

STURGEON GENERAL

Written by

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FADE IN

EXT. NORTHERN WISCONSIN - WOODS - DAWN

STEVE MOSER (late 50s), thick in the middle, plods through the woods in full-bodied camouflage. He hums happily to himself as he juggles a thermos, small cooler, and COMPOUND BOW strapped to his back.

He stops at the foot of a large tree with a DIY DEER STAND twenty feet up the trunk. His eyes scan the precarious WOODEN LADDER.

STEVE
(grumbling)
Fuck me.

EXT. DEER STAND - MORNING

Steve's girth spills over a small camp chair. He pulls SUMMER SAUSAGE and a BLOCK OF CHEESE out of the cooler and makes a sandwich -- no bread needed.

He stares peacefully into the woods. A large BUCK appears in the distance. He drops the sandwich, stands up, and gracefully pulls his bow.

Through Steve's POV, we lock eyes with the buck. After a beat, we hear a GUN SHOT. The startled buck takes off into the woods.

Steve's body crumples to floor of the stand. An arm and a leg hang off the edge.

BLOOD drips onto the leaves and BLOCK OF CHEESE below.

INT. WAREHOUSE ART GALLERY - LOS ANGELES - EVENING

ELSA MOSER (mid 20s) stands alone in the middle of the gallery. Her outfit is artsy, but not entirely coordinated.

Modern, abstract paintings line the walls. Expensive hipsters mingle around her. She's unsure what to do with her hands.

BIRCH (mid 20s), struggling artist aesthetic with a watch that makes you question the struggling part, slinks up behind her.

Elsa turns to smile at her poser boyfriend.

ELSA

Hi.

BIRCH

You're gonna love them.

A tragically hip COUPLE approaches.

MAN

Wow. Birch, this is just...

Birch clasps his hands and bows in thanks.

WOMAN

You must be Elsa.

The couple embrace Elsa at the same time, taking turns kissing her cheeks.

ELSA

Hi.

Elsa pulls away stiff armed, forced smile.

ELSA (CONT'D)

So you all met at NYU?

WOMAN

Yeah. We were with him in his pre-constructivism phase.

Elsa nods her head like she knows what that means.

The man grabs Elsa's elbow and leans in a little too close.

MAN

But he's obviously way past that.

The group takes a beat to appreciate Birch's PAINTING -- a colorfully abstract baby smoking a cigarette.

The Woman looks at Elsa.

WOMAN

Are you an artist too?

ELSA

Yeah. I am.

Birch jumps in

BIRCH

She animates. Cartoons.

Birch squeezes Elsa's shoulder and smiles patronizingly.

MAN

Fabulous.

Birch has already moved on.

BIRCH

You guys wanna go meet Clock? He's
at Forty-One.

The Man and Birch talk details. The Woman, with no other choice, turns to Elsa:

WOMAN

Where are you from?

ELSA

Wisconsin.

The Woman smiles, genuinely intrigued.

WOMAN

Amazing.

Elsa's about to reciprocate the question, when her phone BUZZES. She pulls it out of her pocket and glances at the screen -- "Incoming Call: Mom."

Birch, mid-conversation, peeks at Elsa's phone and rolls his eyes.

Elsa declines the call and puts the phone away. She takes a sip from her plastic champagne flute.

BIRCH

(to Elsa)

Ready to head?

ELSA

It's your show?

Birch looks around the room and scrunches his nose.

BIRCH

It's dead.

Elsa's phone BUZZES again. She ignores it.

ELSA

I'll grab my jacket.

Elsa makes her way towards the coat stands by the front door.

The BUZZING resumes. Annoyed, she pulls her phone out. This time the screen reads -- "Incoming Call Jason."

ELSA (CONT'D)

Hey.

Her PLASTIC CHAMPAGNE GLASS HITS the floor, splashing onto her worn out Doc Martens before ROLLING across the gallery.

INT. WINOCQUA, WI - FUNERAL HOME - BACK ROOM - DAY

The FUNERAL DIRECTOR sits in a chair watching the Moser family with deep concern and exaggerated empathy.

LAUREN (50s) is wedged between her children, Elsa and JASON (early 20s) on a small couch. Jason hugs Lauren as she weeps.

Elsa stares into space, looking uncomfortable in her borrowed black dress. She fiddles with an assortment of rings -- the only lifeline to her usual eclectic style.

A LARGE URN sits on a table near the door.

Shirley (80s), the stoic matriarch, old but spry, stands across the room fidgeting with her funeral outfit.

The sticky sweet Funeral Director leans in toward the family, elbows to knees.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Steve was taken suddenly and tragically.

(nodding with concern)

It will take time for your heads and hearts to fully comprehend this.

The Funeral Director glances at Shirley who stares out the window.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

You're each going to have to forge your own path through the waves of grief that will wash over you.

Lauren squeezes Elsa's hand, pulling Elsa out of her trance.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

You may feel normal one moment. And then crushingly devastated the next.

(crossed hands over chest)

(MORE)

FUNERAL DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

But know that he's fishing with the
Lord now...

Shirley abruptly heads for the door.

SHIRLEY

For fuck's sake.

The Funeral Director jolts upright. Elsa, Jason, and Lauren muffle laughter through tears.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME PARKING LOT

Cars jostle for parking. A truck with a WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) LOGO snags a spot.

IKE (50s) exits the truck. He wears a poorly fitted sport coat and khakis. DEBBIE (mid 30s), Northwoods trophy wife, climbs out of the passenger side and immediately checks herself out in the reflection of a neighboring vehicle.

Ike scans the parking lot. A matching DNR TRUCK drives slowly past. The driver, MITCH (early 30s), gives Ike a sad nod. Debbie stares coldly.

DEBBIE

Prick.

IKE

Not today.

Debbie rolls her eyes.

Mitch drives past them searching for an empty spot. Unsuccessful, he pulls around to the back of the building.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - MAIN ROOM

The family stands in a line near the entrance.

Photos of a life well lived are spread throughout the room. A large FRAMED PHOTO of Steve lying on the ice next to a SIX-FOOT LONG STURGEON is prominently displayed.

Shirley greets people with her chin up, all business.

Lauren and Jason tearfully embrace everyone who passes.

Elsa's tear stained eyes dart around the room. People watch her and whisper.

Debbie and Ike enter the parlor. Debbie walks past the family without making eye contact.

Lauren embraces Ike. She leans into his shoulder and weeps. Ike's visibly uncomfortable with all the emotion.

After a beat, Shirley clears her throat.

Lauren releases Ike.

SHIRLEY
Did they find anything?

Ike shakes his head.

Shirley looks disgusted.

IKE
(thick Wisconsin accent)
Yah, no. I promise you'll know when
we do.

HARLEY (30s), a handsome man-child, comes out of nowhere. He engulfs Lauren, Jason and Elsa in a group hug, sobbing uncontrollably.

People stare.

Shirley turns to Ike.

SHIRLEY
Do something about that.

Ike gently escorts Harley from the family. Harley pauses to turn to Elsa, his bright red face trembling with love--

HARLEY
(affectionately)
Hollywood...

Harley's wails continue.

Elsa's overwhelmed. She bolts to the back of the funeral home.

FUNERAL HOME - BACK ROOM

Elsa bursts through the door and immediately collides with Mitch. He jumps back, flustered, straight into the table with the LARGE URN on it.

The URN crashes to the ground and the TOP pops off. GREY DUST explodes around them. Elsa stands shocked.

ELSA

Holy shit.

Mitch drops to his knees. He frantically scoops piles of dust back into the open urn.

Elsa stares at her hands, covered in her Dad. She stoops down to help Mitch.

Most of Steve is back in the urn, but remnants hang in the air.

Mitch clears his throat. Ashes dirty his face. He begins to COUGH -- like a lot.

Elsa looks up from her panicked scooping, and realizes:

ELSA (CONT'D)

Shut your mouth!

Mitch seals his lips, but the coughing is too strong. His CHEEKS expand and contract like a puffer fish.

Elsa grabs the urn and shoves it under him. Her eyes dart around -- *good, no one seems to have noticed.*

ELSA (CONT'D)

Cough it out!

Elsa wafts the air around them towards the urn. Mitch looks at her like she's crazy. Elsa smacks his back.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Cough!

Mitch coughs into the urn. Nothing comes from this.

They recover as many ashes as possible. Elsa replaces the top, stands up, and sets the urn back on the table.

Mitch's petrified.

Elsa glares at him as she wipes her hands and composes herself. She turns around and walks back into the main room.

MAIN ROOM

Elsa comes back through the door to the mingling guests.

The MINISTER, a timid, elderly man in GREEN AND GOLD church robes, loudly enters from the small side stage door.

MINISTER

Ahem.

People begin to sit but he's not in control.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Folks.

The crowd still murmurs. The Minister COUGHS.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

(louder)

Folks.

The room settles down. Elsa finds a seat in the front next to Lauren, Shirley and Jason. Jason looks annoyed as he has to move over for her to fit on the bench.

The Minister, stone faced, takes in the room before turning to the large picture of Steve:

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Like the great Vince Lombardi said -
'It's not wether you get knocked
down, it's whether you get back
up.'

The sad crowd looks confused.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Uff da.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - LATER

The crowd pours out of the funeral home, heads down.

A BELL RINGS from the low quality outdoor speaker above the door. The guests exit the funeral home.

Well wishers scuttle Lauren and Shirley into a car.

Elsa and Jason exit the building, each hauling a box of photos and memorabilia. They walk through the thinning parking lot in silence towards Jason's pick-up truck.

INT. PARKING LOT - BLACK SUV - SAME TIME

DALLAS (40s), a slicked back business man, handsome but scary, sits behind the wheel of a black SUV.

He looks down at his phone revealing a picture of Steve and Jason, standing proudly in front of a LARGE SIGN that reads "Moser's Bar, Grill, and Fish Processing." Below it in smaller lettering - "Est. 1953."

Dallas looks up from his phone and spots the siblings. His eyes track them carefully.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Elsa stops suddenly.

ELSA
I forgot my bag.

She stacks her arm load on top of Jason's and heads back to the church. Jason groans and keeps moving.

Jason approaches the truck and sets the boxes on the ground to dig for his keys. As he stands up -- bam -- Dallas is in his face.

JASON
(startled)
Fuck man.

DALLAS
(Russian accent)
I'm sorry for you loss.

Jason takes a step back.

JASON
(skeptical)
You knew my dad?

DALLAS
I want my shipment.

JASON
What the hell?

DALLAS
The Mosers owe me some caviar... Or my deposit... plus interest.

JASON
Sorry man, I don't know what you're talking about.

Jason reaches for the door handle. Dallas takes a step closer and claps Jason with one hand aggressively on his shoulder, the other meets Jason's hand on the door handle. Jason SHOUTS in pain.

Dallas spots Elsa exiting the church. He leans in and gives Jason a side hug, as if to comfort him.

DALLAS
(leaning into Jason)
I'll be in touch.

Jason's hand drips with blood as he pulls a thick metal fishing lure out of the web between his thumb and pointer finger. He curses to himself as he watches the black SUV drive away.

INT. JASON'S CAR

Elsa slides into the passenger seat. Jason's hand, hastily wrapped in fast food napkins, shakily turns the ignition. He pulls out of the parking lot.

Elsa stares out the window in a trance. After a beat, she looks over at Jason and notices the napkins that are now bright red.

ELSA
(alarmed)
What happened?

JASON
Caught a loose lure in the back.

Elsa looks skeptical.

JASON (CONT'D)
I reached to grab something and it hooked me.

ELSA
Pull over!

JASON
(curt)
It's fine.

ELSA
(taken aback)
Whatever.

EXT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

The "Moser's Bar, Grill, and Fish Processing" sign stands prominently in front of a classic Wisconsin tavern. A fish processing building sits on the other side of the large gravel parking lot.

INT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL

To the left of the front door is a BEAUTIFULLY CARVED BAR with a ring of stools. The middle of the room's spotted with tables and chairs. A small stage and dance floor fill up the back.

Pictures and memorabilia line the wood paneled walls: Framed newspaper articles about Steve Moser, the "Sturgeon General," and the Moser family legacy of sturgeon spearing and fish processing.

VINTAGE BEER SIGNS give the room a warm glow.

A buffet of Wisconsin comfort food and crockpots overflow on the tables against the wall: cheese and crackers, summer sausage, deviled eggs, pickled herring, etc.

Plates of CAVIAR and CREAM CHEESE on RITZ CRACKERS spot the tables throughout the room.

Jason stands behind the bar. His injured hand, now wrapped in athletic tape, taps pints for the crowd.

Lauren's surrounded by friends and neighbors.

Elsa stands alone, picking at a plate of PIGS-N-A-BLANKET, carefully extracting the cocktail wieners before eating the empty rolls. She observes Jason's effortless conversation with the people around him, seemingly oblivious to his injured hand.

She finishes her plate and maneuvers her way through the tables towards the bar, strategically avoiding a group of similarly aged people.

CLARA, a perky former classmate, hails Elsa over.

CLARA

Elsa.

Elsa stops, makes her way towards the table, and forces a smile.

ELSA

Hi.

CLARA
(sincere)
We're so sorry.

The others nod, but there's a judgmental energy.

ELSA
Thanks for coming out.

DREW, decked in Packers attire, straightens up aggressively.

DREW
We're going to catch that son of a
bitch.

Elsa stands silent, unsure how to respond. Clara interjects:

CLARA
How long are you back for?

ELSA
Not sure yet.

Elsa looks around the bar at her family. Lauren and Jason mingle with friends. Grandma Shirley throws back a LOW BALL of WHISKEY before pulling singles from the cash register.

DREW
Are you still doing those cartoons
and shit?

Clara smacks him on the arm and glares before turning back to Elsa.

CLARA
Well, call me if you need an
escape. We can all go out.

Elsa's face burns with embarrassment, but she returns Clara's smile with a sad nod.

ELSA
Thanks.

CLARA
(genuine)
Probably wouldn't be as cool as
you're used to, but it could be
fun.

The "cool" label throws Elsa off. There's an uncomfortable silence as they wait for her response.

ELSA
(self-conscious)
For sure. Thanks again for coming.

Elsa weaves through the crowd back to Jason.

BEHIND BAR

ELSA
That was weird.

Jason pours her a beer.

JASON
What?

ELSA
Clara and all them. They invited me
out.

JASON
Why's that weird?

Elsa shoots him a look -- *does he seriously not remember?*

Jason registers this but shrugs it off.

JASON (CONT'D)
No one remembers high school.

ELSA
I do.

She gulps her beer.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Pretty much every second actually.

