

Long Hollow -

A Charlie LeBeau Mystery

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Headlights shine in the dark illuminating a roadside sign showing "SISSETON;" in smaller letters underneath it shows "pop. 2572."

The headlights travel uphill. Another sign indicating South Dakota Highway 10 passes. The lights slow on the deserted highway and turn, flashing across a small billboard denoting "Long Hollow District" at the top; the bottom of the sign shows, "Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe."

Music plays on the car stereo. A song like "Seven Nation Army" by the White Stripes courses through the speakers.

Arrows point the way to the Long Hollow Community Center Building and the headlights pass and move down the gravel road. Whirling snow falls in dizzying patterns in front of the lights as a couple miles go by.

The lights turn down a two rut trail covered in a dusting of snow. The trail dips after a mile and the trees line the ruts where a boarded up shack sits at the trail's end. The car parks and a MAN in dark clothes moves to the rear of the car and opens the trunk.

The light from the trunk reveals a bound and gagged TEEN GIRL who struggles at the open trunk. The man flicks a stun gun into view and the blue sparks penetrate the air as he clicks it. The WHINE of the charging battery and the SIZZLE of the shock CRACKS as he touches the girl and she lies motionless.

The man hauls the limp girl into the shack. He returns to the trunk and hauls an unconscious TEEN BOY from the trunk to the shack.

The dusting of snow accumulates on the car. SCREAMS pierce the air coming from inside the shack. Then silence.

More snow accumulates on the car. An ATV engine ROARS to life from the other side of the shack.

The snow comes down and the ATV's light darts across the ground as it rolls through the bottom of the coulee and up the other side disappearing behind a hill.

EXT. BALESTACK - DAY

Bureau of Indian Affairs policeman, Sergeant CHARLIE LEBEAU (40) rests his rifle across the top of a large, round bale, his makeshift deer stand. He puts the cross hairs on a large whitetail doe that has stepped to the edge of the tree line.

CHARLIE
(whispering)
One more step.

Charlie's short, dark hair and handsome, dark features are emphasized in the snow. With his fit, six-foot frame, he holds the cross hairs on the deer's chest but the brush in the trees does not provide a clear shot. His blue eyes, an oddity the Lakota lineage, stare through the rifle scope.

CHARLIE
(whispering)
Come on, girl.

Charlie is an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux (Lakota) Tribe. Charlie's breath curls up in the still, twenty degree air. He holds the rifle waiting to shoot his first deer of the season.

CHARLIE
(whispering)
No, no, no, no.

Charlie feels his chest. His cell phone BUZZES in his shirt pocket. He leaves the rifle resting on the bales, pulls his glove off with his teeth, unzips his heavy camo hunting coat, and digs out his phone.

CHARLIE
(whispering)
Damn it.

Charlie flips his phone open and sees the text message:

CPT KIPP: Code 187. Call now!

Charlie stands to his full height on the bale stack; the doe in the distance is alerted, looks at him for a moment, whirls and disappears into the woods.

Charlie looks at his phone, then to the deer, and then back to the phone.

CHARLIE

Damn it, damn it.

Charlie shakes his head as he hits the send button on his phone dialing his boss, Captain Kipp. Charlie surveys the area, looking at the forty acres of harvested corn and the trees covered in snow before him.

CHARLIE

(into phone)

What's up, Skip? This better be good, because I'm gonna catch heck from my dad, when I show up without his deer.

Charlie spins around on the bale stack, still looking for any stray deer in the area as he listens.

CHARLIE

(into phone)

What?!

Charlie listens more intently.

CHARLIE

(into phone)

What!? Ok, I'm on my way.

Charlie climbs down from the bale stack and trudges through the snow three hundred yards to his beat up 1981 Chevy truck.

EXT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Charlie parks his old 4x4 next to his new, 4x4, the BIA police Tahoe. He goes inside

INT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Charlie's father, CLAUDE LEBEAU (75) greets Charlie at the door. Claude is a little stooped with silver hair, but in decent shape.

CLAUDE

You musta got a good one to be
back this early. Need some help?

CHARLIE

No, Dad. I didn't get one.

Charlie shoves his way by his father as he removes his hunting clothing and exchanges it for his police shirt and jacket as he enters his bedroom with his dad following.

CLAUDE

What? So you didn't shoot one?

CHARLIE

No.

CLAUDE

Not even a doe for me? You gotta
fill my tag for me, you know?

Charlie kicks off his hunting boots and pants and pulls on his uniform pants and work boots.

CHARLIE

Dad, can't you see I'm changing
clothes? I got called in?

CLAUDE

Oh.

CHARLIE

I don't know why you don't go out
and shoot your own deer.

CLAUDE

You always get one for me.
Besides, I'm a retired, old man;
plus it's cold out there.

Charlie shakes his head as he finishes lacing his boots and heads for the door.

CLAUDE

So you are going to get a deer for me?

Charlie opens the front door.

CHARLIE

Yes. Take it easy. It's only the first day of the season.

Charlie pauses before going out the door. He looks at his father.

CHARLIE

Is Nat up yet?

CLAUDE

Nope.

CHARLIE

Tell him to get his huntin' stuff ready 'cause he'll be huntin' with me tonight.

CLAUDE

Will do.

EXT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Charlie heads out the door to his Police truck.

CHARLIE

I'll be back tonight to hopefully get your doe.

Charlie gives a nod and a wave as he opens the door of his truck.

CHARLIE

See ya.

EXT. RURAL ROBERTS COUNTY - DAY

Charlie drives the five miles of snow-dusted gravel from his trailer to his destination. Music plays softly on the truck stereo. A song like "Deeper Than the Holler" by Randy Travis pushes Charlie along.

Charlie eases down the last few hundred yards of a two rut trail and coming to a shack surrounded by yellow crime scene tape and bustling with emergency personnel.

EXT. CRIME SCENE SHACK - DAY

DEPUTY CARSON

Hey, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Carson. What's going on?

Charlie adjusts his black stocking cap and gloves as he dips under the yellow tape. DEPUTY WADE CARSON (28) of the Roberts County Sheriff's Office stands just inside the yellow tape monitoring people coming and going.

DEPUTY CARSON

I'd rather be out here than in there.

Deputy Carson motions his gloved thumb to the shack.

DEPUTY CARSON

It's a bad one.

CHARLIE

Skip inside?

Deputy Carson nods and Charlie moves to the shack door. He takes a deep breath and looks inside the open door.

INT. SHACK - DAY/NIGHT

INTERCUT - MURDER/INVESTIGATION

-The one room shack is at capacity with police and emergency personnel. It takes a moment for Charlie to see the two bodies hanging from gambrels and pulleys from the ceiling.

-Dimly lit shack - Unconscious, teenagers hang by their ankles.

-Charlie inspects the victims' feet; hanging from metal gambrels inserted into Achilles tendons. Charlie notes the knots fixing the pulleys to hooks in the ceiling.

-Dimly lit shack - A knife slices away clothes of the teenagers, exposing naked bodies.

-Charlie crouches and surveys a frozen pool of blood beneath the bodies.

-Dimly lit shack - SCREAMS as a knife flashes in a gloved hand and blood gushes to the floor.

-Charlie looks at the heaps of clothing next to two piles of internal organs, gutted from the victims.

EXT. OUTSIDE SHACK - DAY

BIA Police Captain SKYLER KIPP (50), a.k.a. 'Skip' is the stocky boss of Charlie. Skip is also an enrolled Tribal member. Skip and Charlie discuss the scene inside.

CHARLIE

What do you think, Skip?

SKIP

(heaving a sigh)

Same as you. It's a repeat of five years ago.

CHARLIE

Any IDs on the victims?

SKIP

Nah. Not yet. We're checking the car and missing persons report.

CHARLIE

I can't believe it. Same ropes, pulleys, knots, gambrels...same everything.

Skip wipes and pinches his nose between his eyes with his gloved hand in pain.

SKIP

What kind of freak show we dealin'
with here?

CHARLIE

The usual psychopath deer hunter.

SKIP

Great, that narrows it down to
eighty five percent of the
county's population.

Skip heaves a sigh and blows out his breath in a cloud of
steam around him.

SKIP

I gotta name for our guy.

CHARLIE

Oh, yeah?

SKIP

I call him the 'Deer Slayer,'
because he strikes during the deer
season.

CHARLIE

Nice. Take you all morning to
think that up?

SKIP

(smiles)
Pretty much.

Skip rolls his neck.

SKIP

It makes my head hurt.

Skip drops his hand from his eyes and looks at Charlie
changing the mood and subject completely with a grin.

SKIP

See any big bucks this morning?

CHARLIE

Heck no. Thanks to you.

SKIP

Come on. Let's go warm up in my truck. I got some coffee in there.

The men walk to Skip's truck and get in.

INT. SKIP'S POLICE TAHOE - DAY

Skip pours coffee from his thermos into Styrofoam cups.

SKIP

Look on the bright side, the murders were right here in Long Hollow, just a few minutes from your house.

CHARLIE

(sipping coffee)

How is that supposed to be good news? A murder in my backyard?

SKIP

You're close to home. You'll probably be able to do some huntin' tonight.

CHARLIE

I guess.

SKIP

Coulda been over in Big Coulee. Hey, I heard Meister's tracking a big buck over there. A real monster.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I saw Meister at the Holiday station the other day. He told me all about it.

The men drink coffee and stare at the shack as people go in and out. A gurney is dragged through the snow next to the shack's door and sits with an empty body bag on top.

SKIP

How's Nat doin'?

CHARLIE

It's hard to tell.

SKIP

I'm sorry about your sister. She fought that cancer for how long?

CHARLIE

Five years.

SKIP

God, rest her soul. Tell Nat I'm thinking about him and that I can't wait to see him play some ball.

CHARLIE

Well, you can come see him play in Sisseton with the Redmen. I'm taking him out of Tiospa Zina and putting him in Sisseton Public; now that he's living with me.

SKIP

Are you kidding me? Why?

CHARLIE

If it was good enough for you and me...

Charlie points back and forth to himself and Skip.

SKIP

Yeah, right.

CHARLIE

It's closer. I don't want him spending an hour each way on the road. Plus, Sisseton's got a good program. Good competition. None of those rinky-dink schools.

SKIP

He's gonna be pissed off.

Charlie waves the comment away.

CHARLIE

We've already talked about it.
He's on board. He's ready for a
change now that his mom's gone.

They sit in silence sipping their coffee as the body bag
is taken from the gurney into the shack by an EMT.

CHARLIE

Are we talking about overtime yet?

SKIP

Oh yeah! Superintendent already
called me and said to get on this
case and don't worry about the
hours. He also said the FBI is
coming.

CHARLIE

Of course the FBI will be here.
Probably be as effective as last
time, I imagine.

Charlie stares at the men hauling out a body bag and
placing it on the gurney. Skip turns the volume down on
the stereo. A song like "If I Die Young" by The Band
Perry plays faintly.

CHARLIE

Who found the body?

SKIP

Remember Edgar Walters?

Charlie nods and blows on his coffee.

SKIP

His cousin and son were deer
huntin'. They were up from Sioux
Falls for the opener and saw the
blood seeping out from under the
door.

CHARLIE

Are they related to Marvin Hattum?

SKIP

Yeah. Cousins, also.

CHARLIE

(shaking his head)

Great way to start opening weekend.

EXT. TIOSPA ZINA INDIAN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Sergeant Charlie LeBeau pulls his BIA Police Tahoe into the parking lot.

