN (CONT'D)

You had to know that I was, like, totally in love with you, right?

She looks at him, touched, and not exactly surprised. She gives a slight shake of her head.

NATALIE

Gathering his courage, he steps toward her, and gently takes her face between his hands.

KEVYN (CONT'D)

Better late than never, right?

Natalie hesitates. Looking him straight in the eye --

NATALIE

Kev, I can't...I can't stop thinking about Travis.

Kevyn disengages, hurt. After a beat of gathering himself -- and his dignity -- he gives her a questioning look. Seeing her genuine pain:

KEVYN

He must have meant a lot to you.

NATALIE

It's not like we were each other's sponsors, but we tried... to keep each other clean. I just can't help thinking that if I had been there for him, he might not have --

Unable to finish the sentence, she stifles a sob.

KEVYN

You can't blame yourself.

NATALIE

It's just, *not knowing* if he was loaded when he -- it's...

It's killing her. Kevyn's heart is breaking for her.

KEVYN

I could make a couple calls. Get a copy of his toxicology report. Would that help?

Natalie takes this in, as though it's never occurred to her before. She nods, then hugs him gratefully.

NATALIE

That would be amazing.

Off Natalie strangely impassive. As though this may have been *exactly* what she wanted. And yet, their history, her grief... it's all right there, just beneath the surface.

OMIT

EXT. WILDERNESS - CRASH SITE - DAY (1996)

ON NATALIE, frustrated, sweating. Travis is several yards ahead. Then -- Natalie spots a piece of METAL glinting overhead. A piece of PLANE DEBRIS, caught high in the branches of a towering tree.

She frowns. Coming into a clearing --

NATALIE

Are you fucking serious?

She looks at the WRECKAGE OF THE PLANE'S CABIN in disbelief.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

You brought us back *here*?

TRAVIS

Looks that way.

NATALIE

Why?

Travis approaches a hulk of the plane. Finding -- a scrap of metal paneling, with a wide, flat end. Prying it loose --

TRAVIS

Doesn't concern you.

Natalie glares at him. At the end of her rope...

NATALIE

Jesus fucking *Christ*. I know you're messed up right now, but that doesn't give you a free pass to be this big a dick all the time. We're supposed to be a team.

He snorts a laugh, condescending and cruel.

TRAVIS

Yeah, right. A team.

(then)

Do you even know why people call me Flex?

She stops, shakes her head. He turns and walks away, unable to maintain eye contact. His face reddening with anger.

TRAVIS (CONT' D)

In seventh grade I had to get surgery on my back. I had like, spinal fusion or something, I don't know. It sucked. Then when I got back to school, Bobby Farleigh saw the scar in the locker room and told everyone I had one of my ribs removed. So I'd be flexible enough to, you know...

(mumbling)

...suck my own dick.

Natalie almost lets out a laugh. In fairness, it's... kind of funny. Cruel and shitty, but ridiculous. But the something stops her cold. As she realizes what Travis is up to --

-- as he plunges the metal scrap in the dirt, a makeshift SHOVEL - the exact spot where they buried his Dad --

NATALIE

(horrified)

Oh my god. What are you doing?

She drops the rifle, closing the distance between them. Grabbing for the "shovel" --

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Are you fucking *psycho*?

He wrenches it back, shoving her in the process. She lands on her ass. He goes back to digging. Gritting her teeth, launching herself at his legs in a full tackle --

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Travis, stop!

They both go down, grappling in the resulting scuffle. Despite her disadvantage in size, Natalie ends up on top, pinning him. If only for a moment, before he shoves her off. Finally, panting --

TRAVIS

There's a ring, okay? I didn't think about it when we, you know. Buried him. But it was my great-grandfather's. It's an ugly piece of shit, but it's probably worth a lot of money.

Natalie watches as he stands and heads back to the grave.

NATALIE

It's gonna be bad...

He hesitates but doesn't turn. He knows she's right. Still, he continues toward the grave. And this time, she doesn't try to stop him. As he picks up the "shovel" and digs in...

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. WILDERNESS - CRASH SITE - LATER (1996)

TRAVIS, now several feet down, exhausted and filthy. When -- SQUELCH. There's an unmistakable sound as his shovel hits something soft and wet.

NATALIE

(almost a whisper)

Shit...

She looks nervously at Travis, who drops to his knees. Using his hands to reveal a chest... neck... face.