Jason rolls his eyes.

JASON
No one cares about stupid cartoons
you made ten years ago.

Elsa turns on her stool to look at the rest of the bar,
people quickly turn away like they were just talking about
her.

ELSA
It was Dad's fault for sharing
them.

Jason nods as he makes a drink and sets it in the well. Elsa slouches.

ELSA (CONT'D)

I should probably stop blaming him
now that he's dead, right?

JASON

Eh. I think your fine.

Elsa turns to Jason for a response, but he's already back to pouring beers.

BAR - BACK CORNER

Ike and Shirley huddle at a small table.

Harley sits nearby strumming sad chords on a guitar.

Ike picks up a CRACKER with CREAM CHEESE and CAVIAR and plops it into his mouth. He momentarily closes his eyes while he chews.

IKE

It never gets old...
(eyes open)
But you might want to stop putting
out caviar until things blow over.

SHIRLEY

(defensive)
We're not selling it. Or
(air quotes)
bartering.

Ike shoots Shirley a side eye.

IKE

Technically, giving it away at the
bar in exchange for people's
business is bartering.

SHIRLEY

It's the only thing keeping this
place afloat and you know it.

Elsa's ears perk as she clears a nearby table.

Harley chimes in.

HARLEY

Like Steve always said - no harm no
foul.

IKE

I get it, but ya know, we're getting a lotta heat at the DNR these days about poaching and illegal processing.

Shirley crosses her arms in defiance.

SHIRLEY

Is that boy boss of yours giving ya trouble?

IKE

Ya, no. I can handle him.
(unconvincing)
I'm just sayin...

Shirley glares.

Elsa lingers.

IKE (CONT'D)

Once they confirm it was a huntin' accident, which of course it was, things will settle down.

Shirley bites her lip but doesn't crack.

Elsa picks up the dish tub at the end of the food table and approaches Shirley and Ike. She grabs Shirley's empty glass and nods at Ike.

Ike straightens up.

SHIRLEY

(to Elsa)
I need your help closin' up tonight.

ELSA

Okay.

SHIRLEY

And I've got a couple of things I want to go over with you in the morning.

IKE

(smirking)
De girl's back for a day and you're already putt'n her to work.

Shirley's not amused.

Elsa clears the bin and walks away. As she passes Harley, he gives her a sympathetic look and plays a LONG WHINY CHORD on his guitar.

BEHIND BAR

Jason wipes down the counter. Elsa walks past him and dumps the dishes into the sink. She looks up and sees her mom, Lauren, hugging guests on their way out the door.

Lauren plops down on a stool at the empty bar, emotionally exhausted.

Elsa dries her hands on a towel and turns toward her, searching for the words.

ELSA
I swear, I'll only ask this once.

Lauren raises her hand in protest.

LAUREN
Stop.

ELSA
(insistent)
Mom.

Jason hands Lauren a glass of water.

ELSA (CONT'D)
How do we really know?... They
should've found something by now.

Jason shakes his head like this is the hundredth time she's brought it up.

LAUREN
Hunting accidents happen all the
time.

Elsa's not convinced.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Have you ever met anyone who didn't
love your Dad?

Elsa sighs. Lauren sips her water. Jason shifts his weight from one arm to the other, uncomfortably.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
He was so fucking friendly it
actually drove me crazy sometimes.

Elsa and Jason exchange glances, caught off guard -- Lauren's not a swearer.

Lauren's eyes well up, she smiles at her children.

Jason squeezes one of Lauren's hands.

Elsa pauses briefly, looking at Jason's injured hand before taking Lauren's other hand.

The front door SLAMS open -- the tender family moment is over.

Debbie storms past them toward the back of the bar.

BAR - BACK CORNER

Debbie struts up to Ike, Shirley and Harley.

IKE
(forced enthusiasm)
You're back!

DEBBIE
(aggressive)
I'm locked out Ike.

IKE
Well where are your keys?

Debbie starts riffling through his jacket pockets.

Ike holds up his arms in surrender.

IKE (CONT'D)
Deb. Hold on. We'll find 'em.

Debbie grabs Ike's keys, and heads for the door without saying goodbye.

Ike looks Shirley in the eye as he grabs the last CAVIAR RITZ on the plate, plops it into his mouth, and follows Debbie out the door.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Ike and Debbie exit the bar and approach a shiny red Range Rover.

Ike heads toward the driver's seat, but Debbie cuts him off. He shuffles around the back into the passenger side.

The Rover roars to life. Wheels SPIN as it peels out of the parking lot.

At the back of lot, Dallas sits in his SUV cleaning his finger nails with a knife. He looks up as Ike and Debbie pull out.

INT. MOSER HOME - ELSA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Elsa rolls over. Her childhood bedroom's a chaotic collage of drawings, posters, trinkets, and art supplies.

She slowly opens her crusty eyes to a crooked POSTER OF ROBERT PATTINSON -- Twilight era.

Elsa stares at the heartthrob, glazed over and numb. She pulls out her phone and searches "Steve Moser hunting accident." The first headline reads "No Leads in Tragic Hunting Death of Steve Moser, 'The Sturgeon General.'" Unsatisfied, she drops the phone.

MOSER HOME - KITCHEN

Elsa walks in to find her mom hunched over the LOCAL NEWSPAPER. Lauren doesn't notice until Elsa's reading over her shoulder.

Lauren jumps and closes the paper.

ELSA

Sorry.

Elsa approaches the coffee pot and fills a mug.

Lauren smooths out her hair.

LAUREN

No. No, Sweetie. I'm just not used to having a full house again.

Lauren forces a smile.

Elsa motions to the paper under her arm.

ELSA

Any updates?

Lauren shoves the paper in her work bag.

LAUREN

Nope... But these sort of accidents can take years to solve.

Elsa gives her Mom a look. Lauren knows what she's insinuating.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
(stern)
I told you to drop it.

Jason enters, sensing the tension.

ELSA
(accusatory)
Why is everyone so sure it was an accident?

LAUREN
Ike's in the loop with the Sheriff.

Elsa crosses her arms, chin out.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
(tears bubble up)
He'll let us know as soon as there's something.

Jason intervenes.

JASON
Elsa. Stop.

Lauren looks from Elsa to Jason, before grabbing her work bag, and heading for the door.

ELSA
Are you sure you want to go to work today?

Lauren's already halfway outside.

LAUREN (O.S)
I'll be home around five. Pull out one of the sympathy lasagnas from the freezer.

Jason moves towards the coffee maker, lifting the empty pot.

JASON
Fuck.

Elsa clutches her coffee mug with both hands, and stares into space until she notices Lauren's LUNCH BAG on the kitchen counter.

EXT. WINOCQUA SUBDIVISION - IKE AND DEBBIE'S HOUSE - MORNING

The red Range Rover, DNR truck, and a luxury speedboat sit in the driveway of a Northwoods nouveau riche cabin-style home.

A handful of YARD SIGNS are sprinkled throughout the front lawn, each with a large PHOTO OF DEBBIE, arms crossed, smiling proudly. The signs read "Debbie for Mayor" with the tagline "Gun Rights are Women's Rights."

INT. IKE AND DEBBIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Debbie stands at the window looking out at the backyard, nestled on a beautiful lake, phone at her ear.

DEBBIE
Yes. That's it.

She nods in agreement with whomever's on the phone.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
(excited)
Alrighty then.

Ike enters the room. Debbie's gleeful mood quickly changes to disgust.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
Bye now.

Debbie hangs up and moves towards the kitchen. Ike follows her.

KITCHEN

The walls are littered with "Life is Better on the Lake" and other KITSCHY SIGNS.

IKE
Who was that?

Debbie hesitates.

DEBBIE
The billboard people.

IKE
I thought we talked about this.

DEBBIE
People should know the face of their future mayor.

IKE
 (sarcastically)
 This comin' out of your campaign
 war chest?

Debbie doesn't answer. She pours another cup of coffee. Ike rolls his eyes.

IKE (CONT'D)
 (pleading)
 Can you just hold off until we're
 more liquid?

Debbie struts out of the kitchen, muttering on her way:

DEBBIE
 Or you could stop being a pussy and
 do what you promised.

Ike hangs his head in defeat. A WOODEN SIGN -- "A Hunter Lives Here With The Dear Of His Life" -- looms over him.

INT. WINOCQUA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - FRONT OFFICE - MORNING

Elsa walks into the office of her old school holding Lauren's LUNCH BAG. Her quirky outfit screams main character returning home for the holidays from the big city.

She approaches the receptionist, TYLER (mid 20s).

ELSA
 Hi. I'm dropping this off for my
 Mom.

As soon as she reaches the desk she realizes --

ELSA (CONT'D)
 Oh my god. Tyler!

TYLER
 Elsa Moser. Been a while.

They smile at each other, absorbing the changes that time has caused.

ELSA
 Since graduation I guess...
 What's new?

TYLER
 I'm gay now.

Elsa shrugs.

ELSA
 Figures. My big high school
 romance.

Tyler laughs, and takes a moment to contemplate.

TYLER
 If we were born fifteen years
 earlier, we'd probably be married
 now. Couple kids on the way.

Elsa grins.

ELSA.
 I didn't know you worked here.

Tyler leans back in his chair like he owns the place.

TYLER
 Worked my way through the twinkles of
 the rust belt.

He performs a small drumroll on the desk.

TYLER (CONT'D)
 Now I'm back in with Mom.

ELSA
 Bet Laverne loves that.

Tyler, very serious --

TYLER
 Too much.

He nods his head towards a small crocheted frame covered in
 flowers and petite writing "Nothing beats the love of a
 mother for her gay (in cursive) son."

Elsa chuckles, Tyler gets back to work filling out a visitor
 name tag.

TYLER (CONT'D)
 I was really sorry to hear about
 your Dad.

ELSA
 Thanks.

He hands her the name tag.

TYLER
 She's in room one-o-six.

Elsa smiles and heads for the door. Tyler, with a contemplative look, watches her leave.

LAUREN'S CLASSROOM

Elsa quietly opens the backdoor of the fourth-grade classroom. She's surprised to find Mitch standing at the front of the room holding a SIX-FOOT LONG PAPER MACHE STURGEON.

Lauren sits at her desk. Elsa holds up the LUNCH BAG.

ELSA
(mouths)
I'm sorry.

Lauren smiles and motions for Elsa to sit down.

Mitch spots Elsa. He stands up tall and straightens his collar.

Elsa takes a seat in an empty desk by the door.

MITCH
When did the first sturgeon swim in
our oceans and lakes?

Blank stares.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Who's seen Jurassic Park?

Hands shoot up.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Sturgeon are members of the
Acipenseridae family of ancient
bony fish that swam with the
dinosaurs one hundred and fifty
million years ago during the
Jurassic age.

Talk of dinosaurs gets their attention.

MITCH (CONT'D)
They're literally dinosaurs, right
here in Winocqua.

Mitch advances his slides to show Steve, "the Sturgeon General," standing next to his legendary catch.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Wisconsin's biggest sturgeon was caught on Lake Winocqua twenty years ago.

Mitch holds up the giant PAPER MACHE FISH.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Six feet, eight inches, two hundred and twenty pounds and one hundred and twenty five years old.

An INDIGENOUS BOY in the back row grumbles

INDIGENOUS BOY

My grandpa got one bigger than that.

MITCH

(enthusiastic)

I bet he did. Everything we know about sturgeon, we learned from the tribes.

Indigenous boy sits up a little taller in his seat.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(pointing to the screen)

This one was speared by Steve Moser, Ms. Moser's husband.

Elsa and Lauren exchange teary smiles from across the room.

Elsa's phone BUZZES. It's Birch. She ignores the call to watch Mitch.

MITCH (CONT'D)

If we want these dinosaurs to stick around, we've got to protect them from pollution, overfishing, caviar harvesting... Does anyone know what caviar is?

A BOY in a MILWAUKEE BUCKS JERSEY shouts out

BUCKS BOY

Fish balls!

The class GIGGLES.

MITCH

Not exactly.

Mitch and Elsa exchange glances. Mitch blushes.

MITCH (CONT'D)

When female sturgeon are twenty, twenty-five years-old, they release hundreds of thousands of eggs into the water for the male sturgeons' sperm to fertilize.

The kids squirm in their seats.

MITCH (CONT'D)

But when females are caught before they release their eggs, the eggs can be processed into caviar, which is worth a lot of money.

Mitch grabs a small jar of paint from a shelf.

MITCH (CONT'D)

If this jar was caviar, how much would it cost?

A skeptical GIRL wearing a NASA T-SHIRT raises her hand.

NASA GIRL

Fifty dollars.

MITCH

More like five hundred dollars.

NASA Girl's eyes widen.

Lauren jumps in.

LAUREN

Alright. Does anyone have questions for Mitch?

NASA Girl thinks hard.

NASA GIRL

How do you get the eggs out?

MITCH

You place the fish belly up. And you slice down the middle of her stomach, and cut out the ovaries.

NASA girl throws up in her mouth.

MITCH (CONT'D)

And then you rip out the membrane and rub the eggs over...

Lauren CLAPS her hands together.

LAUREN

And that's lunch! Thank you, Mitch.

Mitch smiles proudly.

Lauren encourages the kids to give him a round of applause but they mostly ignore her as they rush out of the room.

Elsa stands up and waits for her mom.

Lauren drags Mitch to the back of room.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Elsa. This is Mitch.

Mitch looks down, suddenly self-conscious.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

He works with Ike at the DNR.

Lauren mouths "cute" behind Mitch's back.

MITCH

We met. At the wake.

Elsa half smiles and changes the subject. She hands Lauren the lunch bag.

ELSA

Here.

LAUREN

Thanks, Hon. I've gotta go, but why don't you help Mitch load up his truck.

Lauren gives Elsa a wink and a nod as she leaves the room.

ELSA

Sure.

Elsa grabs the giant fish a little too rough.

MITCH

Watch the denticles!

Elsa turns -- WTF?

MITCH (CONT'D)

The bony plates.

Elsa gives the giant fish a once over before gingerly carrying it out the door.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT

Elsa wrestles the giant fish into the back of the DNR truck. It's GOOGLY EYES stare straight through her.

MITCH

Don't worry. I'll strap her down.

Elsa steps back from the truck to watch Mitch meticulously strap the art project into place.

ELSA

You do this a lot?

MITCH

I try to visit all the classes.
Some of the kids are still curious.

Elsa thinks hard as Mitch works, before asking:

ELSA

So you're kind of the law of the woods then huh?

MITCH

No. God no. No one respects the DNR.

Elsa looks back at the giant sturgeon before proceeding:

ELSA

You know my family processes caviar, right?

