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# SWEET MISERY CREEK PILOT

Written by

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EXT. MINIVAN - DAY

A fairly new minivan cruising down a two-lane blacktop road in a rural area in Central Georgia (USA state). The license plates are from Oregon.

On the front driver's side of the minivan, up near the edge of the bumper, is a small area where the paint is a slightly different shade, where some damage had been repaired and painted over.

There are fields that may have corn, peanuts, soybeans, or cotton. Others have livestock, mostly cattle with a few goats here and there, and some hogs.

# INT./EXT. MINIVAN - DAY

The van is being driven by THOMAS TRASK (30, Caucasian). In the seat next to him is his husband, DEREK WASHINGTON TRASK (30, African-American).

In the back seat is their adopted daughter, ALICE TRASK (10, Asian American, of Laotian descent). Alice is wearing her earbuds, her smart phone in her hand, and she's staring out of the window.

The seat behind Alice is packed with luggage. They're driving down from Portland, Oregon. They've been on the road for four days.

ALICE Daddy? How much longer?

THOMAS About ten minutes, baby. Hang in there.

Thomas looks at Derek and smiles, reaching over and touching his hand.

THOMAS (CONT'D) Still nervous?

DEREK

Yeah.

Thomas laughs. Derek scowls at him.

DEREK (CONT'D) I know you think it won't be that bad, but I'm not so sure.

THOMAS It won't be. I promise.

DEREK How can you be so sure?

THOMAS Because I'm a Trask, D. And the Trasks own this town.

DEREK (sarcastically) What town?

Thomas lets go of Derek's hand to point ahead, at the WELCOME TO SWEET MISERY CREEK sign they are approaching.

Derek sighs.

DEREK (CONT'D) I'm just looking forward to a long, hot shower.

THOMAS

Me, too.

They've entered the town, which is mostly small houses with fairly large yards. There's a gas station, a convenience store, and a feed store.

A few of the houses have rebel flags flying from poles in their front yards. Several houses have pickup trucks with lift kits installed parked in the driveway.

Some of the houses are ramshackle, others are boarded up and apparently vacant. Some are new, well-built, almost all one story.

A few people are out and about but there's very little traffic. Every person they see is Caucasian.

DEREK Apparently your family name didn't mean a damned thing to somebody.

THOMAS I'm sure that was more related to something Grandpa had done to somebody. Not the whole family in general. DEREK He sure managed to piss off somebody.

THOMAS The wrong person. That's all. Whoever did it is long gone by now.

Derek sighs again, looking back out the window at the passing scenery.

DEREK

I don't see this Lake Mystery furniture shop anywhere.

Thomas points to the front right of the windshield.

THOMAS You can't see it from here but it's right over there. A long, low building with a loading dock.

Derek nods.

DEREK How much longer until we get to the house?

THOMAS Not long. About five minutes.

ALICE

Finally!

Derek and Thomas chuckle.

EXT. TRASK HOUSE - DAY

The house is huge, two stories, with a large front yard, carefully maintained. There is a front porch that wraps around the front facade, with a few porch swings and some rocking chairs.

There are some trellises with climbing roses and other blooming vines in the front yard.

A big pickup truck, almost brand new, is parked in the drive, with an expensive but conservative European model sedan parked nearby.

INT. TRASK HOUSE OFFICE - DAY

This is a nicely appointed room, with sturdy, comfortable furniture. There's a small bar with a crystal brandy decanter and matching snifters, along with a few bottles of high-end liquor.

There's an expensive, heavy desk against the far wall, with a big executive chair behind it. In front is a sitting area, with easy chairs facing each other, a long coffee table in the middle.

On the return of the desk is an older computer setup. Next to it is the hardware for the Internet connection. A blue Ethernet cable connects the PC to the connection.

On the desk is an office telephone, with multiple lines, and wires connecting it to a jack on the wall. The receiver is connected with an old-fashioned coiled cable.

There's another phone on the table with extendable speakers and microphones for conference calls.

Sitting in one chair is DIGGER WELLS (60, Caucasian, male, his real name is Harmon). He's holding a mostly empty snifter of brandy.

In the chair across from him is ROSS SYKES (40, Caucasian), the Trask family attorney. Ross has a glass of club soda on a coaster atop the table in front of him. On the floor next to him is a closed brief case.

> DIGGER So, there ain't nothin' you can do?

ROSS That's what I'm telling you, Digger.

Digger gets up and paces around the room, frustrated. He pauses and whirls around to face Ross, sloshing what's left of his drink against the walls and onto the carpet.

> DIGGER What's the date on that will, anyways? Probably over twenty years ago, I bet.

ROSS The date doesn't matter.

DIGGER Well, it should! A lot can change in twenty years, Ross!

#### ROSS

Yeah, I know. And I asked Herman if he wanted me to update the will, and he said he did, but he never actually got around to it.

#### DIGGER

There you go! That shows, what you call it, intent, right?

#### ROSS

It wouldn't hold up in court. Herman would've had to put it in writing, and he didn't. So the probate court judge has no choice but to follow Herman's wishes as specified in the document we have.

#### DIGGER

Which says Tommy gets everything! Everything! It ain't right, Ross! Tommy ran away almost twenty years ago. I stayed! And after all I done for Herman, for that damned company! All I sacrificed! I --

# ROSS

I realize you're angry about this but I have to urge you to keep your voice down, Digger. He'll be here any minute.

Digger sighs, goes back to his chair and settles into it.

DIGGER I don't give a damn about that queer --

# ROSS

Watch yourself.

Digger growls but says nothing else.

# INT./EXT. MINIVAN - DAY

The scenery has gone back to fields and pastures, with few houses.

# ALICE

We aren't there yet?

Thomas points towards a driveway they're approaching.

# THOMAS That's the driveway, right there.

ALICE

DEREK

Yay!

Yay!

All three of them laugh, slightly punchy from the long trip.

EXT. ROAD IN FRONT OF TRASK HOUSE - DAY

Just before the paved driveway that goes to the house is another driveway, unpaved, that runs next to the yard and back into an area that has a field with some stands of trees on one side and forest on the other.

Three men are standing several yards up that driveway, watching the minivan.

INT./EXT. MINIVAN - DAY

Derek just glimpses the men as they drive past.

DEREK Did you see that?

# THOMAS

See what?

DEREK Those people there.

## THOMAS

Where?

Derek shakes his head, like he's clearing cobwebs.

DEREK It's probably nothing.

THOMAS Or ghosts! We got lots of 'em around here!

Thomas chuckles at his own joke. Derek just looks back, trying to catch another glimpse.

EXT. TRASK HOUSE FRONT YARD - DAY

Thomas turns the minivan into the driveway, pulling up next to the truck.

# INT./EXT. MINIVAN - DAY

DEREK Jesus Christ! This place is gigantic!

THOMAS All of the land we've been driving past the past couple of minutes goes with it. On both sides of the road.

DEREK And it's all yours?

THOMAS I reckon so. Now.

