

Fire Night

written by

Gene Cartwright

gc@genecartwright.com

FIRE NIGHT
Zombies Rule

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE BLDG. - MORNING

Heavy auto and pedestrian traffic.

INT. STOCK EXCHANGE FLOOR

WELLSCOMP, INC. BANNER DRAPED BEHIND BALCONY PODIUM

Half dozen smiling men/women. Two suited men, JOSHUA WELLSLEY W-M, 40, heavier, taller, CALEB WELLSLEY, W-M, 38, sligher, stand side-by-side, bring down gavel to open trade session.

Applause erupts.

OVER BLACK:

Foreboding. New York Street sounds, autos, pedestrian foot traffic, standout rushed footsteps crash on pavement.

EXT. PRESENT DAY - NEW YORK CITY FINANCIAL DISTRICT - NOON

Lower torso of Caleb Wellsley, in same suit as at NYSE, in a mad dash, forcing his way past slower foot traffic.

Caleb's has flushed face. He's in amped phone conversation.

CALEB

Wait. Listen, Josh. Just listen.
I'm almost there. You won't believe
who I saw. It's crazy. It's crazy.

INT. CROWDED WALL STREET AREA RESTAURANT - DAY

Joshua Wellsley, in suit, is on phone at table for four.

JOSH

No, you listen, Caleb. You're late,
as usual. A whole hour. No-no-no.
Five minutes and I'm gone. Five.

Josh tosses phone onto table, sips wine, checks watch.

INCLUDE ENTRANCE

Josh looks up, sees a pale Caleb enter, searching. Josh signals to get his attention. Caleb hurries to table.

JOSH (CONT'D)
What the hell's wrong, little brother? You look sick, man.

CALEB
I saw him, Josh. I swear to God, I saw him. It was him. It was.

JOSH
Him? Him, who? Who the --

CALEB
-- You know what HIM.

A puzzled Josh leans back, then shakes head in disbelief.

CALEB (CONT'D)
He passed right in front of me.

EXT. BROAD STREET SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Caleb in crowd, freezes when a MAN, W-M, 40ish in all white suit/shoes/hat aims a gaze, slows, passes a few feet away.

CALEB (V.O. CONT'D)
I could've touched him.

P.O.V. Caleb.

The Man smiles, disappears into crowd.

CALEB

His eyes bulge, his jaw drops

RETURN TO RESTAURANT

JOSH
That's-nuts. Impossible. It's been, what, almost thirty years. Even then, he was three-hundred years old. Can't believe I'm saying this out loud. Jeezus. Sit. Go on, sit. Stop hovering like a wounded hawk. Sit.

Caleb stares, unblinking.

CALEB

It was him, in all white - head to toe. He looked right at me, then --

Josh puts a finger to his lips for silence, motions Caleb to sit, pours him some wine. Caleb sits, glances over shoulder.

JOSH

-- We were never to talk about what happened back then, ever again. We can't mention this to Mom or Dad.

CALEB

I know. But he's alive, Josh.

JOSH

How could he be alive? And here in New York? Why? This is not good. I'm gonna need more wine.

Josh reaches for bottle to refill glass, empties it. Stares at a pale Caleb. He stands, heads for exit. Caleb bolts up, follows him, rushes to catch up.

OVER BLACK

CRACKLING, CRUNCHING of two pairs of feet plowing through underbrush, dry leaves. Heavy breathing, grunting.

EXT. RURAL NEW ENGLAND - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: Devil's Woods - Rural New England, 1988

Two pairs of legs, one pair trailing, race through woods.

ON BOYS

Joshua Wellsley, 12, pudgy, with Caleb Wellsley, 9 in jeans, sneakers, with backpacks and canteens.

Caleb struggles to keep up. Each boy swipes away hanging branches, as distance between them grows.

Caleb trips, falls to knees.

Josh keeps running.

Caleb grimaces, groans, grabs a leg, tries to stand, falls.

CALEB

Wait, Josh. Wait. Come back, please. I hurt my leg. Josh!

JOSH

I'll send you an ambulance.

Caleb rolls onto one side, props himself on an elbow. His face is dirty, grimy, streaking sweat.

CALEB

I'm not kidding. Josh.

Joshua stops, turns around in disgust, starts back.

JOSHUA

Alright. Jeez. I'm coming, already.

CALEB

I couldn't help it. I tripped.

JOSH

Yeah, Sure. You know what happens when you pull up lame don't cha'?

CALEB

That's not funny. It hurts. Honest.

JOSH

They take you out and shoot 'ya. Kaboom. Lights out.

CALEB

C'mon, stop joking. Ow!

JOSH

Look, I'm gonna leave you next time. You're such a wus!

CALEB

Am not.

JOSHUA

Are too.

CALEB

You wouldn't slow down. Tried to tell ya' you were goin' too fast.

Josh removes his backpack, extends a hand just short of Caleb's reach, pauses to taunt him.

JOSH

You promise to keep your grubby fingers off my camera. And give me your drumsticks at dinner tonight.

CALEB
 Alright, I promise. I promise.

Josh helps Caleb up.

JOSH
 Just look at ya'. Beth coulda kept
 up better than you.

CALEB
 It hurts reeeal bad, man.

JOSH
 Let me see.
 (starts to touch Caleb's leg)

CALEB
 Ooww. Wait. I think it's broken.

Caleb takes easy steps. Josh looks on, reaches to touch
 Caleb's leg again. Caleb flinches.

CALEB (CONT'D)
 Ouch. Don't touch it.

JOSH
 What? It's not broken, silly. Don't
 see any bones sticking out, do ya?
 I think you're faking.

Josh puts his pack on. Caleb continues limping. Josh looks on
 with suspicion.

CALEB
 Why're you looking at me like that?
 It really hurts.

JOSH
 Sure.

P.O.V. HIDDEN OBSERVER:

View of brothers through trees. The watcher's view is
 unsteady, breathing is deep, resonant.

Caleb keeps nursing his right leg, wincing.

CALEB
 Think we oughta go home now.

JOSH
 I knew it. You're just scared.

CALEB

You know we're not suppose to be here. Dad finds out, we're in deep doo-doo. You know what he said.

JOSH

Dad said. Dad said. Don't be a crybaby. You're just scared, is all. Look at you.

CALEB

Stop saying that. I heard something back there. I did. I really --

JOSH

-- Scared, scared, scared.

CALEB

I'm just as brave as you. At least I came into Devil's Woods. Everybody says not to, but I came.

Josh stops, wheels around to face Caleb.

JOSH

Let's go a little more then start back. Unless you wanna go on alone.

Caleb gives a nervous look around. His limp is now gone.

CALEB

No, I'll stay with you. I don't want you to get lost.

JOSH

Right. Let's go. We have to get back before mom knows we're gone.

The two continue.

CALEB

Beth's gonna tell her anyway. She's always telling. I hate girls.

OBESERVER'S P.O.V.

Observer watches Josh and Caleb continue through woods, parallels them, moves ahead through trees.

Josh stops to let Caleb catch up again.

EXT. WELLSLEY FARMHOUSE - DAY

Large, rustic farmhouse in need of painting, set on rolling green acres.

TWO LARGE DOBERMANS

SAMPSON (black), PROWLER (reddish-brown) run free.

Rusting farm implements are nearby. A barn sets behind house.

A wooden corral is on one side, just in front of barn.

A few hundred yards from main house, and across lush green field is edge of Devil's Woods.

INT. DATED KITCHEN - DAY

Dated appliances and decor.

SARAH WELLSLEY, 36, thin, attractive but plain, her hair in single braid, wears apron, is busy preparing evening meal.

ELIZABETH (Beth), 5, kneels in a chair at kitchen table, she stirs food prep in bowl.

A pot boils on stove. Sarah places items on counter, walks to refrigerator, removes items then places them on table. She starts back to the counter.

BETH

I'm helping you, huh mommy?

SARAH

Yes Beth. And Mom appreciates it.
Don't know what I'd do without you.

Sarah opens a cabinet door, scans shelves, glances at Beth.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Where're your brothers?

BETH

In the barn, I think.

EXT. DEVIL'S WOODS - DAY (EVENING)

Caleb and Josh move quickly through woods. Josh keeps looking back to make sure Caleb is keeping up.

INT. KITCHEN

Wall phone rings. Sarah pauses, goes to answer it, turns to keep an eye on Beth.

SARAH

Hello... This is Sarah. Oh, Mrs. Waltham. Yes, I know. Of course, I know about the town meeting. Truth is we haven't ... I understand. We haven't decided whether to sell or not... I didn't know the others agreed ... I hate to remind you, but it's our land.

Sarah checks stove, sees pot boil, spill over. She starts over but phone cord is too short.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Mrs. Waltham, I have to go. I have to go! John will be there tonight. Yes. Goodbye.

Sarah drops phone, dashes to stove. Beth teeters, falls from her chair. Sarah dashes to her, lifts and comforts her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Poor baby. I should've just hung up on that 'ol ... Mommy's sorry.

BETH

(points)

Is it too hot, mommy?

SARAH

Just a little. You stand back, okay? Mommy's got to clean up.

Sarah guides Beth a safe distance away, turns to hang up the BEEPING phone. She massages her temples, grabs cloth towels, rushes to clean spillage on stove and floor.

BETH

I'm sorry, mom.

SARAH

It's not your fault. Alright? Mommy should've been watching.

Beth smiles, twirls her hair. Sarah goes to give her a hug.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You did great, sweetheart. And I'll be sure and tell daddy when he gets home. He'll be so proud.

Beth smiles. Sarah hugs her again.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Sweetheart, see if your brothers are finished in the barn. Tell them I said get in here and clean up. And you come right back.

Beth darts away.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And don't slam the door.

The door SLAMS shut. Sarah shakes her head, wipes hands on her apron, turns her attention to stove.

EXT. DEVIL'S WOODS - DAY (AFTERNOON)

Josh and Caleb, with HEAVY BREATHING, wind their way between towering trees/branches. Rays of sunlight cascade through.

P.O.V. SOMEONE WATCHING

Watcher stays parallel and just ahead of pair.

ON BOYS

Caleb struggles, slows, despite determination to keep up.

CALEB

I'm tired, Josh. Let's go.

Caleb stops, bends over, head down, hands on knees. Josh stops, turns back to him, stops in front.

CALEB (CONT'D)

Sorry.

JOSH

Alright, take a deep breath. Let's go. We have to get back home. Don't go dying on me.

Caleb straightens up then freezes. His eyes bulge, jaws drop, his face reflects fear. Josh snaps back at Caleb's reaction.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Yuk. What is it? You look like you
just dumped in your pants.

Caleb GROANS, quivers, raises a trembling right index finger.

Josh's face mirrors Caleb's fear then turns. His eyes pop, he
emits a silent scream.

ON SCENE

A BOY-LIKE CREATURE, 6+', barefoot, with pulsing forehead,
pupil only eyes, stands only feet from Josh and Caleb.

Tattered rags hang from a filth-covered frame. Long, matted
hair frames creature's face. He aims rigid stare at brothers.

The brothers wet their pants. Josh struggles to speak.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Oh, my god. Whooo ... who are you?

The creature THRUSTS hands to his ears, as if to reacting a
loud sound. He loses a stream of grunts. Caleb cowers.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Yikes. I'm sorry. Don't ... don't
hurt us. Please?

The creature stares, tosses head side to side, begins
circling the boys. Caleb and Josh turn to remain facing him.

CALEB

Josh, what ... what is he?

JOSH

I don't know. Who ... who are you?

Caleb clings to Josh.

JOSH (CONT'D)

You hungry? I ... I've got a
sandwich. You can have it.

CALEB

(teary)

I told ya' we should've gone home.

Josh takes a sandwich from his backpack, hands it to the
creature. He takes it with long, spiny fingers, sniffs it,
nibbles, then spits it He flings the rest, emits a yell.

CALEB

Oh no, must be the wheat bread.

Josh grabs his backpack, begins tedious retreat. The creature's nostrils flare. He tosses his head side to side, raises a hand. The wind GUSTS. Leaves and twigs swirl.

Josh and Caleb cling to each other. Josh grasps Caleb's hand, the two DASH away as fast as they can flee.

EXT. REAR OF HOUSE - LATER

Sarah exits rear door in a huff, Beth in tow.

BETH

I looked everywhere. Caleb and Josh are gone, Mommy.

Beth runs to keep up. Sarah wipes hands on her apron, takes long strides toward barn. The dogs follow Sarah, barking.

SARAH

They'd better be around here somewhere. Get away Sampson ... Prowler. Get away. Go on.

Yards from barn, Sarah looks out over open field toward Devil's Woods, spots two figures running toward her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

My god, I don't believe this. They've been in Devil's Woods. I wish I had only had girls.

Sarah and Beth wait. Josh and Caleb plow through the field of tall grass. They reach their mother and collapse.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I don't want to hear tall tales. You two didn't do your work. And you've been in those woods. Your father will be here any minute. I'll let him decide what to do with the two of you.

Sarah starts toward house. Josh rises to his knees, struggling to catch his breath. Caleb remains on ground.

BETH

You're-gonna-get-it. You're-gonna-get-it. You're-gonna --

CALEB
 (rises)
 I'm gonna get you.

BETH
 Mommy. Mommy.

Best dashes to Sarah.

JOSH
 Mom. Mom. I've gotta tell you
 something. We saw a monster.

CALEB
 We did, mom. No foolin'.

JOSH
 He had a big 'ol head, and --

CALEB
 --- And pig's breath and --

Sarah keeps walking and doesn't look back.

SARAH
 Tell it to your father

Sarah enters house. The dogs race around to front of house.

SHOW the boys run to catch dogs. Both spot their father's
 faded blue Ford pickup coming up the long, winding road. Each
 turn on a dime, dash back toward barn.

INT. BARN — NIGHT

The boys enter, hurry to begin cleaning stalls, hurry to move
 two horses to empty stalls.

CALEB
 It's no use. We're done for.

JOSH
 Relax, squirt. Relax. C'mon.

CALEB
 Don't call me that.

JOSH
 What are 'ya gonna do? Cry?

CALEB
 I told you we were gonna be in
 trouble. But, noooo.

JOSH

Stuff it. I didn't make you do anything you didn't want to do.

Caleb thrusts both hands to his ears, in disgust.

INT. BLUE PICKUP - EVENING

JOHN WELLSLEY, 41, wiry, bearded. He wears dark-blue coveralls, grips steering wheel with both hands.

JOHN'S P.O.V.

Through cracked windshield, sees BARKING dogs rush his truck.

EXT. TRUCK

John pulls to side of porch and stops. He exits. Door doesn't shut right, he SLAMS it, starts up porch to front door.

Sampson and Prowler join him. He pats their heads, enters house. The dogs leap from porch, head for rear yard.

INT. DINING ROOM DUSK

All but Sarah are at table. Josh and Caleb glue eyes on their plates. Sarah enters with fried chicken. John rises, returns with bowl of rice. Sarah brings green peas. Both sit.

JOHN

Holy Father, thanks for your bounty. For what we are about to receive, we are grateful. Amen.

OTHERS

Amen.

Plates are filled. Josh and Caleb hardly look up.

JOHN

You boys are making it hard for me to just talk, instead of strapping you. Josh, you're twelve. Caleb, you're nine already. You've been told to stay away from those woods. Besides, you had work to do. I won't tolerate disobedience. Might take talking, spanking or both, but you will obey. Go ahead, eat.

John leaves table. The boys breathe sigh of relief.

JOSH
Mom, do I have to eat the peas?

SARAH
Yes.

BETH
I like peas, huh mommy?

Caleb mocks Beth, contorting his face.

BETH (CONT'D)
Mommy. Caba is making faces.

SARAH
Caleb you're in enough trouble.

Sarah peers toward doorway. John returns, carrying an envelope. He sits, hands envelope to her.

SARAH (CONT'D)
What is this, John?

John serves himself, watches as Sarah examines envelope.

JOHN
Just read it, Sarah.

Sarah opens envelope, reads it. Only Josh is focused on his parents. Caleb and Beth eat. Beth sticks out tongue at Caleb.