MITCH

I figured that out pretty quick.

ELSA

And you're okay with that? Sturgeon Days and everything?

MITCH

We wouldn't have the sturgeon restoration project without all of the donated eggs and money from the spearing licenses.

Elsa nods her head, that makes sense.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(flirty smile)

Besides, it's crazy fun.

Elsa raises her eyebrows. Mitch closes the truck hatch.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Do you do it?

ELSA
What?

MITCH
Spear?

Now Elsa LAUGHS for real. Mitch doesn't seem to get why, she straightens up.

ELSA
I did with my dad as a kid, but
no... Do you?

MITCH
I fish in the summer.
(melancholy)
But spearing in the winter... it's
hard to get all the stuff out
there, alone.

ELSA
You go alone?

MITCH
Yup.

ELSA
By choice?

MITCH
Not a lot of interest in fishing
with the DNR guy from Madison.

ELSA
What about Ike?

MITCH
(to himself)
Never gonna happen.

She looks surprised.

MITCH (CONT'D)
No one wants to fish with the boss.
Especially not him.

ELSA
(chuckling)
Boss?

Mitch returns his focus to the straps around the sturgeon.

MITCH

Still figuring this place out.

Elsa watches him closely -- *cute boy scout vibe, or suspicious boy scout leader vibe?*

Mitch looks down at the STURGEON'S UGLY FACE and back to Elsa.

She makes a tight lip smile and awkwardly nods before turning on her heels towards her car.

MITCH (CONT'D)

See ya!

She half turns back --

ELSA

Yeah, we'll see you around.

MITCH

(too quickly)

I hope so.

Elsa, unsure of what she heard, yells over her shoulder:

Elsa

What?!

Mitch's face burns with embarrassment -- *where the hell did that come from?*

MITCH

Never mind.

He mutters to himself and ducks into the truck.

Elsa shrugs and gets into her car.

INT. ELSA'S CAR - MOVING

As Elsa drives past Mitch's truck, she sees him gently banging his head against the steering wheel -- *god this guy's odd.*

INT. DNR OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Ike talks on the phone at his desk -- an actual phone with a cord.

PHOTOS of fishing exploits with Steve and Harley dot the burlap walls of his messy cube. A framed GLAMOR SHOT OF DEBBIE sits prominently next to his computer.

IKE

So who registered de boobt?

Ike rubs his temples.

IKE (CONT'D)

I understand it was a wedding gift. But if you wanna get duh boobt back, you're gonna hafta complete a Boobt Repossession Affidavit Transfer Form...

(impatient)

Yes. Form 9400-470... Ohkay. You're welcome.

Ike slams down the phone.

Mitch approaches from his office -- he's got a door.

MITCH

U.S. Fish and Wildlife sent the D.N.A. results.

(lowers his voice)

They confirmed the airline caviar's coming from the Midwest. But it's not the Missouri paddlefish poachers. This is legit sturgeon caviar.

IKE

Is duh distributor talkin'?

MITCH

Nope. It's Odessa's. From Russia.

IKE

No shit. Russia.

MITCH

It's definitely wild caught, passed off as Russian. They're gonna do local testing to refine the match.

IKE

Right...

MITCH

I gotta let the Sheriff know.

Ike abruptly pushes his chair back.

IKE

What?

MITCH

I'm sure it's nothing. But Moser's is the largest caviar processor in the area and...

IKE

It was a fuckin' huntin' accident.

MITCH

Of course. But if illegal caviar's traced to Winocqua, the Sheriff's gonna want to rule out any connection.

Ike rubs his beard and processes.

IKE

They need time to grieve.

MITCH

(apologetic)

I know Steve was your friend, but I have to ask you not to talk to the family about this until we get the green light from the Sheriff.

Ike avoids Mitch's gaze and turns his attention back to his computer.

MITCH (CONT'D)

And I need you to fill in at registration.

IKE

Sure.

(under his breath)

Boss.

INT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL - SAME DAY

Jason and Elsa sit at a table in the dining area rolling SILVERWARE in NAPKINS.

ELSA

Who's been taking Dad's shifts?

JASON

Me and Harley. Mom started helping too.

ELSA
He promised she'd never have to do that.

JASON
We don't really have a choice.

ELSA
Are you gonna hire someone else?

JASON
I'm trying, but Grandma keeps scaring them away... And I'm not sure we can afford it.

Silverware rolling continues seamlessly.

ELSA
So are you like the manager now?

JASON
Shirley doesn't think I'm ready.

ELSA
Still compin' underage drinks?

JASON
It's not that.

Jason looks over his shoulder before continuing:

JASON (CONT'D)
The books are all jacked up. The money in the off season isn't making sense and when I asked Grandma, she flipped out and told me not to question how she runs the business.

ELSA
What'd Dad say?

JASON
He made up some bullshit about it being a tax thing.

Elsa stops rolling -- wheels spinning. After a beat:

ELSA
What does mom think?

JASON
This isn't a mom thing.

ELSA
You gotta figure it out.

JASON
(annoyed)
What do you care? He paid off your college.

ELSA
(sincere)
You know Dad wants - wanted - you to take over.

Shirley emerges from the kitchen. Jason watches her as she heads for the front door.

JASON
She wants you to do it.

Elsa cringes.

They continue rolling silverware.

Shirley flips the CLOSED sign to OPEN and unlocks the door.

The SHERIFF (50s), a large lumbering man, peers through the window.

Shirley opens the door and lets him in. He looks apprehensive.

SHIRLEY
Sheriff.

SHERIFF
Shirley.

The Sheriff's demeanor softens immediately when he sees Elsa and Jason. He approaches their table. Elsa perks up.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
Hey kids. You know how sorry we all are about your dad. He was one in a million, that guy.
(shaking his head)
It's just not right.

ELSA
I have some questions actu... Thanks.

JASON

SHIRLEY
(cutting them off)
Did the dogs find anything?

Elsa looks at her grandmother, annoyed.

SHERIFF

Unfortunately, no. But we're gettin' lots of reports of vehicles in the area and we're following up on every one of 'em.

SHIRLEY

And? What else are you doin'?

SHERIFF

These things can be delicate.

The Sheriff moves away from the table and motions for Shirley to join him by the front door, out of ear shot.

Elsa watches intently.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

I've gotta ask. Was there anything goin' on with Steve that we should know about?

Shirley glares.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Anything out of the norm?

SHIRLEY

Nothin' I'm aware of. Did you talk to Lauren?

SHERIFF

Of course. But I thought since yer in business together, there might be something.

SHIRLEY

(aggressive)

So you're saying it wasn't a hunt'n accident?

SHERIFF

I'm not saying anything of the sort. I'm just tryin' to get a picture of what was goin' on with Steve when he set out that day.

SHIRLEY

If anything comes to mind, I'll let you know.

SHERIFF

(nervous)

There's something else that we...
Uh, I need to talk with you about.

SHIRLEY

I've got work to do.

SHERIFF

This has nothin' to do with Steve,
but I was wonder'n if I could take
a look at your processing records.

SHIRLEY

Beg your pardon.

SHERIFF

It's nothing really. Just something
U.S. Fish and Wildlife is look'n
into. Illegal caviar.

Shirley stares, arms crossed.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

They're look'n for any unusually
large processing orders. Something
more than what you'd expect from a
single tagged catch.

Elsa watches her grandmother carefully.

SHIRLEY

We're an all paper shop here.
That's not something I can just
whip out.

SHERIFF

Of course. But yer gonna wanna get
yer records in order.

SHIRLEY

(impatient)

I'll let ya know if I find
anything, but I'm not disrupt'n my
business without a subpoena.

The Sheriff winces and shakes his head.

SHERIFF

I'm telling ya, Shirley, ya don't
want to mess with the feds.

Shirley heads toward the kitchen -- she's done with the
Sheriff.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 All righty then.

The Sheriff turns his attention to Elsa and Jason.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
 How's things in Hollywood?

ELSA
 (lying)
 Great.

SHERIFF
 Your dad sure was proud of you...
 (remembers Jason)
 And you of course.

Jason and Elsa give him a half hearted thoughtful nod.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
 You two take care now.

He's almost out of the door when he calls out to Elsa:

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
 Stay safe out there.

Before she can respond, the door swings open.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
 (shaking his head)
 Hollywood...

Shirley appears, hovering over her grandkids.

SHIRLEY
 Don't talk to that fool.

ELSA
 Did Dad do something?

SHIRLEY
No. Course not. But we don't need
 the business mixed up in a bunch of
 bureaucratic bullshit.

Shirley heads toward the kitchen.

Jason looks at Elsa and smirks.

JASON
 Who wouldn't want to work for that?

EXT. PIGGLY WIGGLY - DAY

Shoppers walk in and out of the modest grocery store. The giant face of "Piggly Wiggly" watches over them.

Debbie's YARD SIGNS line the grass along the parking lot.

INT. PIGGLY WIGGLY

Debbie pushes her cart through the grocery store. She inspects several items but most aren't worthy.

Dallas peruses the shelves at the other end of the store with disgust -- *what the fuck is "Gogurt?"*

They meet in the CHEESE AISLE -- yep, an entire aisle devoted to cheese.

Dallas stops in his tracks at the sight of Debbie -- her flamboyant outfit and perky breasts. He watches her toss blocks of cheese into the cart.

Dallas moves closer to his target.

Debbie inspects a container of PORT WINE CHEESE SPREAD.

He leans in and grabs his own CHEESE SPREAD and pretends to read the label.

Debbie's annoyed with the invasion of her space until he flashes her a smoldering smile. She turns her back to reapply her lipstick before pivoting to face him -- stomach in, chest out.

DALLAS

Do you, uh, come here often?

Debbie's taken aback by his Russian accent.

DEBBIE

Only decent store in town.

DALLAS

You look so familiar...

Debbie strikes the exact pose from her yard sign.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

The signs!

DEBBIE
Future Mayor!
(flirty)
Now why don't I recognize you?

DALLAS
Passing through for business.

Debbie looks at her nails nonchalantly.

DEBBIE
What kinda business?

DALLAS
Real estate. Some commodities.

Debbie sees dollar signs.

DALLAS (CONT'D)
That's too bad about the...
(searching for words)
Sturgeon General?

Debbie exhales, exasperated.

DEBBIE
He's not the real Sturgeon General.

DALLAS
(seductive)
Tell me more.

Debbie leans in.

DEBBIE
It was Ike's shanty and his spear.

DALLAS
Ike?

DEBBIE
(under her breath)
My pussy ass husband.

Dallas gently teases a lock of Debbie's hair behind her ear.

DALLAS
So who does that make you?

She sticks her hand out with a flourish:

DEBBIE
I'm Debra.

He kisses it, softly.

DALLAS

Dallas.

DEBBIE

Yee haw...

Debbie and Dallas eye-fuck under the florescent lights of the cheese section.

An ELDERLY WOMAN in a power scooter watches them intently as she rolls slowly past.

EXT. LAKE WINOCQUA - LICENSE REGISTRATION BOOTH - DAY

The sun shines on a wooden structure at the entrance of a small parking lot. A handful of boats float on the lake behind the booth.

INT./EXT. LICENSE REGISTRATION BOOTH

Ike stares out at the lake from the open window.

He snaps out of his trance when he hears the CRUNCH of gravel as a BLACK SUV pulls up to the window. He straightens and turns towards the vehicle.

The window of the SUV lowers to reveal Dallas.

IKE

What can I do ya for?

Dallas gives Ike a cold, silent, stare.

IKE (CONT'D)

Fishing license or park pass?

After a beat, Dallas pulls out his phone and makes a call.

A BUZZING sound comes from inside the booth. Ike ignores it until -- Dallas pulls out a HANDGUN and points it at him.

IKE (CONT'D)

(ducking)

Oh Jeez...

Dallas speaks into the phone.

DALLAS

Pick it up.

Ike, still crouched down, picks up his phone, eyes wide.

Dallas puts down the gun.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

I want what I was promised.

Ike slowly peers up to look over the counter with his hands half raised.

IKE

How did you get this number?

DALLAS

Your boss stopped answering my calls.

IKE

(mumbling to himself)

He wasn't my boss...

DALLAS

Shut up.

Ike gulps.

IKE

Listen, man.

DALLAS

No.

IKE

(slowly)

I just need a little more time.

DALLAS

Where the fuck are my fish balls.

IKE

(pleading)

Give me another week.

A SUBARU WAGON with KAYAKS strapped to the roof pulls up behind the SUV.

Dallas puts the phone down and looks Ike in the eye:

DALLAS

You've got twenty-four hours.

Ike smiles nervously at the young couple in the Subaru.

IKE
Okay sir. Here's your park map.

Ike hands Dallas a MAP. Dallas scrunches the map with his left hand and throws it back into the booth.

EXT. MOSER HOME - SAME DAY

Ike walks up to the front door of a beautiful but modest home in the woods. He doesn't hesitate before KNOCKING hard. He scans the trees behind him until the door opens.

LAUREN
(surprised)
Ike.

IKE
Hey Lauren. Sorry to bother you.

LAUREN
Did they find something?

IKE
No.

Ike fidgets anxiously.

LAUREN
You okay?

IKE
Yeah. I uh, I can't find my keys to de fishing shack. Steve and I were out there a couple of weeks ago and I think I mighta left 'em in his booh.

LAUREN
Garage's open. Go ahead and take a look.

IKE
Great.

Ike turns quickly and heads down the walk way until he remembers his manners.

IKE (CONT'D)
(rushed)
You need anything? You and the kids okay?

LAUREN
We're good.

Ike walks backwards as he talks.

IKE
You need anything. I mean anything.
Don't hesitate.

LAUREN
Thanks.

INT. MOSER HOME

Lauren closes the door and leans against it, pondering Ike's odd behavior.

INT. MOSER HOME - GARAGE

The garage's filled to the brim with a boat, snowmobile, tools, sports equipment, and hunting/fishing gear.

Ike rips off the BOAT COVER and frantically tosses LIFE JACKETS and SEAT FLOATS. Empty BEER CANS CLANK around the metal floor.

He moves on to a row of BOXES on an overhead shelf -- no luck.

He knocks a large BASKET of SPORTING EQUIPMENT off the shelf. BALLS BOUNCE on the garage floor.

Ike kicks at random balls.

IKE
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck...

EXT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL - BACKYARD - DAY

The backyard leaves much to be desired. Paint peels off old wooden picnic tables scattered amongst the untrimmed grass.

Elsa leans against the drab wall of the building and pulls out her phone.

INT. CHICAGO - POTTERY STUDIO - SAME TIME

Birch sits shirtless behind a wet clay pottery wheel. He seductively molds an unidentifiable lump.

