

CREDESCENCE FALLS

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OVERBLACK

WHOMP-WHOMP-WHOMP of a helicopter.

EXT. APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

Iced-capped peaks loom over a patchwork of thawing slopes and forest. A flock of CROWS erupt from the treetops and scatter--

A BELL 412 helicopter speeds overhead.

I/E. POLICE HELICOPTER - MOVING - DAY

The helo flies toward the mountains, a stream of exhaust vapor trails the cold air.

Indiscernible radio chatter: smothered by the rotors running full pelt.

Two PILOTS scan the ground. One jabs his finger to the right-- the craft turns and tilts.

Through the cockpit, and below, a large GROUP of LAW enforcement swarm up a track like angry ants.

Hunting DOGS to the fore.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRACK - DAY

The number of trees dwindle. Rock protrudes through earth and scree.

FBI and local POLICE, moving hard, clutching M4 assault rifles and Remington shotguns.

Radio CHATTER in the background. Hunting dogs BARK.

Helo swoops overhead.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Dark. Smoky. Thick with bloated flies. Thin BEAMS of moted sunlight pierce the gaps in woodwork.

TICK-TOCK of a wind up clock.

The faint MUTTERING of a prayer...

A MAN, hessian sack on his head and bound to a chair. He clenches a kitchen knife.

The sound of the CHOPPER approaches, building in resonance...

The Man tilts his head in reflex. The clock alarm RINGS, rattles, and clatters to the floor. He struggles to break free.

EXT. PLATEAU - DAY

Two dozen FBI and POLICE form a rough baseline. A dog BARKS-- the handler grips its muzzle.

The CABIN sits a hundred yards out. A simple wooden structure with shuttered windows and single door.

Deathly calm...

The lean and weathered face of AGENT PARKER, mid-forties, scans the foreground. He looks along the line, checking readiness, and nods.

The group advance with stealth and speed. Hushed voices mixed with hand signals.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The Man breaks free and claws the sack off his head. A petrified face, laced with fear and sweat: TOMMY, late teens, a wiry southerner. He blinks, eyes adjusting in the half-light...

Blurred vision swims over four mutilated CORPSES. Decapitated HEADS line a table.

Tommy retches, his face contorts into overwhelming panic.

The door BREAKS inwards-- fresh light slaps Tommy, his clothes are caked in dried BLOOD. He staggers forward, half-blind, mouth trying to form words.

Parker's armed silhouette whips into view.

PARKER

FBI! Drop the weapon!

Tommy's arms open wide. The knife blade GLINTS.

TOMMY

Help me!

PARKER

Drop it!

Tommy inches forward: DRUGGED pupils compete with the whites of his eyes for coverage.

TOMMY

He, he said--

BLAM-BLAM-- Tommy slams to the floor. Parker approaches.

PARKER

Lose-the-fucking-knife!

Tommy sucks air, still clutching the knife.

TOMMY

W-w-wait.

Parker SHOOTS-- the knife handle shatters, tearing skin and flesh. He kneels on Tommy's back and cuffs him.

AGENTS fill the room-- flashlights slash the darkness.

SHERIFF WEBB, 50, flushed, paunched, steps in and scans the room.

TOMMY

P-Please... you gotta--

Parker grips Tommy by the hair.

PARKER

Shut the fuck up.

Webb takes off his hat and wipes his brow. As with all residents of Clearwater town, he speaks with a southern accent.

WEBB

My god, boy... You're gonna burn for this.

TOMMY

No...

A MEDIC examines Tommy-- heavy blood loss kicking in, yet his eyes bear a grim determination.

PARKER

Take this piece of shit out of here.

Two Agents move in.

MEDIC
We need to stabilize him.

PARKER
Fuck his stability! Get him out, now.

The Agents grab him under each arm, Tommy twists.

TOMMY
N-No!... I gotta stay!

PARKER
Out!

Tommy's dragged away.

TOMMY (O.S.)
Nooo.

Webb opens the shutters. Four CORPSES are lit up, young men and women: facial features frozen in grotesqueness.

An AGENT dry heaves and heads for the door.

PARKER
... You know them?

Sheriff nods once.

WEBB
I know 'em.

He casts his eyes downwards, runs the rim of his hat through his hands.

PARKER
She's not here.

WEBB
No. No, she's not.

A concerned look from both.

PARKER
Christ.

Parker makes after Tommy.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

Webb and Parker look wore out, like they've been up for 24 hours plus some. They stare through the window of the ICU: Tommy's laid up, unconscious. A DOCTOR checks vitals and scribbles on a chart.

PARKER

Guess we'll know soon enough... What do you know of this boy?

WEBB

Nothing bad. Then again, nothing good neither... His father though, whole different story.

PARKER

Go on.