EXT. TRASK HOUSE - DAY

They get out, stretching, bones and joints popping after being confined in the van's seats for hours.

Alice is looking around, wide-eyed.

THOMAS What do you think, honey?

ALICE It's beautiful! Is this where we're gonna live now?

THOMAS

Yep.

DEREK It's nothing like Oregon, is it?

Derek grabs Alice and gives her a quick side hug.

The front door of the house opens and ESSIE JACKSON (70, African-American, female) steps out. She's wearing a house dress, and apron, with a scarf binding her hair.

She's smiling as she looks at Thomas, who approaches her with a smile of his own.

ESSIE Well, well, well! Little Tom Trask, a full-grown man!

He grabs her in a fierce bear hug and she returns it.

THOMAS It's so good to see you, Miss Essie. So good.

They break the hug and look at each other.

ESSIE You turned out to be a fine-looking man, Tom. I always thought you would.

THOMAS And you ain't changed a bit.

He turns to face Derek and Alice.

THOMAS (CONT'D) Y'all, this is the woman who raised me, Miss Essie.

Thomas gestures towards the rest of his family.

THOMAS (CONT'D) Miss Essie, this is my daughter, Alice.

Essie beams at Alice.

ESSIE Such a pretty girl!

THOMAS And this is my ... husband, Derek.

There's a barely perceptible pause as Essie looks at Derek as she fights down her disapproval. Her smile disappears for a moment.

Derek has noted the hesitation in Thomas's introduction as Essie's smile returns.

ESSIE Well, now, you got your own little family.

THOMAS Yeah. Who else is here?

Essie steps forward and lowers her voice.

ESSIE Mr. Digger, and Mr. Herman's lawyer, Mr. Ross. (MORE) ESSIE (CONT'D) I got to warn you, Mr. Digger's not happy. And he's had a few.

THOMAS Not surprising. Not surprising at all. Where are they?

ESSIE In the office. I'm sure you remember where that is.

THOMAS

Indeed I do.

He turns to face Alice and Derek.

THOMAS (CONT'D) It looks like I've got a meetin' to go to.

Thomas steps through the door, followed by Derek, Alice, and Essie.

INT. TRASK HOUSE FOYER - DAY

The interior is dark, with solid, expensive furniture. There's a stairway leading up to the second floor with a landing near the door.

There is a phone, a land line, atop an end table, with a coiled cable trailing from the receiver in a tangled mess.

The art on the walls is mostly landscapes or generic still lifes, except for one large old photograph positioned so that it's the first thing one sees when entering the house.

The picture is of Eugene Bartholomew Trask (40, Caucasian), from the year 1861. He's dressed as a Confederate Colonel, with long hair and a shaggy beard. He's in a heroic pose, chest out, unsmiling and grim, looking at the viewer with a permanent scowl of disapproval.

Derek pauses in front of the picture.

DEREK This isn't your grandfather, is it?

Thomas laughs.

THOMAS Oh, no. That's Eugene Bartholomew Harper. My great-great-great grandfather. (MORE)

# THOMAS (CONT'D)

Maybe there are a couple of other greats in there. He changed his last name to Trask after the war. He founded Sweet Misery Creek, in 1840.

#### DEREK

Those eyes ... They look ... cold.

#### THOMAS

He owned slaves, and he stole money from the Confederate government. And anyone else when he could get away with it. He was a monster. There are a lot of stories about him. He's not the hero in any of them.

#### DEREK

Really?

# THOMAS

Yeah. He's kind of lucky his side lost the war or they may have hanged him.

ALICE How big is this place?

THOMAS Forty rooms, upstairs and downstairs.

# DEREK

Damn.

ESSIE There's twelve more that we got closed off.

There's the sound of a child crying and Essie darts towards it, opening a door to one of the rooms and going inside.

She re-emerges carrying a toddler. This is ALEXANDER (2, male, mulatto). He's fussy and she's rocking him in her arms as she comes back to rejoin Thomas and company.

THOMAS And who is this little one?

He leans over and makes faces at Alex, who looks at him like he's crazy.

ESSIE My youngest grandchild, Alex. Martha's boy.

THOMAS My God. Little Martha is old enough to be a mother now!

Essie nods.

ESSIE

I'm watching him while she's in school. She's studying to be a nurse. His daddy is ... well, his daddy is not in the picture.

THOMAS He's a beautiful child, Miss Essie.

ESSIE Thank you, Tom. You need to get to your meetin'. I'll show Derek and Alice to the rooms I got set up.

Thomas sighs.

THOMAS I guess I can't put it off any longer.

Derek laughs as Essie leads them up a hallway to their rooms.

INT. TRASK HOUSE OFFICE - DAY

Digger is pouring himself more brandy, Ross watching from his chair with a disapproving scowl, when the door opens and Thomas enters.

Digger turns to face him, holding the now filled snifter.

THOMAS Uncle Digger. Ross.

ROSS Good to see you, Tom.

Ross stands as Thomas enters, extending a hand across the table. Thomas takes the hand and shakes it.

DIGGER Hello, Tommy. Digger gulps down some of the brandy and refills the snifter again. Thomas looks at him a moment before he sits in the chair Digger had been sitting in.

ROSS I've got a little business here that we can take care of in a minute or two.

Ross picks up his briefcase and puts it on the table, opening it and taking out a manila folder with some papers inside.

Digger, a little annoyed that Thomas took his chair, sits next to Thomas, trying not to look at him too overtly.

THOMAS Those are the papers for the probate court?

ROSS Yes. All ready for your signature.

Ross slides the papers over to Thomas so he can see them, putting a big, pricey pen next to them.

THOMAS

What will that accomplish?

ROSS

It just acknowledges that you are the heir your grandfather specified in his will, and that you are taking over ownership of the Lake Mystery Furniture Company and all of the Trask family property, holdings, residences, and other assets. And assuming responsibility for debts and liabilities.

THOMAS

I see.

He looks over the papers, Digger casually glancing over to see them, as well.

DIGGER I reckon you're gonna sign those, right?

THOMAS Why shouldn't I?

### DIGGER

Well, Herman ain't changed his will in twenty years. A lot has changed. There may be other folks who deserve some consideration --

#### ROSS

Digger, we've already discussed that. We have no choice but to follow the instructions Herman spelled out in his last will and testament.

## DIGGER

But he don't say nothin' at all about me! I worked my ass off for that man, and I'm family, too!

#### ROSS

You were brother to Herman's wife, who died thirty-five years ago. You were an integral part of the business but you were also paid a salary and benefits for your work.

DIGGER You goddamned ingrate! I'll --

Digger lunges across the table, a bit unsteadily, knocking over his snifter.

Thomas grabs the back of Digger's belt, dragging him back to his chair.

THOMAS Uncle Digger, you're drunk.

ROSS I let you into this meeting as a courtesy, Digger.

Digger looks angrily at Ross, then at Thomas. His anger then turns to tears.