BIRCH

Hey.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

ELSA

Hey.

Birch talks in the direction of his phone sitting on the counter next to him.

BIRCH

How are you?

ELSA

I'm fine. How are you doing?

We PULL OUT further to reveal another shirtless SCULPTOR at the wheel next to Birch.

The sculptor reaches his long toned arms towards Birch's lumpy looking pot. He gently guides Birch's hands around the lump, until it begins to form into an actual shape.

BIRCH

(breathy)

I'm good.

ELSA

I think I need to stay here a little longer.

Birch spins faster, his pot becomes more upright and phallic.

BIRCH

(eyeing the other sculptor)

My show's next Thursday.

ELSA

I know, but they need me at the bar, at least through the weekend.

BIRCH

Okay.

Elsa twirls a piece of her hair.

ELSA

I was thinking. Maybe you could come here for a few days.

The pottery wheel picks up speed. Wet clay splatters across Birch's bare chest. The other Sculptor watches Birch's hands run up and down his wet clay.

BIRCH

Sorry, Babe. I'm swamped here getting ready for the show...

Elsa looks disappointed.

ELSA

My mom would love to see you.

BIRCH

(skeptical)
And the others?

Elsa winces.

The two beautiful men are in sync with their passionate molding.

ELSA

I don't know Birch.

Birch looks the sculptor in the eye as he fingers the center of his clay -- it's getting uncomfortable to watch -- WET CLAY SOUNDS get louder and louder.

Elsa sits on the other end of the line, disappointed.

BIRCH

I'll call you later.

Elsa puts the phone away and stares wistfully into the woods until something moving catches her eye.

She walks toward the tree line to investigate.

ELSA

Hello?

The RUSTLING stops. Elsa creeps further into the woods. As she crosses the first line of trees, she spots the old TOOL SHED several yards down a narrow path.

She approaches the shed and finds an OPEN COMBINATION LOCK on the ground near the door. She scans the woods before picking it up. The wooden door CREAKS as she enters.

The shed's filled with tools, gardening supplies and other forgotten items.

A KID-SIZED DESK SPRINKLED WITH PINK GLITTER sits in the back corner. Craft supplies litter the floor. An OPEN CONTAINER OF PINK GLITTER rests on its side on the shelf above.

Childhood art projects scattershot the shed's interior. Elsa smiles as she traces her fingers along the memory filled walls.

After a beat, she turns back toward the door and eyes the FRAMED PHOTO on the wall: Steve juggles a toothless Elsa in one arm, a large fish dangles from the other.

She moves closer to get a better look at the photo and trips over a TARP on the floor. She lifts the tarp to expose a BOX filled with hockey puck-sized GOLD TINS.

Elsa crouches down to examine the tins. She grabs one and shoves it in her pocket.

She takes another look around the shed before pulling the framed photo of her Dad off of the wall.

INT. DNR - MITCH'S OFFICE - DAY

Neatly marked three ring binders line the office shelves. WILD LIFE PHOTOS and MAPS fill the walls.

Mitch sits behind a desk working on a computer. He leans into the screen to study a SPREADSHEET. His eyes dart ferociously across the screen.

He stands up and pulls a THREE RING BINDER from the shelf. He sits back down and flips through, eyes going from binder, to computer screen, and back. He mutters to himself as he reads.

COMPUTER SCREEN

At the top we see "Lake Winocqua Spearing Season 2022." The table below lists February dates on the X AXIS and "juvenile female, adult female, juvenile male, and adult male" across the Y axis. The far right column on the Y AXIS reads "Return/Donate."

Mitch scribbles numbers on a NOTE PAD as he scans the rows marked "Donate."

INT. DNR - COOLER

Oblivious to the cold and with complete focus, Mitch moves CLEAR PLASTIC CONTAINERS filled with STURGEON EGGS around on the shelf. He searches the handwritten dates on the labels, and counts the containers. He looks perplexed.

INT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL - BATHROOM - EVENING

Harley checks himself out in the mirror. He adjusts the BANDANA thinly tied around his hair, and straightens the collar of his JEAN JACKET. Satisfied, he turns to leave.

Through the mirror we see a massive "Harley Davidson" patch on his back.

He opens the bathroom door to the ROAR of a crowd.

INT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL

An overcapacity crowd packs the bar.

Harley greets his fans with hugs and high fives as he winds his way up to the stage to join his BAND: a HEAVILY BEARDED MAN with a mandolin; an EARTHY WOMAN with a fiddle; and a LANKY GUY with DREADLOCKS on the electric bass.

Throngs of young woman move closer to the stage, drawn in by Harley's raw charisma.

His demeanor turns serious as moves to the mic.

HARLEY

I can't lie people. This is rough.
(choked up)
It's the first time we've played
without our buddy Steve back there
behind the bar.

Jason and Elsa exchange sad glances.

HARLEY (CONT'D)

I wouldn't be up here today if he
hadn't dared me...

The women in the front row tear up, desperate to comfort him.

HARLEY (CONT'D)

(composing himself)
But he loved music. And he loved a
good time. So we're gonna play.

Harley picks up his guitar.

HARLEY (CONT'D)

This one's for the Sturgeon
General.

The crowd shares a vigorous TOAST to the Sturgeon General.

Elsa soaks up the scene.

Harley turns briefly to check in with the band before -- WAM --
-- JAM-GRASS music electrifies the crowd.

Elsa spots Tyler at a table near the front. She watches him
watching Harley.

Clara sits nearby with a group of young women. She gives Elsa
a small wave, which Elsa returns -- the friendliness is a
little foreign, but not unwelcome.

Jason wipes down the counter, he hears the door open and
looks up. Dallas enters the bar. Jason turns to Elsa, on
edge.

JASON

Can you help me tap some kegs out
back?

Elsa nods and follows Jason through the side door to the
backyard.

BACKYARD

Jason unlocks the doors of a small storage unit and drags out
TWO LARGE METAL KEGS.

A MAN'S BARE ASS is seen in the distance as he pees in the
bushes.

Jason hands Elsa a TAP.

ELSA

I've never seen the bar this
packed.

JASON

It's like this whenever Harley
plays.

Elsa looks around the yard like she's seeing it for the first
time.

ELSA
This could be a great outdoor
venue.

Jason LAUGHS.

JASON
Good luck with Shirley.

ELSA
You've tried?

JASON
(annoyed)
Of course I've tried. But we need
an inspection. An upgraded liquor
license. An outdoor music permit...

Jason watches Elsa scan the yard, wheels turning.

JASON (CONT'D)
You gonna help me or what?

Elsa stops contemplating and gets to work tapping her keg.

BARE ASS (O.C.)
I love you guys.

Jason jumps like a gun just went off. Elsa notes his over-
reaction as she opens the back door for Bare Ass.

ELSA
Okay. Back inside.

Bare Ass shuffles through the door. Elsa turns to Jason:

ELSA (CONT'D)
Coming in?

JASON
I'll be in a sec.

Elsa walks back into the bar. As soon as the door shuts Jason
turns to walk quickly towards the fish processing building.

INT. FISH PROCESSING BUILDING

Jason bursts through the front doors of the lobby, which
reveals the charm and chaos of a family owned small business:
Fishing gear, spears, coolers, abandoned coffee mugs, and
photos of smiling fishers with their prize catches.

An eclectic array of sturgeon decoys hang from the ceiling: a shiny copper bundt pan, colorful bowling pins, and a mobile made of a doll's head and shiny beads.

He frantically opens drawers and cabinets behind the front desk until he finds what he's looking for: a worn 1960's BETTY CROCKER RECIPE BOOK. He opens the front cover to reveal a cut out concealing a SMALL HAND GUN.

He pulls out the gun and tucks it into the back of his jeans, hidden by his shirt.

INT. DEBBIE AND IKE'S HOUSE

Debbie stands in front of a full length mirror wearing skinny jeans, an animal print blouse, and a furry vest.

Ike run-walks past the open door as Debbie poofs her hair. On second thought, he backs up to ask

IKE
Where ya goin'?

DEBBIE
Out.

She applies lipstick. Ike looks confused.

IKE
With who?

DEBBIE
A campaign donor.

IKE
This donor have a name?

Debbie's phone DINGS with a text. Her face lights up.

DEBBIE
Don't wait up.

Debbie struts past Ike, out the door.

Ike follows his wife down the hall, and calls out:

IKE
Debbie! We're not done here.

Off screen, we hear the front door SLAM shut.

Ike grits his teeth and squeezes his temples between the palms of his hands.

IKE (CONT'D)
AAAAHHHH...

INT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Elsa winds her way through the bar delivering a tray of drinks.

ROD, a jovial man in his 70s, waves her down from a table in the corner.

ROD
Moser girl.

Elsa eyes the stately baby pink cowboy hat resting on the table next to him.

ELSA
What can I do for you, Rod?

ROD
No, dear. It's what can I do for
you?

Elsa smiles fondly.

Rod fumbles through his pockets, and pulls out a stack of BUSINESS CARDS. He hands one to Elsa.

ROD (CONT'D)
You ever need a ride, just say the
word.

She checks out the card - "Rod's Cadillac Ranch." Her face lights up when she flips it over and sees a BRIGHT PINK CADILLAC.

ELSA
(excited)
You still doing rides through the
woods?

Rod bursts into laughter.

ROD
I thought your mom was gonna kill
me the last time your dad and I
took you kids for a ride.

Rod's laughter trails off.

ROD (CONT'D)
No more rides through the hills.
County shut me down.

ELSA
(indignant)
No.

ROD
Yup. My off-road tour days are
done. Had to pivot... Now I'm like,
uh, Uber!

ELSA
Cool. Are you on the app?

Rod points to the card in her hand.

ROD
Don't need an app.

He stands up and puts on his hat.

ROD (CONT'D)
Just call if you need me.

Rod downs his mostly full whiskey and hobbles towards the door.

ELSA
Thanks.

Elsa slips the card into her pocket. As she watches Rod leave, she notices Mitch entering. His hair's slicked back with too much gel; his shirt's tucked neatly into his khakis; he's out of place amongst the comfortable mostly drunk crowd.

Clara, leaving the bathroom, spots Mitch -- new blood.

Elsa watches as Clara effortlessly beelines to Mitch. She can't hear, but her body language is -- flirty? Mitch doesn't seem to pick up on it.

FRONT DOOR

CLARA
Hey!

Mitch jumps -- *someone's talking to me?* He hits her elbow.

Clara spills beer on his khakis. She grabs napkins and dabs Mitch's pant leg. His entire body flinches.

MITCH

It's okay. I don't mind being wet.

Clara, loosing interest, stands up. Mitch glances around the room, like he's looking for someone. Clara, less flirty and more genuinely neighborly:

CLARA

You heard these guys before?

MITCH

First time. You?

CLARA

Harley's my neighbor... I don't think we've met before.

Clara extends her hand.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I'm Clara.

Elsa watches Mitch smile at Clara from across the room.

MITCH

(extending his hand)

Mitch.

Clara shakes his hand.

CLARA

I saw you interviewed during Sturgeon Fest. The D.N.R. guy.

MITCH

(embarrassed)

That's me.

CLARA

Nice.

Mitch zeroes in on Elsa at the bar. He waves like a clown.

Clara watches Mitch watch Elsa -- she's got his number.

MITCH

Can I get you something?

CLARA

(smiling to herself)

I'm alright.

Mitch makes his way to the bar.

MITCH

Hi there.

The MUSIC is loud but not overpowering.

ELSA

Hi.

Mitch sits down. He looks uncomfortable but excited.

ELSA (CONT'D)

You here to give a TED Talk?

MITCH

(trying to be casual)

Just hanging out.

He leans too far back on his stool and nearly falls off.

ELSA

(smiling to herself)

Uh huh... Can I get you something?

Mitch inspects the taps.

MITCH

I'll have a Moon Man.

Elsa walks to the taps, sneaking glimpses of him as she pours.

Harley's love fest with the crowd continues.

MITCH (CONT'D)

They're good.

ELSA

Yeah.

(pondering)

They are.

Elsa sets the beer down in front of Mitch.

Harley wails out -- he's kinda drunk

HARLEY

This last one's for you big Steve.

The mood changes. Elsa and Mitch sit in silence. After a beat, she starts to say something, but stops herself.

Clara and her posey approach the bar, Mitch awkwardly looks down at his shoes.

CLARA

Hey.

ELSA

Hi.

Mitch tilts stiffly to his left, avoiding getting in their personal space.

ELSA (CONT'D)

What can I get for you guys?

The girls look at the taps and the liquor shelves until the one sporting a HIGH PONY and a harsh glare responds:

HIGH PONY

I'll have a vodka soda.

(beat)

Unless that's too simple for you.

One of the girls giggles. High Pony doesn't flinch. Clara looks uncomfortable.

HIGH PONY (CONT'D)

That was the word you used right?

Elsa is frozen. Mitch looks from the girls to Elsa, confused.

Elsa begins to mutter something when High Pony spots Jason and leads the crew to his part of the bar.

Clara gives Elsa a sympathetic look, but doesn't say anything as she walks away.

Elsa doesn't move, still frozen until Mitch leans forward onto the bar:

MITCH

I had some enemies too once.

STAGE AREA

Debbie and Dallas lock eyes on the dance floor, oblivious to the world around them. It's uncomfortable to watch, but hard to look away -- They're somehow grinding without actually touching.

Dallas glances at Jason behind the bar with a sassy sneer.

Jason gulps.

Shirley barrels through the front door in a thrown together outfit -- night gown peeking out from under her jacket.

She heads straight for the cash register and empties the contents into a money pouch. When she spots Debbie and Dallas "dancing," she calls out to Elsa:

SHIRLEY
Where's Ike?

Elsa shrugs.

Shirley shakes her head with disgust and then turns her attention to Jason.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Turn the music down.

Jason rolls his eyes.

Shirley abruptly heads back out of the door.

BEHIND THE BAR

Elsa dries glasses, out of sorts from High Pony's comments.

Mitch nods to Clara and her friends.

MITCH
What was that about?

Elsa continues cleaning without looking up.

ELSA
I don't want to talk about it.

Before Mitch can respond Jason approaches.

JASON
You're cut.

Elsa rolls her eyes at his display of managerial authority, but she concedes.

ELSA
Thank you.

Elsa takes off her server apron and throws it under the bar. Then she squats down to dig through the back of the mini fridge, loudly banging things around until she pulls out a beat up cardboard box of colorful fruity drinks.

ELSA (CONT'D)
You gonna miss these?

Jason makes a face of disgust, shakes his head, and gets back to work.