BETH
Daddy, I helped mommy cook today.
Didn't I mommy?

SARAH
Yes, dear. You sure did.

JOHN
Good girl. It's delicious. At least
one of my children is obedient.

Sarah is somber, folds letter, returns it to envelope, hands it to John who puts it in his overall's top pocket.

SARAH
This place is worth five times
that. If we were going to sell,
there's no way we can accept an
offer like that. Let Colfield build
a plant elsewhere. It's an insult.

Sarah resumes eating.

JOHN

I heard the others plan to go along
... the Fullers, Prophets, the
Calvins. 'Course, I'm sure they all
got sweeter deals than this.
Waltham saw to that.

SARAH

Looks like we're the last of the
four families to decide. You know
what that means. Trouble.

John barely eats, stares at his plate as he talks. He notices
Josh is listening to their conversation.

JOSH

Mom? Dad? Do we have to move?

JOHN

You kids go on and eat. There's
nothing to talk about just yet.

SARAH

Mrs. Waltham called while Beth and
I were cooking ... almost made me
ruin the rice.

JOHN

What did she want this time

SARAH

Well, she went on about the town
needing the plant ... insisted no
one will miss Devil's Woods and the
Monahassett won't be polluted.
Wonder what they're getting paid to
push this whole thing.

JOHN

Well, there's no doubt the plant is
needed here in Colfield. Hardly
anyone in this town earns a living
anymore. But, we've been deceived
before.

We HEAR an automobile approach. John leaves room, walks
through to living room. He peers through curtains.

P.O.V. JOHN THROUGH WINDOW

Sees a white station wagon approach. He walks out onto porch.

INT. DINING ROOM DUSK

The kids continue eating. Sarah takes food back to the kitchen, reenters the dining room, pauses.

SARAH

You boys do your homework when you're done eating.

EXT. FRONT PORCH DUSK

The station wagon reaches the yard, comes to a stop. John approaches. JULES BEDFORD, 45, farmer-type gets out. They shake hands. John waves to a woman and four kids in the car packed with personal belongings. Luggage rack is loaded.

JOHN

Jules. You leaving now? Thought you and Catherine were gonna wait 'til Monday. Changed your mind?

JULES

(solemn)

We'd planned to wait. But I decided today was as good as any. Besides, we've already shipped most things. Only thing left was me, Catherine, the kids, and this last load here .

JOHN

Well, Let me get Sarah and the children. They'd never forgive me if they didn't say goodbye and all.

Jules nods. John goes to get his family. Jules motions his to join him. John reaches the front door, calls to Sarah.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Honey, it's Jules and Catherine. They're leaving tonight. You and the children come say goodbye.

SARAH (O.C.)

Coming.

The Bedfords pile out. CATHERINE, 40, 2 boys, 2 girls, 5 to 15. John returns to Jules, embraces Catherine and kids.

JOHN

We'll miss you all. I'm losing a real friend. And-- well, I don't have so many I can afford that.

JULES

Got no choice, John. We either leave and take a chance or stay and starve. It's that simple. Not easy to be starting over. But --

Sarah and kids reach the station wagon. All exchange embraces. The kids drift away into playful conversation.

SARAH

Catherine, we thought you all weren't leaving 'til Monday. I was hoping to have you over for supper, to reminisce ... cry a little.

CATHERINE

A lot. I know. It's just that it was so hard to come to this decision, what with Jason buried here. It's like leaving a part of us behind. If I talk about it, I'll start crying.

JOHN

Don't you worry one bit about Jason's grave. I'll see that it's tended and cared for proper.

SARAH

Our Liza is buried in the old churchyard, too. I know it would be hard for us to leave her behind.

JULES

'Course I expect we'll be back to visit some day. With that plant going in, things will be different in a few years. We just don't have years to wait.

Sarah gives John the 'eye', signaling him to not comment.

CATHERINE

We barely scraped together enough to make the move. Pains us to leave such beautiful country. We've lived here all our lives. There's just no future here, for us.

JOHN

I still can't see Jules as a West Texas oil baron. But if anyone can make it there, I know he will.

JULES

It's my brother who's the baron.
I've put him off for years. Told
him this was God's land. Still
believe that.

SARAH

Hope you're right, Jules. I'd hate
to have both God and you' all leave
us. You both pray for us here in
Colfield, too. We're gonna need it.

They all laugh, then silence.

JULES

Well, I guess it's no use putting
this off. We'd better be going now.

JOHN

Hate to see you go.

JULES

I know the whole town's going to
put a lotta pressure on you to sell
out. And I don't think they'll be
satisfied with anything other than
a yes. This town has some strange
folks who are still living back in
the 1600's. Keep an eye out and
just listen to your hearts.
Everything'll be just fine.

They all share an emotional embrace.

JOHN

Be safe.

JULES

Thanks. Kids, say goodbye. We're
going now. Josh, Caleb, Beth, you
all stay as you are, you hear?

The Bedfords begin leaving. Jules honks, everyone waves. The
Wellsleys watch. Sarah wipes away tears.

SARAH

Josh, get Caleb and Beth inside.
Start your homework. Give Beth her
drawing book.

Josh obeys, ushering his siblings toward front door. Sarah
watches them. John is still staring toward highway.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And please feed Sampson and Prowler
before you do your homework.

JOSH

I fed them already, mom.

SARAH

Then do your homework. You and
Caleb both. Go on.

AT SUNSET

Josh is reluctant but enters house. Sarah joins him. Both
stand looking at the sunset. She slips an arm around him.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Do you envy them, too?

JOHN

In a way. I guess there's just
something about sowing new seeds in
fresh soil, you know?

Sarah nods. They walk up drive toward two-lane Highway 1688.
Vast green fields border unstriped, worn asphalt roadway.

SARAH

I guess it's only natural to think
about what it would be like to get
a new start - the idea of new
dreams, fresh chance to do better.

JOHN

Or worse.

SARAH

True.

JOHN

I've been thinking. I just wanna do
the right thing for my family. With
the right price, we could go
anywhere ... wouldn't have to wait
years for some factory that may or
may not get built.

The two stop walking, face each other.

SARAH

What do you mean may not?

JOHN

I'm not as educated as ZEB, WEEMS,
and all. But I read that proposal.
Nothing says they have to build
that plant or any other. They could
buy this land and sit on it
forever, even sell it.

SARAH

You think they'd do that? The
committee wouldn't let them. They
got a lawyer

John chuckles. She FOLDS her arms, stares at him.

JOHN

Why would they care?

SARAH

You think they don't?

JOHN

You remember the Anacom deal? Same
committee was involved. Once they
got their money, nothing mattered.
That project was suppose to bring
jobs to Colfield. When all was said
and done, no plant and no jobs.

SARAH

The whole town lost out.

JOHN

Only winners were the folks who
brokered the property sales. Same
ones are involved now.

SARAH

So what are you going to tell them
at the meeting tonight?

JOHN

The truth. What's on my mind.

Sarah puts both hands on his shoulders.

SARAH

Which is?

JOHN

Which is that I haven't decided.
I'm not convinced they need our
land or need to destroy Devil's
Woods, or that they won't foul up
the river ... kill it off.

Sarah leans her head against John's shoulder briefly.

SARAH

I know you love this place, but
what choice do we have? True, we've
got some savings left, but it won't
last forever ... shrinks every day.

John stares off in the distance, pondering Sarah's question.

SARAH (CONT'D)

This land has been in your family
over a hundred years. You promised
your father, on his deathbed, that
you wouldn't sell it, but --

JOHN

-- The money is tempting. I know. I
also know I owe more to the living
than the dead. But I'd be lying if
I said I wasn't haunted by the
promise. It was the very last thing
I ever said to him.

SARAH

If we did sell, we could live most
anywhere. You wouldn't have to take
fix-up jobs at the church or in
town. Could even start farming
again -raising horses. You'd love
that. And, if Beth got sick again,
we wouldn't have to dig into
savings.

JOHN

I know. You're right. There's no
denying it. Tonight, I'll listen to
them, see what they have to say.

John and Sarah embrace, turn back toward the house.

SARAH

I can't believe the boys sneaked
off into those woods again. I've
got a feeling they went in farther
than the last time. It scares me.

JOHN

It was Joshua who talked Caleb into going with him. Right?

SARAH

More than likely. But something scared them. Caleb swears he saw a monster. Josh says it had big eyes, huge head, a --.

JOHN

-- Sound's like another one of Josh's monster stories.

SARAH

What's funny is how they always seem to be at each other's throats, but yet they're inseparable.

JOHN

I know.

SARAH

But they're good boys. I told them you'd have a word or two with them. I'm sure they expect the worse.

JOHN

I know. And we can't make empty promises about punishment. I'll talk to them more, later. The meeting shouldn't take long.

John and Sarah walk toward the house as the sun sets.

INT. DINING ROOM NIGHT

Josh and Caleb are doing their homework at the dining room table. Beth is in the kitchen, trying to wash dishes. Sarah enters the dining room. We hear John's truck. Josh leaps up.

JOSH

Mom! Dad's leaving? I wanted to go!

Sarah chuckles. We hear the truck drive away. Josh is dejected. He slumps back into his chair.

SARAH

Son, that meeting is not a place for children. Besides, you've got homework.

JOSH

But, mom --

SARAH

-- No buts. Then, it's bed for all of you so I can have some solitude. A little peace and quiet.

JOSH

I'm almost a grownup. I'm twelve, and next year I'll be thirteen.

SARAH

Is that right? Well, Mr. grownup, check the barn doors then hurry back and finish your homework.

Josh grabs a flashlight, leaves for barn. Caleb continues his homework. Sarah helps him.

INT. KITCHEN

Beth is in kitchen. The atmosphere turns ominous. At first, lights blink several times.

INT. DINING ROOM

Loud CRASHES come from kitchen. Beth SCREAMS. We hear GLASS BREAKING. A startled Sarah dashes to kitchen, Caleb follows.

SARAH

Oh, my god. Beth. Beth!

INT. KITCHEN

Cabinet doors open and close. Dishes and glassware fly out, crash onto floor. LIGHTS BLINK on and off.

Beth SCREAMS, cowers in a corner. Sarah gasps. Caleb's eyes bulge. Sarah crawls to Beth, tries retreating to safety.

BETH

Mommy. Mommy. I didn't do it.

SARAH

It's alright Beth. It's alright. Oh my god. Get back, Cabe. Get back!

BETH

Mommy.

In a flash, it all stops. Utensils and glassware are everywhere. A dumbstruck Sarah stands, all stare with shock, stunned to see none of the glassware is UNBROKEN

CALEB
What happened, mom?

A winded, puzzled, shaken Sarah holds Beth to her.

SARAH
I don't know. It's okay.

EXT. REAR GROUNDS - NIGHT

Josh checks barn door. It's closed tight. He turns back toward house, FREEZES.

JOSH
Sampson, Prowler. What's wrong?
Stop it now. Stop it!

Josh aims flashlight.

SHOW dogs are CROUCHED, eyes GLOWING, GROWLING, teeth GNASHING, mouths FOAMING, ready to strike. Josh trembles.

The dogs stop, back away, whining like puppies.

The house's rear door opens.

SARAH (O.C.)
Josh. Josh!

JOSH
Coming, mom.

Josh backs away.

Then, a distant, piercing HOWL. A soft glow appears over the woods. Josh circles around dogs, dashes for house. H

Josh enters, SLAMS door shut.

INT. JOHN'S PICKUP - NIGHT (MOVING)

John looks intense/grim-faced.

INSERT ON TOWN LIMIT SIGN:

Reads: "Welcome To Colfield, Mass. Pop. 4,500"

EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK

The two lane highway is bordered by wooded areas, open fields dotted with houses. Moonlight aids truck's dim lights.

INT. TRUCK

RADIO BROADCAST.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Again, our top story's from Colfield where tonight they are expected to approve purchase of private property that will clear the way for a new electronics plant. The plant, to be built by Neurosonic—the big Japanese conglomerate—is expected to provide over 2,000 jobs in Colfield and nearby towns. Due to economic factors, State officials have waived an environmental impact study.

John stares ahead, enters Colfield. He turns off radio, continues to single-story Town Hall in center of town.

Streets are deserted, except for a few pedestrians.

EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK

John arrives at town hall, a white building with asphalt parking lot. Dozens of cars are parked. John parks between two cars at curb.

INT. TOWN HALL — NIGHT

John and others enter, walk through vestibule. We hear loud APPLAUSE, CHEERS from inside main hall. The meeting is in progress. John enters, nods to many he passes.

INCLDUE

John nods to CONSTABLE RANKIN and a DEPUTY.

At front of hall, two long tables are end to end. Seated are three of TOWN FATHERS. They converse with REVEREND WALTHAM and TWO JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN.

DISPLAYS

Charts on easels. American FLAGS are in background. John is motioned to front. He nods acknowledgment of his NEIGHBORS.

A vacant chair is between the three. He scans crowd, sits. The large room, has wooden floors, metal center posts.

Reverend Waltham, 60s, tall, thin, ICHABOD CRANE of a man, wears black suit, string tie.

Crane stands. Crowd quietens.

REV. WALTHAM

Finally, it's my pleasure to have helped bring the advantages of Colfield to the attention of our town leaders, to help them seek to bring industry to our great town.

Audience applauds.

REV. WALTHAM (CONT'D)

Now, after many months, we near the results we all seek. So, let's have a big applause for our Town Manager and chairman of our Industry Committee, Zeb James. Zeb.

Waltham turns to the graying, cigar-chomping, bespectacled man to his right who stands to APPLAUSE.

ZEB

Thanks, Reverend Waltham. I'm not going to waste time. Our guests are busy folk and we all know why we're here. So let's get to business. I expect this to be a short meeting.

One Japanese businessman smiles, nods.

ZEB (CONT'D)

I'm going to ask Mr. Hiroki to proceed as he sees fit. Mr. Hiroki.

Man nearest Zeb stands to applause. Zeb whispers to him.

ZEB (CONT'D)

They're glad to see you both.

HIROKI

Thank you. Thank you.

Hiroki smiles, waits for applause to end.

HIROKI (CONT'D)

As you are all aware, I'm no stranger to Massachusetts or Colfield. Having lived in New England all my life, I realize the impact a Neurosonic facility will have on your lovely town and all of Massachusetts. Neurosonic will be a great neighbor, provided you all decide you want us here.

John glances around at those nearest him. Someone yells out.

VOICE (O.C.)

You bet we want cha.

More applause erupts.

HIROKI

Thank you. Your enthusiasm is very gratifying.

More APPLAUSE.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah, in cotton gown, sits at mirror of antique dresser, brushes shoulder length hair. She is still shaken, stares into mirror.

We hear a sharp, distant HOWL. Sarah turns with a start.

INT. JOSH AND CALEB'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The boys are in pajamas. Caleb sits on edge of his bed. Josh stands at barely opened door, peers out. He closes door, turns back to Caleb.

CALEB

(loud whisper)

What was that?

JOSH

How'm I suppose to know? Maybe a bear or something in the woods.

CALEB

You know there're no animals in Devil's woods.

JOSH

Well, you tell me what it was.

CALEB

I don't know. Maybe --

JOSH

-- Maybe what?

CALEB

Maybe that big weird kid we saw. We gotta tell mom and dad.

JOSH

We told mom. You saw she didn't believe us. Dad won't either.

CALEB

'Cause you're always making up stories. Nobody believes you.

JOSH

I do not.

CALEB

Do too.

JOSH

Did you make up what happened in the kitchen? I didn't make up that about Sampson and Prowler, either.

Just then, the door to their bedroom eased open.

SARAH

(whisper)

Josh, Caleb?

Josh jumps in bed. Both close their eyes, pretend to be asleep. Sarah peeks inside then closes door.

INT. HALLWAY

Sarah continues to Beth's room, peers in, closes door and continues past kitchen to rear door.

Sarah checks door locks. A hand lands on her back. Sarah wheels around with a start, sees Beth behind her.

SARAH

Beth. You were just asleep.

BETH

I'm scared, mommy.

SARAH
Come here baby. It's alright.

