

Stranger Things

The Crooked Man

By:
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PREVIOUSLY ON STRANGER THINGS:

1983. Dark forces plague the small town of Hawkins, Indiana.

Posing as an energy research facility, the HAWKINS NATIONAL LABORATORY conducts nefarious experiments on human test subjects. The laboratory's primary operation, Project MKUltra, is a series of experiments designed to develop new kinds of human weapons against America's Cold War enemies. After a series of gruesome trials, one experiment has gone horribly wrong... or horribly right...

A rift has been cut between space and time; a doorway in our world opened to a dark, mysterious realm. Through it, a monster has emerged with its gaze set on the unsuspecting residents of this unassuming Indiana town.

After a night of D&D with his friends, 12 year old WILL BYERS is stalked by the Monster and vanishes without a trace. His mother, JOYCE, inundates Hawkins PD and its Chief, JIM HOPPER, who mount an unprecedented search for the boy. Meanwhile, another search party mounts up. Will's friends, MIKE WHEELER, DUSTIN HENDERSON, and LUCAS SINCLAIR look for Will on their own and find an unexpected ally in a young girl, only identified by a number on her arm: ELEVEN.

Able to move objects with her mind and enter a dream-like state of telepathy, Eleven is a successful experiment of MKUltra who escaped the lab...but not before accidentally causing the rift between Hawkins and, what the kids have called, "THE UPSIDE DOWN," where Will has been taken by the monster they named "THE DEMOGORGON." After narrowly escaping the lab's "bad men," the kids are able to defeat the Demogorgon, allowing Joyce and Hopper to save Will, but not without Eleven seemingly sacrificing herself in the process.

One year later, the lab is run by DOCTOR SAM OWENS, now tasked with preventing the portal from opening wider. Will, still haunted by The Upside Down, discovers a new entity, a gargantuan Shadow Monster, and becomes possessed by it. Eleven, having survived her encounter with the Demogorgon, now lives with Chief Hopper in secret. She digs deeper into her own past, discovering her true name is Jane and that MKUltra produced other successful experiments.

Eleven reunites with the kids, and newcomer MAX MAYFIELD, to use her power to close the growing rift while Joyce frees Will of his possession with the help of her elder son, JONATHAN and Mike's sister NANCY. With the monster, named "THE MIND FLAYER," trapped in the Upside Down and the lab under control, Hawkins has finally gone back to its quiet self...but it has been that way for too long already...

EXT. CHICAGO - NIGHT

We FADE IN on the night sky; specks of white dot the dark.
Superimpose Titles:

OUTSIDE CHICAGO

JUNE 14, 1985

A distant VOICE echoes from afar, its words indiscernible.

We TILT DOWN to see a lone, petite CABIN surrounded by
seemingly endless trees; warm light glows from the windows.

Clothes and sheets, hung over thin rope lines just outside
the structure, gently flap in the breeze.

INT. CABIN

The modest hut is more of a functioning living space than a
home. Few decorations adorn the dilapidated wooden walls.

Warm yellow light radiates from small lamps across the
cabin. A RADIO on the counter announces:

ANCHOR

We are just two weeks away from
first public hearing in the case
against Hawkins National
Laboratory. Late last year, the lab
was exposed in numerous cases of
environmental contamination. One
instance in particular has been
revealed to have resulted in the
death of Hawkins, Indiana resident
Barbara Holland. The lab itself was
shut down early last December and
continues to be occupied by--

A HAND reaches toward the radio and holds the dial.

A MAN (28) cycles through stations. He wears a well-worn
tank top that used to be white and equally-worn slacks.

The fluctuation between bits of song and static are
accompanied by a WOODPECKER, PECKING on a tree just outside.

The man holds on a static-filled station as he looks out the
open window to the bird. His eyes narrow.

The bird continues PECKING; the man holds out his right
hand. A low, but sharp RINGING rises over the static.

(CONTINUED)

The bird STOPS and tilts its head toward the man. Its head bobs back and forth; the man holds his hand extended.