He gets out of the vehicle and walks to the school as his breath vapors rise in the crisp still air. It is quiet as the blanket of snow seems to cover everything but the CRUNCHING of the snow under his feet.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie sits across the desk from the Principal, VICTOR CRAWFORD (40). Victor sports traditional Lakota braids and leather beaded vest over a dress shirt and tie. He is a large man.

VICTOR

I wish we were seeing each other on better terms, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I know.

VICTOR

(sighs)

You sure you want to do this? Nat's on board?

CHARLIE

We talked about it a lot. He understands. Time for a clean slate; his mom recommended it.

VICTOR

I'm sorry about your sister. She was a good woman.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

VICTOR

You gonna be able to handle it?
Being a single parent?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I'm glad we got
basketball as a distraction.

VICTOR

Yeah, don't we know it?

Victor holds and imaginary ball and shoots it at an
imaginary basket with a flick of his wrist. Charlie
turns pretending to follow the flight of the ball.

CHARLIE

Miss? I can see you still need to
work on your shot.

Victor laughs heartily.

VICTOR

We had some good times playing
ball, didn't we?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

VICTOR

We probably would have brought the
Sisseton Redmen a state
championship if you hadn't wussed
out.

CHARLIE

Wussed out? I broke my leg!

VICTOR

(laughs)

Whatever. You coulda played with
a broken leg and been better than
most of us.

CHARLIE

(smiles)

Yeah, what could have been...

VICTOR

It'll be good for Nat to play against better competition in the Northeast Conference.

CHARLIE

That's part of it, but the truth is I want him closer to school and me. It's only a few miles from my trailer to Sisseton.

Victor nods understandingly.

CHARLIE

I don't want him on the road all the time. It's thirty miles each way over here.

Victor stands and Charlie leans forward in his chair.

VICTOR

I'll ask the secretary to get copies of Nat's records

Victor sighs.

VICTOR

I wanted to ask you something, maybe you can't say, but what happened to those two kids murdered.

CHARLIE

You're right, I can't say anything.

VICTOR

It's too bad. Where were they from, Watertown?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

Charlie stands.

VICTOR

Come on, let's go get Nat.

Victor pats Charlie on the shoulder in a comforting manner as they move out of the office into the hallway.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Victor's and Charlie's steps ECHO down the empty hallway. They stop in front of the sports trophy case in front of the main entrance.

VICTOR

We're going to miss Nat.

Victor points at the State Class "B" Basketball runner-up trophy. It sits next to Region Champs trophy and photo of the team; Nat has a net around his neck and holds a number one finger up. The men continue to walk.

VICTOR

By the way, do you remember Zeke Gonzalez?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

VICTOR

I guess he's back in town. That guy was crazy.

CHARLIE

He never did graduate, did he?

VICTOR

Not that I know of. Just be on the lookout for the trouble that surrounds that guy. He might hit you up for some money.

Victor smiles.

VICTOR

That guy could play some ball,
though. It's too bad he quit
school and the team. He coulda
played in college.

CHARLIE

Sad. What was he, two years
younger than us?

The men stop in front of a door to a classroom. Victor
opens the door and all the kids look.

VICTOR

Nat, Can you come with me? Bring
your books.

NATHANIEL (NAT) CHASING WOLF (16) moves from his desk in
the middle of the classroom. He shoulders his book bag
as he stands to his full height of six feet two inches.
His wiry, 160 pound frame eases through the room to the
door and into the hall.

NAT

What is it Mr. Crawford?

Nat sees his uncle across the far side of the hallway.
He nods and his long braid bounces. Nat is distinguished
looking with jet black hair, dark skin, narrow face, and
high cheek bones. He wears blue jeans and a Nike
windbreaker over a white t-shirt.

NAT

Oh, I guess it's time.

VICTOR

Yes, your uncle's here.

INT. CHARLIE'S POLICE TAHOE - DAY

Charlie and Nat drive down BIA route 1 heading north to
Sisseton.

CHARLIE

Looks like we'll need to get you a
new letterman's jacket.

Nat looks down at his winter coat, a Tiospa Zina letterman's jacket with TZ over his left chest.

NAT

(laughs)

Huh, I never even thought about that.

CHARLIE

Are you nervous?

Nat shrugs. His mouth twists.

NAT

A little.

(shaking head)

It' just weird, you know.

CHARLIE

It's a good school. Yours truly graduated from there; Grandpa graduated from there. It can't be all bad.

NAT

...and my mom.

Charlie smiles and nods as he drives.

NAT

I'm not even that sad about leaving TZ. Half the guys in my class have dropped out. Our basketball team was going to suck. I'm ready for a change.

Nat reaches for his head. He runs his hand over his hair.

NAT

Could we stop at Clyde's? I think I really want to change.

CHARLIE

What? No more braid? Seriously?

NAT

It's time.

CHARLIE

All right then.

Nat rubs his hand over his braid and pulls it in front of his face to look at. He folds down the visor and looks in the mirror.

NAT

Can I ask you a question, Uncle?

CHARLIE

Sure.

NAT

Did you ever sun dance?

CHARLIE

Nope. I've never been traditional. Don't get me wrong, I'm not much for telling people how to live their lives. It's just that the old ways were never for me.

NAT

You never wore long hair?

CHARLIE

I didn't want the hassle. My dad, your Grandpa Claude, he wasn't traditional either. He let me make my own decisions on that stuff. How about you? You sun dance?

NAT

No.

CHARLIE

You want to?

NAT

I don't know. All my friends that did it...They all dropped out of school!

Nat frowns in disgust.

NAT

I just don't understand it. The clash of the two cultures...It seems like it's one or the other, you just can't survive in both worlds.

CHARLIE

I know what you mean. Try being a cop and dealing in both cultures.

Nat and Charlie sit in silence. The song "Smokey Mountain Rain" by Ronnie Milsap comes on the radio. Nat leans forward and turns up the volume.

Nat hums along until the chorus. He sings a customized lyric substituting 'South Dakota Rain' for the actual lyric of 'Smokey Mountain Rain.'

NAT

(singing)

South Dakota rain, keeps on falling, I keep on calling, her name. South Dakota rain I keep on searchin', can't go on hurtin', this way. She's somewhere in the South Dakota rain.

Charlie looks over at Nat and grins. Nat turns the volume on the radio down.

NAT

What?

CHARLIE

Nothin'.

NAT

That was a song, my mom and I used to sing. We changed the lyrics to South Dakota and reference towns in South Dakota.

CHARLIE

So I hear.

NAT
I really miss her.

CHARLIE
Yeah. We all do.

The men drive in silence. Nat gazes out the side window.

NAT
You know, I like to think the new traditions for Indians are basketball and deer huntin'.

CHARLIE
I would concur.

NAT
The fan favorite at the state tourney is always a Reservation team.

Charlie laughs.

NAT
I think I'll stick with my new modern traditions.

Charlie slows the vehicle as they approach Sisseton and a stop sign. Straight is to the high school, and to the right is the barber shop.

NAT
Hang a right.

CHARLIE
Clyde's it is then.

Nat smiles as the vehicle heads to the right.

NAT
I was just thinkin', Uncle Charlie. You should be nervous.

CHARLIE
Oh, yeah?

NAT

Yeah...your Redmen basketball
scoring records are going down.

CHARLIE

Records were made to be broken...but
mine will always have an asterisk.

NAT

Why?

CHARLIE

(whining)

I only had a three point line for
one year.

NAT

(shaking head)

Excuses.

EXT. HOLIDAY GAS STATION - DAY

The ancient, faded "Holiday" sign stands high over head.
Under the canopy covering the gas pumps, Charlie fills
his Police Tahoe with gas. A few snow flakes waft down on
the dreary day.

A small SUV pulls up to the pump across from Charlie.
MARVIN HATTUM (53) emerges from the building. Marvin
hustles as fast as a short, stocky man with a walking
boot and cane can maneuver to the SUV.

MARVIN

Hey, Charlie.

Marvin waves to Charlie. Charlie returns a nod. The
DRIVER gets out of the SUV.

MARVIN

Sir, you have a tie down loose on
your luggage rack.

Marvin reaches for the loose rope holding down a
suitcase. He ties it quickly and tightly as Charlie
observes.

DRIVER

Thank you!

MARVIN

No problem. You're welcome.

Marvin limps back into the station building followed by Charlie, who has finished fueling. Marvin is behind the counter manning the register. Charlie grabs a coffee.

CHARLIE

Hey, everyone.

A collective "hello" murmurs through the 9:30 am coffee club. Local farmers and retirees sit and drink coffee and discuss the latest happenings. Charlie moves by the tables and booths of coffee drinkers to the register.

Music plays softly overhead. A song like "Chicken Fried" by the Zac Brown Band can be faintly heard.

CHARLIE

Howdy, Marvin.

MARVIN

Morning Charlie, just the coffee?

Charlie hands a five dollar bill to Marvin.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I put the gas on the credit card at the pump.

MARVIN

I miss the old days when I used to get to talk to everyone because they had to come inside and pay.

Charlie collects his change from Marvin.

MARVIN

This business has been in the family for sixty years, before I was even born. Now, I only talk to half the people because of those credit card pumps.

Charlie gives a nod to Marvin's foot.

CHARLIE

What did you do to your foot?

Marvin grabs his large belly with both hands.

MARVIN

Doctor says I'm too fat; causing a stress fracture in my foot.

Charlie sips his coffee and chuckles.

MARVIN

It really sucks.

Marvin gestures up to the wall behind him at a stuffed head of a whitetail buck with massive, symmetrical antlers; seven points on one side, eight points on the other.

MARVIN

I can't do any huntin' this year with a bad foot.

CHARLIE

You can sit in a truck and drive around like all the lazy-ass hunters.

MARVIN

(smiling)

No thanks.

Charlie steps aside as a customer pays for a candy bar and a Coke.

CHARLIE

Who was the guy that you tied down the suitcase for just now?

MARVIN

I don't know; some Thanksgiving traveler I suppose. I just hate to see loose ropes like that.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

MARVIN

I mean, what if it flew off and caused somebody to crash? I'd feel terrible.

CHARLIE

Where'd you learn to tie knots like that so quickly?

MARVIN

(laughs)

You should know. You forget Desert Storm already? You don't remember tying stuff down all the time to haul across Iraq in our trucks?

CHARLIE

(laughing the words)

Oh yeah.

Marvin's eyes dart around the room as he moves in close to Charlie.

MARVIN

(whispering)

Any word on the killings?
Something I can share with the boys.

Marvin tilts his head to the men drinking coffee. Charlie sips his coffee and leans in.

MARVIN

You know it was my cousin that found the bodies.

CHARLIE

That's what I heard. Isn't Long Hollow where you shot that big one?

Charlie nods toward the big buck on the wall.

MARVIN

It sure was.

Charlie glances around and leans close to Marvin.

CHARLIE

They're going to release the names
of the victims...two high school
kids from Watertown.

Marvin nods with a serious expression.

CHARLIE

I gotta run over to Peever.

MARVIN

Thanks, Charlie. What's in
Peever?

CHARLIE

Stolen ATV, I guess.

MARVIN

Well, let me know the details and
I'll keep an eye out for it.

CHARLIE

(smiles)

Sure, Marv.

Charlie exits.

EXT. CULLEN RANCH - DAY

Charlie meets with WILL CULLEN, farmer/rancher, taking
the statement and complaint regarding the stolen ATV. A
few stray snowflakes fall as the two men talk in the shop
with the large shed doors open.

WILL

Gosh darn, it. It was a 2006
Yamaha Grizzly.

Will is a large man, dressed in heavy coveralls; he
scratches his head through his dirty stocking cap.