INT. COLFIELD TOWN HALL - NIGHT

HIROKI
Mr. Nakamura will return to Tokyo
in two weeks, hopefully with signed
contracts on the land. We look
forward to a long relationship.

Hiroki looks at Zeb who stands as Hiroki moves to one side
but remains standing. More APPLAUSE.

ZEB
Well, as you all know, Neurosonic's
plans to build their multi-million
dollar facility is conditioned on
the sale of four very large parcels
of land which back onto Devil's
Woods, plus the clearing of the
woods to access the river.

In audience, mustachioed PETE CRULL, 50's, stands.

PETE
Cut to the chase, Zeb.

LAUGHTER.

ZEB
Well, I see all four of the
landowners, who have the future of
Colfield in their hands, are seated
here in front of me.

John shifts in his seat. His neighbors grin.

ZEB (CONT'D)
I spoke to three of the four and
they've agreed to sell.

The audience cheers. Zeb waves both hands in an effort to
restore order. John stares at ZEB.

ZEB (CONT'D)
Hold on. I said three agreed. I
wasn't able to reach John Wellsley
here. Bob Fuller, Zeke Prophet, Lem
Calvin - you boys stand up there.

The three stand, turn to more audience APPLAUSE. We hear a
buzz from crowd. John sits stoically. The three sit.

ZEB (CONT'D)

John Wellsley's right here. I hate to put him on the spot but I'm gonna ask him to tell us right now what he's decided.

SHOW audience quietens. John, uneasy, stares at Zeb then stands. A hush falls over overflow crowd.

JOHN

If any of you gentlemen had contacted me today, I would have told you I still haven't decided.

SHOW NED TEAL, 40s, muscular, bearded. He leaps to his feet.

NED TEAL

Speak up, Wellsley. Can't hear 'ya.

John wheels toward audience. Ned Teal remains standing.

JOHN

I haven't decided. I realize the importance of this plant to all of Colfield. I understand that.

SHOW an angry Pete Crull.

PETE

Then sell, damn it.

John turns to give himself a view of committee and audience.

JOHN

I said I'm aware of the importance. I'm also aware that only four of us are being asked to part with land that has been in our families for generations.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's not something you do casually. I was born and raised on that land. So was my father. And his father. Besides, I've seen nothing that's says Neurosonic MUST build a plant. Have any of you?

Audience erupts in HISSES, BOOS. John grimaces.

ZEB

Ladies and gentlemen, please. We have guests, and this is not the way we behave. Hear Wellsley out.

AUDIENCE

The audience quietens.

John sits. Mr. Hiroki signals Zeb he wants to speak.

HIROKI

Please, please understand. We have no desire to sow seeds of division amongst you. Mr. Wellsley has every right to the information he needs to make a good decision. There isn't a lot of time to waste. However, we want him to know that if he has questions, we'll be happy to answer them now or over the next ten days. Thanks very much for inviting us here tonight.

Audience BUZZES. Hiroki and Nakamura gather materials, stop to shake hands with Waltham, and others, leave hall.

Committee members look surprised. eb and others stare at each other with dropped jaws. Zeb moves to podium.

ZEB

When I said the meeting would be short, I didn't have this in mind. We'll work this out and try again. Meeting's adjourned.

John remains seated. An angry CHORUS resumes.

ANGRY VOICE #2 (O.C.)

One way or the other, Wellsley.

ON AUDIENCE

Some shout epithets. John stands, turns toward dispersing audience. He appears stunned. His neighbors next to him walk away without a word.

RICHARD BALFOUR, 24, Ivy-league-type, in sweater and oxford shoes, approaches John, as John moves toward exit.

BALFOUR

Mr. Wellsley? Mr. Wellsley? You have a moment?

John turns, aims a cool stare, continues walking.

JOHN

Who're you?

BALFOUR

I'm a reporter here in Colfield. Mr. Weems at the Guardian hired me yesterday. Name's Balfour. Richard Balfour. I'm from Newfield and I'd ... I'd like an interview.

JOHN

You sure you want to be seen talking to me?

BALFOUR

You're the man of the hour. I'm a reporter. I need a story and you're it. Simple. Now the way I see it --

JOHN

-- Whoa. You talk too fast. Sure you're not from New York?

BALFOUR

Sorry. Mother always told me that. I do get excited. Listen, you're the most important man in town. If these folks were smart and not suffering from terminal myopia, they'd be kissing your feet and other parts of your anatomy.

The two near rear of hall.

JOHN

What's this... my-o-peeah?

BALFOUR

It's not important. The point is, you have a right not to sell. You're free to decide whatever you want. I wanna tell your story.

John pauses, turns to face Balfour, steps closer.

JOHN

I don't have a story, and you won't have job if you write that. Old man Weems is one of the biggest supporters of this new plant. You should get to know your boss, before you start working on your first Pulitzer Prize.

BALFOUR

It's a matter of free speech, ah,
life, liberty and all that
revolutionary stuff.

John snickers, half-turns his head over his shoulder as he
nears front entrance.

JOHN

You're a real minuteman. Better
keep your powder dry and your eyes
open, Balfour. This isn't exactly
the harmless town you think it is.

EXT. COLFIELD TOWN HALL - NIGHT

John exits into light fog, starts across parking lot toward
his truck. Balfour follows. As John nears the truck, he comes
to a sudden stop. Balfour almost walks into him.

BALFOUR

What is it?

John points to flat left front tire on his truck.

John looks around lot. Several men look on from yards away.

BALFOUR (CONT'D)

Wow. Are you serious? A flat?

John surveys his truck more. Balfour follows.

JOHN

This is no accident. Tire's been
slashed.

BALFOUR

You're kidding. Who would do
something like this?

John doesn't answer. He walks around the truck.

JOHN

Only one tire. That's considerate.

BALFOUR

Got a spare? If you don't, I have a
brand new one in my Tempo.

John stares at him, then starts to remove his spare.

JOHN

Put a compact passenger tire on a truck, right?

BALFOUR

Oh, right. Cancel that. I do have a flashlight, though.

John removes spare from underneath truck bed. Balfour holds flashlight. John begins loosening lugs.

ON FRONT END OF TRUCK

Spare tire is on. John walks to side of truck, tosses slashed tire and jack into bed, turns to Balfour.

JOHN

Well, goodnight Mr. Balfour.

John climbs in his truck, cranks engine. It struggles to start. Balfour stands at driver's door.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

BALFOUR

What about the story?

JOHN

You already have one, don't you?

EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

John drives off. Balfour watches, glancing around area, as John's pickup disappears into light fog.

INT. JOHN AND SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight spills through raised window and sheer curtains. John sits on side of bed, in pajama bottoms. Sarah rises, moves next to John, places an arm on his shoulder.

SARAH

Honey, I know you're still upset and angry, but just try and lie down. You need some sleep. After what's happened here tonight, I doubt if I'll be able to.

John takes a deep breath, half turns to face Sarah.

JOHN

Amazing. You spend your life with these people, work with them, go to church with them, but you don't know them until this happens.

SARAH

Surely all of them don't feel that way. There must be--

JOHN

-- What?

SARAH

I was saying there must be some who don't feel that way.

JOHN

You shoulda been there. They were like animals. People I've known all my life. Not one of them said a word to me afterwards, Except for that kid I told you about. Balford ... Balfour, something.

SARAH

Well at least he stayed until you fixed your tire. He sounds like a decent person.

JOHN

Maybe. If you ask me, he wants something, like all the rest.

SARAH

Darling, everybody wants something.

JOHN

I know. But nothing says we have to want what they want. I don't like being pushed. I won't take it from anybody.

SARAH

Shhh, the kids. They finally fell asleep. You come to sleep. Try.

Sarah tries to coax John back to bed.

JOHN

Can't sleep. I keep thinking about what happened here ... the meeting. I'm only gonna keep you awake. Maybe I should sleep on the couch.

SARAH

You just try it, John Wellsley the
Third. I'll let you know when to
sleep on the couch.
(kisses him)

John starts to lie down. SUDDENLY, the horses begin NEIGHING
and PAWING. Prowler and Sampson begin BARKING. John bounds
from the bed, grabs his pajama top.

SARAH (CONT'D)

My god. What in the world's going
on out there? What's happening?

John slips on house shoes, dashes to closet, grabs his
shotgun. Sarah goes to peek out window, turns to John.

JOHN

I've never heard 'em make that
kinda noise. Something's got 'em
spooked.

John loads his pump-action shotgun, bolts from room with
Sarah close behind. Both start for back door. John turns to
her. The sounds coming from horses and barking dogs.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Stay inside. I'll be right back.

SARAH

I'll stand at the door. Be careful.

John continues. He unlocks back door, steps into light fog.

EXT. WELLSLEY REAR YARD - NIGHT

Moonlight pulses through fog. John hears dogs' BARKING grow
louder, reaches barn, shotgun ready. The horses continue
PAWING and KICKING in stalls. He opens door. Sarah looks on.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

John steps inside, flips on light switch. He is stunned to
see both horses fast asleep in their stalls.

JOHN

What the ...?

John eases toward horses in stalls, glances around. He
touches them, examines his fingers. They're dry. He looks up
toward hayloft, lowers his shotgun and stands staring.

SARAH

John!

John wheels around, sees Sarah standing in barn doorway.

JOHN

Sarah. You wanna get shot? I don't want the kids left alone.

SARAH

They're fine. I had to see for myself. What's wrong? Everything looks okay. What was that noise?

JOHN

I have no idea. All I know is what we both heard. But look. The horses haven't moved. They're asleep, and as dry as powder.

A puzzled Sarah takes a closer look. Both exit barn.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Where're Sampson and Prowler? Didn't see them but We heard them.

John secures barn door from outside.

EXT. WELLSLEY REAR YARD — NIGHT

John scans corral and yard. Sarah follows. John moves toward front of house, peers into truck bed and underneath truck.

He spots the dogs lying on the front porch, turns to Sarah, points. They walk over, observe both sound asleep.

JOHN

There's no way these dogs would sleep through anything like what we heard, especially Prowler.

SARAH

We heard them, too. Josh said they acted strange tonight. He thought they were going to attack him.

JOHN

I don't understand. They've never behaved that way. I know what we heard. - Let's get back inside.

John and Sarah return to back door. John pauses, looks out toward barn, closes door.

INT. HOUSE — NIGHT

John and Sarah check on children. They're all okay. They stand outside Beth's room, staring at each other.

EXT. COLFIELD SERVICE STATION — DAY

A two-pump station on Colfield's Main Street. Two customers pump gas. Pete Crull, in grease-soaked jeans and shirt, services a car on lift in station's single stall.

John pulls his truck to within a few feet of stall. Pete turns, takes a hard look, resumes work.

John, exits truck, strides up to Pete.

JOHN

Morning Pete. I need a tire.

Pete waits before responding. John remains calm.

PETE

Not sure I got a tire to fit that heap. Sorry.

JOHN

(deep exhale)

Every tire on this heap came from you. So why don't you just take a look and find me a tire.

Pete turns around, tool in his hand, stares at John. John stares back. A grudging Pete walks to tire rack, surveys tire stock, returns to John.

PETE

Gotta leave it here. Can't get to it just now. Maybe a little later.

JOHN

You got the tire?

PETE

Well now, I wouldn't be tellin' ya' to leave it if I didn't. Would I?

John stares at Pete, goes to his truck bed, gets slashed tire. He returns, leans it against truck's front bumper.

Pete has returned to servicing car in stall.

JOHN
Keys are inside. Be back in an
hour.

FOLLOW JOHN

John walks across street, to COLDFIELD PHARMACY. He waves to
MALE DRIVER of a passing car. The driver scowls.

INT. COLFIELD PHARMACY — DAY

Two female customers are at counter. Store's owner, a
grandmotherly MRS. WEEMS, 60s, is behind counter.

JOHN
Morning, ladies. Mrs. Weems.

Mrs. Weems grunts acknowledgement, glances over her shoulder.
John moves mid-store, searching shelves.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Mrs. Weems, where's your children's
Tylenol, please?

Mrs. Weems whispers something to other women. All snicker.

MRS. WEEMS
Don't keep it on shelves. Keep all
children's medicines her, behind
the counter, like always.

John walks to counter. The women step away. Mrs. Weems puts
Tylenol on counter. John places five dollar bill on counter.

MRS. WEEMS (CONT'D)
Wish you'd done the right thing.
Thought you cared about your wife
and kids. Which one's sick now?

Mrs. Weems looks up at John. He aims a cold stare at her.

JOHN
Nice day we're having.

Mrs. Weems bags medicine, places John's change on counter,
even as he extends his hand. John picks up his change, counts
it aloud, heads for door.

MRS. WEEMS
Your father would be mighty
disappointed, John Wellsley.

John continues without looking back.

EXT. COLFIELD HARDWARE, GRAIN & FEED - DAY

Two delivery trucks are at the ramp and roll-up door. They're being loaded with boxes and sacks of feed.

INT. WAREHOUSE/OFFICE AREA - DAY

View from loading area into warehouse office shows three men in animated conversation - Zeb, Zeke, Reverend Waltham. Ned Teal enters office.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Reverend Waltham, dressed in khaki pants, white shirt and black fedora, stands. Zeb, and Zeke Prophet are seated.

WALTHAM

C'mon in Ned. We were betting you'd live up to your reputation for tardiness. You didn't let us down.

NED

I had to --

ZEB

-- Save it. We got important business, figuring out how we can save this town. 'Cause if we don't get that plant, we can kiss it, our asses, and a damn fortune goodbye.

ZEKE

You gotta excuse Zeb's cave man language, Reverend. He forgets his Christian upbringing, sometimes.

ZEB

I expect the good Reverend spews a few hell's and damns sometimes.

Waltham begins pacing. He stops and faces the group.

WALTHAM

We know where the problem lies. Question is, how to take care of it in the right way.

Brief silence. Waltham stares at each of his confederates. They look at each other.

NED

Way I see it, me and a few of the boys from Newfield could solve the problem. If there's no house up there, them Wellsleys gotta move. We take two or three sticks up there and - kaboom.

Waltham continues pacing.

ZEKE

That still wouldn't mean Wellsley would have to sell. He'd still own the land, even if he lived on the moon, you fool. Them Wellsley's always been a stubborn lot. His daddy, granddaddy, all of 'em.

NED

Who you callin' fool, fool?

WALTHAM

Gentlemen, please. Ned, there's little doubt that of those of us gathered here, you are - how can I put this - you are the least shackled by constraints, social mores and respect for law.

NED

You only say it 'cause it's true.

WALTHAM

As a man of God, I have to be very circumspect and above reproach. You Mr. Teal, on the other hand, have little to lose and wealth to gain.

NED

How much?

The others exchange furtive glances.

ZEB

Thousands. Hell, tens of thousands. Enough for you, your wife and young Matthew to live on for the rest of your lives.

ZEKE

Listen, before we toss this bone to Fido, let's try a few other things? I mean, we're talking serious stuff here. We got ten days.

(MORE)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

If we have to kiss Wellsley's ass,
or cut him in, just do it.

WALTHAM

We are indeed talking serious
stuff. If that plant goes away and
we lose everything, that's it. We
lose our whole way of life.

ZEB

Hell, we'd lose a way of life we've
only dreamed about. What you got in
mind, holy man?

ZEKE

Things could be made real tough on
Wellsley. He buys food, gas,
supplies, needs credit. We could
condemn his property by eminent
domain. Have that so-called lawyer
we pay look into it.

ZEB

There's only one sure-fire way, if
he won't change his mind. Folks in
this town are willing to do just
about anything to protect their
interests. Anything.

From window, Waltham glances out through open blinds. He sees
John headed up loading ramp. Ned spots him too.

John nears top of dock. He stuffs medicine into his pocket.
Waltham closes blinds.

WALTHAM

There's Wellsley, Zeb. Hurry out
and see what he wants and make sure
you don't have it.

Zeb hurries out, closing door behind him.

INT. WAREHOUSE — DAY

JOHN

Zeb, I need those things I ordered
last month. Are they in yet?

ZEB

'Fraid not John. They got me
backordered something terrible.
Just have to wait, I reckon.

JOHN

You sure?