The bird dismounts the tree and flies away. The man SIGHS and turns the dial again with his left hand. He finally holds on a station which plays Bad, Bad Leroy Brown.

His hand lingers on the dial and we see under his left forearm tattooed in simple, black lettering: "005."

The man IGNITES a gas-powered stove under a pot of water and drops eggs into the bubbling liquid.

On the counter, the man chops tomatoes to the beat of the song. One by one, eggs rise in the water and--

DARKNESS. SILENCE. The power has been cut.

The man holds still and clenches his knife up close; the blade, and tomato juice dripping off, of it glistens in the moonlight spilling in through the window.

He slinks toward a window facing the drying laundry. He presses his empty hand and face against the glass and gazes out into the darkness.

Between the flapping sheets, a DARK FIGURE stalks toward the cabin with quick stomps. The figure, or what can be seen of its silhouette, appears disfigured and holds a long object.

The man GASPS and pushes away from the window. He drops to the floor and rips a mat away to reveal a compartment. He FLINGS the hatch open and reaches down for a backpack.

He PULLS the bag out and it gets caught on the floor. It TEARS open, spilling papers everywhere.

MAN

Shit!

He pulls back as many papers as he can and--

STOMP. STOMP. The figure is just outside the front door.

The man stares at the simple chain lock holding it shut.

Beat.

BAM. The door JUMPS in it's frame as the figure on the other side KICKS against it.

The man reaches into the bag. BAM. BAM.

(CONTINUED)

BAM! The door plummets onto the floor and a Converse shoe, red dulled to a dirty brown, STOMPS down onto it.

The tall figure stands in the frame; a man, SLIM, not that he's about to introduce himself. His dark green jacket nearly disappears in the blackness behind him. His figure is demonstrative of his name.

The slender man's right shoulder protrudes higher than his left and the M17 gas mask on his face makes him look all the more inhuman. It is weathered and scratched, clearly having made it through a hellish, maybe other-worldly environment.

He raises a refashioned, sprayed-black Winchester rifle up in front of the mask's foggy, lifeless eyes.

The man holds his hand up; a familiar RINGING.

Slim's rifle droops for a beat but he PULLS it back up and--

The man TOSSES a flash-bang grenade toward Slim.

BOOM! A flash of WHITE.

Slim stumbles backward, shielding the mask's eyes with his arm. The man pulls his bag and DARTS to the cabin's rear.

The pot of water ferociously BOILS as the he runs by.

Some papers remain on the floor. We see one, a file on DOCTOR SAM OWENS with a picture of the doctor clipped to it.

EXT. CABIN

The man ERUPTS out of the back door, and right into a BEAR TRAP. It BITES into his left leg and he SCREAMS.

Writhing in the trap, the man CLENCHES the metal jaws and PULLS with all his might.

INT. CABIN

Slim PEEELS the mask up to the top of his head, revealing his clenched-shut eyes as he HUFFS and PUFFS.

His eyes SPRING open; He brings the mask down with a swift-

EXT. CABIN

CLANG! The man forces the bear trap's jaws down and pushes himself away, into the thick woods.

He limps as fast as he can, propelling himself off his now injured leg like a paddle in water.

BANG! Bark from a tree right behind the man EXPLODES.

Slim stands in the back door frame, his rifle fixed in the limping man's direction. He inches out toward him.

BANG! Another miss. Slim shakes his head, recalibrating.

The man DIVES behind a tarp-covered object. He tears the cloth away, revealing a DIRT BIKE.

BANG!

He jumps on and STOMPS the kick.

BANG!

He STOMPS the damn thing again!

BANG!

VROOM! The engine roars to life, the back wheel kicks dirt and fallen leaves behind the vehicle.

The man SPEEDS away, weaving through trees as Slim watches him in his sights.

He lowers the rifle.

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

The lonely road is surrounded by trees on both sides. Harsh yellow light floods down on it under old, stained lampposts.

The man speeds by on his bike and looks over his shoulder.

Nothing. He's free. He approaches an intersection.