WILL

I'm not even sure when it went missing, but it's gone now. I just need the report for the insurance. Heck, it may not even be worth filing the claim with the deductible and all.

Charlie takes notes on the criminal complaint form on his clipboard.

CHARLIE

Where did you keep it?

WILL

Right where you're standin'. We just park 'em here. Keys in 'em. Shed's not locked.

CHARLIE

I see.

WILL

Never had nothin' like this happen before. Shoot, they left the new four wheeler.

Will points to a big red ATV next to Charlie. Charlie nods, noticing the muddy machine for the first time.

CHARLIE

Hmmm.

WILL

We musta been gone, cuz we would have heard dogs barking if a stranger pulls into the yard. You heard 'em when you pulled up.

Charlie nods and scratches his eyebrow with his pen.

WILL

Let me guess, we'll never see that four-wheeler again.

CHARLIE
(smiling)
Not likely.

WILL
Son-of-a-gun, hard to believe they
would leave the new one and take
the old one.

Charlie tears out a carbon copy of the complaint form and hands it to Will.

CHARLIE
Criminals tend not to be the
brightest bulbs.

WILL
You can say that again. Thanks
for coming out Charlie.

CHARLIE
No problem, Will. Stay warm.

Charlie turns and begins to walk away.

WILL
You too. Hey, any big bucks yet?

Charlie stops and looks back.

CHARLIE
Not for me. I haven't heard of
anyone gettin' one yet either.

WILL
Me neither. See ya.

Charlie walks across the farmyard; dogs materialize from different corners of the yard and follow him to his vehicle, a few BARKS from the dogs echo in the yard.

EXT. CHARLIE'S POLICE TAHOE - NIGHT

Charlie waits in the dead of the cold night inside his vehicle. He stakes out the scene of the recent murder from a distance. He looks through a night vision scope and scans the area.

Charlie shivers and sips coffee, trying to stay warm. The engine is off as he tries to remain hidden. He looks again through the night scope. He sees movement in the trees. Somebody is approaching the shack through the coulee.

Charlie eases from the vehicle in his white, winter camo, coveralls. He moves silently in the snow, service weapon drawn in one hand night vision scope in the other.

He reaches the shack and stands flat against the side of the building still wrapped in yellow police tape. He breathes hard as he hears footsteps CRUNCHING in the snow.

Charlie reaches for his car keys and holds the remote unlocking device in his hand as he stashes the night vision scope in his pocket. He hears the shack's door handle turn emitting a shrill SQUEAK.

Charlie hits the remote unlocking device and his vehicle lights shine behind him as he maneuvers around the corner of the building.

CHARLIE

Freeze! Get down on the ground!

A song like "Last Night" by the Strokes blares.

The INTRUDER SCREAMS at the blinding lights and drops to the ground. Charlie puts his knee in the back of the gasping INTRUDER as he digs for handcuffs and finally cuffs the intruder.

Charlie stands, digs for his flashlight.

CHARLIE

Get up! Who are you?

Charlie rips away the hood from the diminutive INTRUDER and pulls the mask off revealing a woman as she rolls to her knees attempting to stand.

INTRUDER

I'm Veronica Lewis! I'm a reporter! Get these cuffs off me!

VERONICA LEWIS/INTRUDER (30) is five foot three, one hundred ten pounds. Her beautiful face is criss-crossed by mussed dark hair.

Charlie slumps down to get a better look at her. Charlie's meets Veronica's eyes and there is an instant attraction.

VERONICA

Please, let me go! I'm a reporter with the Sisseton Chronicle!

Charlie reaches down and picks her up by her heavy coat and frisks her. He pulls a cell phone from her pocket.

CHARLIE

Come on.

Charlie hauls her to his vehicle. Veronica stumbles through the snow as Charlie pushes her toward the Tahoe. Charlie loads her in the back of the vehicle with her hands still cuffed behind her back.

INT. CHARLIE'S POLICE VEHICLE - NIGHT

Charlie gets in the vehicle and starts it. Veronica straightens to a sitting position. Charlie watches her in the mirror as the dome light fades and only dash lights illuminate.

The song like "Last Night" by the Strokes plays on the stereo, quietly in the running vehicle.

VERONICA

Listen to me! I'm just doing a story on the murders. I came out here to see the crime scene at night.

Charlie looks down at the cell phone in his hand he scrolls through the contacts. He looks back in the mirror and meets Veronica's eyes.

VERONICA

Please! These cuffs are killing me! Please!

Charlie looks down at her phone's contacts and keeps scrolling through them.

VERONICA

I am begging you. Please get these handcuffs off me. I'm just a reporter.

Charlie looks again at Veronica staring at him in the mirror. He sets the phone down on the console and gets out of the vehicle.

EXT. CHARLIE'S POLICE VEHICLE - NIGHT

He opens the back door and helps Veronica out of the vehicle. He spins her around and unlocks the cuffs.

VERONICA

Thanks.

Veronica rubs her wrists.

CHARLIE

Get in the front.

VERONICA

What? Why?

Charlie grabs her arm and starts dragging her to the passenger side.

VERONICA

Ok! Ok!

Veronica gets in the vehicle and Charlie returns to the driver's seat.

INT. CHARLIE'S POLICE VEHICLE - NIGHT

Charlie looks at Veronica with pity.

VERONICA

I'm sorry. I know I'm wrong, and I apologize.

Veronica picks up her phone from the console.

VERONICA

Oh, you confirmed my identity from my phone contacts?

(smugly)

Nice police work.

CHARLIE

What are you doing here?

VERONICA

I told you, I'm writing a story on the murders. I wanted to get the feel.

CHARLIE

This is an active crime scene. You didn't see the police tape?

VERONICA

I said I'm sorry!

Veronica sighs. They sit in silence. Veronica shivers.

VERONICA

Why are you here? Are you guarding the crime scene?

CHARLIE

No.

Veronica's mouth drops open.

VERONICA

Is this a stake out? You think the killer is going to return to the scene of the crime!

CHARLIE

Has anyone ever told you that you talk a lot?

VERONICA

Yeah...pretty much everyone.

(shivers)

Thank God for this heater. It's freezing out there tonight.

CHARLIE

Let's go. I'll take you to your car. Where is it?

VERONICA

Wait! You didn't answer my question. You're on a stake out, hoping the criminal returns.

CHARLIE

I can't comment.

VERONICA

I'll take that as a yes.

Veronica smiles and Charlie's mouth shows a hint of a smile.

VERONICA

Don't worry, I won't quote you.

CHARLIE

You want to go to jail for obstruction? I'll do it. You went across the police tape...You turned the handle of that door...

VERONICA

Fine.

CHARLIE

Where's your car?

VERONICA

Just over the hill. I came up through the adjoining coulee. I wanted to feel what the murderer might have felt approaching the shack.

Charlie puts the Tahoe in gear and begins to drive.

CHARLIE

Put your seatbelt on.

Veronica buckles up and they move through the snow to the two rut trail. They ride in silence.

A mile east, a mile north and a mile west brings them to Veronica's car. Charlie puts the Tahoe in park and the doors unlock.

VERONICA

Thanks for understanding and letting me go.

CHARLIE

Don't let me catch you around here again.

VERONICA

You'll be out here again?

CHARLIE

I'm warning you, don't come out here again. I won't be so friendly if there is a next time.

VERONICA

Do you have a card? I'd like to buy you lunch and thank you. We could talk a little...you know, background info for my story.

CHARLIE

I'd consider lunch, but no talk of the case.

VERONICA

Lunch it is, the rest, we'll play by ear.

CHARLIE

Ok.

Charlie digs out a business card with his info from his pocket and hands it to Veronica.

VERONICA

Great!

(reading card)

Sergeant Charlie LeBeau, I'll give you a call in the morning. Is the casino ok for lunch?

Veronica opens the door.

CHARLIE
That's fine. I'll follow you out.

Veronica exits. Starts her car and Charlie follows.

INT. DAKOTA CONNECTION CASINO RESTAURANT - DAY

Charlie finds Veronica already seated in the restaurant. She writes in her reporter's notepad as Charlie approaches.

VERONICA
(looking up)
Hi!

Veronica stands and offers her hand. Charlie shakes her hand and they sit.

CHARLIE
(tapping notebook)
Thought we were off the record.

VERONICA
I was just putting it away.
Different story.

Charlie nods. The WAITRESS, a young Indian girl appears with glasses of water.

WAITRESS
We got good specials today,
burgers with the works.

VERONICA
Sounds good.

Charlie nods.

A song like the acoustic version of "Small Town" by John Mellencamp plays overhead.

CHARLIE
Yup. Burger and bring me a coke
too.

Veronica smiles at Charlie.

VERONICA

Let me get right to it. I want to sit on the stakeout with you.

Charlie chuckles and sips his water.

CHARLIE

You get to the point don't you?

VERONICA

I know you're going to sit on the murder site.

Charlie leans forward and Veronica leans in.

CHARLIE

I've read your stuff. You were the sports writer for the last couple years.

VERONICA

Yeah, so? This is a small town, high school sports are big, but I write other stuff too.

CHARLIE

Now you're doing the police beat?

VERONICA

I asked my editor for some variety. This is what I got. We're just a weekly newspaper; I have time for bigger stories.

CHARLIE

Ok. You can sit with me, but everything I say is off the record.

VERONICA

Deal.

Veronica extends her hand across the table and Charlie shakes it. ELLIOT KOFFMAN (47) walks to the table and stops.

ELLIOT

Big business deals going down?

VERONICA

Oh, hey, Elliot.

Veronica stands and gives Elliot a one-armed hug.
Charlie stands.

VERONICA

Elliot, this is...

Elliot cuts her off.

ELLIOT

I know Charlie LeBeau. Charlie
was a few years behind me in
school before I moved away.

Elliot shakes Charlie's hand. Elliot is a stocky five
feet nine inches on a muscular build. Elliot has dark,
short, curly, hair, and delicate facial features.

VERONICA

Elliot's my boss. He's the
editor, publisher, owner;
everything for the Chronicle.

CHARLIE

I forgot that you run the paper.
I like Chronicle. I subscribe.

ELLIOT

Great!

The waitress brings the burgers.

ELLIOT

I'll let you get back to lunch.
Good to see you Charlie. See you
at the office, Veronica.

Charlie and Veronica sit and begin eating burgers and
fries.

CHARLIE

You and Elliot an item?

VERONICA

(laughing)

Heavens no! Why would you ask that?

CHARLIE

I was just wondering. You don't wear a ring, but one never knows.

VERONICA

I don't see a ring on your finger.

Charlie leans back and wipes his mouth with a napkin.

CHARLIE

What's your story? You're not from around here.

VERONICA

I'm from Fargo, originally. My parents are dead. I took care of my mom while she was sick. I delayed going to college to take care of her.

CHARLIE

Cancer?

VERONICA

Yeah. She left me some money. So, I don't really have to do much. I did some volunteer social work down here in college. I liked it here, and came back.

CHARLIE

You were a Journalism major? Or a Sociologist?

VERONICA

Yup, yes a little of both. I took a little extra time getting through college. North Dakota State University Bison!

CHARLIE

I wouldn't say that too loudly.

VERONICA
(laughing)
Yeah, you're probably right.

CHARLIE
So, this is your first real job?

VERONICA
Yeah, I've been here just a couple years now. I'm getting my feet wet. You learn every aspect of the business working for a small town paper.

Veronica leans back.

VERONICA
What about you?

Charlie shrugs.

CHARLIE
Born and raised here on the Reservation. Spent a couple years in the Army. Came back home...

Charlie looks around the casino.