ZEB

Now, why wouldn't I be? I oughta know my own business, I reckon. If you're upset about last night, I'm sorry. Other folks are upset too.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Others strain to hear and see. All crowd at window, peer out through blinds.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

JOHN

Didn't come here to discuss last night. Came for my merchandise I paid for. Don't jerk me around Zeb. I got no patience for it.

John pokes Zeb several times with his index finger, punctuating his last words. Zeb swats at his hand.

ZEB

And you'll get it when I get it. You got no call to behave this way, Wellsley. You got no call at all.

JOHN

I'm not going to be pushed around, Zeb. Nobody can tell me what to do with my property. Don't think I don't know what's going on either.

ZEB

I got nothing to say about that. Just don't come around here with a chip your shoulder. I'll get your merchandise then thank you to stay away from my business. You can shop in Newfield.

John watches Zeb stalk back to office, hesitates then leaves.

EXT. - COLFIELD SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

A boisterous crowd of kids gather around two boys fighting at one end of fenced playground.

TEACHER

A stocky woman, MRS. MATHERS, 50s makes a beeline for the fight. As she approaches, crowd parts.

Josh has an arm locked around head of a large, 12 year-old MATTHEW TEAL. Both roll on ground in dirt, yell and scream at each other. Caleb cheers his brother on.

CALEB

Punch his lights out, Josh.

JOSH

You take it back you slimeball,
pigbutt. Take it back or I'll make
a girl outta 'ya. I'll --

MRS. MATHERS

-- Stop it. Stop it right this
minute, Joshua Wellsley ... Matthew
Teal. Stop it. Both of you.

She bends down to grab Josh's forearm. Her grip slips.

MRS. MATHERS (CONT'D)

Oh, no.

Mrs Mathers tumbles backward in a heap. Kids roll with laughter. Josh stops to help her up. His face is soiled, clothes dirty, twisted on his body.

JOSH

I'm sorry Miss Mathers. I --

MRS. MATHERS

-- It's Mrs. Mathers. And you two
come with me, and not another word.

Mrs. Mathers grabs both boys by their collars, marches them toward school building. Caleb follows.

JOSH

He started it.

MATTHEW

Did not. You hit me first.

JOSH

You called my dad an asshole, you
puke-face jerk!

MATTHEW

He is.

JOSH
I'll show you.

Josh breaks away from Mrs. Mathers, smacks Matthew in his eye. Matthew doubles over in pain, FALLS to his knees.

MATTHEW
My eye. He hit me in the eye.

A MALE TEACHER dashes to take control of Josh, while Mrs. Mathers grabs Matthew.

Crowd of kids disperses. Josh and Matthew are escorted into building.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - DAY

John returns. His pickup has been moved, parked on edge of driveway next to a phone booth.

A big BLUE PICK-UP with extended rear bumper, and confederate sticker on cab window, is on rack. Pete mounts tires on it.

John races across driveway to his pickup. At service bay, he sees his tire against wall where he left it. He steps up to service bay to Pete.

JOHN
You all done with my truck?

Pete turns to him, continues working.

PETE
Ain't had time yet.

JOHN
Like hell. You're putting tires on that damn truck there. You don't want my business, just say so.

Pete scowls. Meanwhile, a car pulls into station. Pete wipes his hands on a rag taken from his pants pocket.

PETE
Look, this customer came in yesterday, paid cash for these tires. Came back to have 'em put on. I don't mind taking your money or anybody else's. Understand?

Pete stalks past John toward pumps. His office telephone RINGS. He calls out to driveway customer as John looks on.

PETE (CONT'D)
Be right there.

John grabs his slashed tire, heads for his truck. He's gone several feet when Pete steps out of his office, calls out.

PETE (CONT'D.) (CONT'D)
Hey, Wellsley.

John keeps walking, doesn't answer or look back.

PETE (CONT'D)
It's your wife.

John turns around, tosses tire into truck bed, hurries back to office. Pete points to phone on his desk.

INT. STATION OFFICE

John enters, grabs phone. He looks concerned, angry.

INT. JOHN'S PICKUP - DAY

John, Josh and Caleb are silent, as truck rambles down Highway 1688, en route home. Windows are halfway down.

JOHN
Son, it's not that I don't understand why you did it. It's that I don't want you fighting. Sometimes kids - even grownups, say things that make you angry. You just have to let it roll off you.

JOSH
But dad, I wasn't bothering him, honest. He kept following me all over the playground yelling 'your daddy is an asshole. Your daddy --

JOHN
-- Okay, Josh. I heard you.

CALEB
He's telling the truth dad. I saw it. Josh didn't want to slug him. He asked for it. So Josh popped him. Wham. Right in the socket.

Caleb draws a grin from Josh, a glare from John. John suppresses a smile, clears his throat, turns away.

JOHN

So now, you're suspended Monday and Tuesday. Great. That's great. We'll see what your mom says about that?

Josh hunches his shoulders.

CALEB

I'm not going either, dad.

JOHN

Oh? Who says?

CALEB

I can't dad. I mean --

JOHN

-- Who say's? You're not suspended.

CALEB

I know. But If I go without Josh, I'll have to fight for sure, especially, with that Matthew. I may have to hurt him.

JOHN

Wait. Matthew was suspended, too.

JOSH

Wrong, dad. Just me. Matthew's still at school. They let him stay.

John's brow fills with deep frowns.

EXT. TURNOFF FROM HIGHWAY TO JOHN'S FARM - DAY

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK

JOSH

Dad, can I talk to you later 'bout Devil's Woods? I don't mean to scare you but we saw this monster. He looked like a boy, but he was --

CALEB

-- Ugly and ragged and stinky ... had big 'ol eyes and --

JOSH

-- And he made the wind blow real hard, too and --

JOHN

-- Really? I see. So why didn't you take your camera? You could've shown us pictures of all this.

JOSH

Oh yeah. Guess, I forgot.

JOHN

I'm kidding, Josh. I've always told you two to stay away from those woods. And I meant it. I still do.

JOSH

I know you think we made it up, but we didn't. Honest. Honest, dad.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sarah and Beth sit at kitchen table. Covered pots are on stove. Sarah chops fresh vegetables. Beth is busy with her coloring book.

Classical MUSIC PLAYS on a small radio. Both hear SOUND of the truck. Beth stops coloring, darts for front door.

BETH

They're home. They're home. Oooh. Is Josh in trouble mommy? Don't let daddy spank him, please? Please?

Sarah reaches for Beth's arm, motions her to sit back down.

SARAH

You worried 'bout your big brother?

Beth nods yes. We hear truck doors slam four times.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Yes. That's them, alright.

Sarah continues chopping. Beth stares toward door. John appears in doorway, with Josh and Caleb behind.

JOHN

I've posted this one's bail.

Beth leaves her chair, hurries to Josh.

SARAH

(to Caleb)

Wel, who's that next to him.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

I don't recall Mrs. Mathers saying anything about you, young man.

John gets a pitcher of water from fridge, a glass from cabinet. Beth shows her coloring book to Josh.

JOHN

We got lucky - two suspensions for the price of one. The short one there wants to join his brother to express his solidarity. Of course Matthew Teal is still in school and probably --

CALEB

-- I'm not scared of Matthew.

SARAH

At least I'll have a couple of farmhands I can put to work. Josh, go get cleaned up. You're a mess.

Sarah takes vegetables to sink to rinse. Josh leaves kitchen. Beth and Caleb follow.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I've had six obscene calls. One called me a witch. Another used a word which rhymes with it. So, now I just pick up and hold the phone before saying anything. And I don't want the children answering it for a while. It's just horrible.

John shakes his head in disgust.

JOHN

This all seems a just little too organized to me. Were they men or women's voices? Any you recognized?

SARAH

Oh, about half and half. And the voices were muffled. John, I wasn't ready for this. I think we've really angered some people.

JOHN

I'm angry, myself, truth be told.

SARAH

I know. And Reverend Waltham called about fifteen minutes ago.

JOHN
What did he want?

Josh and Beth return to Kitchen. Sarah dries her hands on apron, motions John to follow her. Turns to Josh.

SARAH
Make a sandwich and let Beth finish her coloring. I'll be right back.

John walks to living room. Sarah closes door behind her.

INT. LIVING ROOM — DAY

JOHN
What did Waltham want?

SARAH
Said you needn't come to work at the church tomorrow. Wants to talk to you first. Didn't say why.

JOHN
What does that mean? Don't come in.

SARAH
Then he hung up. You know, it struck me as strange he never asked if you were home. First thing he said was that he wanted to leave a message for you... like he either knew or assumed you weren't here.

John, angry, starts for front door. Sarah follows.

EXT. WELLSLEY HOUSE — DAY

SARAH
John, Please. What's wrong?
Where're you going? Wait.

John jumps from porch, storms to his truck.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Don't leave like this. Tell me something, John. Talk to me. John.

JOHN
I'll be back.

John goes to truck, drives away. Sarah watches him reach highway. She turns to find Josh standing in doorway.

JOSH
What's daddy mad about?

Sarah enters house. Josh turns to her.

INT. LIVING ROOM — DAY

Sarah, exhausted, walks to sofa, plops down.

JOSH (CONT'D.)
Where'd daddy go, mom?

Sarah motions him to sit beside her.

SARAH
Your dad is a little upset Josh.
He'll be back soon. He'll be okay.

JOSH
It's those folks who want us to
sell, right? That's why daddy's
mad. And that's why Matthew said
those mean things about him today.

SARAH
Son, I know you were defending your
father and I'm sure he's glad you
feel that way about him. But, you
can't whop some kid every time they
say something you don't like.

JOSH
I don't do it every time, Mom.
But this was special.

SARAH
Well, special or not, I don't want
you getting into fights. What's
done is done, but I'm not pleased
you handled it that way. There're
better ways to solve problems, son.

JOSH
Sometimes a man has to fight back.
Sometimes, you get pushed and you
can't take it any more. And I don't
like being pushed around.

The phone RINGS.

Sarah goes to end table next to recliner. Josh sits, his head
down. Sarah answers, listens for a second before speaking.

SARAH

Hello.

INT. COLFIELD/NEWFIELD GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER OFFICE — DAY

Office door is open. Balfour sits at small desk at rear of newspaper office.

A WOMAN types at old-school computer in small, enclosed office on one side of room.

A silver-haired man in blue suit, MR. WEEMS, with horn-rim glasses, sits at desk in separate office.

AT BALFOUR'S DESK

PHONE CALL. Balfour/Sarah

BALFOUR

Mrs. Wellsley?

INT. WELLSLEY LIVING ROOM — DAY

SARAH

This is Sarah Wellsley.

BALFOUR (V.O.)

I'm Richard Balfour, from the Guardian. I met your husband after the town meeting last night.

SARAH

Oh yes. He mentioned you. Thanks for helping him. He's not here right now.

INT. GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER — EVENING

Zeb and two men enter while Balfour is on phone. They enter Mr. Weems' office. Weems greets them, closes his door. Woman walks past Balfour, as if he isn't there.

BALFOUR

You know when he may be in?

INT. WELLSLEY LIVING ROOM — EVENING

Josh has walked to where his mother stands.

SARAH

No. Anything I can help you with?

Josh wedges a question in while Sarah is distracted.

JOSH

Mom, dad said I should've taken pictures yesterday. May I? He --

SARAH

-- Go on, Josh.

Josh bolts from room. Sarah continues on phone.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Go on. - I suggest you try back in an hour or so. - Fine.

Josh, in jeans and denim jacket, dashes from his bedroom with backpack and 35mm camera. A puzzled Caleb follows to back . Beth exits her room, follows Caleb. Caleb calls out to Josh.

CALEB

You're crazy. Dad didn't mean for you to back out there. You know he didn't. I'm gonna tell mom.

JOSH

Shhh. She's on the phone. You heard dad say I shoulda taken pictures. And I just asked mom. She said go on. She said it. She did.

CALEB

I don't believe you, Josh.

JOSH

Big deal. Don't believe it then.

BETH

Josh.

Josh darts out back door, onto ground, bolts away.

EXT. REAR OF HOUSE - DAY

Josh heads across fields. Caleb follows to just beyond barn. Beth follows, carrying a baseball cap.

Prowler and Sampson BARK and run behind Josh.

CALEB
 You're in trouble Josh. You'd
 better come back here. Something
 real bad's gonna happen to you.

BETH
 Here, Josh.

Beth holds Josh's cap. Josh continues. Prowler and Sampson
 come to a sudden stop at edge of fields.

CALEB
 Prowler. Sampson.

Both dogs run back to Caleb who watches until Josh is out of
 sight. Beth pets dogs. Caleb stares across fields, then turns
 back toward house. Beth follows.

Sarah appears in doorway, sees Caleb, starts toward him.
 Sampson and Prowler rush to her.

SARAH
 Caleb, where's your brother?
 Where's Josh? Answer me.

Caleb reaches Sarah. She grabs his shoulders.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Answer me.

CALEB
 He said you said it was okay. I
 said you didn't and told him not to
 go, but he went anyway.
 (points)

SARAH
 Devil's Woods? He's gone into those
 woods again? Has he? Well?

CALEB
 Yes, Mom.

Sarah takes several steps past Caleb, stares out over fields.

SARAH
 Good lord. I can't believe this. I
 told him no such thing.

Sarah starts for house with Caleb and a teary Beth.

CALEB
 Is Josh in trouble?

SARAH
Beth. Don't cry, sweetheart?

EXT. DEVIL'S WOODS — DAY

Josh is winded, when he enters Devil's woods. He looks back over fields toward house, catches his breath and continues.

Josh moves deeper into woods.

Josh trips over logs, leaps small streams, encounters heavy undergrowth. Sweat beads on his brow, he wipes it away. He reaches a thick canopy of trees. Light streams through.

Josh spots a log in a small clearing, walks to it, sits. He removes his camera, canteen and pack, opens a candy bar.

POV SOMEONE WATCHING JOSH THROUGH TREES

Josh drinks from his canteen, caps it, rises, puts his gear on again, takes a look at his watch.

INSERT WATCH FACE. "READS 2PM."

POV PERSON WATCHING JOSH

Josh resumes walking, comes to sudden stop, turns in circle, appears to sense DANGER, begins moving through trees.

Josh comes to small clearing where the 'Boy' was seen. He walks around area, as if searching for the spot. He removes canteen, takes a drink, places it back over his shoulder.

JOSH
Anybody here? Hello. Hello.

Josh's tentative voice echoes. He swallows hard, wipes brow, turns in circle. Takes a deep breath. Assumes a bold look.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Hello. Hello. I'm ... I'm back. Is anybody here? I'm not scared.

Josh freezes. Then, RUSTLING leaves, SNAPPING twigs sound.

Josh's hair is whipped in a rush of HOWLING wind. Leaves, twigs, dirt swirl.

Josh' eyes bulge, he turns in circles, grips his camera strap and canteen. He squints to prevent dirt getting in his eyes.

Then, the wind suddenly stops. Josh turns in circles, looks all around. His eyes bulge.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Oh God. What am I doing here?

ON CREATURES

Out of nowhere, the creature Boy, and TEENAGE-like GIRL, with distorted features, matted hair hanging past shoulders.

TWO SMALLER boys, A SMALL GIRL, appear. All dirty, bare foot, bedraggled, eyes only pupils, foreheads bulging, encircle Josh, move closer, tighten circle.

Josh' face drips perspiration. He gasps for breath, clutches his chest - eyes blinking non-stop.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Oh God. Please, I'm only a kid. I won't hurt you. Okay? Don't you remember me? Can't you talk?

BOY
Nunnnnh, nunnnnh.

JOSH
Who are you? Where'd you come from?

Josh's words and arm gestures have no effect. Group watch him, toss heads side to side. Josh trembles in fear.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Ah, you can all come with me.
I ... I live across a big field.

Josh turns, points. All back away. The oldest boy FLAILS his arms, pulls at his hair.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Geeze. What did I say?

The Boy moves toward Josh. Josh tries to back away, but can't move. He panics.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Don't hurt me, okay? Please?
Please. Say something.

Creature boy continues advancing. Josh grimaces, squints his eyes. A foot away from him, the boy raises his right hand. His skin looks clammy. His pupils pulsate and glow red.