The man lets out a victorious LAUGH as he crosses the intersection, his eyes forward toward--

HEADLIGHTS spring alive, tall, just feet away on his left.

WHAM! The man is THROWN from the bike, like a swatted fly.

(CONTINUED)

A gargantuan, night-black, flat-faced cab over semi truck SCREECHES to a halt just yards from the man, lying bloodied and mangled in the street.

The truck's door creeks open; Bad, Bad Leroy Brown echoes from inside.

A familiar converse shoe STOMPS down on the metal step.

Slim, rifle in hand, drops down from the tall, hulking vehicle. "The Cullen," not that he'd admit that to you.

He slams the door. Silence. He approaches the fallen man.

The bloodied man looks up to the lifeless mask as the rifle rises in front of it.

He extends his hand; RINGING.

Slim's head tilts; his rifle slightly droops.

Beat.

Slim WHIPS the rifle up and--

BANG. The man's body JOLTS back onto the street. He stills. Slim stands motionless under a street sign.

LOCUST STREET.

He removes his mask and holds it under his rifle arm.

He reaches to his left ear, pulls out a foam plug and plunges it into his pocket.

Out of the same pocket, Slim pulls a pair of small pliers.

He kneels down beside the man's body as we tilt up to see another sign, just a few yards beyond the intersection.

"Welcome to Hawkins."

CUT TO BLACK.

CREDITS.

Superimpose Titles:

CHAPTER 1

THE CROOKED MAN

EXT. HAWKINS MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

The bright blue sky sits softly above the school gymnasium.

Dozens of GRADUATION CAPS fly into the air, followed by a resounding WHOOOO from an army of GRADUATES.

The caps plummet to dozens of GRADUATES exiting the gym. Amid the sea of black gowns, a quintet of NERDS emerges.

MIKE WHEELER, DUSTIN HENDERSON, LUCAS SINCLAIR, WILL BYERS, and MAX MAYFIELD elbow each other and cavort.

They each hold their own caps, adorned with various quotes from Star Wars, The Lord of the Rings, and more.

Dustin's cap is taped to his trademark red and blue hat.

DUSTIN

Lady and gentlemen, we have
officially leveled up!

Will does his best arcade "BLING" sound.

MIKE

End of an era.

MAX

Yeah, one hell of an...eight months
of my life. Really shaped me into
who I am today. Might as well give
another eight a go.

Lucas wraps his arm around her shoulder.

LUCAS

Hey, it's only up from here. High
schoolers, mother f--

SCOTT CLARKE, wearing an elegant robe, steps in, his arms crossed behind his back.

MR. CLARKE

The next words out of your mouth
better be "may I."

Lucas' arm RECOILS back to his side. Dustin bows.

DUSTIN

My Lord.

(CONTINUED)

MR. CLARKE

Ah-ah, not anymore. You are all now ready to captain your own curiosity voyages without me. Alas, I must wave you off from shore as you sail to the Undying Lands.

The boys pout. Max looks around for any clarification.

MR. CLARKE

Now, I know we couldn't have this as part of the ceremony, but I wanted to commemorate our Fellowship in some way.

Mr. Clarke pulls his arms around, revealing a small trophy; The wooden cylinder is topped with a gold-painted microphone. Its base is engraved, "Hawkins AV Club."

He hands it to Mike, the group huddles around it.

MR. CLARKE

Mr. President. Mr. Vice President. Mr. Secretary slash Treasurer. Heads of Marketing.

Lucas and Max shoot finger-guns at him.

MR. CLARKE

What can I say? It's been a pleasure and I'll miss having you all in class. I'm sure the rising club members will need some guidance, so don't be strangers next year.

MIKE

We'll be back. Gotta make sure they don't burn the place down.

WILL

Again.

Everyone looks at Will.

Behind the group, a woman, JEN, waves at Mr. Clarke.

MR. CLARKE

Well, can't keep the missus waiting. Gentlemen, lady. I'll be expecting random scientific inquiries over the course of the summer.

(CONTINUED)

Mr. Clarke walks to Jen, but turns back to say:

MR. CLARKE
Oh, enjoy your vacation!