DIGGER I gave him all I had and he does me like that. Nothin' for me. Nothing for ol' Digger except thank you, kiss my ass, goodbye.

Thomas takes a deep breath.

THOMAS Uncle Digger, we'll work something out.

DIGGER Yeah, I'll believe that when I see it.

ROSS I feel like I should tell you, Tom, that there are a couple of offers on the table from PXK Furniture, and from Reynolds Brothers, for Lake Mystery. Both of them are fair, I think.

#### DIGGER

You can't sell to those buzzards! They'll pack everything up and ship it overseas! Everybody in town works for the shop. It'll dry up and blow away!

ROSS You don't have to sign this now. You'll want to read it over and maybe talk to an accountant --

Thomas is already signing the papers.

ROSS (CONT'D) All right, then.

Thomas slides the paper back over to Ross, who takes them and puts them back into his briefcase.

THOMAS What happens now?

Ross closes his briefcase.

#### ROSS

I'll file this with the county clerk tomorrow morning, and the judge will issue an order for the banks and other financial entities your grandfather did business with to allow you access to the accounts. That should happen by tomorrow afternoon. Then Lake Mystery will be able to reopen and people can get back to work. Unless you decide to sell. I won't be selling. Uncle Digger is right. Without Lake Mystery our little town will die.

DIGGER (mumbling) Maybe it needs to die.

ROSS

I'll call you as soon as it's done.

Ross gets up, grabbing his briefcase and heading for the door.

THOMAS I thought you'd want to stay a bit.

ROSS

I wish I could, but I've got another meeting. Oh, and Sheriff Hart wants to you to call him.

THOMAS

Why?

ROSS Probably about what happened with your grandfather. Just give his office a call when you get a chance.

THOMAS I'll do that. Thanks, Ross.

ROSS

No problem!

Ross exits, closing the door behind him. Thomas turns to face Digger, who is looking down at the floor.

THOMAS

(gently) Uncle Digger?

Digger looks up at Thomas, tears staining his cheeks.

THOMAS (CONT'D) I'm sorry about how grandpa treated you, all those years. You were his right arm and he abused you constantly. Thomas winces slightly at being called Tommy again.

THOMAS Have Miss Essie make you some coffee, okay?

DIGGER

Sure.

Digger gets up and heads for the door. He pauses, hand on the doorknob, turning towards Thomas.

DIGGER (CONT'D) Uh, I think I should tell you, you might want to avoid going into the back yard for now.

THOMAS

Why?

DIGGER Because that's where Herman was ... where it happened. It ain't been cleaned up yet.

THOMAS

Why not?

# DIGGER

Because it needs to be done by one of them crime scene cleanup places. Done right, I mean, more than Miss Essie can do. And there ain't been nobody around who can pay them.

THOMAS

Ah. Okay. Thank you for letting me know. How bad is it?

# DIGGER

There's a lot of blood. It's all dried now, and it don't much look like blood, but still, there's a lot of it.

# THOMAS

I'll have to warn my husband and daughter about that.

THOMAS You got a problem with that, Uncle Digger?

DIGGER No. Not at all. No problem at all, Tommy. Oh, and you need to make some decisions about the funeral and all. Herman's still at the county morgue.

He exits, closing the door quietly. Thomas takes out his smart phone and looks at the screen.

It says, "NO SERVICE." The wifi icon has a line through it, as well. Thomas chuckles.

### THOMAS

(muttering) Some things never change.

He pulls the phone on the table closer, picking up the receiver and entering a number.

EXT. TRASK PROPERTY OUTSIDE THE FENCE - DAY

It's getting near sunset.

The driveway that runs by the house, where Derek saw the three men, goes on through several fields, into a forest in the distance.

Part of the forest is here, behind a fence next to the driveway. There's a gate, with another driveway going through it. The gate has a "NO TRESPASSING" sign on it.

The driveway cuts through the forest, taking an abrupt curve before vanishing among the trees.

Across the driveway from the gate, in a small area where the trees had been cut down, sit the Baldwin brothers, the people Derek had glimpsed.

Sitting on a big tree stump is the eldest, LAMAR BALDWIN (40, Caucasian, tall and heavy-set, long hair and an unkempt beard, wearing jeans and a dirty white tee shirt with a filthy old baseball cap). Lamar is holding a bottle of cheap bourbon. It's almost empty.

Across from him are his younger brothers, LATHAM BALDWIN (30, Caucasian, very similar to his older brother except his beard is neater).

The youngest is LUKE BALDWIN (20, Caucasian, thin, unable to grow a beard but dressed like his brothers).

All three of them have been drinking cheap liquor and eating junk food for the last few hours. Luke is staring at the "NO TRESPASSING" sign on the gate. The area between them is littered with empty bottles and food wrappers.

Lamar is looking at the screen of his smart phone.

LATHAM Still no word?

LAMAR

Nope.

LATHAM That was them, in that van, right?

LAMAR I reckon so. Him and his (with contempt) family.

Lamar puts the phone back in his pocket.

LAMAR (CONT'D) He's queer, you know.

LATHAM

I knowed him all through school. It don't surprise me at all.

LAMAR And they adopted one of them Chinese babies, too. Like we ain't go enough foreigners in this country.

Lamar takes a sip from the bottle before extending it towards his brothers. Latham takes it from him.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

Luke?

Luke doesn't respond, still staring at the gate. Lamar picks up a rock and throws it at him.

LAMAR (CONT'D)

Luke!

The rock hits Luke and he jerks, looks at Lamar, his eyes becoming focused.

LUKE

What?

LAMAR You're thinkin' about goin' through that gate again, ain't ya?

#### LUKE

I bet that's where Herman kept his weed. I bet there's a whole field of it growin' back there.

LATHAM Herman never had any use for weed, dumbass. He was a moonshiner.

LAMAR

That was his daddy. And he went legit. Herman never did any of that.

# LATHAM

A still, then.

# LAMAR

Ain't no still back there. And with that new sheriff it ain't likely there ever will be one, nor any anywhere else in this whole county. Anyways, I hear he's married to a ni -- to a black man.

Luke has started staring at the gate again.

LATHAM Long as he keeps the shop open I don't care what his personal life is like.

### LUKE

If it's not a still or weed, what's over there?

Lamar sighs.

LAMAR Okay, I'll tell you. It's a lime sink.

LUKE There's a lime sink back there?

# LAMAR

Yeah. And we ain't never told you because we knew you'd have a fit to go fishin' in it.

# LUKE

Well, why not?

## LATHAM

Because three people done drowned in that thing over the years. Bodies never turned up, neither. That's why there's a no trespassin' sign on it.

### LAMAR

Lime sinks is bottomless. That one is, anyways. No tellin' where them drowned folks wound up.

### LUKE

I ain't planning on swimming. Just catching a few largemouths.

LAMAR

Ain't no largemouths in that lime sink. Lots of cottonmouths, though.

#### LATHAM

It'd take twenty minutes for an ambulance to make it here from Minner. Plenty of time for you to die if you get snake bit.