TRAVIS

Oh god, oh god, oh fuck...

Travis drops the shovel and jumps out of the hole. Doubles over, RETCHING.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I -- I can't.

(heaving again)

Fuck. Fuck. I can't do it.

Collapsing to his knees --

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I can't do it.

NATALIE

So don't. Jesus, it's just a ring.
Let it go.

TRAVIS

I can't!

Travis turns to her, his face naked with a mix of hurt and grief and humiliation. Choking back tears --

TRAVIS (CONT' D)

You don't fucking get it. I have to
bring back something. I have to.

NATALIE

(realizing)

For Javi...

He nods, miserable. ON NATALIE, as she takes him in, the grimness of the task ahead. Then reluctantly, she looks down at Coach's partially exposed face:

Bloated and discolored, a ghoulish purple-black... lips curled up in a permanent sneer, eyes wide and staring into the void.

Natalie presses her lips tight. Holding it together.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Which hand?

Travis furiously swipes away angry tears.

TRAVIS

R-R-Right.

Natalie kneels with grim determination. Gently unearthing a HAND bearing a GOLD INSIGNIA RING. Only -- when she tries to take the ring off, it won't come. She TUGS, but the finger's too bloated...

Finally, seeing no other choice, Natalie pulls a HUNTING KNIFE from her pocket. As she flicks it open, steeling herself... Lowering the blade with a grimace...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WILDERNESS - CRASH SITE - LATER (1996)

Natalie and Travis sit a few yards from the freshly filled-in GRAVE. Travis silently turns the RING over in his hand. Natalie opens her BACKPACK, finding a secret inner ZIPPER COMPARTMENT.

She pulls out an old, bent JOINT and a LIGHTER. Fires it up and takes a deep drag before passing it to Travis. He inhales, coughs. A long beat. Finally --

NATALIE

So. Can you suck your own dick?

He gives her a look.

TRAVIS

I wish.

They both crack a smile. Another quiet beat.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

He was such a shit dad. He didn't even fucking like me.

As Natalie looks at him, seeing a tear run down his cheek --

INT. TRAILER HOME - NATALIE'S OLD BEDROOM - FLASHBACK (1993)

We're right back in the scene we saw before: Natalie's father with a death grip on her arm, eyes wide with rage.

NATALIE

We were just listening to music --

NATALIE'S DAD

(shaking her)

DON'T YOU FUCKING LIE TO ME!

VERA hurries in, confused.

VERA

Hey -- hey, what are you doing --

Vera tries to gently pull him off of Natalie. In a flare of anger, he BACKHANDS Vera, releasing Natalie in the process. Vera falls, and he looms over her, raging.

NATALIE'S DAD

You're fucking passed out while she's been bringing all these boys in here --

As he keeps berating Vera, Natalie sees her chance to slip out of the room --

INT. TRAILER HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (1993)

Natalie hurries to a CLOSET, reaches into the back and pulls out... a SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN.

NATALIE'S DAD (O.S.)
 -- so I'm the one who has to
 straighten it up -- I'm the only one
 in this whole house with any sense of
 fucking *decency* --

Determined, Natalie hefts the weapon and walks back through her bedroom door...

INT. TRAILER HOME - NATALIE'S OLD BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS (1993)

NATALIE'S DAD
 -- so don't you try and give me any
 shit, because *I will fucking* --

Natalie's dad goes silent as he notices her, raising the shotgun to her shoulder. Aiming RIGHT AT HIS FACE.

He stares at Natalie's finger on the trigger. OFF Natalie, trying not to shake --

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. WILDERNESS - CRASH SITE - DAY (1996)

Natalie and Travis, right where we left them.

TRAVIS
 Why do I feel like this?

NATALIE
 Doesn't matter how shitty they are.
 It still fucks you up when they're
 gone.

Travis nods. Realizing, perhaps, that she's speaking from experience. As Natalie takes another drag --

OMIT

EXT. RESTAURANT/BAR - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Kevyn walks Natalie to her CAR. She's collected herself.

NATALIE

I'll call you. And thanks for

For offering to help. For forgiving the past.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

...For being here.

They share a smile. Then --

KEVYN

It was good to see you, Nat.

She looks at Kevyn, taking him in. His openness. His honesty. Then, surprising herself as much as him, Natalie steps toward him and KISSES HIM. Sweetly, then more hungrily.