Mr. Clarke and Jen embrace and continue walking.

DUSTIN
Oh shit, I haven't even started packing.

LUCAS
That makes two of us.

MAX
Three. Four?

Mike nods. Will YAWNS.

WILL
I'm set. I was up late packing.

DUSTIN
How many extra pairs of underwear did you mom pack?

Will lightly swats Dustin's arm.

LUCAS
We got plenty of time. Come 14 hundred hours tomorrow, we'll be en route to Lake Manabozho.

MIKE
Cool of the Chief to get us a full week before it reopens.

MAX
Yeah, you know what they say: Saving the world twice has its perks.

WILL
I'm just looking forward to a break. I think we can all use one.

LUCAS
Yeah, kick back, relax, soak in some sun. It'll be toooatallly tu--

MAX
Please stop.

(CONTINUED)

DUSTIN
Seconded! Plus, getting some time
away from the parent--Heeeyyyy!

MRS. HENDERSON, Dustin's mom, approaches them, SQUEALING.

She engulfs Dustin in a bear hug, smothering him.

MRS. HENDERSON
AHHHHHHH. Congratulations, kids.
Sooooo proud!

DUSTIN
Thnkeeeuwmmom...

A camera FLASH spits light over the group. JONATHAN BYERS,
dressed well, approaches, camera in hand.

JONATHAN
Evidence, in case he doesn't make
it.

Behind Jonathan, JOYCE BYERS pushes through the crowd.

JOYCE
There are my graduates! Congrats,
boys, Max.

Joyce walks over to Will.

JOYCE
I was good, right? I didn't yell
THAT loud when you walked up.

WILL
Mom...

Lucas and Max disperse to their approaching PARENTS. The
SINCLAIRS and MAYFIELDS celebrate with their kids.

Mike watches them all. He looks down to his trophy.

NANCY WHEELER pounces on Mike from behind, trapping him in
her arms. They both stumble forward.

MIKE
Jeez, Nance!

NANCY
Get used to it, you have a whole
school year of this to look forward
to.

MIKE
Damn, only one?

Nancy spins Mike around and punches his shoulder.
She looks at the trophy in his hands.

NANCY
What's this?

MIKE
AV Club. Mr. Clarke made it special
for us.

NANCY
That's nice.

MIKE
I guess.

Beat.

NANCY
I know, they don't exactly make
"Inter-dimensional World Savior"
trophies much these days.

Mike chuckles, through a forced smirk.

MIKE
Where are mom and dad?

NANCY
Being efficiently distracted.

Nancy rotates Mike 90 degrees to his left. Through a narrow
break in the crowd stands JANE HOPPER, wearing a yellow
sundress in contrast to the muted colors of the crowd.

She fiddles with a blue hairband on her left wrist as she
watches the river of faces flowing above her.

Mike and Jane lock eyes, their faces light up like Christmas
lights on Joyce's wall. She walks toward him.

Nancy leans over Mike's shoulder.

NANCY
I'll keep mom and dad out of your
hair. Don't take forever, though.
Jonathan and I can only talk about
college for so long.

She nudges him forward and leaves into the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

Mike and Jane meet in the middle of the crowd.

MIKE

Hi.

JANE

Hi.

MIKE

Your dress looks pretty.

JANE

Thanks. Yours too.

MIKE

Oh, this isn't a dress. It's a gown. It's different...I guess.

JANE

Oh...still pretty.

They laugh.

JANE

Congratulations for graduation.

MIKE

Thanks! It's weird, we're just going next door. It's not like it's a big deal yet. Just gonna be kind of more of the same.

JANE

Trophy?

MIKE

Yeah, for our AV Club. Remember when we first met and we brought you to the room with the radio? The one where you-

JANE

Blew it up?

MIKE

Yeah, that one. Hey, we found Will because of it, though. Not that we can really brag to anyone about that.

Mike looks down to the trophy in his hands.

(CONTINUED)

JANE
What's wrong.

MIKE
Nothing, it's just...I feel...