#### LUKE

People don't die from cottonmouth bites! Most of 'em don't, anyway.

### LATHAM

People don't die from one cottonmouth bite, but it can make 'em real sick. And there's probably hundreds of 'em in the brush around the water. You could get bit a couple dozen times.

# LUKE

Dammit.

### LAMAR

You ain't goin' over there. I'm the oldest, and I said no.

LUKE Oldest. And stupidest.

Lamar tries to get up, gets dizzy, and sits back down quickly. The other two brothers hoot and point.

LAMAR Gimme that bottle.

Latham hands it to him and he takes another swig.

INT. TRASK HOUSE GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

It's a comfortable looking room, with a big dresser and mirror, and a small desk. On the nightstand is an old-fashioned telephone.

Derek has opened his suitcase on the bed and is taking out clothes for himself and for Thomas as Essie stands in the doorway, holding and rocking Alex.

> ESSIE Alice is in Tom's old room across the hall. I think she'll like it there.

Derek takes out his cell phone and is staring at the screen.

DEREK Yeah, it's probably bigger than her room back in Portland.

ESSIE I guess I should tell you that Mr. Digger is staying here, too.

Derek is still staring at his phone.

DEREK

Digger?

ESSIE Tom's uncle. Great uncle, I should say. Mr. Herman's brother-in-law. He's been staying here since his wife kicked him out, drinking up all Mr. Herman's liquor. He's on the other side of the house.

DEREK I see. What's your wifi password?

Essie chuckles.

We ain't got one. Can't get online?

DEREK

No.

Derek taps his phone's screen and watches it for a moment before tapping the screen again.

DEREK (CONT'D) It's not working. And I can't get any bars on my phone, either.

ESSIE

Yeah. The wifi in this house is unreliable. Sometimes it works, sometimes it don't. Can't get a signal with the phone, neither. And that what do you call it? Bluetooth? That don't work very well, neither. Never has. Don't know why.

DEREK

Well, what ---

ESSIE

We got land lines for the phones. Herman would plug straight into the modem with an ethernet cable if he wanted to get on the Internet. Or you could just go outside. You should at least be able to get some bars on your phone if you do.

DEREK That's so weird.

He puts the phone in his pocket and resumes unpacking.

ESSIE

Did Tom tell you anything about his life here?

DEREK No. He said it wasn't worth mentioning.

ESSIE He was so unhappy. Who can blame him? With all the death he saw, growing up?

Derek pauses, looking at Essie.

DEREK

Death? I know about his father, but who else?

ESSIE He had two brothers. Louie died in a car wreck when Tom was still a baby. Stephen died of sickness when Tom was about five.

DEREK

Sickness?

ESSIE (whispering) Rumor is, it was AIDS.

Derek nods knowingly.

# ESSIE (CONT'D)

That just left Tom. Herman had some other children, but they died, too, of one thing or another. Does Tom ever hear from his mother?

DEREK

No. We thought about visiting her when we passed through Atlanta but he decided not to.

ESSIE Probably for the best that you didn't.

Thomas enters, grinning.

THOMAS Getting settled?

DEREK How did it go?

THOMAS We'll see, I reckon. Miss Essie, the sheriff's gonna be stopping by in a few minutes.

ESSIE Where's Mr. Digger?

THOMAS I think he's in his room. Probably passed out. ESSIE Okay. I'll --

There's a high-pitched, young girl's scream.

DEREK

Alice!

They all exit, in a rush.

EXT. TRASK HOUSE BACK YARD - DAY

It's getting near sundown and the dying light casts crazy shadows all over the big, landscaped back yard.

There's a gardening shack several yards from the house, holding tools and bags of sod and fertilizer, along with hoses and other equipment.

The yard has a brick walkway that threads its way through flowerbeds with different types of flowers, bushes and small trees, and a couple of statues and fountains.

Near one of the fountains, on the walkway, is a large, dark splotch of dried blood.

Standing over it is Alice. She's holding her smart phone but staring at the blood, horror on her face.

Derek runs up to her, Thomas right behind, Essie with Alex trailing.

DEREK

Alice!

She turns to him, then runs into his embrace. He hugs her tightly.

Thomas is staring at the spilled blood, in shock.

THOMAS (whispering) Oh, my God. Grandpa.

ALICE I came out here because I couldn't get any bars on my phone and I saw ... that --

Alice points at the blood.

Essie steps up.

ESSIE I'm so sorry about that, Alice. I should have warned you. DEREK Is that where ... you know ... ESSIE Yeah. That's where Juan found Herman that day. His body was right there. She nods at the blood. THOMAS Miss Essie, as soon as I can we'll have a crime scene cleanup crew come in here to clean this up. ESSIE Thank you, Tom. I would've tried it myself but --THOMAS Yeah, this isn't something you could handle. There's the sound of a doorbell from inside the house. ESSIE I bet that's the sheriff. I'll get it. Essie exits, going back into the house. DEREK Didn't take him long to get here. THOMAS Yeah. I wasn't expecting him for another twenty minutes or so. The curtains in one of the windows on the house move and Digger peeks out from behind them. Then he closes the curtains again. DEREK He must have been waiting for you.

THOMAS

Yeah.

Thomas takes Derek's hand to reassure him.

Derek smiles shyly and they exchange a brief kiss.

Coming through the house's back door are Sheriff JESSE HART (40, male, Caucasian, shaved head, a younger "Stone Cold" Steve Austin with a badge and a Smokey Bear hat).

With Jesse is his chief deputy, ANGELA COLTER (30, African-American, small but fit and athletic, wearing a deputy's uniform and hat).

Thomas approaches them, hand extended.

THOMAS (CONT'D) Sheriff? I'm Thomas Trask.

Jesse takes his hand and shakes it.

SHERIFF HART Jesse Hart. This here's my chief deputy, Angela Colter.

Thomas shakes Angela's hand, then turns to his husband and daughter.

THOMAS This is my husband, Derek, and our daughter, Alice.

Jesse nods at them.

SHERIFF HART Pleased to meet you.

THOMAS I'm guessing this isn't a social call?

SHERIFF HART Afraid not. Could we talk alone for a few minutes?

THOMAS Uh, sure. D, could you and Alice bring in the rest of our stuff from the van?

DEREK Sure. C'mon, girlie.

They exit, going back into the house, closing the door behind them. Jesse and Angela step closer to Thomas so they can speak with him quietly. THOMAS Any ideas as to what happened?

SHERIFF HART What do you think? Do you have any ideas?

# THOMAS

I'm guessing he had an argument with somebody that got heated. More heated than usual.

SHERIFF HART He argued a lot from what I hear.

### THOMAS

Oh, yeah. All the time. Grandpa could be a real prick. Especially when it came to money. A Trask family trait, actually.

SHERIFF HART Anybody in particular stand out?

Thomas looks uncomfortable.

THOMAS

Uh ... .

DEPUTY COLTER Family members, maybe?