CHARLIE
Came back home, try to do some good by being a cop.

VERONICA
(nodding)
Very noble.

INT. CHARLIE'S POLICE TAHOE - NIGHT

Charlie and Veronica sit in the Tahoe. Charlie looks through his night vision scope. Veronica shivers.

VERONICA
Can't you at least roll your window up?

CHARLIE

I told you to dress warm. I need to be able to hear if somebody is approaching.

VERONICA

What is the deal? Why are you sitting on the shack?

CHARLIE

We're off the record, right?

VERONICA

Absolutely. I'm taking notes, but I swear they will sit until this crime is solved.

CHARLIE

I like your confidence.

Charlie drops the scope from his eye and looks at Veronica.

CHARLIE

The previous Deer Slayer crime scenes...

VERONICA

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Deer Slayer?

CHARLIE

Yeah, that's what we call the guy.

Veronica stares blankly, she shakes her head to say 'what?'

CHARLIE

The murderer hangs, guts, and sometimes skins the victims like a deer; and the murders have all been during the deer season.

Charlie notices a look on Veronica's face.

CHARLIE

You're not aware of the murders five years ago?

VERONICA

What?

CHARLIE

How do you not know this? You're supposed to be a reporter.

VERONICA

Wow. So mean and hurtful.

Veronica opens her notebook and writes.

VERONICA

I'll do some research.

CHARLIE

There was a lot of stuff never released on the previous murders that was repeated. We're pretty sure we got a serial killer here.

VERONICA

I can't believe this.

CHARLIE

I have some theories.

VERONICA

You want to share?

CHARLIE

You'll be the first to know when I do share.

VERONICA

Can't you give me something?

CHARLIE

I have. You're here aren't you?

VERONICA

Yeah, but...

CHARLIE

I'm pretty sure the killer came back to visit the murder scene on previous occasions. It was a small note in the file of the last murder.

VERONICA

Really? How...

CHARLIE

It was my note. I noticed tracks out of place on subsequent visits. The killer must get some sort of thrill coming to see his handiwork.

VERONICA

Wow. I must say. I am...shocked. What else? Care to share anything else.

CHARLIE

(smiling)

That's probably enough for tonight.

VERONICA

Come on. I'm completely intrigued now. Give me...

CHARLIE

(whispering)

Shhhhhh! Listen!

The faint HUM of a small engine approaches.

VERONICA

(whispering)

What is it?

CHARLIE

Snowmobile, I think.

Charlie scans the trees in the coulee with his night scope.

CHARLIE

You stay here.

EXT. SHACK - NIGHT

Charlie exits the vehicle and moves forward all the way to the shack. He presses himself against the building as the WHINE of the engine gets closer and then cuts out.

The snow CRUNCHES as the snowmobiler moves closer to Charlie. Charlie can't see the snowmobile or snowmobiler due to the steep coulee. Charlie re-grips his pistol in his hand and flashlight ready to surprise the intruder.

The helmet of the snowmobiler appears first over the slope just twenty-five yards from Charlie tucked around the corner of the shack. Charlie waits, twenty yards, fifteen yards, at ten yards Charlie steps around the corner.

CHARLIE

Freeze! Get down on the ground!

Charlie rushes forward snapping on his flashlight and aiming his gun and light at the snowmobiler.

The snowmobiler, wearing a helmet, freezes for a moment; but then flicks on his own million candlepower spotlight, blinding Charlie.

The snowmobiler turns and bolts to the bottom of the coulee.

Charlie staggers blindly, stunned by the light. In the Tahoe, Veronica turns the ignition starting the vehicle as Charlie moves to the bottom of the coulee still trying to recover his sight. A song like "All Over You" by Spill Canvas blares.

The snowmobile engine ROARS and its full throttle WHINES away the same way it arrived. Charlie redirects himself back up the coulee to the Tahoe.

INT. TAHOE - NIGHT

Charlie is in the Tahoe slamming it into gear and tearing down the two rut trail.

VERONICA

What are you doing?

CHARLIE

Get your seatbelt on!

The Tahoe bounces down the two rut trail plowing through drifts.

VERONICA

We can't catch him!

Veronica finally is able to latch her belt between roller coaster bounces.

CHARLIE

We're going to try to get to higher ground to observe. I've got a guess where he might go.

A large crusted drift redirects the Tahoe off the trail into the shallow ditch. The Tahoe is stuck. Charlie bangs his hands down on the steering wheel.

VERONICA

(breathing hard)

Oh my, God. Do you think that was the killer?

Charlie throws his head back and stares up at the roof of the Tahoe. He heaves a sigh. The song like "All Over You" by Spill Canvas plays on the radio.

INT. SISSETON REDMEN HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

Nat walks from the locker room to the basketball court with his new teammates in his practice shorts and jersey. He sports a short haircut. A fellow player tosses him a ball from the rack.

Nat takes a dribble and launches a shot from the three point line and swishes it. Someone throws him a ball, he catches it on the move and shoots, swish.

Nat knocks down shot after shot from everywhere on the floor and soon everyone is gathered around watching the shooting display. The COACH wanders over and observes with a smile.

After eighteen out twenty made baskets by Nat, Coach blows the whistle and begins practice in earnest.

INT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Breakfast starts the day, and Charlie wears his jacket and hat, drinks orange juice and eats a banana at the sink as Nat sits at the table eating cereal and reading the box.

CHARLIE

How was practice yesterday?

NAT

Good.

Nat doesn't look up as he answers. Silence as they eat.

CHARLIE

Did you find all the classrooms
ok? You didn't get lost?

More silence.

NAT

(still reading)

Nope, I found my classes.

Charlie drains his juice and tosses the peel in the trash. Nat points at the trash, but doesn't look up from the back of the cereal box.

NAT

You should think about a compost
heap. You know, for banana peels
and junk.

Charlie looks at the trash.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I'll get right on that. How
about your hair? Anybody say
anything?

NAT

Nope.

CHARLIE

Ok, then. Good talk. I'll see
you tonight for supper.

Charlie heads for the door pulling his gloves on. He opens the door and his truck is running; warming on the cold morning.

CHARLIE

You're coming deer huntin' this
weekend. Get your stuff ready.

Nat holds up his thumb without looking up from the cereal box as he reads.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHARLIE'S TRAILER - DAY

The sun is rising and Charlie's phone BUZZES as he enters the truck.

INT. CHARLIE'S TRUCK - DAY

Charlie answers the phone.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE

I'm on my way in now. You got my
message on the stake out from last
night?

Charlie listens and buckles his seatbelt. He puts the truck in gear.

CHARLIE

I'll be there in ten minutes. We
can talk about it.

Charlie closes his phone and heads down the driveway to the county road.

INT. CHARLIE'S TRUCK - DAY

Charlie winds his way on snow covered gravel roads; snow drifts reach across roads from the slight breeze. He passes by the trail to the murder scene shack and the divot in the snow he had to dig himself out of the night before.

Charlie turns down another gravel road and circles west delaying his trip for a few minutes to scout the roads he didn't get a chance to see after he got stuck the night before.

Charlie's phone rings and he answers it as he spies an object just ahead on the side of the road.

CHARLIE

Hello?

Charlie slows and keeps driving forward.

CHARLIE

Lake Traverse? Stolen snowmobile?

Charlie pulls up next to a snowmobile alongside the road. A drift has formed around it covering about a foot of the machine.

CHARLIE

Let me guess. The missing sled is a black and orange, Firefox, Arctic Cat.

Charlie puts the truck in park and rolls down the window to look at the snowmobile.

CHARLIE

How did I know? I'm looking at it right here.

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE

I'm not kidding you. Come on out, Skip. We'll collect some evidence. Bring a trailer. I'll wait.

EXT. BALE STACK - DAY

Charlie and Nat sit atop the bale stack dressed in heavy hunting clothes and blaze orange vests. They scan the trees and fields for deer.

NAT

Can I ask you a question, Uncle Charlie?

CHARLIE

Sure.

NAT

What was my dad like?

Nat sits on the bales holding his knees, not bothering to even keep an eye out for deer.

CHARLIE

He was a living contradiction. He didn't want to be stuck in traditional Indian ways, yet he wanted to stay on the reservation and help the people.

NAT

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

He didn't go by his full last name, Chasing Wolf. He shortened it to just Wolf.

NAT

Really?

CHARLIE

I only knew him a short time. I introduced him to your mom after we were roommates at the BIA police academy.

Charlie scans the trees with his binoculars.

CHARLIE

He was a smart guy. Probably should have been with the FBI, but, like I said, he wanted to come back and help the people. The FBI would have assigned anywhere.

NAT

It's weird. My dad was dead before I was even born.

CHARLIE

I know. Being a police officer is dangerous. We all know the risks when we sign up, but you never think it will be you or somebody you know.

NAT

You know, I don't really think about it that way. I'm just lucky I had you and Grandpa always around. It's like I had two dads.

CHARLIE

Speaking of Grandpa, we got to get a deer. He drives me nuts asking about filling his tags.

Nat laughs. He stands and scans the area with his binoculars.

CHARLIE

Everything ok at school?

NAT

Yeah. Hey, I'm sorry. I'm not much of a morning person. I know our conversation was kind of weird at breakfast the other day.

CHARLIE

Same here. I guess we got that in common; mornings don't agree with us. Basketball ok?

NAT

Sure.

CHARLIE

What about the offense? You know it?

NAT

Same flex offense everyone runs. It's just a matter of execution.

CHARLIE

You gonna run the point?

NAT

Nah, I'll be a two guard, but I can run point if necessary or as a change of pace.

The sun goes down behind the hills of the Coteau Des Prairie.

NAT

Where are all the deer?

CHARLIE

I don't know. It's been a slow start to the season.

Charlie picks up his rifle from the top of the bales.

CHARLIE

Ya ready to head back?

Nat grabs his rifle.

NAT

Yup. Let's go.

Nat slides down a big round bale. His foot catches in a loop of loose baling twine and he is spun around and suddenly hanging upside down by his foot.

NAT

Whoa! Noooo! Help! Uncle Charlie, help!

His rifle plunges into the snow bank below.

Charlie jumps down to help his nephew.

CHARLIE

Are you ok?

NAT

Yeah. Just get me down!

Charlie laughs.

CHARLIE

Just a sec.

Charlie grabs his cell phone from his pocket. A song like "Return To Innocence" by Enigma plays quietly in the background.

CHARLIE

Just need a couple photos for the record.

NAT

Oh, come on. Do you have to do that?

CHARLIE

Just like your mom. Oh, so graceful.

NAT

Just get me down.

Charlie puts his phone away and pulls out a knife.

NAT

Wait, wait, wait, wait! Let me get a hold of something!

It's too late, Charlie cuts the twine and Nat bounces off the lowest row of bales and plows head first into a snow drift.

NAT

Thanks a lot.

Charlie pulls his phone out again.

CHARLIE

One more photo for the scrapbook.

Nat rights himself and brushes snow from his head and shoulders.

INT. BIA POLICE STATION - DAY

Charlie moves through the office on his way to see Captain Kipp. He passes the administrative assistant, KATHY (28).

CHARLIE

Morning, Kathy.

KATHY

Hi, Charlie. Skip wants to see you.

CHARLIE

That's where I'm going.

Charlie keeps walking down the hall. He knocks on a door and enters. Captain Kipp sits at his desk.

SKIP

Mornin', Charlie. Close the door and have a seat.

Charlie shuts the door and sits.

SKIP

First of all, we got another report on a stolen four wheeler from the Big Coulee District.

CHARLIE

No kidding?