Josh takes a deep breath, covers his mouth and nose. Boy brushes Josh's face. Josh squirms, winces.

INT. SARAH'S KITCHEN — DAY

Sarah is at sink washing knives. She flinches, drops a large knife in water, grabs her right cheek.

Blood appears on her face. She wheels around to Caleb and Beth, both eating at table. Caleb jumps from his chair.

CALEB
Mom. You're bleeding.

Sarah has a distant look in her eyes, glances down at her bleeding hand.

SARAH
I must've cut my hand. Hmm.

Caleb rushes to her, grabs her arm, grimaces. Beth follows.

CALEB
Looks gross, Mom. I'll get some bandages.

BETH
Don't cry, Mommy. I'll fix it.

Beth wraps her arms around Sarah. Sarah looks down at her, then raises her head. She glances at kitchen clock.

INSERT CLOCK FACE. Reads 5:30

Sarah appears distant. A puzzled look covers her face.

EXT. DEVIL'S WOODS — EVENING

The Creature Boy stands a few feet from Josh. He examines the camera removed from Josh's neck. Josh looks on with cringing relief. The siblings gather around, examine camera.

Josh removes his backpack, canteen.

JOSH
It's it's just a camera. Haven't you seen a camera before?

BOY
Nunnnnnh, nunnnnnh.

JOSH
Okay. Hey, I'll take your picture. You can't understand me, can you? Where did these freaks come from?

Josh extends right hand. Boy glares back, tilts head then all do. Boy extends camera back to Josh. Josh reacts with relief.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Ah, you all sorta stand like this.

Josh motions them together. They mock his hand gestures.

JOSH (CONT'D)
This is not going to work.

They watch Josh move to find a position that include all in shot. He finds it, aims, snaps shutter. Flash startles them.

BOY
Nunnnnnh. Nunnnnnh.

All thrust hands skyward, emit strange sounds. Josh is frightened but determined. He snaps another picture.

JOSH
It's okay. Here, you do it. I'll show you. It's easy.

Josh struggles to hide his fear.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Just raise this up to your eye, like this. Then you ... you'll see me through here. Don't worry 'bout focusing. It'll ...
(pauses)
This isn't going to work. I'll set the timer and hand it to you, Okay?

Josh sets timer, hands camera to Boy, moves short distance, positions himself as camera is raised at awkward angle. The camera CLICKS.

JOSH (CONT'D)
God. Is this happening?

More fussing over camera, Boy raises it, hands it to Josh.

JOSH (CONT'D)
You all can't be real. You can't be. You're just too weird. Hope you don't understand weird.

The Boy tosses his head, appears agitated. Josh steps back.

Boy turns to his siblings, raises his arms. Josh lifts camera to take a second photo. FLASH goes off. He lowers camera and is shocked to see the kids are not there.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Whoa. They're gone? They're gone?

Josh stares at spot where group stood, rubs his eyes, does a three-sixty. Then, a reverberating GROWL. Josh looks shaken.

A violent WIND stirs, BLOWS Josh to the ground. He struggles to his feet, falls again, rises, starts running.

Rumbling GROWLS continues, trees begin to fall, blocking his path. Josh struggles to climb over them, keeps falling. He lies motionless. A large shadow creeps over him.

INT. WELLSLEY LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Sarah on phone, stands next to recliner. Her left thumb is bandaged. Through screen door, we see Caleb sitting on front porch. Beth is seated next to him.

SARAH

No-no-no, I just wondered if he'd stopped by is all. Thanks. Thanks.

She hangs up. Caleb leaps to his feet, turns to door.

CALEB

Mom. Mom. Dad's coming.

Caleb leaps from porch, Sarah walks out, joins Beth.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - EVENING (SUNSET)

Caleb starts down long drive.

SARAH

Come back here, Cabe.

Caleb sulks but returns to porch. John comes to a stop a few feet away from porch.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Cabe, take Beth inside.

CALEB

Aw mom.

SARAH

Now, Caleb Charles Wellsley

CALEB

Yes ma'am.

JOHN

John is viewed gripping steering wheel. Sarah watches him. Caleb and Beth head inside. Sarah turns to see Caleb peering through screen door.

John climbs from truck, slams door shut, pauses then starts up to porch. He appears intoxicated.

SARAH

I have been scared stiff. You left here like a wild man, John. I've been calling all over trying to find you. And you've been drinking?

JOHN

I had two beers, alright? I'm fine. I'm ... What's with your hand?

SARAH

Your son - you know which one - waited 'til I was on the phone and took off into those woods again. I'm worried. I'm scared, I'm --

JOHN

-- He what?

SARAH

I was on the phone and - you know how he waits 'til you're on the phone to ask for what he wants. He mentioned something about taking pictures. I told him to go on. I had no idea he meant in the woods

JOHN

Damn. I told him no.

Sarah nurses her bandaged thumb.

SARAH

What do you mean? What did you say?

JOHN

On the way home from school, he mentioned seeing some monster
(mocking)
in the woods. I said he shoulda taken pictures. Guess that's all he needed to hear.

John grabs front door handle.

SARAH

That is what he said, alright.

John he and Sarah turn, see a car barreling up drive toward them. John steps back onto ground.

ON APPROACHING CAR

Richard Balfour's Tempo stops behind John's truck. He steps out, starts for porch. Sarah looks at John, then Balfour.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Who is that? You know him?

JOHN

Yeah. Kid from the paper.

Balfour reaches porch, flashing a wide smile.

BALFOUR

Mr. Wellsley. Sorry for just stopping in like this. I was --

JOHN

-- This is my wife, Sarah.

Sarah forces a smile, shakes Richard's hand.

SARAH

We talked on the phone, earlier. Mr. Balfour called to speak to you.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Balfour. I can't talk now. Gotta go look for my son.

BALFOUR

Wait. Your son's lost? Which one?

JOHN

Josh. He went back into Devil's Woods, hasn't come back. It's getting dark. Come back tomorrow.

BALFOUR

Well, is he in danger?

JOHN

Could be. Especially if I keep standing here talking to you.

John starts inside. Balfour bounds up onto porch.

BALFOUR

Well wait, I'll go with you.

John looks Balfour up and down. Balfour is dressed in short-sleeve shirt, dress slacks, penny loafers.

JOHN

Naw. Don't think you're dressed for Devil's Woods. Night air gets cold. Besides, I don't know what we'll run into out there. Hard enough being responsible for myself.

BALFOUR

Don't worry. I wanna go. I assure you I can take care of myself.

John and Sarah exchange extended glances.

JOHN

We'll have to get a few things.

John holds door open, motions Balfour inside. Sarah follows, closes door.

EXT. REAR OF WELLSLEY HOUSE — NIGHT

A full moon. John and Balfour move at a fast pace toward Devil's Woods. John, wears a jacket, carries a large flashlight, his shotgun. Balfour has smaller flashlight.

Balfour struggles to keep up. Sampson and Prowler follow to edge of field and stop.

Sarah, Beth and Caleb huddle at back door.

ON JOHN AND BALFOUR

BALFOUR

Excuse me, but why do you need a shotgun? I mean, are there wolves or bears or other creatures out there? And if there are, shouldn't I have one of those?

JOHN

There are no animals in Devil's Woods. Not even squirrels, rabbits, deer or anything. In fact, birds won't even fly over it. My dogs won't go past the tree line.

Balfour appears puzzled.

BALFOUR

Wait. Then what's the gun for? And what sort of woods have no animals?

JOHN

Devil's Woods.

BALFOUR

Alrighty. Guess I walked right into that one. So why doesn't it?

JOHN

Don't know why. Nobody does. Least nobody still living and breathing.

BALFOUR

Wow. How long you lived here?

JOHN

All my life - forty-one years. My father lived here seventy-five, 'til he died in my arms. His dad, eighty-three years. What else you wanna know?

BALFOUR

Your dad ever talk about these woods ... tell you why they call it Devil's Woods?

Both near edge of Devil's Woods.

JOHN

Only that no one came here, and that I wasn't to come either. Never said why. His father never told him either. I never heard anybody say where the name came from. Why?

BALFOUR

Like I told you the other night, I'm a reporter. It's my job to ask a lot of questions.

JOHN

Even when it makes you a pest?

BALFOUR

(laughs)

Especially. Means I'm usually on the right track, then.

JOHN

Well, ask ol' man Weems. He's got enough junk in his basement - old newspapers and stuff. Some of it's probably three hundred years old,

Balfour swallows hard, doesn't respond.

EXT DEEP IN DEVIL'S WOODS - NIGHT

At tree where Josh fell, he's gone. His canteen is on ground, slashed and ripped. A few feet away lies his ripped backpack. Contents are scattered.

EXT. EDGE OF DEVILS WOODS - NIGHT

John and Balfour reach woods' edge. John scans area with his flashlight, shotgun under his arm. Balfour looks uneasy. He stands just to rear of John.

BALFOUR

Are we really going in there?

John turns around, takes step toward him.

JOHN

I am. You don't have to. It was you who insisted on coming. Remember?

BALFOUR

It's not that. I just thought he might come out while we're still in there. Good there's a full moon.

JOHN

Right. That's fine. You stay here. If you hear any shots, I want you haul your ... haul yourself back to my house and call the Constable. He's not much, but he's the law.

BALFOUR

Alright. You really expect to have to use that thing, right?

JOHN

Just remember what I said.

John grips his gun, turns, disappears into woods. Balfour looks afraid. He looks around in every direction.

INT. WELLSLEY HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah and kids are on living room sofa. SUDDENLY, lights dim, then come back up. Sarah is startled, tries to hide it.

CALEB

What's wrong with the lights, mom?

BETH

I'm scared, Mommy.

SARAH

There's nothing wrong, baby. You know how the electricity acts up sometimes. There's nothing to be afraid of. Daddy will find Josh and they'll be back in no time at all.

EXT. DEVIL'S WOODS - NIGHT

Balfour is no longer where he had been last seen.

John makes his way through trees, calls out to Josh then stops to listen. He repeats, then keeps moving.

JOHN

Josh. Josh. Where are you, son?
Josh. Josh.

John pauses. There is no reply. He moves on, searching, aiming flashlight back and forth.

The wind starts to HOWL, branches sway. John is startled. A loose branch falls, lands at his feet, startles him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Damn.

John drops flashlight, brings his shotgun to ready. He recovers, retrieves his flashlight, continues.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Josh. Josh.

EXT. DEEPER IN DEVIL'S WOODS - NIGHT

A pulsating light streams through trees. Wind still HOWLS. A low guttural HUM sounds. More leaves and branches fall.

A light grows closer and closer, becomes blinding.

JOHN waves flashlight back and forth. He stops.

John points flashlight toward ground then stares with horror on his face. He kneels, grabs and lifts Josh's shredded canteen. He examines it, ties it to his belt then stands.

JOHN

Josh.

Anxious, John moves on, continues his search.

EXT. DEVIL'S WOODS - NIGHT

At edge of woods, Balfour is still not seen. The Wellsley house is visible in distance, across field.

JOHN

More wind GUSTS. John struggles to maintain balance and avoid falling branches. He continues, reaches a huge tree, stops.

Then, a human-like figure appears before him. John raises his shotgun, takes aim.

FIGURE

The figure collapses. John lowers his shotgun, aims his flashlight to reveal subject.

Josh lies on ground. John looses deep breath, tosses gun aside, falls to his knees. Josh's camera is around his neck.

JOHN

Josh. Josh. Thank god. You alright?

John cradles Josh's head in his arms, takes his own canteen, forces him to drink water.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Balfour. Balfour. I found him! Can you hear me?

John leans shotgun against tree, places flashlight in his belt. He lifts Josh across his shoulder, grabs shotgun.

John fights against force of wind, begins carrying Josh.

The moon casts an eerie glow through trees.

A loud, chilling sSCREAM comes from deep in woods.

EXT. EDGE OF DEVIL'S WOODS - NIGHT

Dark outline of tree-line contrasts against sky. HOWL of wind sounds. John emerges with Josh over his shoulder. Josh's camera dangles around his neck. John grips his gun stock.

JOHN

Balfour. Where the hell are you?

John drops shotgun, kneels, lays Josh on ground. He looks back, sees Balfour headed their way, running.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Where were you? Thought you came along to help.

Balfour reaches him, out of breath.

BALFOUR

I headed down that way
(points)
'bout a half mile. Didn't want to just stand around. Is he alright?

Josh is very weak, tries to sit up.

JOSH

Dad. Dad.

JOHN

It's okay son. It's okay. Just lie there for a minute. Shhh.

Balfour kneels down with John and Josh.

BALFOUR

Where was he?

JOHN

'Bout a half-mile in. I just happened to be in the right spot. He fell right in front of me.

Josh tries to sit up again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Relax son. Relax. It's alright. You'll be alright.
(to Balfour)
He's probably in shock.

Josh BOLTS straight up. He looks dazed, disoriented.

JOSH
My camera. Where's my camera?

JOHN
It's right here, son. Don't worry.

JOSH
I got pictures of them. I got --

JOHN
-- It's okay. Tell us later, son.

Josh manages to stand, with John's help. Balfour assists.

JOSH
I'm okay now dad. I can walk. Just,
please don't be angry. I'm sorry.

JOHN
We'll deal with that later. Let's
get on home, okay? Let's go.

All three start across field. Behind them, a massive cloud
forms over Devil's Woods.

INT. JOSH AND CALEB'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

Josh, in pajamas, hands an empty plate to Sarah. She hands it
to Caleb who heads to kitchen. John, Balfour and Beth are
jammed into modest bedroom.

SARAH
You're still shivering.

Sarah pulls up covers, tucks him in.

JOSH
I'm fine mom. I'm not sleepy.

SARAH
You're staying in bed. Rest so you
can take what's coming to you.

Sarah and Beth turn to leave. When they reach door, Sarah
turns to John and Balfour.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Two minutes. He needs some rest and
we've got to talk.

John loses a smile, glances at Balfour who moves to Josh.

BALFOUR

That's quite some adventure you had, Joshua. Especially that story about kids living in those woods.

JOSH

It's not a story Mr. --

BALFOUR

-- It's Richard. Call me Richard

JOHN

It's Mr. Balfour, son.

JOSH

Mr. Balfour, it's no story. You'll see. They took my picture too.

JOHN

Son.

BALFOUR

Well, I can't wait to develop this film and see what we have here.

Balfour looks at film, returns it to his pocket.

BALFOUR (CONT'D)

See what little urchins we have living out there. It's about nine now. If I can, I'll develop this tonight and bring it back tomorrow.

JOHN

You needn't hurry.

BALFOUR

We'll see. Goodnight Josh. You stay outta Devil's Woods now, you hear?

Josh flashes a grin. John escorts Balfour out. They pass kitchen. Sarah braids Beth's hair. Caleb washes dishes.

BALFOUR (CONT'D)

Goodnight Mrs. Wellsley. Pleasure meeting all of you.

SARAH

Goodnight to you, and thanks for everything.

BALFOUR

Glad to help.

EXT. FRONT DOOR — NIGHT

JOHN

You never said why you wanted to talk to me.

BALFOUR

It'll keep. If I get Josh's film developed, I'll return tomorrow. Maybe we can discuss it then.

John nods, watches Balfour head towards highway. John walks to the edge of porch, stares at moon.

INT. JOHN AND SARAH'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

Curtains FLAIL in wind. Moonlight fills room. John and Sarah are asleep. John tosses, settles. Sarah is in fetal position.

INT. JOHN AND SARAH'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

We HEAR faint CRACKLING flames. It grows louder. Sarah tosses. Faint CRIES of a child sound. Voice grows louder, REVERBERATING, ECHOING.

CHILD'S VOICE

Mommy. Mommy. Mommy.

A child's voice plus CRACKLING noise escalate. Sarah tosses, is thrown awake, sits up with a start, shaking, beading with perspiration. She hears child's voice and CRACKLING noise.

SARAH

Oh my god. My god. John, wake up. Something's wrong. Beth is crying.

Sarah shakes, pounds John with her fist. John bolts straight up. Sarah jumps from bed, dashes to closed bedroom door.