JANE
Unappreciated.

MIKE
No it's just-- No one knows, you know? No one gets it. And it's not even that I want them too. It's just...Will still gets bullied and no one even knows what he's been through. Everyone just thinks we're losers--

Mike jiggles the trophy in his hand. Beat.

MIKE
--and we couldn't even be recognized for that. We can't even talk about you or what you did for everyone. Twice.

Beat.

MIKE
I don't even want to be celebrated, we don't need a big Rebel Alliance medal ceremony.

Jane tilts her head.

MIKE
Star Wars, we'll watch it. Just, sometimes I wish people would understand. You know?

JANE
Yes.

Jane holds the trophy in Mike's hands.

JANE
But we know. And people will learn. That you're smart. Brave.

Mike smiles.

(CONTINUED)

JANE

People are going to be aghast.

The smiles droops.

JANE

I heard it on TV.

MIKE

Oh.

Dustin LUNGES onto them from the side, hooking them both with one arm each while CHEERING.

Lucas swoops in from the other side, Max in tow.

They release after a moment.

DUSTIN

Hey, El--or, Jane.

LUCAS

That's still gonna take some getting used to.

JANE

It's fine. I like your...gowns.

Dustin curtsies.

DUSTIN

Why thank you.

MAX

I can't wait to get out of this thing. I've been stepping on it all day.

LUCAS

Yeah, it's really constricting my move set.

Lucas starts busting a move. Will approaches.

WILL

Now it's a party.

Will and Jane greet each other.

DUSTIN

Well, ladies and gents, we are one step closer to adulthood with our whole summer ahead of us. What do you want to do?

They all look around to each other.

EXT. WHEELER HOUSE - NIGHT

A sprinkler douses the dark, green lawn in front of the Wheeler residence. Multiple family cars are parked on the street out front.

In the window, Joyce and KAREN WHEELER walk by, holding plates of food and laughing.

MIKE (O.S.)
The water is flowing calmly now;
the storm has passed.

INT. WHEELER HOUSE - BASEMENT

The kids all sit around a short table. On it, multiple folders stand upright and numerous dice lay. Sporadic plates lay spread across it as well, some holding unfinished pizza crust. Max is halfway through a slice.

Dustin and Lucas look to Mike, Dustin leaning on the table with his elbows. Jane, on Mike's left, remains in awe of the pizza crust she is working on.

Will, on the opposite side of the table to Jane, leans over his plate, bracing his head up with one hand.

MIKE
The boat continues forward. Through
the thinning fog, a tower begins to
appear. Its gold cap reflects the
sun as its shine returns. You've
found the island!

DUSTIN
Heyyyyyy.

Dustin and Lucas high-five.

MIKE
You can almost feel the lost city's
cache of gold in your grasp; the
infinite coins and doubloons
flowing through your fingers!

Max wipes sauce from her chin with her thumb and looks to a roll of paper towels at the end of the room.

They FLY toward her, she catches them and looks to Jane.

(CONTINUED)

Jane nods. Max nods back.

MIKE

You sail closer, the shore is in sight. The riches of Mad King Pellinore will surely be...

Mike makes a BLURB noise with his mouth.

Jane looks at him with a raised brow.

BLURB.

MIKE

The water...it starts to bubble around the boat.

BLURB. BLURB.

MIKE

More bubbles, the water is boiling!

DUSTIN

Ah shit.

MAX

Told you a maelstrom was too easy.

MIKE

A giant, dark figure rises to the surface.

Mike SLAMS a Godzilla figure on the table.

MIKE

The Leviathan!

LUCAS

That's Godzilla.

MIKE

I'm improvising. The Leviathan lurks above your dinky little boat, the hot steam of its fiery breath reeks of death!

MAX

Dustin, show'em who's boss. Burp at it.

DUSTIN

A boss this early? We practically just started.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

What? It's unexpected. It raises the stakes by starting halfway through. It's a classic trope.

LUCAS

Yeah, it's called En Medium Ritz.

MAX

It's En Media...you're an idiot.