WEBB

Well, now... drunk and disorderly for the most part... But there was history of domestic violence, not that his momma would admit it... A few years back, there were some nasty rumors.

PARKER

Of what?

WEBB

Aggravated assault on a teenage girl. Nothing concrete, but the town whispers were rife.

PARKER

... What's the likelihood of him coming to check on his boy here?

WEBB

Next to none. He went out for a beer one night, nobody seen him since. Been two year this fall.

PARKER

The mother?

WEBB

She died. Cirrhosis of the liver so I heard... But I reckon she just plain ol' gave up. This boy's grandpa been raising him.

PARKER

Where's he at?

WEBB

A few miles outta town... Best I take you if you wanna speak with him.

PARKER

Got a reason for that?

WEBB

At my age, got a reason for most things.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Two black SUV's speed into view and stop dead. A couple of BODYGUARDS exit, one covers the entrance, the other opens the passenger door.

SENATOR DEVANT, an imposing gentleman of polished appearance, climbs out and heads inside.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Flanked by guards, Devant strides down a long hallway, answers his vibrating cell.

DEVANT

Who's on it?... Should I know them?

All three stop at an elevator.

DEVANT

They fucking better be.

He hangs up. The lift pings.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

Parker watches Tommy through the window. Webb approaches with two coffees in styrofoam cups, hands one to Parker.

PARKER

Thanks.

WEBB

Don't thank me yet, this stuff's bitterer than my ex.

Both stare in at Tommy.

PARKER

We got preliminary on some of the bloods.

WEBB

And?

PARKER

His clothes and two of the others, show positive for Clare's.

WEBB

Cross contamination?

PARKER

(doubtful)

Perhaps.

WEBB

... There's always an outside chance she's still alive.

An elevator PINGS from down the hall. Parker looks.

PARKER

There's outside, and there's dreaming.

Parker spots Devant approaching.

WEBB

I hear her pop's a ruthless son of a--

PARKER

(over Webb's shoulder)

Senator Devant.

Devant stares through the window, his aides swing left and right.

DEVANT

This him?

PARKER

Yes, sir.

Devant looks Webb up and down.

WEBB

I'm Sheriff Webb.

DEVANT

I know who you are, what progress have you made?

WEBB

Well, we --

PARKER

We're still waiting to question the suspect.

Devant eyeballs them.

DEVANT

My daughter is missing and you haven't even questioned this animal?

PARKER

Sir, we--

DEVANT

The both of you are going to be wholly responsible for any delays, incompetencies, or fuck-ups during the course of this investigation.

He glares at Tommy.

DEVANT

I will not rest until I get my little girl back. And neither will you.

INT. TOMMY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Tommy's propped up in bed. Tired. Unfocused. Wires protrude from his gown, linked up to a vitals monitor. A saline drip feeds him fluids and medication.

AGENT CHIN, late 20s, astute and clinical, goes through some notes. He checks the timer on a voice recorder and jots something down.

CHIN

And then?

TOMMY

What?

CHIN

You're in the chair. Sack on your head.

TOMMY

... He, he stuck that knife in my hand.

Tommy strains to focus: To recollect.

TOMMY

He, he said I gotta stay put, till the alarm went off... and then...

CHIN

Then?

TOMMY

It'll all be over.

CHIN

And you believed him, this guy?

TOMMY

What?

CHIN

And I say guy, you never even saw him, right?... You can't offer one defining feature?

TOMMY

It were dark. His, his voice was...

CHIN

Was what?... High, low, deep-- threatening? Fucking poetic?

TOMMY

Was, was like... distorted... not normal.

CHIN

Distorted how?

Tommy's face screws up. He shakes his head.

CHIN

Tommy, distorted how?

TOMMY

Not real.

CHIN

Are we talking demons here?

TOMMY

You, you gotta believe me.

Chin places his pen down.

CHIN

And this 'demon' told you to sit and wait, until the cavalry came?

Tommy reluctantly nods.

CHIN

... You know, either you're a simple son of a bitch or you think I am-- and I'm telling you now, I'm not.

TOMMY

What?

CHIN

You're saying, you just sat there and waited?

TOMMY

... It's the truth.

CHIN

It's dog shit, and if that's your defense, they're gonna crucify you in court.

TOMMY

When can I go?

CHIN

Are you even listening to me?

TOMMY

I done nothin' wrong!

CHIN

You aren't going anywhere, not until I get some straight answers... Where is she? Where's Claire?

Tommy shakes his head. Tears stream.

INT. FBI INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Parker and Devant sit across from each other in a spartan room. Voice recorder between them.

CHIN (OVER RECORDER)

Tell me where she is and we can go real easy on you.

TOMMY (OVER RECORDER)

Please. No more--

Parker stops it.

PARKER

Totally unreliable testimony. His mechanisms gone.