SKIP

Mattingly ranch called it in. I want you to go out and take a statement. I'll be surprised if it's related to the Deer Slayer, but check it our thoroughly.

Charlie leans forward in his chair to stand.

SKIP

Not so fast.

CHARLIE

Oh?

Charlie leans back.

SKIP

We got your friend from the FBI
waiting for you in interview room
two.

CHARLIE

(laughing)

Really? What took them so long to
get here?

SKIP

(shrugging)

Go talk to him.

CHARLIE

With pleasure.

SKIP

Charlie...

Skip raises an admonishing finger as Charlie stands to
leave.

SKIP

Be nice.

CHARLIE

Aren't I always?

Charlie smiles and leaves.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM TWO - DAY

FBI agent Austin Brown (35) a Tommy Lee Jones lookalike
stands next to the mirror as Charlie enters the room.

CHARLIE

Agent Brown, how goes it?

Charlie shakes Brown's hand and sits.

AGENT BROWN

Same old, same old.

CHARLIE

Where's your partner.

AGENT BROWN

Dead.

Any hint of smile is wiped from Charlie's face.

CHARLIE

Are you serious?

AGENT BROWN

Do I ever joke around?

CHARLIE

No. What happened to Agent Lawrence?

AGENT BROWN

Heart attack.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, man. Geez.

Charlie puts his hands up in surrender.

CHARLIE

How can I help you?

Agent Brown, in a dark suit and dark tie, sits at the table across from Charlie.

AGENT BROWN

Give me whatever you got on the case.

CHARLIE

(nodding)

The Deer Slayer case.

AGENT BROWN

Deer Slayer? That's what you're calling him? Nice.

CHARLIE

Skip came up with it.

AGENT BROWN

Kudos to him. It's catchy.

CHARLIE

We don't have much. Same modus operandi as before. Can you help us out?

AGENT BROWN

Well, you got a little blip on D.C.'s radar. We've poured over the national records for similar kills, but we got nothin'.

Charlie shrugs and shakes his head.

AGENT BROWN

You got your very own isolated serial killer here. So, what are you workin' on now?

CHARLIE

I'm talking to people that had their snowmobiles and four wheelers stolen. These stolen vehicles might have been involved in the murderer's getaway.

AGENT BROWN

Sheesh? That's all you got? You really don't have much.

CHARLIE

I don't know what to tell you, Agent Brown. We didn't have anything five years ago, we got nothing now. For all I know it'll be another five years before we see anything new...When the Deer Slayer strikes again.

AGENT BROWN

You got my contact info. If anything, and I mean anything comes up, you let me know.

CHARLIE

Sure.

The men stand and shake hands.

INT. SISSETON REDMEN GYM - DAY

The Redmen Boys basketball team practices.

COACH KINNEY

Nat, switch your jersey. You're going with the starters as the number two. Curt, your on defense, switch your jersey.

CURT SWENSON (18) stands with an incredulous look on his face. COACH DAN KINNEY (35) a tall and lanky former college player claps his hands.

COACH KINNEY

Come on Curt, switch your jersey. Let's run it.

Curt switches his jersey in disgust at the demotion from the starting team.

The point guard brings the ball from half court and the offense starts its motion. Nat moves to set a screen and Curt throws an elbow to Nat's eye. Nat drops to the floor and the whistle SCREECHES.

COACH KINNEY

What are you doing, Curt!

Nat rolls on the floor holding his eye. He recovers and gets to his knee looking for Curt. Curt stands over Nat with the rest of his teammates looking down at Nat. Nat's eye is swollen shut, but he springs forward at Curt landing a punch deep in Curt's gut. Curt drops knocked out of wind.

Coach Kinney blows the WHISTLE as Nat's teammates restrain him.

COACH KINNEY
That is enough! Curt, locker room, now!

A teammate helps Curt get to his feet and Curt leaves the court doubled over as he makes his way to the lockers.

COACH KINNEY
Nat, come here.

Nat moves over to the coach. Coach Kinney looks at his eye.

COACH KINNEY
We need to get some ice on this. Come to my office.

Coach Kinney puts his arm around Nat's shoulder. Coach turns to the players just standing around.

COACH KINNEY
Free throws! Everyone on the free throw line 'til I get back.

Coach Kinney walks with Nat to the Coach's Office.

COACH KINNEY
Don't worry, Nat. You're not in trouble. I saw what Curt did. It wasn't an accidental elbow.

Nat walks with his hand over his eye. He acknowledges the coach with a nod.

COACH KINNEY
I'll give your uncle a call to pick you up. You might have to see a doctor.

INT. CHARLIE'S POLICE TAHOE - NIGHT

Nat gets inside vehicle and turns to face Charlie. Charlie flips on the interior lights.

CHARLIE

Holy Cow! What happened?

NAT

Didn't Coach Kinney tell you?

CHARLIE

No.

NAT

I had a little run in with an elbow.

CHARLIE

I can see that. The question is can you see?

NAT

I'll be fine. I've had worse.

CHARLIE

I can run you over to the Indian Health emergency room. They'll get you in right away. You're with me and they know me.

NAT

Let's just go home.

Charlie puts the Tahoe in gear.

CHARLIE

How's the other guy look?

NAT

I may look worse for the wear, but he won't forget who he was messing with.

Nat holds up his fists.

NAT

Need to remember you're messing with thunder and lightning...donner and blitzen as the Germans say.

CHARLIE
(smiles)
Good to hear.

EXT. BING'S RESORT PICKEREL LAKE - DAY

Inside the ATV and snowmobile sales shop, Charlie shakes hands with a man and exits. He draws his phone from his pocket and dials as he walks to his police Tahoe.

CHARLIE
Hey, Skip. I'm over here at
Pickerel Lake. Just finished
taking the statement on the
umpteenth stolen snowmobile
report.

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE
I just thought I'd check in and
see if there is anything else that
might need to be checked out in
this area.

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE
Please tell me you don't have any
other stolen snowmobiles reported.

Charlie laughs and listens.

CHARLIE
All right. I'll be back in the
office in an hour or so.
Charlie reaches his Tahoe and
climbs inside.

INT. CHARLIE'S POLICE TAHOE - DAY

Charlie fires up the engine. He scrolls through his contacts on his phone and dials.

CHARLIE
Hey, Veronica. It's Charlie.
What are you doing?

Charlie listens and smiles.

CHARLIE

I got a couple offers for you.

Charlie listens and checks out his surroundings.

CHARLIE

I was wondering if you want to get a steak at the bowling alley with me. They have the best steaks in town if you didn't know.

Charlie listens as he notices tracks in the snow off the road where a vehicle made a three point turn around.

CHARLIE

Ok, that sounds good. Six thirty at the bowling alley. I'll meet you there.

Charlie listens as he stares at the tracks out of place.

CHARLIE

Oh, the other thing? Do you want to go to the game on Friday? My nephew's first game with the Redmen.

Charlie turns the engine off as he listens.

CHARLIE

There's something I want to talk to you about.

Charlie listens as he opens his door.

CHARLIE

I'm just over here at Pickerel Lake getting a report on another stolen snowmobile. That's what I want to talk to you about.

Charlie exits the vehicle as he listens.

EXT. BING'S ENTRANCE ROAD - DAY

CHARLIE

Ok, I'll see you tonight.

Charlie walks to the tire tracks in the snow. He holds his phone out and photographs the pattern of the tire track left in the snow.

CHARLIE

Hmmph.

Charlie looks around the area seeing the lakeside cabins and the frozen lake with a few ice fishing shacks. He looks at the tire track on the side of the road that serves the cabins and Bing's. He shrugs and walks back to his Tahoe.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A WAITRESS leads Charlie to a table where Veronica types on her laptop. Her notebook is open on the table and she closes both as Charlie sits.

CHARLIE

Don't you ever give it a rest?

VERONICA

Just trying to preserve my notes.

Charlie smiles and waves an admonishing finger at Veronica.

CHARLIE

This is still off the record.

VERONICA

Absolutely.

CHARLIE

Ok then.

Charlie scoots his chair closer to the table. A waitress brings water and menus. Charlie sips from his glass of water. A song like "Looking For Love" by Johnny Lee plays overhead.

VERONICA

So, you wanted to talk about something? Don't keep me in suspense.

Veronica leans in. Charlie raises his eyebrows and sips more water. Charlie looks around the restaurant and leans close and speaks softly.

CHARLIE

It's all these stolen snowmobiles. I had a theory.

VERONICA

Oh, yeah?

CHARLIE

I know we saw the killer on the snowmobile, and I'm pretty sure we recovered that snowmobile.

VERONICA

But?

CHARLIE

But why all the other stolen machines? Is he going to kill again? Or is it just some diversion?

VERONICA

Huh.

CHARLIE

All these stolen machines, they are never new models. He is trying not to draw attention. New one goes missing; we'd get a call right away.

Veronica nods.

CHARLIE

Most of the reports I've filled out; people don't have a clue when the snowmobile or four wheeler went missing. Days or weeks could have gone by before they notice.

VERONICA

I just can't imagine another murder. All this attention right now? That'd be crazy.

CHARLIE

Crazy is an understatement for the Deer Slayer. Maniacal, that's the word I've settled on.

The waitress returns and they order steaks.

VERONICA

So, what's the FBI saying?

Charlie raises his eyebrows.

CHARLIE

Hmmm. FBI? I see you've done some homework.

VERONICA

Oh, please. Those guys stick out like a sore thumb. They roll into town with the subtlety of an eclipse of the sun.

CHARLIE

The FBI has nada. Nothing in the national database that matches our killings.

VERONICA

Oh, I guess we're special then?

CHARLIE

(laughing)

Yeah, that's what FBI Agent Brown said.

VERONICA

Unique for all the wrong reasons.

The steaks arrive and they dig in. Elliot Koffman appears from the bowling alley lanes wearing his bowling shoes and shirt.

ELLIOT

Hi, guys.

CHARLIE

Elliot. How you rollin' 'em?

ELLIOT

Good, for me. I'm just trying to break a hundred.

Charlie chuckles.

ELLIOT

Veronica tells me she got a scoop; an exclusive interview with your nephew.

CHARLIE

Come on already, he hasn't even played a game.

ELLIOT

I guarantee we'll be selling extra copies when his interview comes out. The coach even called me to make sure I come to the game.

Elliot looks to the lanes.

ELLIOT

I'll let you eat. I gotta go finish my third game. See you guys.

Elliot leaves.

CHARLIE

That guy cracks me up.

VERONICA

Be nice. We can't all be tall,
handsome, and athletic like you.

CHARLIE

So,
(chewing and swallowing)
You wanna go with me to the game
on Friday? Or are you workin'?

VERONICA

I can do both; I'm sure I can make
some time. Maybe you can arrange
an exclusive interview for me with
the new, star player.

CHARLIE

He hasn't even played yet.

VERONICA

(laughing)
It's not a secret. Word's out
that we have a bona fide All-State
player on the team since, I don't
know...you?

Charlie shakes his head and takes another bite of his
steak.

INT. SISSETON REDMEN GYM - NIGHT

Veronica sits next to Charlie in the crowded bleachers.
The Sisseton Redmen face their rival, the Britton Braves.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Nat steals the ball and gets an easy layup.
- Nat launches a long three point shot that swishes.
- The crowd cheers wildly.
- Nat weaves through opposing players and dishes to
teammate for an easy basket.
- Scoreboard shows Sisseton 65 Britton 40 at the end of
the third quarter.

-A substitute comes in for Nat at the whistle for a turnover. Nat exits to standing ovation.

Minnesota Rouser, the Sisseton Redmen school song is played by the pep band.