SARAH (CONT'D)

John, something's wrong. Beth's crying. She's crying.

Sarah grabs doorknob, yanks her hand away.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Oww. It's hot, John. It's hot. I can't open it. Oh, god. The house is on fire. The kids. My god.

John leaps from bed, stumbles to Sarah. Sarah yells to kids, pounds on door.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Josh. Caleb. Wake up. Wake Up!
John, the house is on fire.

JOHN

What? On fire? Josh. Caleb.

John grabs frantically for door. Knob burns his hand, draws it back, tries again, withdraws it again. He flips light on. Varnish on door bubbles.

Sarah pounds on wall. She's in tears.

INT. JOHN AND SARAH'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

SARAH

Josh, wake up. Cabe, Beth.

John grabs his pajama top from bed post, wraps it around his hand. He tries door again, pulls with all his strength.

Sarah slumps to floor in tears.

JOHN

Damn. It won't open. The window ...
we'll go through the window.

John grabs Sarah, guides her to open window.

Both GASP, as bedroom door swings open. Both look at each other, mouths open. Light is on in hallway.

JOSH (CONT'D.)

Mom? Dad? What's wrong?

John and Sarah stands speechless. They ease toward door, in wide-eyed daze.

SARAH

The fire. The house is on fire!

Josh looks confused, scratches his head, rubs his eyes.

JOSH

Fire? There's no fire. What fire?

JOHN

John moves past Josh into hallway. He steps back into room, reaches for doorknob from outside.

JOHN (CONT'D.)
 It feels cool, Sarah. It's cool.
 The door, the doorknob.

He examines outside door surface. Reaction shows it's normal.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 It's ...it's normal.

John re-examines inside knob and door surface. Sarah examines same. John moves down hallway, examines rest of house. Sarah and Josh follow.

BETH'S ROOM

John looks into Beth's room. She's asleep.

CALEB'S ROOM

Caleb sits on edge of his bed.

SARAH
 John, what's going on in this
 house? Something's happening.

INT. OUTSIDE JOHN AND SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOHN
 Sarah, you're gonna scare the
 children. There's gotta be a reason
 for this. We have to figure it out.

JOSH
 Reason for what? I don't
 understand. What's going on?

John turns to Josh, puts an arm around his shoulder.

JOHN
 Son, you go on back to bed. I'm
 sorry 'bout waking you. Mom and dad
 had a bad dream. That's all.

A distraught Sarah enters their bedroom.

JOSH
 Both of you had a bad dream?

Before John can respond, all hear and react to swelling ROAR of HIGH-REVVING engines. Beth begins crying. John turns to Sarah, exchange stunned glances.

JOHN

Check on Beth. Josh, go to your room, son. Go on now. Hurry up.

Josh moves on, past his father. Sarah checks on Beth. The ROAR grows louder. Sarah soon joins John in hallway.

SARAH

Who in the world is that?

JOHN

I don't know. But I'm gonna find out. You go on back. Maybe someone just turned onto the wrong drive.

Sarah goes back to Beth. John dashes to his bedroom.

INT. JOHN AND SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He grabs his shotgun, box of shells, slips on house shoes. Sarah enters, stands watching - a hand to her chest.

SARAH

John, what are you doing? John.

JOHN

Close the door, Sarah.

John storms out for living room. Sarah follows.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sampson and Prowler are heard out front, BARKING. John peers through curtains.

POV JOHN

He sees three pairs of bouncing headlights streaking toward his house.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

John opens door, steps out, closes door then races to far end of porch. He jumps to ground, positions himself at corner, out of view.

VIEW

Three large pickups, with huge tires, massive bumpers, roar to within yards of house.

MEN in trucks'scream and whoop, turn loops, figure eights.

John strains to get a good look at trucks and occupants.

MALE VOICE #1

Hey Wellsley, bring your scrawny
ass out here and die like a man.

Others laugh, continue WHOOPING and YELLING.

MEN IN TRUUCK

Yahhhh, Huaahh, Wahhhh, Wahhh-hooo

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah grabs Beth, takes her to boy's room. She hears the yelling, racing engines.

SARAH

Josh, I want all of you to stay in
this room. Do not leave it for any
reason. Understand?

Josh nods yes. Sarah closes door, bolts into hallway.

SARAH HEADS TO KITCHEN - FOLLOW

INT. KITCHEN

Sarah grabs telephone, begins dialing. Her hands shake.
We hear Sampson's and Prowler's fierce barking.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Ned Teal is driving lead truck.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Trucks spin, engines ROAR. Occupants continue drunken WHOOP.
The dogs leap toward trucks then back.

A PASSENGER, W-M, in second truck, aims a gun from window.

MALE VOICE #2

Last chance you bastard. C'mon on
out or fry inside.

FRONT OF HOUSE

Just then, someone tosses a Molotov cocktail towards house. It falls short, near porch.

John leaps onto porch, opens fire on nearest vehicle. He fires again, striking passenger door and rear cab window. Truck windows shatter.

INT. NED'S LEAD TRUCK - NIGHT

NED'S PASSENGER

Dammit. Get the hell outta here.
Move it. I've been hit.

NED

Damn you. You're a dead man,
Wellsley. You're a dead man.

John reloads, fire at fleeing vehicles. Molotov cocktail burns out on ground feet from porch.

EXT. HIGHWAY 1688 - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

INT. A PARKED, OCCUPIED CAR

A 4-DR Sedan sits on side of highway across from entrance to farm.

WELLSLEY DRIVEWAY

INT. PARKED CAR - NIGHT

Through driver's window, bouncing headlights of fleeing trucks approach. Trucks enter highway, make hard SCREECHING turns, tear toward Colfield.

Khaki uniform covered arms of parked car's driver, grips steering wheel with one hand, cranks car, eases onto highway.

EXT. PARKED CAR

As car pulls away, we SEE CONSTABLE INSIGNIA emblazoned on driver's door.

INT. WELLSLEY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah, in tears, peers through living room curtains.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

John examines his still agitated dogs. He pets them, starts back inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Sarah flips on light, opens the door. John, angry, perspiring, enters, slams door.

SARAH
Are you alright?

John doesn't answer, tosses shotgun onto sofa.

SARAH (CONT'D)
They tried to kill us. Tried to burn us out, John. Who were they?

SARAH (CONT'D)
John.

JOHN
I'll kill 'em all. Damn cowards. I hit one of the trucks. I sure hope I killed him. I hope I hit him. They'll rot in hell.

Sarah stares at him with pained expression.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Josh's and Caleb's stand at door, straining to hear. Beth is curled up on Josh's bed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah dries her eyes.

SARAH
Who were they? Did you recognize them? And why do they want us dead?

JOHN
I'm sure as hell gonna find out. Somebody's gonna pay. It's the whole damn town. Hating is one thing, but trying to kill us --

SARAH

-- I called the Constable's office.
The deputy said Rankin wasn't there
and he couldn't leave, himself.
Said he'd get him on the radio.

John appears oblivious to what Sarah is saying. He stares ahead at wall.

SARAH (CONT'D)

John. John.

John doesn't answer. He picks up shotgun, sits with it across his lap, a distant look in his eyes.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM NIGHT

The children jump into bed when they hear someone approach. Sarah enters, picks up Beth.

JOSH

Mom, what's happening? Is dad
alright. Who was were those men?

SARAH

You and Caleb get some sleep.
Everything's okay. Those were just
some angry people clowning around.

JOSH

Why? 'Cause we won't sell our farm?
I heard gunshots, mom.

SARAH

Everything's alright. Your father's
okay. Listen, get some sleep. We'll
talk about this tomorrow.

Sarah leaves room with Beth.

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah places Beth in her bed, pulls covers up.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah reenters. John is still on sofa, holding shotgun.

SARAH

What now, John Wellsley?

JOHN

They're all in on it. And Rankin's their boy. He does whatever they tell him. At the meeting, all I said was that I hadn't decided. I didn't give them a flat out no. But now, I wouldn't sell at any price. They threaten my family ... try to kill us? For what? Our land? For jobs? Somebody - not those bastards - but somebody else is calling the shots. I know it.

Sarah sits next to John. The two embrace.

SARAH

Maybe so John, but those people out there just tried to murder you, our kids, and me. They drove onto our property. They didn't hide in the bushes. They came out in the open ... tried to burn us out. So what now? Is this place worth our lives?

An angry John grips his shotgun's stock.

SARAH (CONT'D)

It sure isn't worth the lives of our kids. You know where they were? They were in Josh's room - scared to death. They thought we were all going to die. And so did I. I wish you could see yourself sitting here - a gun across your lap.

JOHN

(stands)

I'll send you and the kids to your mom's in Boston. You can stay there until --

SARAH

-- Until what? Until you're dead, and this town gets what it wants anyway? What am I supposed to tell the children John? That this land is more important than our lives? Is that what I tell them? No, you tell them. We're a family. What we do - what we, not you or me - what we decide, is supposed to be for the good of the whole family. You're not thinking, now.

JOHN

Just who do you think I'm doing
this for? You saying I don't care?
That I don't love my family? Is --

SARAH

-- I know you love us. And I get
nauseated at the idea of letting
anyone run us off our land. But
right know this whole thing is a
death struggle between a bunch of
male egos. I admit I have very
narrow self-interests - our lives.

JOHN

Egos or not, nobody, I mean nobody,
is going to force me off this land,
Sarah. I mean it. I won't endanger
you or the kids. I'm willing to die
for this but I plan to live for it.

SARAH

It's not just this land, John, it's
this house. Or don't you remember
what just happened? And remember
last night? The dishes flying
around the kitchen like something
out of some horror movie. And look
at my hand. Go on. Look at it.

INSERT SARAH'S HAND

We see an ugly burn on her palm. The thumb on her left hand
is still bandaged.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And what about what Josh said he
saw in those woods? And the noise
outside, last night?

John raises his own right hand to show a burn in his palm. A
puzzled look covers his face. He looks at Sarah.

JOHN

What do you want me to say?

SARAH

Explain all this away, John.

John takes a deep breath, looks away.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Explain it.

JOHN

I can't explain it. I wish to god I could, but I can't.

Sarah stands, stares at John.

SARAH

We heard the crackling, saw the door wouldn't open. We both heard a child crying, okay? We didn't imagine it. And what about last night? Ever since the boys went into Devil's Woods yesterday, seems we've been tormented... haunted.

JOHN

Sarah, I --

SARAH

-- What? I don't feel safe here.

JOHN

Are you saying our home is cursed or something?

SARAH

I don't know. All I know is none of this is normal. And all of it's happened since yesterday. So, you tell me. I can't live like this.

Sarah leaves room. John sits on sofa, buries head in hands.

EXT. TWO-STORY FRAME HOUSE - NIGHT

Colfield business district. Balfour's car is parked at curb.

SIGN ON LAWN READS

COLFIELD/NEWFIELD GUARDIAN, Harry Weems Publisher.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - NIGHT

Main office area is illuminated by moonlight spilling through windows. We see desk where Balfour called Sarah.

MOVING

Down a hallway, around corner, down second hallway, a sign above a door reads:

BASEMENT ARCHIVES.

Farther down hallway is a red light above DARKROOM door.

INT. DARKROOM - NIGHT

Balfour develops film. Red light fills room. He stares into developing tray. Next to him is strip of negatives suspended from a carousel.

Balfour develops prints in solution. He nods his head, lifts several prints, views them, lowers them, then stares ahead.

EXT. WELLSLEY FARM - MORNING

John and Josh stand inside corral currying two horses. John's right hand is bandaged. Sampson and Prowler romp near barn.

JOHN

Son, I don't think I have to say anything about those woods again, but I know you have questions about what's been going on - about those men, about your mom and me.

JOSH

Well, me and Caleb and Beth weren't too scared until those men came last night. As for those weird kids, why're they there? Who are they? They look like aliens.

JOHN

You really believe you saw them?

JOSH

I know I did, Dad. Caleb saw one the first time, too. And I saw five of 'em last night. You'll see when Mr. Balfour brings the pictures.

John pats Josh's shoulder and smiles.

JOHN

Alright son. Alright.

JOSH

You do believe, right?

JOHN

Of course. I know you wouldn't lie to me. And I trust you.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I also want you and Caleb and Beth to know that I'm not gonna let anything or anybody hurt us. This is our land and we'll move whenever we decide.

JOSH

I understand, dad.

Josh locks both arms around his dad. John embraces him. Both continue currying horses.

JOHN

I love you, son.

BACK PORCH

Sarah looks on, dabbing her eyes, smiles then starts for corral. John sees her coming. He and Josh head to meet her.

SARAH

Morning, Josh. You two got up pretty early. Had breakfast yet?

JOHN

Josh had cereal. I drank some orange juice.

John and Josh stand at fence. Sarah tiptoes, kisses both. Josh heads leads horses back to barn.

JOHN

I'm sorry

SARAH

I'm sorry.

Both grin.

SARAH

I'm not sorry for what I said. I'm sorry I yelled at you. And sorry the kids overheard. They've never heard us talk to each other that way before. I think that frightened them as much as anything.

John wipes his brow, grasps her hand.

JOHN

You were right, though. A good husband and father is supposed to keep his family out of harms way ... supposed to care for them. 'Fraid I haven't done that well.

Sarah squeezes his hand, gazes past him at horses.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I've sold the horses.

SARAH
Sold the horses? To whom?

JOHN
Ol' man Neville. He's coming in a couple days to get them. I found a nice station wagon over in Newfield I'm gonna get... saw it yesterday.

SARAH
What about ol' blue?

JOHN
Oh, I'm gonna keep my truck. But at least you and the kids'll have a safe and decent way of getting around. I've been embarrassed to have you seen in that thing. Been thinking 'bout something else too.

SARAH
What?

JOHN
I've decided the time's come to sell. We can get as much as we can and leave this place. I know Dad will understand. God knows we could use the money.

SARAH
Darling, I know you love us more than you love this land or anything else. I also know a man without a strong sense of pride, or without a willingness to stand for something, is not a man I could love or have as the father of our children. I've been thinking, too. And we're not selling. I'm scared, but I don't want to leave here. I will not be driven away, ever.

JOHN
Say that again.

Sarah grins, kisses him again.

SARAH
I called mother. She says she'll be in her new house in a week or so.
(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

We can still send the kids to her.
But we'll keep them here 'til then.
I'm staying here. If they want a
battle, we'll give them a war.

Before John can react, Caleb bursts through back door, calls out to his dad.

CALEB

Dad. Dad. Someone's coming.

JOHN

Thanks, son.
(to Sarah)
'Til this thing's over, they're
gonna react like that every time a
car heads toward the house.

Sarah nods agreement, squeezes John's hand then starts back to house.

John exits corral, starts for front yard. Dogs follow.

EXT. FRONT YARD

John sees a Constable car heading toward house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sarah peers out living room window, her hand on barrel of John's shotgun, The stock rests on floor.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Constable Rankin stops at John's pickup. John waits at front porch, his dogs at his side.

Zeb and Rankin exit car, approach John as his dogs GROWL.

RANKIN

Morning John. Hurt 'cha hand?

John stares, does not answer. Rankin looks at Zeb.

ZEB

John. Nice day, huh?

JOHN

Saturdays are reserved for my
family, Constable Rankin.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

So, unless you came out here to take a report and file charges on the bastards that tried to murder us last night, I'm want you off my property.

ZEB

Now, John, I heard 'bout what happened. 'Course that wasn't exactly the way I heard it.

JOHN

That a fact? Just how did you hear 'bout that? Only people who knew were the ones who tried to kill us.

RANKIN

Your wife did call my deputy.

JOHN

She did. And where were you? Thanks for showing up ten hours later. So what do you do now, Constable?

RANKIN

I suppose I could take your statement or something.

JOHN

(chuckles)

Please understand one thing, I will protect my family, no matter what I have to do. If I'm right, at least one of those damn pickups has a few holes in it. Right now, I expect there's a little bodywork and window replacement going on some place. You can start there. I got things covered here alright.

ZEB

John, you gotta be damn sure about things 'fore you start shooting at folks.

JOHN

You doubting me, Zeb?

ZEB

I'm not saying that.