Finally, their faces part. It was all he ever dreamed of... And Natalie is feeling something, too -- almost in spite of herself. OFF Kevyn, as she climbs into her car --

INT. MOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - LATER

Natalie enters the bathroom and looks at her face in the mirror. Stoic, with a touch of triumph. And yet, we can see that there's conflict beneath her satisfaction.

Her grief for Travis... her unexpected feelings for Kevyn,,, It's a heady stew of emotions that she's desperately trying to tamp down.

She bends down to splash some water on her face and, as she stands up again, we see TEEN NATALIE standing beside her, mutely and mournfully staring at her older self...

INT. ABANDONED MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY ROOM - NIGHT

Shauna and Adam slip into a once-grand DAY ROOM, now deteriorating and overgrown with vines. Adam looks around, amazed.

ADAM

Man. This place is beautiful.

SHAUNA

Doubt that made anyone here less insane.

ADAM

What, you don't believe in the
transformative power of beauty?

SHAUNA

I guess not.

ADAM

What do you believe in, Shauna?

Shauna makes a face. Adam smiles. He's being playful.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Come on, I just want to know what's
in your head.

SHAUNA

Yeah, look, we're not on a date,
okay? We don't need to "get to know
each other."

As though to prove her point, she KISSES HIM and starts
unbuckling his pants -- but he stops her.

ADAM

If you really wanted to just have
sex, we could have gone to a hotel.

SHAUNA

Plenty of people have sex here...

She tries to kiss him again, but he poses another question,
well aware that he is irking her:

ADAM

What are you most proud of in your
life?

SHAUNA

(sighing)

This is really, like, the opposite of
a turn-on...

Ignoring her, Adam finds two OLD CHAIRS. He sits on one,
gesturing for her to take the other. She remains standing.

ADAM

(as though she asked)

What am I most proud of? Wow, great
question. Lemme see...

She rolls her eyes and fidgets, really contemplating
leaving.

ADAM (CONT'D)

..um, never getting stuck. Always challenging myself. Once in a while, making something really beautiful. Or, at least trying to.

(then)

What about you? Do you do anything creative?

SHAUNA

Nope.

ADAM

Really? Nothing?

(off Shauna's silence)

Okay, how 'bout this one: what's the worst thing you've ever done?

She pauses. At least that's an interesting one.

SHAUNA

You don't really want to know.

ADAM

Come on. You gotta give me something here...

Shauna seems to contemplate, then lets out a long breath.

SHAUNA

Okay, fine. I -- I was eighteen. Me and my friends, we were driving home late. We'd been out, and...

She sits, seemingly shaken by the memory. Adam is engrossed.

SHAUNA (CONT'D)

...and we hit someone, okay? We were all freaking out, just praying that he was okay, but he wasn't. At all. I can still remember that feeling of total panic. The desperation to go back in time. To make the nightmare go away. We threw the body into the ocean and agreed to never talk about it again.... I went off to college. And things seemed... okay? But then I got a letter in the mail and it said: *I know what you did last summer.*

Shauna lets this land. She almost wants him to be angry at her, that she won't play his little games. Instead, he grins.

ADAM

You're a really good liar.

SHAUNA

What, you don't think I could have actually killed somebody?

ADAM

Oh, I didn't say *that*...

(with a smile)

There's definitely a darkness in you, Shauna Sadecki.

As he holds her gaze, Shauna feels the charge of real connection. But at that moment, they hear the SQUAWK of a WALKIE-TALKIE. Clicking footsteps. A SECURITY GUARD, approaching the door of the room --

With a mix of fear and exhilaration, Adam takes Shauna's hand and pulls h e r into a shadowy corner, where they HIDE behind some old FURNITURE as a FLASHLIGHT BEAM sweeps in.

As the guard peers around -- soon getting DANGEROUSLY CLOSE, Shauna and Adam stay frozen in their hiding place. Shauna is delighted by the illicit teenage thrill, and she and Adam LOCK EYES.

The way Adam is looking at her, it's both stirring and unsettling. He sees her, all her pent-up darkness -- it is electric, and also intimate...

Finally satisfied that no one's here, the guard moves off.

Adam comes in close, taking Shauna's face in his hands. Loving what her pleasure has revealed in her.

ADAM (CONT'D)

(quietly)

There you are.