Charlie and Veronica stand and clap with the crowd. Veronica leans over and talks into Charlie's ear above the crowd noise.

VERONICA

How many points did Nat have?
Thirty?

Charlie shrugs and shakes his head. He leans in toward Veronica.

CHARLIE

Twenty-five, maybe?

Charlie makes eye contact with Nat as Nat grabs a towel and acknowledges the crowd with a wave. Nat gives Charlie the slightest of nods and Charlie returns the gesture and adds a thumbs up as he claps.

VERONICA

(shaking her head)
Your nephew is something else.

The crowd sits as play resumes with the second teams in to play out the fourth quarter.

Charlie looks around as he feels a tap on his shoulder. Captain Kipp leans down and whispers in his ear. Charlie nods and Kipp turns and leaves.

Charlie leans over and whispers to Veronica.

CHARLIE

Something's happened.

Charlie points to Captain Kipp walking out the side exit door.

CHARLIE

My boss, Captain Kipp, wants me to go talk to a witness.

Veronica's eyes widen.

VERONICA

A witness in the Deer Slayer case?

Charlie shrugs. He leans over and kisses Veronica on the cheek. Veronica blushes and covers the kissed cheek with her hand.

VERONICA

Call me later!

Charlie gives her a wave as he walks away and out the same side exit, following Captain Kipp.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Charlie and Skip look through a window into a patient's room. A skinny teenage boy with a shock of red hair lies on the bed with an oxygen mask on his face. His eyes are closed as nurses hover over him. He is under a heavy blanket.

SKIP

He said he was kidnapped.

CHARLIE

And?

SKIP

He escaped.

CHARLIE

Really? Not just some prank gone way wrong?

SKIP

I don't think so. He was found naked on Main Street, staggering down the sidewalk.

CHARLIE

Hmmm.

SKIP

Hmmm, is right. He said he was drugged.

CHARLIE

Hmmm.

SKIP

He woke up in the trunk of a car,
tied up. He managed to work his
way loose.

CHARLIE

With those toothpick arms of his,
I bet it would be tough to keep
him bound.

SKIP

The new cars have a safety latch
in the trunk nowadays. He felt
the car stop, musta been at the
four-way, and made a run for it.

CHARLIE

Nobody saw anything?

SKIP

Everybody's at the game tonight.
Great game by Nat, at least
according to the radio.

CHARLIE

He played all right.

SKIP

Anyhoo, his name is Lonnie
Caldwell. He's a high school
senior from Milbank. His parents
are in route.

CHARLIE

That's it?

SKIP

He doesn't remember. One minute
he was in school, next minute,
Sisseton Hospital. He doesn't
even remember being naked in the
street.

CHARLIE

Roofie?

SKIP

Probably.

CHARLIE

Can I talk to him?

SKIP

Sure.

The men enter the room with the patient.

INT. PATIENT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lonnie tries to lift his heavy eyelids as the men approach his bed.

SKIP

You remember anything else, son?

Lonnie shakes his head from side to side.

Charlie reaches for Lonnie's wrist. He turns over the boy's hand recognizing the bruises. The black and blue marks on Lonnie's wrist match the looping knots of the Deer Slayer.

CHARLIE

I've seen enough.

SKIP

Your parents will be here soon,
son.

Skip and Charlie leave the room.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Charlie and Skip resume their positions looking through the window at Lonnie.

CHARLIE

He's a victim all right. The
bruises on his wrist.

SKIP

Yeah?

CHARLIE

Same knots as the other Deer
Slayer victims. Tied by a lefty.

Skip gives a low whistle.

SKIP

My God. The Deer Slayer is way
off his pattern.

CHARLIE

No kidding.

SKIP

Are you sure about all this?

CHARLIE

Pretty sure. It's not that common
of a knot, but the military uses
them for transport tie downs.
That's where I saw 'em, Desert
Storm.

SKIP

So, Deer Slayer is likely a
veteran.

Skip nods.

SKIP

I'll give Agent Brown at the FBI a
call.

CHARLIE

Check his body for stun gun burns.
You'll probably find 'em.

EXT. RED IRON LAKE - DAY

Charlie stands next to a snow drift on the middle of the
frozen lake. A handle bar and a tire protrude from the
snow.

Charlie talks on his cell phone.

CHARLIE

Hey, Skip. Send a truck over to Red Iron.

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE

From the tip on a stolen four wheeler.

Charlie listens

CHARLIE

Smack dab in the middle of the lake.

Charlie listens and looks around.

CHARLIE

Only about three or four ice fishing houses.

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE

Come on out, I'll wait for ya.

INT. HOLIDAY GAS STATION - DAY

Charlie and Veronica sit at a booth having coffee. They watch Marvin at the register. A song like "Trouble" by Lindsey Buckingham plays softly overhead.

VERONICA

That guy? He's your suspect?

CHARLIE

(whispering)
Shush! Keep it down!

VERONICA

He's old, plus he's got a cast on his foot.

CHARLIE

That's where I need your help. I want to see if he's faking.

VERONICA

Really?

CHARLIE

I was wondering if you could run to Watertown.

VERONICA

Sure.

CHARLIE

Just go into the Lake Region Clinic, call Sisseton Hospital, and tell them to fax the x-rays and diagnosis to this number.

Charlie hands her his card with the fax number and the Sisseton Hospital number.

VERONICA

Shouldn't you have a warrant?

CHARLIE

Probably.

VERONICA

So, get one.

CHARLIE

I don't want to risk alerting anyone.

VERONICA

Ok, I'll do my best, but why Watertown?

CHARLIE

Caller ID. They won't even think twice about the records once they see the clinic ID on their phone.

VERONICA

Why don't you do it?

CHARLIE

I have some other business to take care of.

Marvin waves at Charlie and heads over. Charlie kicks Veronica under the table.

VERONICA

Ouch!

CHARLIE

Shhh. He's coming over. Act normal!

EXT. DEW DROP INN BAR - NIGHT

Charlie pulls his Police Tahoe into the parking lot just outside the Britton City limits. He enters the bar.

INT. DEW DROP INN BAR - NIGHT

Charlie scans the sparse crowd from the door way. There is a raucous conversation and laughter at the far end of the bar. Charlie sees ZEKE GONZALEZ (38) surrounded by two other men. He approaches the group. From the jukebox, a song like "Y'all Come Back Saloon" by the Oak Ridge Boys plays at a low volume.

CHARLIE

Remember me, Zeke?

Zeke stands at six foot four and two hundred fifty pounds. He wears a black biker jacket, jeans and a blue bandana on his head. He sports a thin mustache. Small circular designer glasses are out of place on his face.

ZEKE

Charlie LeBeau? You're a cop?

Zeke pushes away from the two men and hugs Charlie.

CHARLIE

Yeah, for the last fifteen years.

ZEKE

I have son that's going to the police academy out in Bakersfield.

CHARLIE

Good. Good. What brings you around these parts?

ZEKE

My mom. She's been a little under the weather.

CHARLIE

Sorry to hear that.

ZEKE

She's in the assisted living center over here in Britton. It's funny. I got an anonymous note and five hundred cash in the mail saying to come see my mom.

CHARLIE

What?

ZEKE

I thought it was my mom, pranking me. I don't need the money. I own a landscaping business back in California; my mom knows I got money.

Zeke shrugs.

ZEKE

I thought it was my mom sending money and a note to get me out here. She denies it all and she doesn't have an extra five hundred bucks.

Charlie digs some money out of his pocket and throws it on the bar.

CHARLIE

I gotta go, but Victor Crawford wanted me to buy you a drink if I saw you.

ZEKE

No kiddin'?

Charlie shakes Zeke's hand.

ZEKE

Good to see you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You too, Zeke.

INT. DAKOTA CONNECTION CASINO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Veronica and Charlie have a late supper. Veronica sits with her laptop and notebook on the table. The meal is over and the couple talks about their investigations.

VERONICA

I did as you said. I went to Watertown and made the call.

Veronica looks at her notebook.

VERONICA

According to my notes, it was 2:30 pm when I called.

CHARLIE

(smiling)

I got the records in my office. Good job.

Charlie frowns.

CHARLIE

Unfortunately for both Marvin and us, he really has a broken foot. So, he's off the suspect list.

VERONICA

What about you? Where'd you go?

CHARLIE

I was over in Britton. There was a guy I went to school with; he's back in the area. It was a dead end.

A song like "Want To" by Sugarland plays softly in the Casino Restaurant.

VERONICA

Just a coincidence, huh?

Veronica writes in her notebook.

CHARLIE

It's a weird deal though. It was like somebody was setting him up to be here. They sent him money and said his mom was sick... anonymously.

VERONICA

Wow.

Veronica writes again.

CHARLIE

Hey! This is always off the record! Stop writing!

VERONICA

This is for my book! After you solve the case, I'm going to write a book about it.

Veronica smiles and Charlie laughs.

CHARLIE

I wish I had your confidence in solving the case.

VERONICA

What are you doing tomorrow?

CHARLIE

I have to run over to the BIA Regional Office in Aberdeen. I'm picking up some new computer equipment.

VERONICA

Ok. Tomorrow's a big day for the paper. We got the final proof of the stories before printing...

CHARLIE

That's right. I'm looking forward to your exclusive interview with Nat.

VERONICA

It includes some nice photos too.

CHARLIE

I can't wait.

Elliot Koffman approaches their table.

VERONICA

Hi, Elliot. What's up?

ELLIOT

I was just getting some fuel. I saw the police vehicle and wondered if you were here also.

VERONICA

I was just going to head back to the office to do some final editing before we go to print.

ELLIOT

I guess I'll see you there. Bye.

Elliot leaves. Charlie looks at Veronica and shakes his head.

CHARLIE

Looks like you got yourself a little stalker.

VERONICA

(laughing)

Shut up!

CHARLIE

Wherever you are, there he is. It's amazing.

VERONICA

No! This is just a small town.

CHARLIE

Well, I don't know about you, but
I'm going to keep an eye on
him...and you.

Charlie points two fingers at his eyes and then one
finger at Veronica. Veronica playfully slaps his hand.

VERONICA

Stop it! You jealous?

Charlie stands and takes out some money.

VERONICA

I'll get it. You keep your money.

CHARLIE

Ok. Maybe, I'll see you later
tomorrow.

VERONICA

I've gotta make a couple more
notes here before I leave.

Charlie starts to walk away, but stops. He comes back
and kisses Veronica, deeply on the mouth.

CHARLIE

Thanks for supper.

Charlie starts to walk away.

CHARLIE

Make sure and grab me some extra
copies of the paper. I can't wait
to see that interview.

Veronica smiles and waves.

EXT. ABERDEEN BIA REGIONAL OFFICE - DAY

Charlie hauls equipment to his Tahoe. His phone
vibrates. Charlie tosses two more boxes into the back
seat and he answers his phone.

CHARLIE

Hey, Skip. What's up?

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE
What!?! In the Chronicle?

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE
Oh, Geez. I'm heading back right
now.

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE
Yeah, yeah. See ya.

A song like "Some Fools Never Learn" by Steve Wariner
plays on the radio.

INT. SISSETON CHRONICLE PUBLISH OFFICE - NIGHT

Veronica sits at a desk, alone; her laptop in front of
her. She chews on a fingernail.

The door CHIMES as somebody enters the office.

CHARLIE
(yelling)
How could you?!?

Veronica stands as Charlie crosses the room to Veronica's
desk.

CHARLIE
How could you do this to me?!?!