JOHN

Speak up Zeb. You doubt what I'm saying, do 'ya? They had to be here to get shot at.

John steps toward porch, points to a Molotov bottle still on ground. He picks it up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This is, or was a Molotov cocktail. You think this grass turned black overnight by itself? Even you can figure this one out, Rankin.

RANKIN

Didn't come way out here to be insulted, Wellsley.

John walks over to area where trucks churned up ground. Zeb and Rankin follow. Sampson and Prowler encircle them. They show apprehension.

JOHN

Don't worry 'bout my dogs. They don't attack unless I'm threatened.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sarah stares out living room window.

EXT. FRONT GROUNDS - DAY

John points to multiple tire tracks.

JOHN (CONT'D.)

You can see the damage here ... all over there. Go on, look. 'Course I'm wasting time, right? You're not here to take reports or investigate any crimes. You both probably know all there is to know 'bout this anyway. So, good day gentlemen.

John turns to walk away.

ZEB

John, surely, you don't believe what you just said.

(MORE)

ZEB (CONT'D)

I came here to offer my sincere apology for the actions of a few hot heads who will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, provided you're able to identify them. I'm sure I speak for the whole town when I say that the Constable and I find this kinda thing totally unacceptable.

JOHN

Hot heads? I call 'em, paid guns. At the meeting, I said I hadn't decided, and so everybody figured the way to convince me was to slash my tires, refuse me service, burn me out of my home.

RANKIN

You come press charges against anybody you choose, and my office will do its sworn duty. I promise.

ZEB

John, you know what kinda shape this town is in. We need that plant. We'd all be better off for it. But as much as I want you to sell, I don't hold with violence. It's not Christian.

JOHN

I'm not selling.

ZEB

Pardon me?

JOHN

We've decided. And the answer is no. We're not selling. That's it.

John walks away. Zeb yells out.

ZEB

Mighty sorry to hear that.

John keeps walking. Sampson and Prowler follow.

JOHN

See 'ya in church tomorrow, Zeb. Constable.

Zeb and Rankin stand mute. Zeb kicks a clump of grass. The two get into the car, spin tires as they leave.

EXT. RURAL CHURCH - DAY

A modest white building nestled between trees. Vehicles fill an adjacent unpaved parking lot. Other vehicles, including John's truck, line roadway in front of church.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Reverend Waltham is in pulpit. Choir sits behind him. Wellsley family are seated middle aisle, near front.

Zeb, Zeke, Pete and others are present. Mr. and Mrs. Weems sit in front pew alongside Mrs. Waltham, she one in a fur wrap and large hat.

WALTHAM

And, yes it is true, God Almighty does still today permit Satan to foster much trouble amongst us. He allows mortals to don the raiments of the Prince of Darkness and sow evil deeds, for a time. This is as old as the ages. Believe it. Just as in centuries past, there are today those who are caught up in the practice of witchcraft, sorcery and evildoings of all sorts. We must be ever vigilant and willing to put on the armor of God, and do battle in his name.

The Reverend aims a prolonged look at John and Sarah.

WALTHAM (CONT'D)

They bring heartache and suffering to those around them. And just as they had to be, and were, pointed out, rooted out, and cast out from amongst us before, it is your duty, in service to our heavenly father, to do the very same today. To do less, will bring down the wrath of God and reap his eternal damnation on our souls.

A chorus of amens erupt from congregants.

WALTHAM (CONT'D)

We must commit ourselves to doing the will of the Almighty, lest we be judged undeserving of his divine mercy and bountiful blessings.

WALTHAM IN PULPIT

Waltham raps lectern with his fist. The congregation looses another chorus of amens. Some jump to their feet. Others join them. Only the Wellsleys remain seated.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Rev. and Mrs. Waltham are on church steps greeting parishioners as they leave, with handshakes and smiles.

CONGREGANT

Wonderful sermon, Reverend. You're absolutely right.

WALTHAM

Thank you brother. God bless.

John, Sarah and children exit church. They are given a wide berth. Waltham lifts his hand. John nods, doesn't accept it.

JOHN

Reverend.

The Wellsleys continue to their truck. Ahead of John, we see the large blue pickup truck with oversize tires, chrome bumpers, confederate sticker. John slows his gait.

SARAH

What is it John?

John proceeds to truck, examines it. Sarah and kids follow.

INSERT AREA OF TRUCK SIDE PANEL

We see signs of fresh paint on the passenger door. The right fender panel looks duller, by comparison.

John walks to side of truck bed, looks at rear window.

P.O.V. JOHN

As he examines truck bed, finds clumps of safety glass. He picks some up, examines it then turns ...

RETURN TO SCENE

To see Pete Crull standing behind him.

PETE

Make me an offer.

John looks at him. Sarah tries to signal John to walk away.

JOHN

So, this is your new truck. Must've had an accident. Too bad.

Pete stares at John, stalks away to driver's door. John follows. Sarah looks on. Both men stand toe to toe.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This is the same truck that was in your service bay.

PETE

Maybe. Maybe not. What if it is?

JOHN

If it is, you lied. You said it belonged to one of your customers. I didn't believe you then, and I see I was right.

PETE

Congratulations.

Pete reaches for door handle.

JOHN

This damn truck was on my property the other night, too.

PETE

I've got Sunday dinner waiting. I get very upset when I don't eat.

Pete puts a foot inside, climbs onto edge of his seat.

John grabs truck door handle.

JOHN

The next time, it won't just be that back window that gets blown to hell, I promise you that. And you can tell your friends, too.

John turns, walks to his truck. Josh and Caleb climb into truck bed. Beth sits between John and Sarah.

John pulls away onto Highway 1688.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

BETH

I'm hungry mommy.

SARAH

I know sweetheart. We'll all eat,
as soon as we get home.

John stares ahead.

In distance, we sees huge yellow-orange earthmoving vehicles
parked on left side of highway.

John frowns, slows his vehicle.

SARAH (CONT'D)

What's wrong? Why're we stopping?

JOHN

Look over there.

We see earth-moving/logging equipment staged at entrance to
property of John's neighbor, Zeke Prophet.

INSERT SIGN OVER ENTRANCE

THE PROPHETS

Sarah stares at scene.

JOHN (CONT'D)

They're up to something. That's
earth movers, logging trucks.
They're not waiting. They're going
right ahead.

EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK — DAY

John pulls onto shoulder across from entrance to Prophet's
farm. Josh and Caleb stand up in truck bed to watch.

JOHN

You boys sit down back there. You
can see without standing.

JOSH

What are they doing, Dad?

SARAH

(to John)

Is all that meant for Devil's
Woods? Can they do that?

John looks across road. Sarah leans forward, looks past him.

JOHN
 Zeke's granted them right of way.
 Otherwise, they wouldn't have all
 this equipment sitting here.

INT. JOHN'S PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

SARAH
 But he doesn't own those woods.

BETH
 Mommy, I'm hungry.

JOHN
 I know. The State does. And they
 agreed to a hundred year lease to
 Neurosonic. Zeke agreed to sell so,
 he's giving them right of way
 across his land to harvest those
 Woods. Only other access is the
 river ... and our place.

EXT. TRUCK BED - DAY

Josh leans over edge of truck bed to better hear his parent's
 conversation. He turns to Caleb.

JOSH
 We can't let 'em destroy the woods.
 Where would all those kids go?

CALEB
 But what can we do? We're just
 kids, too.

JOSH
 We could put dirt in their tanks.

CALEB
 Yeah. And we could sic Prowler and
 Sampson on them.

JOSH
 Right.

Zeke arrives in a luxury sedan from behind John. He honks,
 waves as he pulls past entrance to his property.

John starts his truck, eases onto highway. Just past gate,
 Zeke climbs from his car, shake hands with a man dressed in
 construction worker clothes.

EXT. WELLSLEY HOUSE - NIGHT

Balfour's Tempo is parked next to John's truck. A light is on in living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

INSERT THREE COLOR PHOTOS

One photo is of Josh in woods. Two others only show trees.

BALFOUR

I wanted you to see them, first,
before I gave them to Josh.

John sits on sofa next to Sarah, both at examine photos on coffee table. Balfour sits in recliner, leans forward.

JOHN

I'm confused.

SARAH

I am too. I mean, if Josh is in
this picture, who took it? Not
Josh, we see his whole body.

JOHN

I was thinking the same thing. His
camera doesn't have a timer.

Balfour rests his chin on laced fingers, shakes his head.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And Josh is a better photographer
than this. Look at the bad angles,
And he wouldn't just take out-of-
focus shots of trees. Besides, he
said he took pictures of these --
kids. And I believe him.

Sarah turns to Balfour.

SARAH

What do you think?

Balfour lowers his head, grimaces.

BALFOUR

I was afraid you'd ask me that.

JOHN

You developed them. What did you
think when you saw them?

BALFOUR

Well, when I look at that full body shot of Josh, and the look on his face, I have no doubt he was not alone in those woods. It's clear he didn't take this picture. So the question is, who did? Right? I have no reason to doubt Josh's answer.

SARAH

Let me get this. There are five creatures ... kids out in Devil's Woods. One of them took a picture of Josh. Right? Well, who are they? Where did they come from? There're no missing children around here.

Balfour appears to want to say more but holds back.

JOHN

I don't know. Maybe the woods are haunted and Josh did see ghosts.
(laughs)

John gathers photos, examines each then looks at Balfour.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What are you thinking?

Balfour stands, begins walking around room, looking at family photos, keepsakes. He turns to face John and Sarah.

BALFOUR

(labored)
What I'm going to ask may sound weird, but just go along with me.

John and Sarah exchange puzzled gazes.

JOHN

Okay. Sure.

Balfour sits.

BALFOUR

Are either of you aware of strange or unexplained things taking place? I mean, at any of your neighbors or here, in the past or even recently?

Sarah looks down at her lap. John clears his throat.

JOHN

Ah, no. I can't say that we are. I mean ... Why do you ask?

BALFOUR

Well, I don't want to expose my whole theory tonight, and I certainly don't want to frighten anyone. But --

SARAH

-- What? I'm already frightened.

BALFOUR

Okay, I'll be blunt. I've been digging around in Mr. Weems' basement archives. He keeps old newspapers and records, some collector items that must be oh - more than a hundred years old. John, you mentioned that as far as you can remember there've been no animals in Devil's Woods. Birds won't even fly over it, you said.

John nods, takes a long look at Sarah then Balfour.

JOHN

I remember my father - grandfather saying the same thing. That's all I've ever heard. That's all anyone's ever heard.

SARAH

(to Balfour)

What are you getting at?

BALFOUR

Well, here goes. I think those kids, creatures - whatever Josh and Caleb saw - were spirit beings. That's why they didn't photograph. Go on, laugh. I know it sounds weird. I wouldn't blame you for --

John and Sarah stare with rapt attention.

JOHN

-- Who's laughing?

SARAH

What do you mean, spirits? You don't know Josh. He has the most amazingly imagination.

BALFOUR

I understand. What I'm --

SARAH

-- I don't think you do. You have to know Josh, to really understand what I'm saying.

BALFOUR

Let me explain. I mean, spirits, probably trapped in Devil's Woods. Something must have happened, perhaps many, many years ago - some catastrophic event. I hope to find records of something - anything. If I'm right, whatever led them to their fate has to be rectified before they finally move on.

JOHN

Old records, newspapers, trapped spirits? Do you know how that sounds? Look, we don't believe in that kind of thing.

BALFOUR

Well, so far, I've found part of an article written for the Colfield Herald, not Guardian, in 1688. There's a lot to wade through. It'll take some time.

JOHN

I'll say one thing, you've got some imagination yourself. There has to be a logical explanation for all this. There has to be.

BALFOUR

Like I said, it's a theory. If you have a better one, I'd very much like to hear it. It's a little naive to think that what we see, feel and hear is all there is to this boundless creation which defies measurement.

There's prolonged silence. Balfour stands.

SARAH

Maybe.

BALFOUR

I understand that you folks are Christians. Correct me if I'm wrong but, you also worship spirits or a spirit, right?

(waits)

I really should be going, now. I have a feeling I'll find that clue I need to put all this together. If anything out of the ordinary happens, let me know.

Balfour starts for door. John and Sarah accompany him out.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

BALFOUR (CONT'D.)

I'm really sorry about what happened the other night.

John and Sarah exchange curious gazes.

BALFOUR (CONT'D)

I hope you scared them real good. You do have the right to protect yourself. Nobody should be allowed to try and drive you off your land.

JOHN

Oh, thanks. They won't.

BALFOUR

Well, goodnight all.

John and Sarah watch Balfour climb in his car, head for highway. They embrace.

SARAH

We should've told him everything.

EXT. EDGE OF DEVIL'S WOODS - NIGHT

P.O.V. SOMEONE WATCHING THROUGH TREES

We see unsteady movement, a wide view across fields toward lights in Wellsley home.

EXT. CAR ON HIGHWAY 1688 - NIGHT (MOVING)

Reverend Waltham and his wife ride down winding stretch of highway. Dense woods line both sides.

INT. WALTHAM AUTO - (MOVING)

Mrs. Waltham is asleep and snoring, her hat in place.

Through windshield, a small human figure appears yards ahead on the right side of highway.

Waltham nudges his wife, points.

WALTHAM

Carrie. Carrie!, Look there.

Mrs. Waltham bolts awake.

MRS. WALTHAM

Heaven sakes. What is it? Slow down, will you?

Waltham slows, points just as car passes a blonde, cherub - faced GIRL in white lace dress, white shoes, standing still at roadside.

Waltham slows, pulls to shoulder.

WALTHAM

Holy Caesar. I'll be damn. It's a little girl. Oh, my god.

THROUGH REAR VIEW MIRROR, the girl turns, looks toward car. Red brake lights reflect on her and roadway.

Mrs. Waltham turns in her seat, stares out rear window.

MRS. WALTHAM

Dear, we've got to get that child. She's lost. We can't leave her.

WALTHAM

Yes dear. Of course. Of course.

Waltham reaches into his glove box, grabs a small flashlight, exits car.

EXT. WALTHAM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The girl waits as Waltham approaches, pointing his light.

Mrs. Waltham opens her door, gets out to watch her husband. Waltham reaches girl, places a hand on her shoulder.

WALTHAM (CONT'D.)

Little darling, come. Are you lost?

ON GIRL AND WALTHAM

Girl's skin begins to transform, becomes dark, emaciated. Her eyes grow all black, bulge in sockets. She grins, reveal jagged teeth. A snake tongue shoots from her mouth.

The girl spews a greenish liquid into Waltham's face. He loses a nonsense yell.

WALTHAM (CONT'D)

Awwwwgahh!

His eye bulge. He clutches at his chest.

The girl's blonde hair falls away, leaves sparse, scraggly brown strands. She moves to within inches of Waltham.

GIRL

(guttural)

Father. Hold me, father.

Waltham summons strength to stumble backward. He turns, dashes for car. Mrs. Waltham is stunned by his behavior.

MRS. WALTHAM

Earl! What in the world is wrong with you? Bring that little girl here this instant. Do you hear?

P.O.V. MRS. WALTHAM

She only sees a little girl dressed in white.

RETURN TO SCENE

WALTHAM

(screaming)

Get in the car. Get in, woman.

MRS. WALTHAM

What?

WALTHAM

Get in the goddamn car. Now.

Mrs. Waltham reenters car. Waltham leaps behind wheel, SLAMS door shut, starts car, tears away.

The girl turns, walks away from road, disappears.

INT. ZEB'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Room is dark. The phone rings. Zeb struggles awake, turns on lamp next to his bed. His wife is asleep next to him. He answers phone on the second ring. His wife remains asleep.

ZEB

Hello Earl, hold it. Slow down.

Zeb sits up straight, listens.

ZEB (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'm here. Heard ya' alright. You sure somebody didn't spike your holy water? I'm not trying to be funny. Put yourself in my place.

Zeb leans over, glances at clock on nightstand.

INSERT CLOCK. 12:10 AM

ZEB (CONT'D)

You wake me up at midnight with this wild story... I understand. I want you to understand that what you're telling me sounds nuts. If I didn't know better, I'd say you were on drugs. Sure, I'll meet you in the morning. Wait. Wait a sec.