He's about to kiss her, tenderly -- but she pulls away. It is too intimate; she's now afraid of the connection she feels.

SHAUNA

I should go, it's getting late.

ADAM

What, really?

SHAUNA

Yeah. My husband's waiting for me.

Adam takes this blow with equanimity, glancing at her RINGLESS HAND. He understands that Shauna is being guided by her fear. As she starts to walk away --

ADAM

I really want to see you again. But you were right -- we don't need to "get to know each other."
 (raising an eyebrow)
 I think I already know you pretty well...

OFF Shauna, walking away, her need for comfort and security in a battle with her desire.

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

Natalie and Travis stalk slowly through the woods. Hearing a far-off RUSTLE, they both stop --

And see a SMALL DOE foraging about fifty yards off.

They share a quick glance. *This is it.* As Natalie silently takes the rifle off her shoulder, FLASH TO --

INT. TRAILER HOME - NATALIE'S OLD BEDROOM - DAY (1993)

Younger Natalie, with the sawed-off shotgun aimed at her father's head. If he is frightened for a moment, he quickly dismisses the feeling -- and SNORTS.

NATALIE'S DAD

Here she is. The girl who cried after she shot a goddamn turkey, and now -- what. You're gonna shoot me in the head?

As he starts to move toward her, Natalie's whole body stiffens. A lifetime's worth of humiliation and thwarted rage. *She's had enough of this asshole...*

NATALIE'S DAD (CONT'D)

Put that thing down before you hurt yourself --

Before he can even get the last word out, she SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER. For a split second, we see her father's genuine surprise, only -- The gun did not fire.

OFF Natalie's horror, as she realizes that, in her nervousness, she forgot to take the SAFETY off, we start to INTERCUT between the scenes --

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

Natalie pulls back the hammer on the rifle...

INT. TRAILER HOME - NATALIE'S OLD BEDROOM - DAY (1993)

Natalie's dad's eyes flare, adrenalized.

NATALIE'S DAD
Looks like you got the safety on.

He GRABS the shotgun out of her hands. With contemptuous mocking, he demonstrates how the safety works.

NATALIE'S DAD (CONT'D)
Here, lemme show you. *On, off, on, off*, you worthless fucking --

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

Natalie tries to center the deer in her sights, but she is trembling...

INT./EXT. TRAILER HOME - DAY (1993)

Natalie's dad strides out of the room, holding the gun.

NATALIE'S DAD
Perfectly safe to keep a gun in the house, as long as your kid's too fucking dumb to know how to use it. Never thought you could be more useless than your mother but you just won that little contest. Fucking *Christ*...

As he exits, lumbering down the handful of STEPS between the trailer door and the ground, Natalie can't hold in her rage --

NATALIE
You're the fucking useless one.

Hearing this, her dad wheels around on the steps -- he's fucking coming back inside for her --

NATALIE'S DAD
What did you just say to --

-- but he TRIPS, and --

BOOM! The gun accidentally goes off. His body drops.

Vera SCREAMS and pushes past Natalie to run out to him, WAILING as she realizes his head is half blown off.

OFF Natalie, frozen with horror at what just happened --

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY (1996)

Natalie, haunted by this memory, is now trembling even more. Observing this, Travis steps closer.

TRAVIS
(quietly)
It's okay. Just breathe.

He gently puts his hands on her arms. A gesture of support.

She steadies a bit, and he lets go.

The deer is in her crosshairs. She takes a long breath in... then pulls the trigger. BOOM.

The deer is hit, and falls.

Travis and Natalie cautiously approach the bleeding animal. Natalie takes in its hitching breaths. The intervals between them getting longer. The deer's eyes panicked, searching...

Then the eyes go still. Travis glances at Natalie, as she absorbs this intense and complex moment -- having overcome her fear, and having ended a life.

EXT. HUNTING CABIN - WILDERNESS - EVENING (1996)

The rest of the girls are divvying up the meager spoils from their foraging expedition. Jackie walks up to Van.

JACKIE
So, just for the record, we're,
like... even now, okay?

Van just looks at her -- like, *Are you fucking kidding me?* Before they can say more, they hear the girls start to react, excited and impressed. They turn to see --

Natalie and Travis emerging from the woods, the deer dangling from an improvised CARRY POLE between them. The hungry Yellowjackets WHOOP and shout their approval, crowding around the returning heroes.