Elsa nods to Mitch before heading out of the side door to the backyard.

ELSA (CONT'D)

See ya.

THE DANCE FLOOR - LATER

The band strums a slow song, the remnants of the crowd drunkenly slow dance, or collect their things to leave.

Mitch, sits at a table in front of the stage, mesmerized by the band until he looks at his analog watch -- *holy cow it's late.*

He stumbles slightly as he stands up. He straightens his shirt and nods unreciprocated goodbyes to the band.

Mitch heads for the door, nodding similarly unnoticed goodbyes to everyone he passes.

He walks by Debbie and Dallas, getting chummy in the corner booth. His bow to the duo goes unnoticed.

EXT. BAR PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mitch steps out of the bar -- now he's loose. He spots Elsa sitting in a camp chair next to the processing building. Her feet rest on an old cooler, empty fruity drink cans litter the ground. Her head hangs over the back of the chair, starrng up at the stars.

Mitch approaches with an exaggerated swagger, but stops half way, not daring to get too close.

MITCH

(from a distance)

You need a ride?

Elsa picks up her head.

ELSA

Yeah... Actually I do.

Mitch looks over his shoulder back at the street.

Elsa raises her eye brow -- *is he going to offer?*

MITCH

Me too.

Elsa tips her head back up at the stars.

Mitch inches closer.

MITCH (CONT'D)

We could walk.

Mitch smiles and shrugs.

Elsa pulls Rod's RIDE SERVICE CARD from her pocket. She stares at the card for a moment before shoving it back.

ELSA

Why not.

Elsa grabs the two remaining cans from the plastic holder and tosses one to Mitch.

EXT. HIGH WAY - NIGHT

The moon lights their path as Mitch and Elsa make their way down the rural highway.

MITCH

What happened with those girls?

ELSA

I don't want to talk about it.

MITCH

Come on...

(beat)

People who were bullied in high school are the cool ones now.

Elsa sucks in a breath, unsure what to say.

Eventually, it dawns on him.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(light hearted)

Ohhhhhhhhh. I see... You were the bully.

Elsa cringes.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What'd you do?

She shakes her head.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Wrestle people for their money?
Spit in freshman's faces?

Elsa takes a deep breath.

ELSA
Worse.

Mitch looks surprised. She searches for the words:

ELSA (CONT'D)
I never really fit in here. I mean,
I didn't really try. But I don't
know...

She's drunk rambling, evading the point.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I spent most of my time with my Dad
or drawing.
(takes a swig of her
drink)
My last year of high school
everyone was hanging out all the
time, doing the big senior year
stuff. It all seemed so pointless.

Mitch listens intently.

ELSA (CONT'D)
(cringing)
And then I made those stupid
cartoons.

MITCH
How could cartoons be that bad?

ELSA
(ashamed)
It was mean. And personal.

Elsa picks up a stick from the ground and throws it into the woods.

ELSA (CONT'D)
No one was supposed to see them but
my Dad thought they were funny and
he kept sharing them at the bar.

Mitch looks more serious now.

ELSA (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to hurt anyone... for it to be hurtful... When I got into art school I begged my parents to let me move to LA.

They continue to walk in silence until Mitch pulls on her arm to stop.

MITCH

Can I see them?

Elsa immediately pulls back.

ELSA

No way.

MITCH

Please.

Elsa looks at his tipsy lopsided smile, charming under the light of the moon, and reconsiders. She takes a deep breath and pulls out her phone.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You kept them?!

ELSA

My Dad thought they were so funny. Whenever I was stressed about a big project he would send them to me.

A beat as the video loads.

ELSA (CONT'D)

No one talks about how much of a prick he could be.

Elsa almost throws the phone into Mitch's hands and then covers her eyes.

ELSA (CONT'D)

I can't watch.

PHONE SCREEN: A crude stop motion video plays. The bubble letters "Welcome to Winocqua" dance off the screen as a cartoon cow hobbles into the picture. An oddly shaped farmer type with a crazy look comes up behind the animal as he inserts his male genitalia into the cow. The cow moos then the character dumps on a beer on himself.

Elsa cringes.

PHONE SCREEN: A potbellied fish lounges on the couch watching porn.

Mitch continues to watch.

MITCH

Oh...

(eyes wide)

Master 'Baiter'... That's clever.

ELSA

It gets worse.

MITCH

Worse?!

Mitch's face as he holds up the phone tells us everything we need to know.

After a beat, he hands the phone back to Elsa, jaw open -- equal parts impressed and appalled.

Elsa rubs her temples as she walks.

MITCH (CONT'D)

That was vile... I mean the parts about your classmates weren't that bad, but... Wow.

He laughs again.

ELSA

I was such a cunt...

MITCH

Did you apologize?

ELSA

I haven't seen most of them since the last week of school.

As they near the intersection, Elsa turns to walk down her street.

ELSA (CONT'D)

You don't have to walk me home.

MITCH

I don't mind.

They walk a bit more, it's woodsier and darker now.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You're a really good artist.

ELSA
(still dejected)
Thanks.

MITCH
Fish don't normally have sex
organs, but now I know what a bass
with a chode would look like, so
thanks for that.

Elsa huffs out a small laugh.

MITCH (CONT'D)
I think you ruined brats and cheese
for me.

Elsa rolls her eyes but slightly smiles.

ELSA
It's weird being back.
(beat)
I forgot how peaceful it is.

MITCH
It's beautiful isn't it.

Mitch looks down at her with kind eyes. Elsa's heart flutters
before she stamps it down. Her demeanor shifts.

ELSA
The Sheriff was here today. He said
something about illegal caviar.

Mitch squirms. The vibe is gone.

MITCH
I really can't talk about that.

ELSA
Why?

A loon YODELS in the distance.

They approach the Moser home. Elsa stops in front of the
drive way.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I just want someone to tell me
what's going on.

MITCH
I get that, but it's messy.

ELSA
Was my Dad was doing something
wrong?

Mitch looks away, avoiding her pleading gaze.

MITCH
Elsa, seriously. I can't talk about
this.

She's pissed. She turns to leave.

ELSA
(muttering to herself)
Fine, fucking leave me out. I'll
figure it out myself.

MITCH
(pleading)
Elsa.

ELSA
Go away.

MITCH
Whatever. Go draw me then.

Elsa whips her head around -- low blow. She storms into the house.

Mitch shakes his head and heads down the street.

INT. MOSER HOME - ELSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elsa sits at her desk staring down at an open SKETCHBOOK. The PICTURE of toothless Elsa and Steve leans against the wall in front of her.

She TAPS her PEN several times before attempting to finish a drawing of STURGEON-LIKE CREATURES with legs sitting around a campfire roasting marshmallows with DINOSAURS.

FLASHBACK - INT. MOSER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

A much younger Steve sits at the kitchen table hunched over a small HANDMADE FLIPBOOK. Jason (2), plays with his food from the highchair across the table.

Elsa (4) stands nearby with her hands over her eyes. She peaks at her dad through her fingers.

Steve puts his pen down when he spies Elsa. With a twinkle in his eye, he motions for her to join him at the table.

Elsa launches herself onto his lap.

Steve holds the FLIPBOOK in front of her, pulls the corner back with his thumb, and then releases the pages to reveal: crude drawings of a fisherman cutting a hole in the ice; fish circling the hook below; snow falling; and in the end, the fisherman buried in a heap of snow.

Father and daughter burst into laughter, which turns into a tickle fest.

END FLASHBACK

ELSA'S BEDROOM

Elsa scribbles out the drawing in her sketchpad and flings it to the ground. A week's worth of tears flow from her crumpled body.

EXT. IKE AND DEBBIE'S DOCK - MORNING

The morning sun glistens on a peaceful lake. Birds CHIRP. DUCKS bob on the water. Gentle waves BREAK against the rocky shore.

A moored speed boat floats along the side of a long dock. From the shore, we see something stir in the boat.

BOAT

The cover haphazardly shields half of the boat from the sun.

Ike sleeps, mouth open, on the cushioned bench -- a life jacket for a pillow and a beach towel for a blanket. Empty beer cans litter the floor.

He SNORES in harmony with the sounds of nature. The peace is broken as we hear fast steps POUNDING their way down the wooden dock.

Ike's eyes flutter open. He cocks his head to see what's coming. Holy shit -- it's TWO DEBBIES weaving in and out between the rays of the sun.

He blinks hard, frightened and confused. As his vision clears, he sees his wife glaring at him, holding a LIFE SIZE CARDBOARD CUT OUT of herself at her side.

Debbie props cardboard Debbie up on the dock beside her.

DEBBIE

What the fuck are you doing?

Ike looks back and forth between Debbie's angry face and the creepy smiling Debbie next to her. His brain fog clears.

IKE

Where were you last night?

DEBBIE

I told you. With a donor.

IKE

Is that what they're calling it?

DEBBIE

(defiant)

He believes in me!

IKE

(defeated)

Then what do you need from me?

DEBBIE

To move my fucking boxes into the Rover!

Ike contemplates this for a moment before closing his eyes and snuggling the beach towel back under his chin.

A GUN SHOT jolts him upright.

The water beside the boat ripples with smoke. Birds and ducks SQUAWK and flee.

Debbie stands on the dock, pointing her pink bedazzled hand gun directly at Ike.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Now.

Debbie struts back down the wooden dock towards the house. Ike scrambles after her.

INT. MOSER HOME - MORNING

Elsa sits at the kitchen table focused on her computer. Her crusty red eyes tell us she didn't get much sleep last night.

Her screen is open to an article titled "Poaching and Illegal Caviar Trade Threaten Wild Sturgeon."

She scrolls down the article until she lands on an image of SHINY GOLD TINS like the one she found in the tool shed. She clicks on the image -- holy shit! \$599 for a tin of fresh caught caviar.

Lauren enters and pours herself a cup of coffee. She approaches Elsa to top off her cup. Elsa closes her computer.

LAUREN

Morning.

Lauren sits across from Elsa at the table.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Why are you working? It's Saturday.

ELSA

I've got a new website client.

LAUREN

That's great you're getting work.

Elsa shrugs.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

How's the animation coming?

ELSA

Haven't had much time lately
between Birch's shows and new
clients...

Elsa trails off, Lauren looks her directly in the eye.

LAUREN

Your dad loved the idea of you
getting your art out in the world.

ELSA

He didn't love Birch. He made that
pretty clear.

LAUREN

You gotta let that fight go.

Elsa looks away and bites her lip to stop the tears.

Mother and daughter sit in silence. After a beat, Elsa changes the subject.

ELSA

Jason needs help at the bar.

LAUREN
They'll find someone.

ELSA
Can we even afford to pay them?

LAUREN
(trying to sound upbeat)
My union rep says I can take a
leave for the rest of the year
without losing seniority.

Lauren notes the pained expression on Elsa's face.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Or just through the spearing
season.

ELSA
That's six months from now.

Lauren gets up, kisses the top of Elsa's head.

LAUREN
You've gotta live your life.

Lauren loads dishes into the dishwasher.

Elsa tucks her laptop under her arm. On her way out of the kitchen, she stops to ask:

ELSA
All that caviar they've been giving
away at the bar... whose catch was
that?

LAUREN
I don't know. Why?

ELSA
I didn't think Grandma or Dad got a
sturgeon this year. And Jason's
didn't have eggs.

LAUREN
(dismissive)
It was probably Ike's. Or maybe
Harley's... Ask your brother.

INT. MOSER HOME - JASON'S BEDROOM

Jason sits upright in his bed staring at his laptop.

Elsa enters the room without knocking. Jason slaps the screen down.

JASON
What the fuck?!

ELSA
Are you doing something illegal?

JASON
No...

She raises an eyebrow.

JASON (CONT'D)
(defensively)
Porn's not illegal, Elsa.

Elsa rolls her eyes.

ELSA
That's not what I'm talking about
pervert.

Jason throws a pillow at his sister.

JASON
I'm busy.

She doesn't take the hint. Instead, she closes the door and sits down on the edge of the bed.

Jason makes note of her concerned look and sits up straight.

ELSA
Was Dad selling caviar?

JASON
What?

Elsa pulls out the GOLD TIN from her pocket.

ELSA
I found a box of these in the tool
shed.

Jason straightens up.

JASON
They were probably for gifts.
Friends and family stuff.

ELSA

They look exactly like the tins I saw in an article about illegal caviar.

Elsa flashes the tin in Jason's face.

ELSA (CONT'D)

One of these is selling for six hundred dollars!

Jason says nothing.

ELSA (CONT'D)

You heard what the Sheriff said about U.S. Fish and Wildlife looking for illegal caviar.

JASON

Let it go.

Elsa glares, hands on hips.

JASON (CONT'D)

Trust me. Please.

ELSA

What did you say about the books being off? And where've we been getting the roe for all that caviar at the bar?

Elsa crosses her arms and stares, chin out. Jason avoids eye contact. She shakes his foot.

ELSA (CONT'D)

What if Dad got himself into trouble?

JASON

Don't be so dramatic. You're just upsetting Mom and Grandma.

Elsa pitches the tin onto Jason's bed and storms out. He yells after her:

JASON (CONT'D)

Don't forget about the meat raffle.

Jason picks up the tin and flips it in his hand, contemplating. After a beat, he shakes it off and reopens his computer to the screen -- "Wisconsin Department of Regulation and Licensing -- Outdoor Music Permits."

INT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL - AFTERNOON

PRIZE WHEEL

Colors whirl by as the FLAPPER on a PRIZE WHEEL TICKS. The TICKS gradually wind down until the FLAPPER settles softly between two spokes.

DEBBIE (O.S.)
 Lucky number five is going home
 with this beautiful side of ribs
 and a ham hock.

DINING AREA

A festive crowd of hard core day drinkers, seniors, and an assortment of couples and families glance at their WOODEN PADDLES and shake their heads with disappointment.

CARDBOARD DEBBIE stands by the front door as if she's a greeter.

A FAMILY sitting at a table in the back of the dining room hoots and hollers. The DAD raises a WOODEN PADDLE WITH A HAND PAINTED NUMBER FIVE high in the air.

DAD
 Yes!

Dad leans down and hands the paddle to his SON (age 6) who makes his way toward the stage.

The table on stage overflows with PLASTIC WRAPPED PACKAGES OF MEAT on one end, and the PRIZE WHEEL on the other.

Debbie owns the stage with her BEDAZZLED MICROPHONE in hand and a "Debbie for Mayor" campaign sticker on her too-tight sweater.

She looks down at the boy and haphazardly drops a PLASTIC WRAPPED TRAY OF MEAT into his arms almost knocking him over.