#### THOMAS

Well, the only family left besides me is Uncle Digger. And they fought all the time.

DEPUTY COLTER What did they fight about?

#### THOMAS

Money, mostly. Uncle Digger was the day-to-day manager at the shop. It's a really stressful job. Grandpa kind of took him for granted. He didn't pay him what he should.

DEPUTY COLTER

Really?

# THOMAS

Yeah. And he didn't have sort of provisions for him in the will, even though he helped Grandpa build the business. I mean, Grandpa said he was going to cut me out of the will but I guess he never got around to actually doing it. I don't know if he ever told Uncle Digger he'd cut him in, but without me I don't know who he'd leave everything to if not Uncle Digger.

DEPUTY COLTER How good is Mr. Wells at his job?

### THOMAS

He's okay, I reckon. The business seems to be doing well. I haven't looked at the books yet.

# SHERIFF HART

Of course, he doesn't stand to benefit from Mr. Trask's death, does he? With him not bein' in the will and all. And I reckon he knows that.

# THOMAS

Beg pardon?

SHERIFF HART

And he says he wasn't here that night. We're still checkin' that out.

DEPUTY COLTER What about the housekeeper? Ms. Jackson?

#### THOMAS

Miss Essie doesn't live here. She usually goes home around seven and comes back around seven the next morning. On weekdays.

SHERIFF HART What are you planning to do with the business?

Digger is peeking out of the curtains again but disappears when he sees that Thomas has noticed.

### THOMAS

I'm hoping to open it back up and run it like Grandpa did.

SHERIFF HART Do you know anything about running a business?

# THOMAS

No. But Derek was a business major, and he managed a dental practice in Portland. He'll know what needs to be done.

SHERIFF HART I see. What happens to Digger in that scenario?

Thomas looks at each of them suspiciously.

# THOMAS

I don't see any reason not to keep Uncle Digger in the job he's been doing. Derek will run the office, Uncle Digger will run the shop.

SHERIFF HART And what will you do?

### THOMAS

I have no idea. There's a lot of property that needs to be looked after. Grandpa neglected a lot of that. I may devote myself to taking care of it.

SHERIFF HART You're an art history major, right?

Thomas looks a bit surprised.

### THOMAS

Been checking up on me, Sheriff?

SHERIFF HART

Just trying to learn the players, Mr. Trask.

THOMAS I was in Portland, Oregon, until four days ago. All the way across the country from here. Yeah, we know that. Look, we just kind of wanted to walk you through what we think happened with your granddaddy.

# THOMAS

Okay.

Jesse goes over to stand at the head of the dried blood, Angela going with him.

DEPUTY COLTER I'm sure you've noticed your grandfather doesn't have any security cameras anywhere.

THOMAS Yeah. He wouldn't like that.

DEPUTY COLTER Right. So we'll have to re-enact whatever happened, based on the evidence we have.

SHERIFF HART Right. So, we think he was standing right here. He was facing towards the woods. The Medical Examiner thinks it happened between two and four a.m.

Angela goes to stand in front of him. She's holding a foot-long ruler.

DEPUTY COLTER It looks like he was facing whoever killed him. Somebody came up to him like this.

She takes a step towards Jesse, holding the ruler low, near her waist.

DEPUTY COLTER (CONT'D) We think he knew whoever it was. Based on the lack of any evidence Mr. Trask put up a fight or tried to escape. He trusted whoever it was. Anyway, the perp lashed out with a metal, pointed object with an extremely sharp edge.

She demonstrates, using the ruler to slowly mimic slashing Jesse's throat.

DEPUTY COLTER (CONT'D) Whatever was used was at least six inches long, and extremely sharp, as I mentioned. The cut was deep and very fast.

SHERIFF HART Damned near took his head off.

# THOMAS

(whispering) Jesus.

SHERIFF HART I'm sorry, Mr. Trask. Anyway, it happened real quick.

DEPUTY COLTER Yeah. With one blow.

# SHERIFF HART

Herman went to his knees right here, then fell forward onto the bricks and bled out. Probably in less than a minute. Blood would have been gushing everywhere.

THOMAS Jesus Christ, Sheriff!

SHERIFF HART Again, I apologize, Mr. Trask.

DEPUTY COLTER Whoever did this knew what they were doing.

THOMAS

Really?

### DEPUTY COLTER

Yes.

# SHERIFF HART

We haven't found any meaningful forensic evidence. Neither has the GBI CSI. Or the FBI. Nothing. Not even a bloody footprint.

DEPUTY COLTER That's unusual for a crime of passion. SHERIFF HART What we're saying is, this has some of the hallmarks of a professional hit.

# THOMAS

What?

# SHERIFF HART

Did your Grandpa have anyone he used for, say, under-the-table work? Stuff he'd rather the general public didn't know about?

### THOMAS

I have no idea. I haven't been around here in eighteen years.

#### DEPUTY COLTER

You don't remember anybody he'd call if he was frustrated with somebody, of if he needed something shady done?

#### THOMAS

He wouldn't have included me in that sort of thing. You'd have to talk to Uncle Digger about that.

DEPUTY COLTER

We'll do that.

# SHERIFF HART

Well, I think we've taken enough of your time, Mr. Trask. We'll get in touch if we need anything else.

THOMAS

Of course. I'll walk you to the door.

SHERIFF HART No need. We'll just cut around the house.

They exit, walking around the house, leaving Thomas standing there, looking at the big blot of blood where his grandfather lost his life.

THOMAS (whispering) Grandpa, what have you done? Jesse and Angela get back to the big SUV what has WOODWARD COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT on the side, with the lights on the roof.

Jesse gets into the passenger's side, his deputy getting in the driver's side.

INT./EXT. SHERIFF'S CAR - DAY

They both are buckling their seat belts.

SHERIFF HART What do you think?

DEPUTY COLTER He's definitely hiding something.

SHERIFF HART Let's make some calls to Portland.

Angela starts the car.

EXT. TRASK HOUSE FRONT YARD

The sheriff's car drives off as Derek and Alice head to their van to get more of their luggage.

INT. TRASK HOUSE, DIGGER'S ROOM - DAY

The room is a mess. The bed is unmade, the trash can is overflowing, and there are empty beer cans and liquor bottles everywhere, along with dirty drinking glasses.

Digger's clothes are all over the bed and the floor, and on the easy chair that faces the bed.

The window that Digger was peeking out of now has the shades drawn tightly.

Digger is on the bed, sitting against the head board, holding a half-full glass of whiskey balanced on his thigh. His eyes are closed and sweat trickles down his brow.

There's a quiet rap on the door and Digger jerks, startled.

THOMAS (O.S.) Uncle Digger? THOMAS (O.S.) (CONT'D) Uncle Digger? We need to talk.

Digger sighs again.

DIGGER I'm tryin' to sleep! Come back later!

THOMAS (0.S.) Open this door, Uncle Digger. We need to talk. Right now.