They LAY DOWN THE DEER, and everyone marvels at it, including Ben Scott (whose CRUTCH is now more finished, with some CLOTHES tied to the top to make it more comfortable).

BEN
Holy shit. Nicely done, you two.

TRAVIS
It was all Natalie.

She shoots Travis an appreciative look.

NATALIE
(to Ben)
So, what do we do with it now?

BEN
First, we have to bleed it out.

A beat of silence -- then, not quite sure what is compelling her, Shauna cautiously steps forward.

SHAUNA
I'll give it a try.

Natalie hands Shauna the HUNTING KNIFE. Shauna kneels down, and presses the tip to the deer's throat.

Her heart pounding, she plunges it deeper, deeper, then begins to draw it straight across. As the animal's blood spills out onto the ground, Shauna feels a thrill she's never felt before.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUNTING CABIN - WILDERNESS - NIGHT (1996)

Later, in the glow of a BLAZING FIRE, a blood-spattered Shauna diligently works on sawing HUNKS off of one of the deer's LEGS, which she has sloppily severed and skinned.

Meanwhile, around the fire, the rest of the girls have been roasting and devouring the other LEG. Taissa pauses, and picks a bit of FUR out of her mouth, but that's not about to stop her from tearing into the next bite.

Ben Scott hobbles away from the fire, about to bite into the skewer of MEAT that he just cooked.

As he passes Misty, she impulsively -- so quick we might almost miss it -- kicks his crutch, snapping the wood at its base.

Ben lurches forward, about to face-plant, but Misty grabs his waist and steadies him. He instinctively clings to her, desperate to regain his balance.

MISTY
 (playing innocent)
 Oh my gosh, are you okay??

He gives her a long look... then clocks his meat, which has landed right in the dirt, along with his broken crutch.

MISTY (CONT'D)
 You really need to be more careful.
 I'll go get you some more meat.

As Misty contentedly scurries off, Ben has no choice but to sit down and let her minister to him, still not quite sure if that was an accident.

FIND Shauna -- as she stands up to stretch her back, she notices the NOTEBOOK PAGES she gave Javi, which he must have set down a little distance from the fire.

She goes over to look at them and finds that, instead of writing, he has filled them with DRAWINGS. Cartoon characters, superheroes, GEOMETRIC DESIGNS, a few attempts at local wildlife. He's clearly got some talent, and Shauna is charmed. She glances towards Javi --

Who we FIND sitting by the fire next to Travis, eating. Acting casual, Travis starts to reach into his pocket.

TRAVIS
 Hey, I kind of forgot I had this,
 but --

Travis holds out their father's RING.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
 -- why don't you hang onto it?

Javi takes the ring, amazed to suddenly have this treasure of their dad's. Travis stifles a smile as he glances across the fire -- at Natalie. Their eyes meet and, in their brief look, we can read everything they went through today, never to be shared with anyone else.

OMIT

EXT. SHAUNA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Shauna walks up to the front door and starts to unlock it as her phone RINGS -- it's not a number that she has saved in her contacts. She pauses to answer.

SHAUNA

Hello?

MISTY (V.O.)

Shauna, hi! It's been so long. It's Misty.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. NURSING HOME - BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Misty, still keyed up after her confrontations at the restaurant, is talking on her cell while a SNOOZING MRS. SINGH sits (fully clothed) on the toilet.

SHAUNA

(icy)

I told you never to call me.

MISTY

Even when something *really big* has happened? Something that I know you'd want to know, but it seems that no one else has bothered to tell you --

SHAUNA

I don't have time for this, Misty. Just fucking say it.

MISTY

Travis is dead.

Shauna is silent. Shocked.

MISTY (CONT'D)

Shauna? Hello?

INT. SADECKI HOUSE - NIGHT

Having hung up on Misty, Shauna enters her house, half-dazed. Her mind spinning. We FIND JEFF lying on the couch, reading a SPORTS MAGAZINE.

JEFF

Hey. How was book club?

Shauna pauses -- then VOMITS onto the floor.

Jeff looks up at her, puzzled. He probably assumes she had a little too much rosé, not that a tidal wave of emotions, old and new, is right on top of her.

Off this absurd domestic tableau, and the ever-widening gulf between Shauna and her husband, we --

CUT TO BLACK.