Charlie slams a newspaper down on her desk. The headline
shows: POLICE TIE STOLEN SNOWMOBILES TO MURDERS

A smaller headline indicates: LOCAL BUSINESSMAN AND
FORMER RESIDENT ARE SUSPECTS IN 'DEER SLAYER' MURDERS?

VERONICA
Listen, Charlie, I didn't do it.

CHARLIE
I trusted you. All this was off
the record!

Charlie turns and marches away.

VERONICA

Charlie, wait!

Charlie exits. The song like "Some Fools Never Learn" by Steve Wariner picks up louder.

EXT. BALE STACK - DAY

Nat and Charlie sit on the bale stack in the still air on a cold, overcast day.

NAT

So, you and Ms. Lewis aren't seeing each other anymore?

CHARLIE

Nope.

NAT

She keeps calling the house.

CHARLIE

I know.

NAT

She's nice.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

A herd of ten deer race out of the trees and cut across the snow covered corn field at full speed. Nat and Charlie grab their rifles as the deer disappear back into the trees.

NAT

What the heck? I wonder what scared them.

CHARLIE

Listen.

A MURMUR of a snowmobile engine in the distance draws Charlie's and Nat's attention.

NAT

A snowmobile coming up the draw?
Kicked up the deer I bet.

CHARLIE

Nobody but you and I have
permission to hunt or be here.

Charlie sets his rifle down on the bale stack and looks through his binoculars. The WHIR of the snowmobile engine stops.

CHARLIE

I think I see somebody moving over
there.

A man in snow camouflage moves in and out of the trees.

Nat stands with his binoculars and looks toward the trees.

NAT

I don't see him.

CHARLIE

I think he's in the bottom of the
draw.

NAT

He's probably stalking a big buck
right out from under us.

CHARLIE

He wasn't wearing his hunter
orange.

A couple minutes pass. Charlie scans the area intently. Two hundred yards from where he last spotted the man, Charlie sees the slightest of a glint of light.

The man is pointing a rifle at Charlie using a forked tree as a rest.

CHARLIE

Get down!

Charlie pushes Nat off the bale stack and Nat flops off the bales bouncing off the lower bales into the snow.

NAT

Oof!

A ZING of a bullet ripping through the air overhead is followed by a CRACK and ECHOING ROAR of the rifle.

Charlie ducks behind his bale. The stock of Nat's rifle explodes, resting on the top bale, hit by the sniper's bullet.

Charlie reaches for his rifle on top of the bales and pulls it to him; he crawls along the bales to the where he can peer around the corner. Charlie fires his rifle in the direction of the sniper.

CHARLIE

Nat!

Charlie fires two more shots and digs for more bullets.

CHARLIE

Nat! Are you ok!

Charlie looks for the sniper and sees nobody. Charlie jumps down from the bales to Nat's side.

NAT

My ribs! I got the wind knocked out of me.

Charlie hands Nat his pistol.

CHARLIE

Burrow into the bales and don't move until I come get you!

NAT

(straining)

Ok.

The ROAR of a snowmobile engine at full throttle pierces the air. Charlie runs for his old pickup parked three hundred yards away.

Charlie jumps in his pickup and tears northward down the drifted section road in the direction of the snowmobile.

INT. CHARLIE'S OLD TRUCK - DAY

Charlie clears the trees of the coulee flying down the road. He spots the snowmobile cutting diagonally across a snow covered harvested wheat field.

A song like "Ain't No Rest For the Wicked" by Cage the Elephant plays.

Charlie turns to the east down a gravel road and speeds down a mile before turning north hoping to intercept the snowmobile.

A grove of trees blocks the view of the open field and Charlie slows in hopes of catching a glimpse of the snowmobile.

Charlie sees a cloud of snow before he sees the machine top a swale in the field. He punches the gas trying to intercept the point where the snowmobile will cross the road.

The snowmobile bounces wildly across the drifts in the field. Charlie slams on his brakes and slides to a halt on the gravel road. Charlie looks in disbelief.

The driverless snowmobile hits the ditch of the road and launches in the air. It tumbles and crashes into trees of the adjoining coulee on the other side of the road.

Charlie exits the vehicle.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

The snowmobile engine SCREAMS as Charlie approaches rifle in hand. The battered machine has thrown its track and the engine ROARS unabated. Charlie moves to the machine and presses the kill switch.

Charlie pulls his phone from his shirt pocket and dials.

CHARLIE

Hey, Skip. How quickly can you
get to my house?

Charlie listens.

CHARLIE
I need you there as soon as
possible.

EXT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Veronica waits by her car as Charlie pulls into the yard.
Charlie exits his truck.

CHARLIE
Get out of here! I don't have
time to talk to you.

VERONICA
Charlie, please! It was Elliot.
He had some spyware on my computer
or something!

CHARLIE
I don't have time to hear this.
Somebody just took some shots at
me and Nat when we were sitting on
the bale stack waiting for a deer.

Veronica moves to hug Charlie.

CHARLIE
Are you hurt?

Charlie pushes past Veronica.

CHARLIE
Go inside and wait. I got to go
get Nat.

Veronica goes up the steps to the trailer. Charlie
drives down the two rut trail to the bale stack.

INT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Veronica moves through the trailer to the kitchen her
hands shake as she gets a glass of water and sips.

CLAUDE (OS)
Charlie? Did you get my deer?

Veronica drops the glass on the floor.

VERONICA

Ahhhh!

Claude moves from his bedroom to the living room looking into the kitchen.

CLAUDE

Who's here?

VERONICA

It's me, Veronica. You scared me.
I didn't know anybody was here.

CLAUDE

Oh, you're Charlie's friend, the
reporter. I'm Claude. I'm
Charlie's dad.

A car door SLAMS outside. Claude looks out the window.

CLAUDE

Skip's here.

Skip moves up the steps and KNOCKS. Claude lets him inside.

CLAUDE

Hey, Skip! What are you doing
here?

SKIP

Where's Charlie?

VERONICA

He had to go get Nat.

SKIP

Veronica? Why are you here?

Charlie's truck ROARS into the yard. Nat and Charlie come into the house.

SKIP

What's going on Charlie?

Charlie hands over Nat's rifle with a splintered stock to Skip.

CHARLIE

Some sniper came by snowmobile through the woods and took some shots at us. That's all.

SKIP

Holy Cow! Who was it?

Skip examines the rifle as he listens.

CHARLIE

We couldn't see who it was.

CLAUDE

Are you ok?

CHARLIE

I pushed Nat off the bale stack.

NAT

I got knocked out of wind, but I'm fine.

CHARLIE

C'mon, Skip, I'll show you the snowmobile. Same M.O. as the slayer. He used a diversion with the snowmobile to get away.

VERONICA

Charlie, can I just talk to you for two minutes? In private? Just two minutes.

Everyone looks to Charlie. Charlie nods.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

VERONICA

You have to believe me. It was Elliot that wrote those articles. He must have spyware on my computer.

Charlie frowns.

VERONICA

He's some kinda computer whiz. He was Army Intel or something in Desert Storm. He knows all kinds of computer stuff.

CHARLIE

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Elliot was in the Army?

VERONICA

Yeah. Why?

CHARLIE

It's him. It's gotta be him.

Charlie kisses Veronica and bolts from the room down the hall.

CHARLIE

Skip! Hey Skip!

Veronica puts her hand to her kissed mouth.

VERONICA

What just happened?

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - DAY

Veronica and Charlie sit on the street. A song like "Young Love" by Sonny James plays quietly on the radio.

CHARLIE

You sure you got it?

VERONICA

I got it. I got it!

CHARLIE

Are you positive you can do this?

VERONICA

I told Elliot I was glad we were exposing the truth before I left. I didn't know what to do.

CHARLIE

You get to his computer. Just say you need to check something on the internet, and your computer is broken. I'll come in after ten minutes with a fake warrant, arrest you, and take your computer.

Charlie makes air quotes on the word "your."

CHARLIE

It's gonna work.

VERONICA

Ok.

Charlie kisses Veronica.

CHARLIE

Let me just say I'm sorry in advance.

VERONICA

For what?

CHARLIE

The handcuffs, they are going to hurt. I want to make it seem real.

Charlie gets out of the car.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Veronica drives away.

Charlie looks at his watch and climbs in his Police Tahoe and waits.

INT. SISSETON CHRONICLE OFFICE - DAY

Veronica sits at her computer.

VERONICA

Dang it! Elliot, do you mind if I use your computer a minute? My internet is messing up.

ELLIOT

Go ahead.

Elliot stands and moves to the layout table.

ELLIOT

I wanted to look at some of the ad layouts for next week anyway. We sold a lot of papers with our big story last edition. More ad sales than ever.

Veronica sits at Elliot's desk. Elliot smiles broadly.

Charlie barges through the door in a bluster. Elliot stands looking over the paper layout.

CHARLIE

All right, stay where you are Ms. Lewis. I have a warrant for your arrest. Obstructing an investigation.

VERONICA

Are you kidding me?

Charlie moves forward brandishing a piece of paper.

ELLIOT

Whoa, hold on, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Sorry, Elliot, stay back. Stand up, Ms. Lewis. Hands behind your back.

Charlie tosses the piece of paper on the desk. He cuffs Veronica.

ELLIOT

Don't worry, Veronica, I'm calling my lawyer right now.

Charlie closes the screen on the laptop and unplugs the wires.

CHARLIE

I also have a warrant for your computer, Ms. Lewis. It'll come with us.

ELLIOT

That's not her computer! That's mine! She was just borrowing it!

CHARLIE

Nice try, Elliot. You think I'm a fool?

Elliot moves forward and blocks Charlie's path.

ELLIOT

I'm serious. You can't take that computer.

CHARLIE

I have another set of cuffs. You want to be arrested too?

Elliot steps aside and Charlie leads Veronica out the door with the computer under his arm.

INT. CAPTAIN KIPP'S OFFICE - DAY

FBI Agent Brown works on Elliot's computer as Veronica and Charlie watch.

CHARLIE

Hurry up! He's going to be here with his lawyer any minute.

AGENT BROWN

Yup. There's the spyware master program. One more click.

Agent Brown clicks the mouse and spins the computer to face Veronica.

AGENT BROWN

These look familiar?

VERONICA

Yup. Those are my notes.

CHARLIE

C'mon, Veronica. I'm going to put you in the interrogation room. I want it to look good when Elliot gets here.

INT. RECEPTION AREA BIA POLICE OFFICE - DAY

Elliot enters with his lawyer in tow like a whirlwind.

ELLIOT

Where is Veronica Lewis?

Charlie stands waiting with his arms folded by the reception desk.

CHARLIE

Well, well, well. Look who's here.

ELLIOT

I want Ms. Lewis and my computer out here. Now!

Charlie throws his hands up in surrender.

CHARLIE

I give up. She's free. Funny thing happened. My boss agrees with you.

Skip enters the building pushing Marvin Hattum forward in handcuffs.

SKIP

Charlie! Get away from Mr. Koffman! Take Marvin to interview room two.

Skip shoves Marvin toward Charlie and hurries over to Elliot. He glares at Charlie and Charlie returns the scowl. Charlie holds Marvin's arm.

SKIP

I'm sorry, Mr. Koffman. Ms. Lewis is waiting in interrogation room one with your computer.

ELLIOT

Ok.

SKIP

I apologize for Officer LeBeau. It's been very stressful here lately. I hope you understand. It's all over, Mr. Koffman.

Skip gives a slight nod toward Marvin. Elliot acknowledges the gesture with a nod and smile.

ELLIOT

I do.

SKIP

Officer LeBeau will be disciplined appropriately. I can assure you.

Elliot is calm.

SKIP

Let me retrieve Ms. Lewis.