The boy smiles proudly as he wrestles the meat back to his family.

Elsa bursts through the front door, past the smiling CARDBOARD DEBBIE, and beelines for the bar.

BAR

Jason glances at Elsa as he pours pints.

JASON
Harley's swamped in the kitchen.
Can you do a round of paddles?

ELSA
(assessing the crowd)
I'm not qualified for that.

JASON
It's a fucking meat raffle.

Elsa rolls her eyes.

Harley emerges from the kitchen and maneuvers past the bar with a tray of food baskets. He calls over his shoulder

HARLEY
That's the last of the cheese
curds.

Elsa sighs before grabbing the BUCKET OF PADDLES.

DINING AREA

Elsa collects losing paddles from patrons and exchanges cash for new ones.

Debbie works the room, handing out campaign literature to the mostly disinterested crowd.

Dallas sits at a small table in the corner sipping his drink until his phone rings. He picks it up.

The call is in RUSSIAN with SUBTITLES.

CALLER (O.S.)
You got it?

DALLAS
Not yet.

CALLER (O.S.)
I told you, dick hole, Wisconsin's
a bust. We need your fuck face back
in the Ozarks.

Dallas' eyes follow Debbie.

DALLAS
I'm making connections. I need more
time.

He hangs up.

Elsa approaches Dallas with the BUCKET OF PADDLES.

Jason watches from behind the bar.

ELSA

Paddle?

Dallas gives Elsa a once over.

DALLAS

You're the Sturgeon General's kid.

Elsa makes note of the Russian accent.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

Two hundred and twenty pounds.
That's a big fish.

ELSA

Yeah.

Debbie comes up from behind Elsa and brushes against Dallas on her way to the front.

Elsa looks on with suspicion as Dallas watches Debbie climb the steps to the stage.

Dallas holds up a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL without taking his eyes off Debbie.

DALLAS

I'll take four.

Elsa pulls four paddles from the bucket and leaves them on the table in front of Dallas.

BAR

Elsa sets the paddle bucket down and joins Jason and Shirley behind the bar.

DEBBIE (O.S.)

The more paddles you buy, the more
money we can donate to the Winocqua
Substance Abuse Recovery Center.
Woo!

A noticeably DRUNK MAN wearing a "DRINK BEER, WIN MEAT" T-shirt grabs two paddles from the bucket and hands Elsa a ten dollar bill.

ELSA

Thanks.

Elsa puts the money in the cash register.

DEBBIE (O.S.)

Next up, we've got a Chuck Roast.
Speaking of Chuck, y'all find it
funny Mayor Chuck's never at these
community events?

SHIRLEY

I told her - no campaigning in my
bar.

Shirley SLAPS the bar. Elsa and Jason exchange "eek" faces.

Debbie looks over at the noise, she sees Shirley and knows exactly what she did. She continues her banter with the crowd.

ELSA

(to Jason)

Who's the Russian?

JASON

Who?

ELSA

The Russian guy

Jason doesn't bite.

ELSA (CONT'D)

(exasperated)

Fuck Jason. The caviar they've been
tracing to the Midwest. It's being
passed off as Russian.

JASON

So.

Elsa watches Dallas from behind the bar -- oh shit, he's headed her way.

Elsa tries to look busy. She grabs a pint glass and starts filling. She's distracted -- mostly foam -- she dumps the pint and starts over.

Dallas plunks down on the stool in front of Jason.

Jason's discreetly feels for the gun concealed in his waistband.

DALLAS

I would like to try a Brandy Old
Fashioned.

FRONT DOOR/STAGE AREA

Ike enters through the front door, hungover and in shambles. He does a double take as he walks past CARDBOARD DEBBIE.

Eventually, he finds an empty table near the front of the stage. He steals a FRIED CHEESE CURD off an abandoned plate and plops it into his mouth.

Patrons at a neighboring table shake their heads with judgement.

STAGE

Debbie barely glances at Ike before holding up a large pack of meat above her head.

DEBBIE

Who's ready to win this gorgeous
pack-o-sirloin?

The room CLAPS and CHEERS.

Harley moves to the PRIZE WHEEL and gives it a spin.

People clutch their paddles with anticipation.

The wheel stops.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Number twenty two! Where. Are. You!

No one immediately claims the prize.

BAR

Dallas takes the first sip of his brandy old fashioned -- damn, that's good.

The drunk man in the "drink beer, win meat" t-shirt elbows Dallas. Dallas flinches like he's ready to pounce.

Drunk man nods to the PADDLE on the bar next to him.

DRUNK MAN

Twenty-two.

Dallas looks confused. He glances down briefly at the paddle and then whips his head toward the stage.

Debbie spots Dallas smiling at her from across the room. He holds the number twenty two paddle to his heart.

STAGE

Debbie clutches the tray of sirloin.

DEBBIE

We have a winner.

Dallas walks directly to the stage. Without noticing Ike, he grabs Debbie by the back of the neck and pulls her in for a passionate kiss.

Debbie DROPS the meat.

The crowd GASPS. Mouths hang open. Heads turn in Ike's direction.

Ike springs from his chair onto the stage. Dallas and Debbie come up for air just in time to see Ike coming at them.

Ike lunges at Dallas, and grabs him across the waist in a pathetic attempt to drag him down.

With little effort, Dallas twists Ike's arm behind his back.

BAR

Shirley enters from the kitchen as Jason and Harley rush to break up the fight. Shirley's pissed.

She pulls a bottle of whiskey from the shelf and makes for the door. On her way out, she grabs CARDBOARD DEBBIE and tucks her under one arm, bottle of whiskey in the other.

STAGE AREA

Ike slips away from Harley's hold and makes another go at Dallas. With precise reflexes, Dallas blocks Ike's punches and nails him square in the nose. Ike stumbles backwards and rolls off the stage.

EXT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL - GRAVEL PARKING LOT

Shirley walks to the opening at the center of the parking lot. She plants CARDBOARD DEBBIE in the gravel and douses her with whiskey. Satisfied, she takes a swig from the bottle, pulls out a lighter, and casually ignites the cardboard frame.

Flames engulf Debbie's printed body. Shirley turns on her heels and heads for the fish processing building.

INT. MOSER'S BAR AND GRILL

Harley stands between Ike and Dallas.

Ike slumps in a chair, rubbing his bloody nose on his shirt.

Harley looks down at his friend with sympathy.

HARLEY

I'm sorry man. You gotta leave.

Ike turns to Harley with a look of betrayal.

HARLEY (CONT'D)

(apologetic)

We got kids here.

Behind Harley, we see the boy holding his dad's winning MEAT TRAY over his belly. His LITTLE SISTER (4) punches the meat like a boxer.

Ike stands up and moves toward Debbie. Dallas blocks him.

IKE

(locking eyes with Debbie)

Don't be a fool.

DEBBIE

Leave.

Dallas smirks, triumphant.

Ike flashes him one last deathly glare before slinking out the door.

BEHIND THE BAR

Elsa watches Ike leave. Jason returns to the bar shaking his head.

Elsa throws her towel on the counter, and beelines for the door.

JASON

Elsa!

Too late, she's gone.

EXT. GRAVEL PARKING LOT

Elsa bursts through the front door and yells

ELSA

Ike!

Ike stands frozen, watching Debbies burn.

Elsa approaches, momentarily hypnotized by burning Debbie.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Hey.

Ike looks up from the flames.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Just tell me.

Ike's eyes glisten, on the verge of tears. He looks at Elsa and searches for words, but has none.

ELSA (CONT'D)

What was he doing?

He rubs blood from his nose. Angry tears begin to flow.

IKE

He ruined my life.

Ike's words land like a punch to her gut. Ike hangs his head, and turns to leave.

As he walks away, light from the flames of burning Debbie reflects off a PATCH OF PINK GLITTER on the back of his JACKET.

Elsa freezes -- pink glitter from the tool shed? Unsure of what to do next, she watches Ike SQUEAL away in his DNR truck.

After a beat, she turns to see the contents of the bar spilling out to watch CARDBOARD DEBBIE burn.

Elsa ignores the crowd and heads for the processing building.

Dallas watches Elsa from the open door of the bar, with a sinister look.

Debbie emerges from behind him and runs to the rescue of BURNING DEBBIE with a bus tub of water in hand.

INT. FISH PROCESSING BUILDING - PROCESSING ROOM

The sterile processing room's filled with a long metal table, several large sinks, and stainless steel refrigerators.

Shirley stands at the metal table facing the front office. Her normally stoic face fights back a whirl of emotions as she bleeds and guts a massive fish.

She picks up a LARGE BUTCHER KNIFE and chops off the FISH'S HEAD. Blood and guts squirt everywhere. She doesn't notice or care.

Elsa bursts through the door and then halts at the sight of her grandma covered in BLOODY GOO. She watches intently as Shirley picks up a FILET KNIFE and expertly runs it down the fish's spine from tail to head.

Shirley looks up briefly at Elsa and nods toward the pile of FISH at the end of the table.

Elsa takes a deep breath before sliding a FISH across the table until she stands directly across from Shirley. She eyes the array of KNIVES waiting for muscle memory to kick in.

Eventually, Elsa selects the perfect filet knife, slices under the fish's gills, and SNAPS its head backwards to break the spinal cord.

Shirley nods approvingly.

They work in silence. Blood and guts fly around the table with abandon.

After a beat, Elsa swipes her elbow to clear strands of hair from her face. MYSTERIOUS FISH PARTS stick to her curls.

She looks up at Shirley, unsure of how to proceed until she eventually blurts out

ELSA
Was Dad in trouble?

Shirley closes her eyes for a moment.

SHIRLEY
He loved you kids very much.

ELSA
That's not an answer.

Shirley stands back to look Elsa square in the face.

SHIRLEY
You need to go back to Chicago.

Elsa locks eyes with Shirley, holding back tears. She turns and leaves without saying goodbye.

Shirley watches Elsa go. As the door SLAMS, a SINGLE TEAR runs down her cheek.

EXT. MITCH'S FRONT YARD - SAME DAY

A dozen WHIMSICAL WOODEN FISH DECOYS hang from a tree in front of a modest home.

The familiar voice of Bob Uecker fills the air with PLAY-BY-PLAY of a Milwaukee Brewers baseball game.

Mitch sits at a small wooden table whittling a piece of wood into the shape of a fish. He looks up, surprised to see a car pulling into his driveway.

The beat up car comes to a stop. He shifts nervously when he sees Elsa exit the vehicle.

LARRY, a very excited dog, greets her. Mitch calls out after him.

MITCH

Larry! Come!

Elsa admires the hanging decoys as she gently pushes Larry off her leg. The house is quirky and inviting -- just like it's owner.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... Larry!

Elsa steps onto the porch. Mitch, TURNS OFF the baseball game from his phone on the table and gives Elsa the up and down. She looks raw.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What have you been up to?

ELSA

Meat raffle.

Larry licks her pant legs.

MITCH

(amused)

I see.

Elsa looks down at the unfinished wooden fish on the table.

ELSA

I love the decoys.

Suddenly self conscious, Mitch pushes his whittling project aside.

ELSA (CONT'D)

I'm really sorry about last night.

MITCH

Me too.

ELSA

You have nothing to be sorry for.

Mitch grabs her a chair.

Elsa struggles to sit with Larry jumping in her lap. He licks blood and guts from her hair. She lets him.

MITCH

Down!

Mitch gives him a stern look. Larry relents and lies down at Elsa's feet.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(earnest)

Why are you here?

ELSA

I know what's happening in the Ozarks - people poaching paddlefish and passing the eggs off as Russian caviar.

Mitch squirms in his chair. Elsa leans in.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Is that happening here?

MITCH

I told you Elsa. I can't talk about this.

ELSA

Have they traced any of the Russian caviar to Winocqua sturgeon?

MITCH

The D.N.A. testing isn't back yet. Why do...

ELSA

I think Ike's involved in something.

(MORE)

ELSA (CONT'D)
 (ashamed)
 And maybe my Dad was too.

Mitch listens, wide-eyed.

ELSA (CONT'D)
 Someone broke into our storage shed
 yesterday and I think it was Ike.

Elsa pulls the gold tin from her pocket.

ELSA (CONT'D)
 And then I found a box of these.

Mitch takes the tin from Elsa and studies it.

MITCH
 (cautious)
 Listen, Elsa...

ELSA
 I get it. You don't want to talk
 about it. But I have to figure out
 if this has anything to do with my
 Dad's accident.

Mitch shakes his head in disbelief.

ELSA (CONT'D)
 Ike was at the meat raffle today
 fighting with a Russian dude.
 (excited)
A fucking Russian!

Mitch's wheels start spinning.

MITCH
 Dang.

ELSA
 What?

MITCH
Dang!

He stands up and walks into the house leaving Elsa alone. She waits, unsure if she should leave.

After a beat, Mitch returns with a THREE RING BINDER. He sets the binder on the table between them and flips to the DONATED EGG CHART.

He runs his fingers through his hair and studies the chart, mad at himself for not realizing the connection sooner.

ELSA

What?

MITCH

The donated sturgeon inventory and the actual storage amounts are all off. I thought it might be someone at work, but not Ike.

Elsa realizes what he's saying and leans in to look at the records. Their heads almost touch. The tension's thick.

Mitch leans back dumbfounded.

MITCH (CONT'D)

We need to talk to the Sheriff.

Elsa immediately shakes her head.

ELSA

We can't do that.

MITCH

Elsa.

ELSA

This is my family.

MITCH

I get that, but...

ELSA

Let's talk to Ike before we do anything.

Mitch stares at Elsa intently.

ELSA (CONT'D)

(desperate)

Please.

MITCH

Fine.

(reassuring)

Maybe it's just a mix up.

Larry barks. He's ready to go.

INT. BOAT LANDING - DNR TRUCK - SAME TIME

Ike rests his head on the steering wheel. After a beat, he sits back and stares out the window at the lake.

FLASHBACK - EXT. LAKE WINOCQUA - WINTER - DAY

The sun shines on a vast frozen landscape dotted with ICE SHANTIES.

INT. ICE SHANTY

Steve, Shirley, and Ike sit around a LARGE RECTANGULAR HOLE in the ice.

The light is dim except for the YELLOW/GREEN GLOW shining up through the hole, illuminating their faces.

A line hangs down from the middle of the hole with a BOWLING PIN DECOY secured to the end several feet below the surface.

The bowling pin can also be seen from an underwater camera projected on an iPad propped up on a small UTILITY TABLE.

Steve tosses Ike a PBR from the TWELVE PACK at his feet, and then CRACKS one open for himself.

STEVE

So how many fish are we talkin'?