Digger growls slightly as he gets out of the bed and goes over to open the door, carrying his drink with him.

Thomas stands there, looking at him, especially at the glass in his hand.

DIGGER

What?

THOMAS Can I come in?

Digger stands aside and Thomas enters, glancing around the messy room in disapproval.

Digger closes the door and goes to sit on the bed as Thomas rakes some discarded clothes out of a chair and sits down.

DIGGER What do you want?

THOMAS How are things between you and Aunt Maggie?

DIGGER Not that it's any of your business, but she ... well, she ain't talkin' to me no more.

THOMAS

I see.

DIGGER Your granddaddy said I could stay here as long as I needed to. DIGGER Are you gonna kick me out?

THOMAS That's not why I'm here.

Digger takes a big gulp of his drink, finishing it off, and puts the empty glass on the nightstand.

He's not using a coaster and the top of the nightstand is ringed from damp drinking glasses being put there.

DIGGER Then what do you want?

THOMAS What do you think happened to Grandpa?

Digger snorts.

DIGGER He pissed off the wrong person.

# THOMAS

Who?

## DIGGER

How the hell would I know? Tommy, your granddaddy didn't clue me in on nothin'. He just told me what he wanted me to do, and I did it.

THOMAS

So he never said anything to you about what he was up to?

DIGGER

No. He ... didn't include me in his thinkin'.

THOMAS Do you have any ideas who it may have been?

DIGGER

No.

THOMAS Uncle Digger, I'm not gonna tell anybody. You can tell me.

DIGGER I saw you with that sheriff and that deputy. Y'all looked mighty chummy to me. THOMAS I didn't tell them anything. Because I don't know anything. Uncle Digger, I haven't spoken to Grandpa in eighteen years. I don't know what he was doing, what he had going on. I don't know anything. Digger looks Thomas over with narrowed eyes, appraising him. DIGGER Like I said, I don't know nothin'. And I wasn't around when it happened. THOMAS You were in Savannah. DIGGER Right. Meeting with Mr. Mills. Trying to work out a deal on lumber. THOMAS Grandpa was killed at around two a.m. Savannah's just an hour away, Uncle Digger. DIGGER Are you accusing me? THOMAS I'm just saying, it's possible for someone to drive up from Savannah, do ... what he did ... and get back to Savannah. Nobody would be the wiser.

> DIGGER There's a club I go to when I'm in town down there.

> > THOMAS

Club?

DIGGER

Yeah.

THOMAS What kind of club?

DIGGER A private club.

THOMAS What kind of private club, Uncle Digger?

### DIGGER

Oh, you know. Pretty women. Booze. Gamblin'. Other stuff. If you know the right people to get in. Anyways, I wound up passin' out on a couch there. I was there until around eight the next morning. Everybody saw me.

THOMAS

Did you tell this to the sheriff?

DIGGER

Not yet. I'm tryin' not to get my friends down there in any trouble.

### THOMAS

You probably shouldn't even worry about that, Uncle Digger. If they can alibi you, you need to tell him.

#### DIGGER

Yeah. Besides, why would I kill Herman anyways? Ain't nothin' in it for me. It ain't like I'm in the will, or gettin' any life insurance money, or anythin'.

Thomas sighs.

#### THOMAS

Grandpa treated you pretty bad. He took you for granted. He abused you, ran you down, didn't respect you, even though you worked your ass off for him.

### DIGGER

Yeah.

Digger is fighting to maintain his composure and not burst into tears.

I saw what he did to you, when I was a kid. How he yelled at you. How he called you stupid. Even though you sacrificed so much for him, and for the shop, to make it a success.

Digger nods, eyes closed, tears leaking down his cheeks.

THOMAS (CONT'D) And the shop is a success! Just about every furniture store this side of the Mississippi has Lake Mystery dining room furniture, bedroom furniture, cabinets, all that stuff. It's everywhere! Grandpa was making a ton of money. And he didn't share any of it with anyone.

Harmon's starting to cry.

THOMAS (CONT'D) Especially you. He wouldn't have achieved that level of success without you, Uncle Digger, and he knew it. You helped him build the company, and he shut you out.

Digger nods, eyes still closed, still sobbing quietly.

### THOMAS (CONT'D)

I never talked to him about it, but I'm willing to bet he was terrified that you would wake up one day and decide you'd had enough, and leave the company. Leave him. And he'd be screwed. Because nobody would be able to replace you, and the company couldn't function without you. So, I just wanted to say, on behalf of the company and the town, thank you, Uncle Digger. Thank you for everything you've done.

Digger's not hiding his crying now.

DIGGER You're welcome, Tommy. Oh, my God. I'd do it again. All of it.

THOMAS

Do what?

Digger quiets, abruptly realizing that he's been played.

THOMAS (CONT'D) Uncle Digger? Do what? What did you do for Grandpa?

DIGGER Stuff that it's better you don't know.

THOMAS Did it have anything to do with what happened to Grandpa?

DIGGER

I doubt it.

THOMAS

Okay.

Thomas gets up, pacing around the room.

THOMAS (CONT'D) Had anything changed with him, just before?

DIGGER How do you mean?

THOMAS Was he anxious? Even more shorttempered than usual? Disappearing for long periods of time, maybe?

DIGGER

Uh ... .

Thomas comes over to kneel next to the bed, putting a hand on Digger's knee.

THOMAS

What?

DIGGER He was scared.

Thomas gets up, takes a couple of steps, and turns back around.

THOMAS

Scared?

Digger nods.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Grandpa?

My God.

Digger nods again.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

DIGGER Yeah. I ain't never seen Herman scared, all the years I knowed him. But he was sure scared of somethin'.

THOMAS Any idea what it was?

DIGGER I got an idea but I don't know anything about what it's about.

THOMAS

What?

DIGGER It ain't a what. It's a who.

THOMAS

Yeah?

### DIGGER

A woman. I don't know her name. She's real pretty. She's kinda dark, like maybe she's Mexican or somethin', and she talks with an accent.

THOMAS How old do you think she is?

DIGGER I dunno. Maybe thirty or so? Real pretty, like I said.

THOMAS What about her, Uncle Digger?

Thomas goes back to his chair, settling into it, watching Digger rack his alcohol-addled brains.

DIGGER She'd come to the office at the shop sometimes. Sometimes she'd come here. (MORE)

### DIGGER (CONT'D)

He'd always meet her in the back yard. I could never tell what they talked about.

### THOMAS

Really?

DIGGER Yeah. He always made me leave when she showed up.

# THOMAS

Did you tell any of this to the sheriff?

DIGGER Naw. He'd just think I was makin' it up.

THOMAS You said Grandpa was scared?

DIGGER

All I can say is, when she left, he would be white as a sheet. His hands would be shaking. He usually needed a drink.

### THOMAS

How often did she come by?

### DIGGER

I only saw her maybe five or six times, over the past ten years or so. But she could've come by when I wasn't around sometimes.

THOMAS Was she his mistress, maybe?