Zeb's wife stirs. He turns, lowers his voice.

ZEB (CONT'D)

I talked to Hiroki tonight. We got 'til Friday. I found out that Wellsley doesn't have any other family left. No heirs, except his wife and kids. And, according to records, has no will on file. That means probate, understand? Now, get some rest.

Zeb hangs up, turns off lamp.

EXT. WELLSLEY FARM - MORNING (DAWN)

A pickup truck with horse trailer is backed up to corral gate. John and JIM NEVILLE, 70s, in western wear, guide John's horses into trailer.

The horses WHINNY, POUND their hooves on trailer floor. Both are inside and trailer door is closed.

MR. NEVILLE

Well, John. Guess I'll head back to Newfield. Here's your check.

John accepts check, puts it in his shirt pocket.

JOHN

Thanks, Mr. Neville. You paid a lot more than I was asking.

Neville smiles. He and John walk to driver's door.

NEVILLE

By the way, what's all that commotion up the road at the Prophet's place?

JOHN

I don't know? Something happen?

NEVILLE

Something for sure, even though it was dark when I drove past.

JOHN

See anything at all?

NEVILLE

Not much, except a bunch of cars, folks standing around. Saw a Constable's car - lights flashing. Guess I'll find out when I go back.

Neville closes his door.

JOHN

I'll get my keys, drive up.

John dashes toward house as Mr. Neville drives away.

EXT. WELLSLEY FARM - MORNING

At end of John's driveway, his truck skids to a stop at highway. He looks both ways, pulls onto road.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - MORNING

John drives down highway, continues a quarter mile.

AT ZEKE'S PROPERTY

Countless vehicles are ahead on shoulder, on both sides of road, opposite entrance to Zeke's property.

John stops. Mr. Neville's truck and trailer are ahead.

EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK — MORNING

John exits truck, approaches. He reaches driveway heads toward crowd at entrance. Some carry still and video cameras.

John turns toward entrance, stops in his tracks, his jaw drops, his eyes pop.

JOHN

Oh, my god.

ANGLES

Show the massive earth moving equipment and logging trucks lying on their sides, stacked across the other like firewood.

SHOW Constable Rankin, Zeb, Reverend Waltham and Zeke Prophet stand near one mammoth, overturned earth-movers.

John walks toward them. Waltham turns, spots John, climbs up onto roof of a nearby car.

WALTHAM

Let me have your attention, Please.

It takes a moment for crowd to quieten.

WALTHAM (CONT'D)

Please. Neighbors, this can only be the work of Satan himself. Last night, these behemoths weighing tens of thousands of pounds were right side up. And this morning, at dawn's light, we find this. I ask you, what power on earth, save that of Satan or God Almighty could have wrought such a deed?

John shakes his head in disbelief.

VOICE IN CROWD (O.C.)

Reverend, you saying the devil did it? Are ya?

Giggles erupt from swelling crowd. Rankin heads toward driveway entrance.

WALTHAM

God will not be mocked, my friends. The devil has his emissaries, his minions who do his bidding. You mark my words! This is but a sign-- a sign to us all, I tell you.

Waltham aims menacing gaze at John.

WALTHAM (CONT'D)

I warned many of you on yesterday that there are still witches and vile practitioners of evil among us. We must root them out or they will destroy us all. It will only get worse, friends. We must defend ourselves.

John turns and walks away.

WALTHAM (CONT'D)

God will not be mocked, I tell you.

There's a chorus of amens. Waltham's voice fades. John moves past the gate. Rankin is attempting to control the traffic. John continues to his truck.

EXT. COLFIELD TOWN HALL - NIGHT

A meeting is in progress. Thirteen men are gathered on one side of the room. Zeke, Zeb, Pete, Ned Teal, Rankin and Waltham are present. Waltham and Zeb are stand before others.

ZEB

Gentlemen, the time for talk and peacemaking is done. At this point, it's more than a matter of trying to insure survival of this town with a new plant. As god-fearing men and believers, we have a duty to ourselves, our families and to God to purge evil from our midst.

The others voice effusive agreement as Waltham interjects.

WALTHAM

We dare not be faint of heart. I told you what happened to me. I confronted the image of Satan himself.

(MORE)

WALTHAM (CONT'D)

And with the power of the Holy Writ
which I held in my hand, I banished
the evil and escaped, protected by
the cloak of the Holy Spirit. Amen!
Praises to God!

Chorus of Amens.

INT. WELLSLEY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah sits between Josh and Caleb on the sofa reading a book
to them. John is in the recliner with Beth in his lap. Beth
is laughing uncontrollably.

BETH

You're so silly daddy. Whales can't
dance. They don't have feet.

JOHN

(playfully)

Well, how do you know? They're
always in the water. You can't see
under them. So, how do you know
they can't dance?

BETH

'Cause I just know. 'Cause all they
do is swim. Huh, mommy?

SARAH

I'm staying out of it.

JOHN

People have feet and they can swim.
Why can't whales?

Beth tugs at his beard.

BETH

'Cause I saw a picture of one on a
beach once. He didn't have feet. He
wasn't swimming either. He was
dead.

Beth looks sad. John hugs her.

SARAH

What are you two doing over there?

BETH

Daddy's making up stories again.

JOHN
Who's making up stories?

BETH
You are.

JOHN
Am not.

John and Beth laugh. Sarah smiles at them.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(To Beth)
Can you hand daddy the phone?

BETH
Yes.

Beth leans over, grabs the phone with both hands, hands it to John, smiling with self-satisfaction.

JOHN
Thanks, sweetheart.

John dials the phone, Beth scrambles down, runs to the sofa.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Hello. Mr. Weems. May I speak with
Mr. Balfour please. Yes, Balfour.
The new kid who works for you. What
da' you mean? I met him myself...
talked to him. He's been to my
house.

Sarah looks up from book, stunned at what she hears. Just then a car is heard outside. Sarah motions to John. She gathers kids and takes them to rear of house.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(on phone)
He's been here twice. He was at the
town meeting, claimed he worked for
you. Are you sure? — Of course, you
should know.

The car door SLAM, as Sarah returns to living room. She peers out of window.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Sorry I bothered you.

John hangs up, turns to Sarah. There's a knock at door.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Who is it?

BALFOUR (O.C.)

Richard Balfour.

John and Sarah glance at each other. John opens door. Balfour enters. He is not his usually gregarious self.

JOHN

I just tried to call you at your office.

BALFOUR

And... Mr. Weems told you he'd never heard of me, and that I didn't work for him. Right?

JOHN

I suppose you can explain that to us. Are there any other lies?

SARAH

We trusted you.

Balfour moves to recliner, stands near lamp. John and Sarah stand in front of sofa.

BALFOUR

I think you should sit.

JOHN

So we can hear more lies?

BALFOUR

Look, you have every reason to feel this way.

SARAH

So why should we listen to you?

BALFOUR

Please. Just listen to me.

John and Sarah take seats on sofa. Balfour remains standing, leaning over back of recliner.

BALFOUR (CONT'D)

Please hear me out. Mr. Weems is both right and wrong. He does know me. He just doesn't remember reading about me.

(MORE)

BALFOUR (CONT'D)

And while I don't work for him, I
did work for the uncle of his
great, great grandfather.

John snickers and claps his hands derisively. Sarah stares pointedly without smiling.

ON BALFOUR

Balfour closes his eyes, clenches his fists. Suddenly living room is dark. Light still spills from hallway. Balfour's eyes glow red in dark.

JOHN

Oh god.

SARAH

John.

Sarah clutches John's leg, winces in fright. John thrusts an arm around her shoulder.

JOHN

Who are you... why're you --

BALFOUR

-- I lived here... three hundred years ago, here, on this very spot, with my mother, my father, four brothers and three sisters. In the summer of 1688, my mother, Lydia Balfour, related the substance of a dream to a neighbor. In the dream, she had seen the death of a town Elder. Two days later, he died. The neighbor had, on the day previous, retold the story to the wife of the minister. My mother was accused, tried and convicted of witchcraft. But the men of Colfield didn't wait for her to surrender to be hanged as she ...

BEGIN FLASHBACK

RECREATE SCENE

BALFOUR (CONT'D)

...had been sentenced. Under the cover of night, a dozen of them rode their mounts as swiftly as they could, to this hallowed place. They set the house alight.

(MORE)

BALFOUR (CONT'D)

My parents, a brother and a two year-old sister were burned alive. The others escaped to the woods with their lives.

END FLASHBACK:

JOHN

I see you, but I can't --

BALFOUR

-- I know this is impossible to believe. It's more than the mortal mind can conceive.

SARAH

What happened to you?

Balfour raises his hand. The light returns. He steps from the rear of to chair, appearing as before.

BALFOUR

A friend who had overheard the men planning their evil, came to me at the Weems stables where I worked. I took one of the horses and rode as fast as I could. I was too late to warn them. My other brothers and sisters later died from wild animal attacks, exposure and starvation. I escaped for several months, but was later caught and executed for theft of Weems' horse. Those... monsters in Devil's Woods are my sisters and brothers. They've been trying to frighten you away, for your own good.

JOHN

After all these years, why now?

BALFOUR

In these over three hundred years, the convergence of events has never taken place, as they have at this very moment. We've waited so long. They've all been awakened.

Balfour covers his face. Then, we hear a violent wind. The sound grows LOUDER, lights dim. We hear the Wellsley children calling out. We also hear the distant CRIES of a child.

CHILD'S VOICE

(distant)

Mommy. Mommy.

JOSH

Mom. Dad.

BALFOUR

Balfour raises his head. His forehead begins to bulge. Sarah jumps up. He halts her with a raised hand. Balfour's pupils begin to grow larger. He speaks in a low rumbling tone.

BALFOUR

Don't be afraid. No harm will come to you or your children. Come with me, father.

John appears hypnotized. He rises. Sarah grabs his arm.

SARAH

John. Don't. Don't.

Balfour points his right index finger. Sarah slumps back onto sofa. Balfour turns to a passive John.

BALFOUR

We have to loose the avenging angels. Now.

EXT. WELLSLEY HOUSE — NIGHT

The wind HOWLS. Balfour and John exit house. Balfour walks without effort. John struggles to stand upright.

They walk to rear of house towards Devil's Woods. At edge of field, under a bright, eerie moon, they stop.

We SEE faint outline of five glowing, human-like images far across field at edge of Devil's Woods.

INT. COLFIELD TOWN HALL — NIGHT

The meeting is still in progress.

ZEKE

I don't like what lies before us any more than any of you. But Reverend, Zeb and the others are right.

(MORE)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Like most of you, I've noticed strange things about those Wellsleys for years. Didn't know what it was 'til now. I say we got no choice. It's this or perish.

Zeke takes his seat to applause. Waltham and Zeb stand again.

ZEB

After tonight, I'm sure we'll see blessings start to flow. Right Reverend?

WALTHAM

That's the vision God has given me. And I want to make one thing clear. We have absolutely nothing in our hearts against John Wellsley and his family. It is the evil within them that we war against.

A chorus of amens.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

A car heads toward Town Hall, turns onto parking lot, stops parallel to curb. John is at wheel of Balfour's Tempo. Balfour sits stoically in passenger seat.

Both exit car and walk to building. Wind HOWL increases. John and Balfour walk to one corner of building to a window. They have an unobstructed view inside. The wind grows louder.

INT. COLFIELD TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Waltham points to Constable Rankin who stands tentatively. Rankin appears to struggle to form his thoughts.

WALTHAM

Well, what is it, man?

RANKIN

I...

WALTHAM

Speak up.

RANKIN

What about the law? There is the law. You all know that.

WALTHAM

What law?

RANKIN

The law I swore to uphold. That's what law.

ZEB

You haven't been that concerned about the law up 'til now.

WALTHAM

(angry)

There is but one final law. The law of God. Do you hear me? Let every man understand that.

Waltham pounds his fist on table. Rankin slinks back into his chair. The wind's fury rises. The men react to noise.

NED

Well, we gonna talk about it or we gonna do something?

WALTHAM

All of you who know and accept the leading of the Holy Spirit and pledge a vow of eternal silence will remain seated. Those who do not, must stand and be forever damned.

EXT. TOWN HALL — NIGHT

John and Balfour peer inside through same window.

BALFOUR

The Constable will be the only one who resists.

JOHN

Why?

BALFOUR

He's the only one with no ancestral link to what happened in 1688.

INT. TOWN HALL — NIGHT

Waltham smiles and turns to Zeb. Just then Rankin stands slowly and moves toward aisle. Waltham spots him and thrusts his hand out toward him.

WALTHAM

Get out. Damn infidel. And I curse
you and your progeny to burn
forever in hell's fire.

ON GROUP

All others turn to watch as Rankin moves to rear of hall. A shot RINGS out. Rankin, slows, wavers, then falls to his knees, then prone.

Waltham returns gun to his waist. The others remain silent.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Shock covers John's face. Balfour shows no emotion.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

WALTHAM

Sounds like there'll be a good wind
tonight, to fan the flames of
sanctification.

Waltham grabs his bible from table, motions them to stand.

WALTHAM (CONT'D)

Bow your heads and close your eyes.
And now, may the grace of God who
empowers us all, shower us with his
blessings until we gather in his
name once again.

Just as Waltham's last syllable sounds, the sound of ear-splitting thunder REVERBERATES.

Bolts of fire crash through walls and ceiling, flash across room.

On The Holy Bible (KJV) in Waltham's hands.

It BURSTS into FLAMES.

Gasps and screams of agony ring out.

A ring of fire forms around group. They try to flee to rear, knocking over chairs. The flames prevent them from escaping.

At the rear of room, TEN HUMAN-LIKE IMAGES of THE BALFOUR FAMILY appear, standing with arms linked.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

John turns to Balfour. He's not there. John flinches, clutches his chest. He looks inside, sees Balfour amongst ten images inside room.

Then, John sees dozen men, including Waltham, begin to transform. They appear as TOWNSMEN, in manner and dress as they would have appeared in 1688.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Dying SCREAMS ring out, even above raging flames and HOWLING wind.

We see grasping arms and melting faces.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

John FLINCHES, grimaces, puts his hand to window. It's hot. He withdraws it, looks around, backs away.

We hear POUNDING horse hooves. John races toward front of building, dashes for Balfour's car. He fumbles for keys, finds them, jumps in and starts the car.

The horses are still heard.

John makes U-turn, slows to a stop on other side of roadway.

Just then a violent EXPLOSION. Entire building is an inferno.

INT. BALFOUR'S AUTO - NIGHT

John's face is drenched with perspiration and look of shock.

We hear a siren. In rear view mirror, John sees headlights headed his way.

A fire engine arrives. John watches for a few seconds, then pulls onto highway, drives away.

The building, a raging inferno, collapses in on itself.

Burning building fills frame.

EXT. REAR OF WELLSLEY FARM ,EDGE OF DEVIL'S WOODS - DAY

Deer graze at edge of Devil's Woods. Birds fly over trees.

EXT. WELLSLEY FARM FRONT YARD — DAY

A white station wagon, Balfour's red car, and John's blue pickup are parked in front yard.

The children play. Sampson and Prowler romp.

A PASTORAL VIEW

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS — DAY

A black limousine moves through frame.

INT. LIMOUSINE

Josh and Caleb share rear seat, their eyes riveted on rear headrest TV.

ON SCREEN

A raging fire consumes a rural compound's main structure.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Authorities will not confirm that the massive fire late last night, near Jackson, Mississippi, is arson or that there are multiple victims. However, credible sources confirm the compound is owned by, and is the headquarters of a militia group, and believed responsible in the slaying of six executives of a Muslim-owned tech company. A news conference is scheduled within the next hour.

Josh and Caleb exchange stunned, knowing glances.

EXT. BLACK LIMOUSINE ON PARK AVENUE — DAY

Josh and Caleb's vehicle move through traffic.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET — DAY

P.O.V. SOMEONE ON SIDEWALK

Watches as limousine passes by, continues on.

ON MAN IN WHITE

Show a man in all white watching, then turn and disappears into pedestrian flow.

FADE TO BLACK