IKE

Sixteen hundred sturgeon total are speared per season. Two hundred or so of those are adult females with roe. And of those, forty or fifty are donated to the D.N.R. for research.

SHIRLEY

At about thirty pounds of roe per fish.

IKE

A big girl could be forty.

STEVE

Exactly. I bet we could skim off ten percent of the adult females without raising any eyebrows.

Ike rubs his scruffy beard.

IKE

I don't know, Steve.

STEVE

What? No one will notice... Hell, you've put your time in, they owe you.

Shirley shoots Steve a cautious look.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(to Shirley)

They're just dumping them anyway. No harm. No foul.

SHIRLEY

We don't need the business wrapped up in illegal caviar.

STEVE

We're not gonna sell it. We'll just use it to bring people into the bar. Like Dad used to do... We're barely skating by.

Shirley crosses her arms, not convinced.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(excited)

We can use it for prizes in the Euchre tournies and meat raffles.

Steve whacks Ike on the shoulder.

STEVE (CONT'D)

And Ike can do whatever the hell he wants with his.

Ike shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

After a beat:

SHIRLEY

We gotta keep this tight. No one beyond this circle.

(stern)

I mean it.

Steve and Ike exchange nervous glances -- you don't mess with Shirley.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Nothin' about this to Lauren or the kids.

(to Ike)

And definitely not Debbie.

IKE
Of course.

SHIRLEY
Okay then.

Steve holds out his beer to toast. Ike CLINKS his can.

Suddenly, Steve notices a LARGE DARK SHADOW swim past the bowling pin on the iPad monitor, he jumps up.

They hop to their feet. Steve grabs the FIVE PRONGED SPEAR resting against the wall behind him.

The trio stares silently into the glowing water below. After a beat, a GIANT SHARKLIKE STURGEON circles the bowling pin.

Steve raises the spear above his head and slams it full force into the water.

STEVE
Shit!

The shanty erupts with DISAPPOINTED GROANS.

EXT. LAKE WINOCQUA

Shirley ducks out from the flaps of the ice shanty onto the frozen lake. MUFFLED PROFANITY spills out behind her.

She adjusts her eyes, momentarily blinded by the sun, as she scans the lake for witnesses.

A FISHERMAN from a neighboring shanty calls out:

FISHERMAN
Any luck?

SHIRLEY
(yelling)
Just missed him. Big fucker. He's
headed your way.

The fisherman high tails into his shanty.

INT. ICE SHANTY

Steve and Ike slouch in their chairs contemplating the near miss.

Steve swigs his beer.

STEVE

So.

IKE

(hesitant)

So.

STEVE

There's a dealer in Chicago. They usually operate out of the Ozarks, but they got too big, too fast. The whole scene's hot right now.

IKE

Where they off loading it?

STEVE

There's a Russian connection. Fresh water caviar's premium nowadays. They're passing it off as Russian caught... We'd just be padding their supply a bit.

IKE

How much we talk'n?

STEVE

Skimming off the D.N.R. stash, we could be pulling in a couple thousand a month.

Ike shakes his head, unsure.

STEVE (CONT'D)

C'mon man. Elsa's got that fancy art school in the fall and I know Debbie's burn'n a hole in your pocket.

IKE

And Shirley?

STEVE

We'll give away our share and sell yours. And if there's more to process, I'll do it myself. She doesn't need to know.

Ike nods his head, he's warming to the plan.

IKE

Duh split?

STEVE
Fifty-fifty.

IKE
(put off)
It's my job on the line.

STEVE
And our business.

They sit silent for a moment staring into the glowing hole.

Steve holds his hand out, inviting the deal.

Ike smiles reluctantly before reaching out over the hole in the ice to accept. An eerie glow illuminates their faces.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. DNR TRUCK

Ike presses his finger to the bridge of his nose and takes a deep breath. With renewed focus, he reaches under the passenger seat and pulls out a DNR EQUIPMENT BELT with a PISTOL, BEAR SPRAY, HAND CUFFS, and FLASHLIGHT.

EXT. MITCH'S DRIVEWAY

Elsa's car pulls out of the driveway onto the rural highway.

As her car rounds the corner, Dallas' black SUV enters the highway from behind a wooded inlet.

INT. ELSA'S CAR - MOVING

Elsa grips the steering wheel too tight. Mitch sits beside her with the BINDER in his lap.

Larry's EARS and TONGUE flap in the wind from a partially open window in the back seat.

MITCH
(intentionally calm)
We can't assume Ike's responsible
for the missing inventory. He's not
the only one with access.

Elsa's eyes dart around the road until she notices the BLACK SUV in her REARVIEW MIRROR.

MITCH (CONT'D)
I'll just go in and ask him
about...

ELSA
Mitch!

They turn in their seats to watch the SUV over their
shoulders.

Elsa pumps the gas. The car lurches forward, but not fast
enough.

EXT. ROADSIDE

Tires SQUEAL as the SUV cuts them off and runs Elsa's car
into a shallow ditch.

INT. ELSA'S CAR

ELSA
Fuck!
(fast)
What do we do? What do we do? What
do we do?

Mitch sits eyes-wild, unable to speak.

Dallas appears through the window and points his gun at
Mitch.

Larry BARKS.

DALLAS
Out of the car.

Mitch turns slightly to make eye contact with Larry.

MITCH
(under his breath)
Stay.

DALLAS
Now! Hands where I can see them.

EXT. DITCH

Elsa and Mitch emerge from the vehicle with their hands in
the air.

Dallas motions with his gun for them to step away from the car further into the ditch.

DALLAS
Give me your phones. Slowly.

They dig in their pockets and throw their phones on the ground at his feet.

Dallas SMASHES the devices with heavy boots. Without taking his eyes off the pair, he picks up the phones, one at a time, and pitches them into the woods.

DALLAS (CONT'D)
(pointing the gun at Elsa)
Where's my caviar?

ELSA
I have no idea what your...

DALLAS
Your buddy Ike can't find it so the
Sturgeon General must've had it.

Dallas moves closer to Elsa and COCKS his gun.

In the background, we see Larry wedging his body out of the open passenger side door.

Mitch holds his hands higher in the air and slowly moves closer to Elsa.

MITCH
(desperate)
I can get you the eggs. As many as
you need.

Dallas turns his attention to Mitch.

DALLAS
Who the hell are...
(sudden pain)
What the?

A GROWLING Larry locks on Dallas' ankle.

Elsa goes in for a quick high kick and knocks the GUN into the tall grass.

Mitch and Elsa exchange frantic glances.

ELSA
Run!

Elsa darts into the woods with Mitch at her heels.

EXT. WOODS

Branches SNAP against their bodies, and leaves CRUNCH under their feet as they flee through the woods. Elsa trips over a log. Mitch grabs her arm and pulls her along with him.

They stop to catch their breath behind a thick tree.

EXT. ROADSIDE

Dallas kicks his leg violently to shake Larry as he simultaneously digs through the tall grass searching for his gun.

He eyes the GUN and reaches to pick it up.

Larry takes off through the tall grass.

Dallas aims the gun in Larry's direction and SHOOTS several times before heading back to his car.

EXT. WOODS

Elsa and Mitch hear the gun SHOTS from their hiding spot behind the tree.

MITCH
(wincing)
Larry.

Elsa takes a moment to squeeze Mitch's arm, before continuing to scan the woods. In the distance she spots a wide, overgrown trail winding through the trees.

ELSA
(with a hint of relief)
Rod's.

MITCH
Rod's?

ELSA
Rod's Cadillac Ranch.
(pointing)
It's about a half-mile past that hill.

Mitch looks confused, but there's no time to ask.

EXT./INT. ROD'S CADILLAC RANCH

Elsa and Mitch drip in sweat as they approach a rugged old ranch house.

Horses graze in the fenced field. SQUACKS and SNORTS emanate from a nearby barn. CLASSIC OLD CARS litter the field in front of a large garage.

They march up to the front porch and KNOCK on the door. No response. Mitch looks over his shoulder back into the woods. Elsa shakes her hands nervously as she peers through the window until

ROD (O.S.)
(yelling from behind)
Hello there.

Rod emerges from the garage.

Mitch and Elsa wave and walk to meet him.

ROD (CONT'D)
Elsa Moser.

Rod smiles affectionately at Elsa before checking Mitch out.

ROD (CONT'D)
This your fella?

Mitch and Elsa flush with embarrassment.

ELSA
No, no... No.

Rod isn't blind -- he knows what's up.

ROD
Okay.

Mitch extends his hand.

MITCH
Mitch. I work at the D.N.R.

Rod steps back hands up.

ROD
(defensive)
I told 'em. I'm not runnin' the trails anymore.

MITCH
We're not here for that.

ROD
(skeptical)
Riiiiight.

Elsa intervenes.

ELSA
Rod. It's an emergency. We need a
car.

Rod notes their disheveled appearance.

ROD
You in some trouble?

ELSA
No. No. We're good. We just need to
get back to town.

Rod looks from Elsa to Mitch, quizzical.

ROD
Okay. You can take the Prius,
it's...

Elsa cuts him off.

ELSA
We gotta go through the woods...
(sudden sad face)
Like we used to with Dad.

Mitch stands behind Elsa. He clasps his hands to his chest
and gives Rod his best sad face.

MITCH
(silently mouthing to Rod)
She needs this.

Rod throws his arms open with a mischievous glint in his eye.

ROD
Well in that case...

INT./EXT. GARAGE

A VINTAGE PINK CADILLAC CONVERTIBLE creeps through the garage
door into the yard, Elsa behind the wheel. Mitch grips the
seat.

Rod hobbles along beside the car calling out instructions.

ROD
Remember the big dip just before
the creek.

ELSA
Got it.

The Cadillac picks up speed, leaving Rod behind.

ROD
(yelling)
And the sharp right at the shitter.

Elsa turns to wave back at Rod.

ELSA
(yelling)
Thanks Rod! We owe you!

As the Cadillac disappears into the distance, we hear BARKS.

Larry bolts down the path and jumps into the back of the Cadillac.

Rod shakes his head, laughing to himself.

EXT. WOODED TRAIL

Mitch and Larry share a brief but loving reunion.

Elsa grins ear to ear as she maneuvers the Cadillac up and down the hilly trail.

After a beat, Mitch yells over the bumping of the car and the wind:

MITCH
Where are we going?

ELSA
We gotta stay off the main road. We
can make it to Ike's from the North
side.

MITCH
Elsa. Stop! We need a plan.

Elsa SLAMS the BREAKS and stops. She thinks. After a beat, she turns to Mitch.

ELSA
We gotta find the caviar.

MITCH

We need to call the Sheriff.

ELSA

(manic)

The Russian said Ike didn't have it, maybe my Dad did... Maybe that Russian killed him. Maybe he's gonna kill Ike... We gotta find the caviar before he does.

Elsa closes her eyes and taps her forehead.

MITCH

It would have to be somewhere cool.

Elsa looks at Mitch, surprised.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(matter of fact)

So the caviar doesn't spoil.

She slowly nods her head until it hits her.

Elsa slams the car into reverse and takes a hard right down another trail.

The Cadillac emerges through the trees and into a grassy field of cows.

The car bumps and bounces through the hills in stark contrast to the slow moving cattle.

INT. DALLAS' SUV - MOVING

Dallas drives slowly down the gravel road scouring the woods. He spots a sign for "Rod's Cadillac Ranch" and turns down the long driveway.

EXT. ROD'S CADILLAC RANCH

Rod lounges in the back seat of a beat up old Mustang convertible, BOOTS up the side door, CIGARETTE in one hand and a BOOK in the other.

He looks up at the sound of GRAVEL KICKING up under the wheels of Dallas' SUV. He stumps out the cigarette in the armrest ASHTRAY, tosses the book on the seat and gingerly climbs out.

Dallas approaches from the driveway. Rod meets him halfway.

ROD
What can I do for ya?

Dallas wastes no time.

DALLAS
You seen a young woman and her
boyish companion around here today?

Rod sizes up the Russian and stands tall.

ROD
Can't say I have.

DALLAS
There was an accident. I just want
to make sure they found a way home.

Rod softens his stance and turns on the folksy charm.

ROD
Well that's kind of ya, but I
haven't seen 'em. Anything else I
can help you with?

Dallas looks around without answering.

ROD (CONT'D)
(aw shucks smile)
You look like a Stingray guy. I've
got a beautiful seventy-three
Corvette in the garage if you're
interested.

DALLAS
I'm good.

ROD
All righty then.

Rod waves his hand and heads toward the house.

Dallas watches the old man walk away. He keeps looking around
the property for a beat before getting back in the SUV.

ROD'S KITCHEN

Rod stands in the kitchen with a ROTARY PHONE in hand. He
dials a number and puts the phone to his ear. After several
RING TONES, the other line picks up.

ROD
I think we've got some trouble.

Rod listens to the response on the other end.

ROD (CONT'D)
 Yup. Some foreign guy.
 (listening)
 They headed down the trail toward
 A. and H. Northside of the lake.

Rod nods.

ROD (CONT'D)
 Yuppers. Okie. Bye now, Shirley.

Rod place the phone receiver in the cradle.

INT. FISH PROCESSING BUILDING.

Shirley hangs up the LAND LINE PHONE, visibly shaken. She pivots to face the desk in the corner.

FLASHBACK - FISH PROCESSING BUILDING

Steve sits at the desk. Shirley hovers over him.

SHIRLEY
 (angry)
 We agreed to give caviar away.
 Nothing more.

STEVE
 You know we need the money.

SHIRLEY
 We're doing fine.

STEVE
 We're barely scraping by. And the
 kids need options.

SHIRLEY
 I'm not putting the business at
 risk to pay off some god damned art
 school.

Shirley hits a nerve. Steve stand firm.

STEVE
 Lauren never got a choice to stay.
 And I'm not doing that to Elsa.
 (defiant)
 Ike and I can handle it.

SHIRLEY

What about Jason? You gonna drag
him into this?

This hits home -- Steve sighs deeply.

Shirley plants her knuckles on the front of the desk and
leans in.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

This stops now.

END FLASHBACK

INT. FISH PROCESSING BUILDING

Shirley pulls out her cell phone from her pocket and dials.
The screen shows - "Outgoing call Elsa."

She bites her lip and waits. No answer.

Shirley bolts for the door.

EXT./INT. CABIN - DUSK

The pink Cadillac stops in the gravel driveway in front a
small rundown cabin.

Elsa hops out of the Cadillac and heads toward the front
porch.

Larry BARKS. Mitch exits the vehicle and turns to face Larry.

MITCH

(stern)

Stay!