Skip disappears around the corner in the hallway.

CHARLIE

It's not over Elliot.

ELLIOT

I'm pretty sure I heard your boss say it was over.

CHARLIE

Sometimes I don't hear so good.

Charlie removes a coat from the coat rack. He tosses it to Elliot. Elliot extends his left hand and catches the coat.

CHARLIE

Are you left handed, Elliot?

ELLIOT

Yeah. What about it?

CHARLIE

Hmmm. That's interesting. I will note that in the file.

ELLIOT

File? What file?

Skip returns with a disheveled Veronica rubbing her wrists.

ELLIOT

Captain, Charlie just mentioned there's a file about me.

SKIP

File? Come on, Charlie, don't you have some work to do? Take Marvin to the interview room.

Skip hands the laptop back to Elliot.

CHARLIE

Yes, sir. Come on, Marv. Skip's got some questions regarding your deer slayer skills.

Veronica points a finger at Charlie as she takes her coat from Elliot.

VERONICA

I'm not going to forget this.
This is harassment!

ELLIOT

Come on, let's go.

Elliot leads Veronica out with an arm on her shoulder.

The front doors close behind Veronica, Elliot, and his lawyer. Charlie looks around the corner of the hallway.

CHARLIE

Do you think he bought it?

Charlie removes Marvin's handcuffs.

SKIP

Oh, yeah! Hook, line, and sinker.
And we're going to land him.
Thanks, Marv, we couldn't a done
it without you.

MARVIN

My pleasure guys. Police work is
fun.

INT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Charlie attempts to call Veronica.

CUT TO:

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

Elliot looks at the caller ID in Veronica's phone indicating "Charlie". Veronica's limp body hangs by her bound wrists behind Elliot. A trickle of dried blood runs from Veronica's mouth and swollen lip.

ELLIOT

Your boyfriend is very persistent.

Elliot drops the phone to the floor and smashes it with his foot. Veronica moans and Elliot swivels to see her eyes flutter in the dull light of a kerosene lantern. Veronica shivers in the unheated shack.

ELLIOT

I have just the partner for you.

Elliot flashes a stun gun in his hand and touches Veronica's chest. Her body goes limp again.

Elliot's breath curls upward in the light of the frozen shack. Elliot leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Charlie is on the phone.

CHARLIE

Skip, she won't answer. We need to activate the locator.

SKIP (OS)

We got a guy sitting on Elliot's house, and he says he's still there. His car is in the driveway.

CHARLIE

He's not there. He snuck out. He's got another car or he's got Veronica's car.

SKIP (OS)

Fine. Come to town. I'll get Agent Brown from his hotel.

CHARLIE

I'll be there in ten minutes.

Claude enters the living room.

CLAUDE

Where you going in ten minutes? It's almost midnight for crying out loud?

CHARLIE

There's a situation.

Charlie grabs his coat and heads out the door. Claude waves his hand at his son.

CLAUDE

(yelling)

Be careful!

Nat emerges from his room bleary-eyed.

NAT

What's all the commotion, Grandpa?

CLAUDE

I don't know. Your uncle's got an emergency. Go back to bed.

INT. BIA POLICE OFFICE - NIGHT

Agent Brown, Captain Kipp, and Charlie lean in looking at the computer screen. A red dot casts an eerie, flashing, glow on the men's faces.

Charlie straightens to his full height.

CHARLIE

It's at Red Iron Lake. Right near where we picked up that four-wheeler. He must be using an old cabin out there.

SKIP

Let's roll.

AGENT BROWN

I'll follow you.

EXT. POLICE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Skip and Charlie toss their assault bags in the Tahoe and speed from the lot followed by Agent Brown.

INT. SKIP'S TAHOE - NIGHT

Charlie's phone buzzes. He looks at it and presses "ignore". He adjusts his night vision goggles.

SKIP

Who was that?

CHARLIE

It was my dad. He was still up when I tore out of the house. He was upset.

The phone buzzes again and Charlie hits "ignore."

SKIP

Just answer it!

CHARLIE

We're almost there!

The police Tahoe flies down SD Highway 10 and finally reaches Red Iron Lake.

EXT. RED IRON LAKE - NIGHT

The vehicles stop and kill their lights on the main driveway to the cabins. Agent Brown exits his vehicle and moves to the driver's door of Skip's Tahoe.

SKIP

We'll use our night vision goggles. No lights.

CHARLIE

I see fresh tracks in the snow drifts. It looks like our path is marked. Let's just follow the tracks.

SKIP

Hop in with us. The drifts are too deep for your car.

AGENT BROWN

Roger that. Let me get my stuff.

Agent Brown returns to his vehicle, grabs his gear, and returns. The Tahoe moves out slowly with no lights.

Charlie's phone buzzes again; he presses "ignore" Claude; Charlie tosses the phone on the dashboard.

CHARLIE

Stop here! The tracks bend into the driveway of that cabin ahead.

The tires CRUNCH to a halt in the snow.

The trio of men coordinate a perfect assault on the cabin. The door is kicked in finding Veronica, awake, hanging by her wrists, shivering.

Charlie moves quickly to free Veronica.

VERONICA

He's not here. He said he was going to get a partner for me.

Veronica's wrists are freed and she collapses in Charlie's arms sobbing.

VERONICA

I thought it was going to be you.

CHARLIE

Come on. Let's get you in the warmth of the truck.

INT. SKIP'S TAHOE - NIGHT

In the empty vehicle, on the dashboard, Charlie's phone buzzes. The caller ID shows Claude.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

The SQUEAKING brakes of a car draws Claude's attention away from the late night TV show. A song like "Rise Above This" by Seether plays.

Claude moves to the window and sees a vehicle he does not recognize sitting in the yard.

Claude grabs the cordless phone and hits the speed dial calling Charlie. There is no answer.

Claude moves to the front closet. He pulls a bolt action rifle from the closet and works the action, chambering a bullet. He leans against the wall and peers through an opening in the curtain.

EXT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Elliot moves with the smoothness of covert experience out of the vehicle to the steps of the dark trailer. His dark clothes keep him hidden in the shadows. He checks the action of his pistol; a round is in the chamber. He tries the door and it is unlocked.

CLAUDE

Who are you?

Claude's voice comes out of the darkness surprising the intruder.

Elliot raises his pistol and fires toward the voice.

Claude returns fire with his rifle and Elliot is struck, blown backward into the TV. The song like "Rise Above This" by Seether playing on the TV halts abruptly as the TV dies and the room goes dark.

INT. SKIP'S TAHOE - NIGHT

Charlie sits in the rear of the Tahoe holding a blanket around Veronica. Skip drives and Agent Brown sits in the front passenger seat as the Tahoe moves back to Agent Brown's vehicle along the highway.

The police radio CRACKLES.

RADIO

Report of shots fired, 911 call.
LeBeau residence.

Skip slams his foot down on the accelerator as they fly down the snowy driveway and bounce onto SD Highway 10 leaving Agent Brown's car behind.

CHARLIE

I knew it, I knew it, I knew it!

Charlie's cell phone buzzes loudly resting on the dash

CHARLIE

My phone!

Agent Brown scoops up the phone and tosses it to Charlie.

CHARLIE

Dad? Are you all right?

CLAUDE (OS)

Charlie, I just shot somebody.

CHARLIE

Oh my God! We're on our way. Are you ok? Is he dead? Are you ok?

CLAUDE (OS)

He's gone.

CHARLIE

Don't touch the body or anything.
Just get out of there!

CLAUDE (OS)

No. The guy I shot. He left. I
don't know where he went.

CHARLIE

What?!? I don't understand.

CLAUDE (OS)

I shot him with your deer rifle.
He flew back against the wall and
TV. I thought he was dead. I
turned away for a second and he
was gone.

CHARLIE

Where's Nat?

CLAUDE (OS)

He's right here.

CHARLIE

Get Nat and get out of there.
Take my truck and go straight to
the Police Station. Don't stop
for anything or anyone.

CLAUDE (OS)

Ok.

INT. BIA POLICE STATION - DAY

Charlie stands in Captain Kipp's office with Agent Brown

CHARLIE

What the Hell happened? How did
Elliot get away?

SKIP

Take it easy, Charlie. We're
working on it.

AGENT BROWN

It just came through that they recovered Veronica's car in Minneapolis. It was double parked at the bus station.

CHARLIE

Sheesh! He's in the wind.

AGENT BROWN

Get this. They found a Kevlar body armor vest with a hole in it in the trunk of the car. No blood though.

Charlie throws his hands up.

CHARLIE

What am I going to tell my family? We're going to sit here and live in fear?

AGENT BROWN

He's not coming back, Charlie.

CHARLIE

How do you know? We know nothing about this Elliot guy? What did the FBI records show? Elliot Koffman was MIA in Desert Storm?

Skip and Agent Brown exchange troubled looks.

CHARLIE

How in the world did this...this guy, Elliot Koffman, show up here five years ago? MIA? We are more confused than ever. Can we get some fingerprints checked?

SKIP

Come on, Charlie. Take the day and go visit Veronica. Heck, take the week off. Take Nat out on the bale stack; see if you can get a deer.

Charlie sighs.

CHARLIE

Fine. I'm outta here. Tell you
what; just call me if you need
something.

SKIP

Ok, Charlie.

Charlie shakes Agent Brown's hand and gives Skip a mock
salute as he goes out the door.

INT. SISSETON HOSPITAL - DAY

Charlie eases into Veronica's sunny room. Veronica turns
when she hears movement.

CHARLIE

Hi. I brought some flowers.

Charlie sets the vase full of a mixture of flowers on a
stand.

VERONICA

(sleepily)

Hello. Sorry I'm so groggy. They
keep giving me sedatives.

CHARLIE

That's ok. I just wanted to check
and see how you're doing.

VERONICA

I twisted my shoulder, that's
about it. I was dehydrated and
cold.

Veronica holds up her IV.

VERONICA

They're giving me fluids and
holding me for observation until
tomorrow.

CHARLIE

You give me a call and I'll give
you a ride home when you're ready.

VERONICA

Thanks.

CHARLIE

I'm on my way home too. Skip sent
me home. I'm still trying to fill
some deer tags.

Veronica strains to keep awake.

CHARLIE

I can see you're tired. I'll see
you tomorrow. Get some rest.

Veronica closes her eyes.

VERONICA

Thanks again, Charlie. Bye.

Charlie moves to the bed and kisses Veronica's cheek.

CHARLIE

Bye.

Charlie exits to a song like "Young Love" by Sonny James.

INT. CHARLIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Charlie enters the house.

CHARLIE

Get your huntin' stuff, Nat.
We're going out.

NAT

The TV's broken.

CLAUDE

Yeah, TV's broken, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Good. Nothing to do except go huntin'. You too, Dad. Get your stuff on. You're coming with. We're going to get your deer.

CLAUDE

Fine.

EXT. BALESTACK - DAY

Charlie, Nat, and Claude stand on the bales overlooking the trees and snow covered corn field.

Charlie scans the area with his binoculars.

NAT

What do you think? A sixty inch flat screen fit in the living room?

CLAUDE

I think so, but we could get by with a fifty.

CHARLIE

Shhhhhh! Can we forget about the TV? Look for deer, would ya?

The sun starts to move to the horizon. It's quiet for a moment.

CLAUDE

We definitely need High Def.

NAT

You're right. It's about time Uncle Charlie moves into the 21st Century.

Charlie scans the trees with his binoculars shaking his head from side to side as the conversation on TVs continues. A song like "Deeper Than the Holler" by Randy Travis plays.

THE END.