#### DIGGER

Oh, no. I didn't get that from her at all. Oh, another thing ... she never changed.

## THOMAS

What do you mean?

### DIGGER

I mean, first time I saw her was a couple of years after you left. Last time I saw her was a month or so ago. And she ain't changed a lick. Really?

#### DIGGER

Yeah. You'd think she'd have some gray hairs or something in all that time, maybe a few wrinkles or somethin'. But nothin'.

Thomas grins at Digger.

# THOMAS

You were looking at her that close, Uncle Digger?

DIGGER Well, like I said, she's real pretty. But something about her ...

#### THOMAS

Yeah?

### DIGGER

Maybe it's because your grandaddy acted like he did after she left, but something about her scared the hell out of me. I don't know what.

THOMAS

Really?

Digger nods.

### DIGGER

I get the idea that, if she wanted to, she could do something really nasty to me. Turn me inside out, or somethin'. And she could do it quick, too, before I even knowed what happened. And she wouldn't think twice about it.

## THOMAS

I see.

DIGGER

That's all I know. You want to know what happened to your granddaddy, you find that woman and ask her.

THOMAS Any ideas how I could do that? DIGGER No. Like I said, I don't even know her name. Maybe it's in Herman's papers somewhere.

Thomas gets out of the chair.

THOMAS I'll check. Thanks for telling me, Uncle Digger.

DIGGER Thank you, Tommy. For everythin'.

Thomas smiles at Digger.

THOMAS I'll see you at breakfast in the morning?

DIGGER Sure. I'll try to make it.

THOMAS

Good.

Thomas exits, closing the door quietly. Digger lies back down, closing his eyes.

He takes a deep breath and lets it out, then starts sobbing.

DIGGER I'm sorry, Herman. I'm so sorry.

He lies there and quietly weeps.

EXT. TRASK PROPERTY OUTSIDE THE FENCE - NIGHT

The moon is full and bright, making up for the lack of street lights and other illumination way out here in the sticks.

The Baldwin brothers are sitting on the ground now, backs against the tree trunks they had been sitting on. Lamar and Latham have their eyes closed and Latham is holding a nearly empty liquor bottle.

It's very still and quiet, the only sounds crickets and dogs barking in the distance, and Latham and Lamar's snores.

Luke stirs, opening his eyes, and looking at his brothers.

LUKE Lamar? Did Digger call? Luke gets up, unsteadily, and has to stand where he is for a moment, until a dizzy spell passes. He belches.

The other two still don't stir.

Luke looks at the gate across the driveway again, with its "NO TRESPASSING" sign, and snorts derisively.

# LUKE (CONT'D)

Lime sink.

He staggers across the driveway to the gate, and climbs over it.

EXT. TRASK PROPERTY INSIDE THE FENCE - NIGHT

Luke makes it over the fence and follows the driveway deeper into the forest.

He takes out his phone and puts it in flashlight mode, shining it around.

LUKE (muttering) Lime sink. Yeah. Hell yeah.

The light reflects off of the retinas of a couple of raccoons and some rabbits, out foraging in the early evening.

> LUKE (CONT'D) (muttering) I bet there's some big assed bass in there. Ain't nobody been fishin' there. Not in a real long time.

He staggers forward. A white-tail deer gets startled and runs from him, disturbing some brush nearby and causing Luke to jump before chuckling to himself.

He walks further into the forest.

INT. TRASK HOUSE GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Another suitcase is open on the bed, with Derek sorting through the contents, putting items away in the drawers and closets.

Thomas enters.

DEREK How'd it go?

THOMAS He's drunk. I guess I shouldn't be surprised.

Derek sorts through a few more items, struggling to bring up the next subject.

DEREK Tom? That sheriff ... .

THOMAS He was hot, wasn't he?

DEREK Well, yeah, I guess.

# THOMAS

The former sheriff is in a Federal prison, on corruption charges. He's a real dirtbag. Played poker all the time with my grandpa, too.

DEREK

I'm worried.

# THOMAS

About what?

DEREK You know you would make a logical suspect in your grandfather's murder.

THOMAS Except I was in Portland.

DEREK You could've hired somebody.

Thomas scowls.

DEREK (CONT'D) I'm just sayin'.

Thomas approaches Derek, touching him on the shoulder and gently turning him to face him. He looks him in the eye.

THOMAS I had nothing to do with grandpa's death. You know that, right? THOMAS (CONT'D)

Right?

DEREK

Right.

THOMAS

Good.

Thomas kisses Derek lightly on the lips and turns to start going through the stuff in the suitcase.

DEREK That's not what worries me.

#### THOMAS

Oh?

DEREK (whispering) Yeah. Look, you know they're gonna contact the police in Portland.

THOMAS (whispering)

So?

DEREK (whispering) Think about it.

Thomas pauses, considering what Derek had said.

THOMAS (whispering) Okay, I've thought about it. Why should I be worried?

### DEREK

(whispering) Because it'll start raising questions about ... you know. What happened in Portland.

THOMAS

(whispering) Don't worry about that. That has nothing to do with this. But --

#### THOMAS

(whispering) We have a daughter to raise. And now a business to run and a ton of property to take care of. We have a lot of people who are depending on us.

# DEREK (whispering) Not to mention all the money that'll go along with all that.

Thomas backs away in shock, almost like Derek had physically slapped him.

THOMAS (whispering) What are you saying?

# DEREK

(whispering) I'm just saying it's really convenient that this murder of your grandpa happened when it did. It gets us out of Portland, and it sets us up for life.

#### THOMAS

(whispering)
I don't care about the money,
Derek.

#### DEREK

(whispering) I'm just saying that the sheriff may see that and draw his own conclusions.

THOMAS (whispering) He won't do that.

Derek looks away, considering what Thomas had just said. Then he looks back at Thomas and smiles slightly.

# DEREK (whispering) I guess you're right.

Thomas pulls Derek into a hug.

DEREK (whispering) I'm sorry I doubted you.

THOMAS

(whispering) It's okay. You're just trying to anticipate problems that may come up. It's kind of what you do.

There's a quiet knock and the door opens. Alice enters.

ALICE Daddies, I'm hungry.

Thomas looks at Derek.

DEREK I could use a bite myself.

THOMAS

Okay. I'm sure there's food in the kitchen. Or we can run into Minner to grab something. I don't think you'd care for the food in the Sweet Misery Creek Diner.

DEREK What kind of food do they have in Minner?

Thomas laughs.

THOMAS

There's pretty much every franchise you can think of, D. They aren't total savages. And I hear Barry's Burgers is still open.

### ALICE

Barry's Burgers?

THOMAS

Yeah. It's a local place. I used to eat there all the time. Best damned burgers I've ever had. Feel like giving them a try? (dubiously)

Okay.

THOMAS Get ready and we'll go into to town, then.

Alice exits, leaving the door open. Thomas and Derek look at each other, then chuckle, as Derek sits on the bed and starts putting on his shoes.