Larry WHINES, then lays down in the back seat for a nap.

Elsa reaches her hand into a BIRD FEEDER hanging from a
nearby branch and pulls out a key. She unlocks the door, and
they're in.

ELSA

Now where's the other key...

Family history oozes from the charming one-room cabin. On one
side, a set of bunkbeds and a queen. On the other, a table,
chairs, bookshelf, and dresser. A couch and fire place nestle
along the back wall.

Elsa digs a box of match out of a COFFEE CAN and lights the GAS LANTERN on the table.

Mitch peruses the bookshelf.

Elsa nearly knocks him over in her frantic search for the key, reminding Mitch of the task at hand.

MITCH

We're looking for a key to what exactly?

ELSA

A pad lock. To the root cellar.

Elsa tosses random items from the dresser drawers.

ELSA (CONT'D)

My grandparents used it for food.
But Dad used it to hide his beer
while we were in high school.

Mitch investigates the knick knacks on a shelf by the couch. He's drawn in by a COLORFUL HANDMADE DIORAMA with MAGICAL SEA CREATURES and a TINY TREASURE CHEST.

He pulls the diorama off the shelf and opens the tiny chest.

MITCH

(holding up a key)
Score.

Elsa grins, grabs the LANTERN from the table with one hand, the key with the other, and bolts out the door.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND THE CABIN

A carpet of pine needles and dirt blankets the clearing behind the cabin.

A metal FIRE PIT with LOG BENCHES sits at the center.

A CLOTHES LINE hangs along the tree line next to an OLD STYLE IRON WATER PUMP and TIRE SWING.

Elsa marches past an OUT HOUSE at the back of the clearing onto a discreet wooded trail.

Mitch takes his time to admire the property.

Elsa stops in front of SMALL WOODEN DOOR built into a sloping mound. She gets to work on the padlock and opens the door.

EXT./INT. ROOT CELLAR

The pair squeezes into the tiny cellar, careful not to burn themselves on the lantern.

They adjust to the enclosure. It's dark and intimate.

For a moment, they huddle, face-to-face, forgetting why they're there.

After a beat, Elsa lifts the lantern. The GLOW illuminates a line of CANNED GOODS on a SHELF made of bricks and two-by-fours, and a TWELVE PACK OF PBR.

She circles the lantern around the cellar but finds nothing until -- she spies a SPOT OF WHITE poking out from under an OLD WOOLEN BLANKET.

A cloud of dirt and dust fills the cellar as she yanks the blanket off to reveal several LARGE YETI-STYLE COOLERS.

Mitch and Elsa exchange wild grins and begin the difficult process of extricating one of the coolers from the cellar.

EXT. ROOT CELLAR

Elsa kneels on one side of the cooler, Mitch on the other.

She can't bring herself to open it. Mitch gives her an encouraging nod.

She lifts the lid to reveal a CLEAR PLASTIC CONTAINER full of CAVIAR.

They hold their breath, not sure what happens next, until -- CLICK-CLICK.

Ike stands behind them with a cocked gun.

EXT. LAKE - SPEED BOAT - MOVING

Shirley races across the lake wearing OLD LADY SHADES. Wind blows through her grey hair -- total bad ass.

INT. DALLAS' SUV - MOVING

Dallas drives slowly down the rural roads, scanning the woods.

As he approaches the lake, he spots a tall pole with painted wooden boards showing the names of families living down the turn off -- i.e. Statz, Davey, Griffiths, etc. -- common signage in the North Woods.

He drives past another set of wooden signs - "Hayes, Phelps, MOSER."

Dallas makes a hard left turn down the gravel road.

EXT. YARD BETWEEN CABIN AND LAKE

Elsa and Mitch plod across the yard, each holding a handle on the end of the cooler.

Ike follows behind them pointing his gun.

IKE

(unhinged)

It was your Dad's idea ya know.
Big Steve and his big ideas. But as soon as he gets what he needs.

(chortle)

What a fool. Paying for that fancy art school.

His words knock the wind out of Elsa. She stops to glare at Ike.

Ike waves the gun at her to keep moving.

IKE (CONT'D)

Anything for his little princess.

Mitch half turns as he walks.

MITCH

It's not too late, Ike. We can fix this.

IKE

(sarcastic)

Thanks, Boss.

The trail stops at a lake. Ike's speedboat floats at the end of the wooden dock.

Elsa and Mitch set the cooler on the ground and turn to Ike.

ELSA

(angry)

I need to know. What happened to Dad?... He was your friend.

Ike lowers the gun. He looks at Elsa and his face crumbles. As he's about to speak --

Dallas bursts from the woods and tackles Ike, hands around his throat.

They tussle on the ground, rolling toward the water's edge until --

A MUFFLED SHOT RINGS through the air.

It's unclear who's been shot until Ike rolls off Dallas.

BLOOD GURGLES from Dallas' mouth. The ground beneath him turns crimson.

EXT. LAKE - SPEED BOAT - MOVING

Shirley pulls off her shades and squints to get a better look across the lake. She sees Ike standing on the shore with Elsa and Mitch.

She swerves the boat and moves it out of sight of the cabin.

Shirley scrambles out of the boat into the shallow water. She ties a rope to a low lying branch, reaches into the boat and pulls out a FIVE PRONGED FISHING SPEAR, and sneaks into the woods.

EXT. CABIN LAKESHORE

Blood drips from Ike's shirt as he paces back and forth, carelessly waving the gun in Elsa and Mitch's direction.

IKE

None of this woulda happened if
he'd just kept to the plan.

Mitch approaches Ike, slow and calm.

MITCH

We'll talk to the Sheriff and
explain everything... How it was
all Steve's idea.

Elsa shoots Mitch an angry glare.

Mitch nods at her to go along.

ELSA

(feigning encouragement)
Nobody could say 'no' to Dad.
(MORE)

ELSA (CONT'D)

And with Debbie's campaign. All
that pressure...

Ike stops pacing.

IKE

Shut the fuck up!
(pacing resumes)
I gotta think.

EXT. LAKESHORE TRAIL

Shirley crouches as she silently makes her way down the wooded trail running parallel to the lakeshore.

She stops in her tracks when she spots Ike pointing his gun at Mitch and Elsa.

After a beat, she pulls her phone out of her pocket and dials. She holds the phone to her ear as she inches closer.

EXT. CABIN LAKESHORE

Ike unlatches the cooler with one hand and points the gun at Elsa and Mitch with the other.

IKE

(to Mitch)

You're gonna take the tub of caviar
to the boat.

Without taking his eyes off Ike, Mitch lifts the CLEAR PLASTIC TUB OF CAVIAR out of the cooler.

IKE (CONT'D)

(to Elsa)

And then we're gonna go back and
get the others.

ELSA

I'm not doing anything until you
tell me what happened to Dad.

IKE

Now!

Elsa doesn't budge.

Mitch gives her a look pleading her to pick up the box.

IKE (CONT'D)
 You really wanna know about your
 Dad?

We see Shirley's face poke through the trees behind Ike, just feet away from Dallas' bloody body.

Shirley grips the SPEAR tighter as her eyes dart between Elsa's terrified face and Dallas' dead eyes.

IKE (CONT'D)
 (exaggerate sarcasm)
 The Sturgeon Fuck'n General.

Ike moves closer to Elsa, ready to explode.

IKE (CONT'D)
 I take my eyes off the hole for one
 second and BAM!
 (spit screaming)
 It was my spear. In my shanty...
 That was my fuck'n sturgeon!

Mitch puts an arm between Ike and Elsa, attempting to shield her.

MITCH
 You need to stop and...

Ike points the gun at Mitch, out of control.

IKE
 I was next in line! It was my
 fuck'n job. Not yers.

Ike jerks away from Mitch to focus on Dallas. He lunges at Dallas' limp body and begins kicking it.

IKE (CONT'D)
 And she's my fuck'n wife.

ELSA
 (furious)
 So what? You just let him kill dad?

Ike stops kicking Dallas and turns back to Elsa. His whole body shakes.

IKE
 No one gives me credit...

Ike raises his arms and declares:

IKE (CONT'D)

I killed him.

Shirley roars from the woods, spear raised.

SHIRLEY

RAAAHHHH!

Ike pivots toward the sound as the SPEAR rips through his heart. He falls to his knees, making a feeble attempt to pull the spear from his chest before his body gives out.

Shirley stands between Ike's and Dallas' dead bodies in shock.

She looks down at her WHITE ORTHOTIC SHOES -- a stark contrast to Ike's DIRTY WORK BOOTS and Dallas' FANCY BLACK BOOTS lying inches apart in a pool of blood.

Off screen, a dog BARKS.

Larry -- Mitch's dog -- runs at them from behind the cabin. He YELPS and jumps from Mitch to Elsa. They barely notice.

Elsa, Mitch, and Shirley look from one to another in stunned silence.

After a beat, Elsa leads Shirley by the elbow to the log bench by the fire pit. Mitch joins them.

They stare out at the FIRE RING until Shirley breaks the silence.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

It's my fault. I told your dad it had to stop.

Elsa grabs Shirley's hands to console her.

ELSA

You couldn't have known what Ike would do.

Shirley turns to Mitch to explain.

SHIRLEY

All those donated eggs were just going to waste... I never agreed to sell anything. We just gave it away at the bar.

Mitch and Elsa exchange stunned glances.

Shirley breaks into tears for the first time in many years.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

(to Elsa)

I'm sorry you got mixed up in this... I never should have let it happen.

(to Mitch)

I called the Sheriff. They should be here any minute.

Elsa stands up to walk and think.

ELSA

What did you tell them?

SHIRLEY

That Ike was here at the cabin with a gun.

After a few quick paces, it comes to her --

ELSA

(talking fast)

Everyone saw them at the meat raffle. Debbie kissing the Russian. The fight.

Mitch watches Elsa with concern.

ELSA (CONT'D)

And then when Ike took off angry... I was worried.

(to Mitch)

So I came to find you. You're his boss.

Mitch shakes his head.

ELSA (CONT'D)

We went to his house, but he wasn't there. We figured he might've come here to hide out. And when we got here...

(arms displaying the bloody scene)

It was too late.

SHIRLEY

Elsa. I can't let you lie for me.

ELSA

You. You thought you could help so you came to calm him down.

We hear SIRENS WAILING in the distance.

Shirley and Elsa watch Mitch closely. His face gives nothing away.

ELSA (CONT'D)

(to Mitch)

If they find out about the caviar,
it's not going to look good for the
D.N.R. or the sturgeon restoration
project.

The trio simultaneously turns to look at the CLEAR PLASTIC TUB lying open on the ground.

Larry happily licks the last of the caviar from the empty tub.

BLACK SCREEN SUPER ONE YEAR LATER

EXT. HIGHWAY - DUSK

Elsa's Camry drives down the highway, passing a BILLBOARD - "Debbie For Governor." Her animal prints replaced with a navy blazer.

EXT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL

Elsa's pulls into the parking lot. She exits the vehicle wearing a fabulous jumpsuit and a newfound confidence.

INT. MOSER'S BAR & GRILL

Elsa enters the partially full bar and smiles.

Clara greets her from behind the register.

CLARA

Welcome home!

Elsa dips behind the bar to hug Clara.

ELSA

I hope you're holding up okay.

CLARA

It's been great.

Elsa looks skeptical.

CLARA (CONT'D)
(sincere)
Really. Jason's the best.

They share a moment before Elsa turns to scan the room.

CLARA (CONT'D)
They're all out back.

Elsa takes a deep breath before heading for the side door to the backyard.

BACKYARD PATIO

Elsa enters the patio in awe. The formerly drab backyard's full of life.

String lights line the fence along the perimeter. Small tables and chairs are scattered throughout. Paper lanterns and a smattering of MITCH'S COLORFUL WOODEN FISH hang from the trees. A trio of small fire pits are tucked into the back corner.

Harley and the band PLAY MUSIC from the stage at the front of the patio.

Harley gives Elsa a friendly nod as she navigates the crowd dancing in front of the stage.

Tyler breaks away from his handsome dance partner to give Elsa a small hip bump. She stops for a quick hug and keeps moving until --

She spots Lauren, Shirley, Jason and Mitch huddling together in the back of the crowd.

When Lauren sees her coming, she SHRIEKS and throws her arms around her daughter.

Mitch takes a step back to give them space. Elsa watches him out of the corner of her eye. He fidgets with his shirt, trying to be nonchalant.

Shirley and Elsa share a moment -- no words are spoken but their eyes say it all. Elsa pecks her grandma on the cheek before moving on to Jason.

Elsa punches Jason on the shoulder.

ELSA
This is amazing.

JASON
(with pride)
I know.

Elsa soaks in the love from Lauren, Shirley and Jason.

Eventually she makes her way to Mitch. They hug awkwardly. The family looks on with raised eye brows. Elsa squirms. Lauren leads the rest of the group away, winking at her daughter as she goes.

Elsa pulls Mitch by the elbow toward an empty fire pit in the corner.

FIRE PIT

The fire casts a warm glow as they sit, shoulders grazing, pretending to watch the band.

Elsa breaks the silence.

ELSA
I heard you've got a new fishing
buddy.

MITCH
(smiling)
Shirley loves me.

Elsa playfully rolls her eyes.

MITCH (CONT'D)
(hesitant)
So uh. How long are you here for?

Elsa turns her gaze away from the stage to look him in the eye.

ELSA
I'm actually coming back. At least
for the Summer.

He tries to conceal a smile.

MITCH
Why?

ELSA
I've got a project I'm working on.

Mitch looks at her intrigued.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Fishing related. So you might
actually be interested.

MITCH
(pretending to be
offended)
I'm not all about fishing. I've got
interests.

ELSA
(flirty smile)
Yeah?

Rod stands nearby, watching the pair with an amused smile.

MITCH
Like hiking. Watching sports...

ELSA
Exciting.

MITCH
I've been thinking about getting
into gambling...

Rod interrupts their flirty banter.

ROD
(pointing and winking)
I knew it!

Busted -- Elsa and Mitch chuckle as Rod hobbles away.

Mitch moves closer, just inches from Elsa's face.

MITCH
(questioning)
Is he wrong?

She smiles coyly before pulling him in for a long passionate
kiss.

We PAN UP to a WOODEN STURGEON DECOY softly swinging from a
tree branch above them, until --

The sturgeon appears to jump off the screen into an artsy
animated short: the sturgeon swims amongst dinosaurs before
heading downstream to spawn; a female sturgeon lays thousands
of tiny eggs; the male sturgeon releases sperm to fertilize
the eggs; baby sturgeon swim happily downstream amongst the
end credits.

FADE OUT.