EXT. TRASK PROPERTY INSIDE THE FENCE NEAR THE LIME SINK - NIGHT

Luke approaches what seems to be the end of the driveway.

He stops, not sure where to go now. The driveway ends in a large, circular area that's devoid of grass, like this was the place where vehicles turned around to go back out.

He stands there, shining his light around. Then he stops, listening, as if he'd heard something.

LUKE

Hello? Is somebody there?

He shines the light around but sees nothing.

It's gotten very quiet. Even the crickets have stopped chirping.

LUKE (CONT'D) (scared) Hello?

Then he hears the sound of a woman's voice, humming, along with quiet splashing, like she's taking a casual, relaxing bath.

Luke heads towards the sound.

EXT. TRASK PROPERTY LIME SINK - NIGHT

Luke finds the lime sink, which is not that far from the end of the driveway. It isn't easy, as he has to fight through heavy brush to get there.

It looks like a small pond, completely surrounded by more thick brush. The reflection of the moon is glistening on the still surface of the water.

# LUKE (whispering) Cotton mouths!

He shines the light around the bank but doesn't see any snakes.

LUKE (CONT'D) (whispering) Ain't no cotton mouths here.

Luke chuckles.

There's a gentle splash and he shines his light out onto the water to see what caused it.

The light illuminates a young woman, in the water near the bank on the other side, the water coming up to her neck. She holds up her hand to shield her eyes from the sudden brightness of the light.

Only her neck and shoulders can be seen above the water, but it appears she's naked.

WOMAN Do you mind?

### LUKE

Huh? Oh!

He turns off the light on the phone and slips it into his shirt pocket. She's still fairly visible in the bright moonlight.

> LUKE (CONT'D) Uh, are you okay, ma'am?

WOMAN I'm fine! Even better now.

LUKE

Why is that?

WOMAN Because you're here.

LUKE

Say what?

She giggles.

WOMAN

I mean, I was just thinking it'd be so nice to have a handsome young man here to swim with me and keep me company. And there you are!

Luke squats unsteadily, grabbing ahold of some brush to hold himself steady.

LUKE

Really?

WOMAN Yes! Funny world, isn't it?

LUKE

I reckon.

WOMAN So, are you coming?

Luke does a double-take.

LUKE

Beg pardon?

WOMAN Are you going to get in the water with me?

LUKE I don't think that'd be a good idea.

WOMAN

Why not?

LUKE

Snakes.

WOMAN Look around. Do you see any snakes?

Luke glances around again.

LUKE Naw. I reckon not. That's weird, though.

WOMAN

Why?

LUKE

Cause if anyplace would have lots of cottonmouths it'd be this place.

WOMAN I don't know about that.

LUKE

Who are you?

WOMAN Someone who likes to swim at night. With handsome young men.

Luke points towards the middle of the lime sink.

LUKE You better be careful. It's bottomless.

WOMAN

Bottomless?

LUKE

Yeah.

WOMAN What does that mean?

Luke looks away from her, embarrassed.

LUKE Well, I reckon it means it ain't got no bottom.

WOMAN Really? That doesn't make any sense. If it didn't have a bottom, could I do this?

The woman stands up, the water now reaching halfway up her thighs. She is, indeed, naked, and not shy about it.

The moonlight shows Luke all he thinks he needs to see.

LUKE

Uh ... .

WOMAN Why don't you join me? We could play a game.

LUKE Like what? LUKE Does that mean, uh ... .

WOMAN It can mean whatever you want it to mean, Luke. It's entirely up to you. Coming?

### LUKE

Oh, my God.

Luke rips off his shirt, tossing it onto the bank, then kicks off his shoes. He starts fumbling with his belt.

His hands are shaking too bad for him to take his belt off.

WOMAN What's taking so long?

LUKE I'm almost ready. Just you wait.

He's still unable to take his belt off.

LUKE (CONT'D) Oh, to hell with it.

He dives into the water, still wearing his jeans, and the woman laughs.

# WOMAN

Finally!

Luke swims across the pond towards her and she stays where she is, sitting back down so that the water is back around her neck.

She's grinning, and licks her lips, as Luke swims towards her.

When he gets close Luke makes a lunge for her and she disappears under the water, bobbing up a few feet away.

She laughs.

WOMAN (CONT'D) Did you think it was going to be that easy?

## LUKE Oh, hell yeah!

Luke is laughing, clearly enjoying himself now as he swims to her new spot, lunging for her again.

She sinks beneath the surface, avoiding him again. She pops up a few feet away.

WOMAN Is that the best you can do?

She's mock-frowning and Luke grins at her.

LUKE Lady, I'm just gettin' started.

He lunges for her again and she disappears beneath the water. This time she reappears much further away than usual, close to the middle of the pond.

She laughs, bobbing in the water, as Luke watches her, panting with effort.

WOMAN You're not getting tired, are you?

LUKE I'm just catchin' my breath. Don't you worry.

WOMAN Good. So, what are we going to do if you catch me?

LUKE I think I'll let that be a surprise.

WOMAN

Oh, goody!

LUKE Wait a minute. Didn't you call me Luke?

WOMAN Of course I did. That's your name.

LUKE How do you know my name?

WOMAN You told me, silly. LUKE

When?

WOMAN When we first met. You introduced yourself to me.

LUKE I don't remember that.

Luke is just sitting in the water, unmoving, and an impatient grimace appears on the woman's face for a moment before she smiles again.

LUKE (CONT'D) Did you ever tell me your name?

WOMAN Why don't you guess my name? Or I'll let you name me, if you catch me.

### LUKE

Deal!

Luke swims towards her and she bobs there, smiling, again disappearing beneath the surface when he gets there.

Luke stays there, treading water, looking around.

LUKE (CONT'D) I can do this all night, you know! All night long!

The woman doesn't reappear this time and he glances around, worried.

He's starting to get a bit scared.

LUKE (CONT'D) Were are you? Are you all right?

There is no answer.

LUKE (CONT'D) (muttering) Damn, the water's deep here.

He looks back over to the place on the bank where he left his shirt and his cell phone.

LUKE (CONT'D) Dammit, this ain't funny! Where are you, lady? He jumps, startled, glancing down, feeling something brush against his feet.

LUKE (CONT'D) Was that you? You messin' with me? Where are you?

The water around Luke begins roiling, in a big circle completely surrounding him.

Luke's eyes grow wide with fear.

LUKE (CONT'D) What the hell?

He's thrashing around in a circle, in a panic, not sure what to do.

Something huge and fast comes up underneath him from the depths of the lime sink.

It's no more than a blur as it swallows him whole.

There's a splash, and an impression of a huge tail fin, as whatever-it-is goes back down into the depths of the lime sink.

The water quickly gets still again. After a moment the crickets resume chirping. A white-tail deer emerges from the forest and starts drinking from the pond.

There's a final, large bubble that comes from the depths of the lime sink, breaking quietly on the surface, rippling the reflection of the full moon.

FADE OUT.