DUSTIN

This is halfway through? What, are we going to go back now knowing this is where we get?

MIKE

I'm trying to change things up!

Mike, Dustin, and Lucas ARGUE as Will begins to drift off. His head sinks down onto his forearm.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Will wakes up on grassy ground, underneath innumerable stalks of tall, green grass.

He LEAPS up and looks around, quickly.

The field stretches far, only ending to meet the start of thick woods. The trees are full of green leaves, the whole scene is bright and warm. What a nice change of pace.

Will walks through the field, feeling the grass as he goes.

Birds chirp, rays of sun shine in the sky. It's great.

Will approaches the wall of trees. A shadow lurks behind it.

Birds SCATTER out of the woods. The shadow RISES!

THE MIND FLAYER looms over the woods, its smokey figure takes its tendril shape and looks to Will.

Its form SWIRLS into a giant sphere in the sky.

The black ball crawls across the sky and over the sun.

As it ECLIPSES the sun, dark shadows cover the field.

Where the shadow stretches, the grass COILS and ROTS. The darkened areas reflect the Upside Down.

INT. WHEELER HOUSE - BASEMENT

Jane JOLTS in her seat as the boys continue arguing. Her eyes WIDEN.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The eclipse's shadow inches toward Will. He looks back to the sky. The sun is almost completely eclipsed when--

MIKE (O.S.)

Will!

INT. WHEELER HOUSE - BASEMENT

Will JUMPS awake. He looks at Mike.

MIKE

Your move?

WILL

Oh, uh...

Will looks at Jane, her eyes fixed on his.

A KNOCK from the basement staircase. Jonathan steps down.

JONATHAN

Closing time, graduates. Wrap it up.

LUCAS

Wrap it up? It just started getting interesting!

Mike shoots Lucas a look.

DUSTIN

Technically, we were halfway through.

Mike redirects his glare.

JONATHAN

You have all summer raid dungeons and slay...Godzilla? But not tonight, big day ahead of us tomorrow.

Dustin, Lucas, Max and Will grab their trash and belongings and head up the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

Jane trails Will, ready to accost him.

MIKE
Hey, hang back a sec?

Jane stops and turns to Mike.

MIKE
I got you something. For this week.

Mike goes to the corner of the room and retrieves something that he holds behind his back.

MIKE
I didn't know if...I figured you
didn't have anything or if Hopper
got you something.

He inches toward her.

JANE
Mike, what--

MIKE
I mean, if you don't like it you
won't hurt my feelings. I just
wasn't sure if--

Jane nods her head to the side and Mike TWIRLS.

He holds a striped bathing suit. He hands it to her.

MIKE
Nancy helped me pick it out, she
thought it looked--

JANE
Pretty.

Mike smiles.

JANE
I can't...swim.

MIKE
Oh, right. We can try to teach you.
None of us are really great
swimmers, either, but we can try.
You can get floaties, too.

JANE
Floaties?

MIKE

Oh, they're like balloons you can
wear on your arms so you can float.
Like when we put salt in the pool.

Jane looks back down at the swimsuit.

MIKE

Do you like it?

JANE

Yes.

MIKE

I think it'll...you'll look...

They lock eyes and inch closer together. They--

A COUGH! They jump.

CHIEF JIM HOPPER, in full uniform, stands in the open back
door frame. He leans on it while looking to the side.

JANE

Hey.

HOPPER

Hey, kiddo. Ready to go?

JANE

Yes.

She walks over to him.

MIKE

Hey, Hopp.

HOPPER

Kid. Congrats on the graduation.
First of three, I hope.

MIKE

That's the plan.

HOPPER

Thatta boy. Alright, Jane, let's
head out. We have to pack first
thing in the morning.

JANE

Okay. Goodnight Mike.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Goodnight! She heads out the door,
past Hopper. He sees the suit.

HOPPER

What's that? That's nice.

Hopper looks to Mike. He points to his own eyes, then
Mike's. He leaves, gently closing the door behind him.

EXT. WHEELER HOUSE - NIGHT

The Sinclair family pulls away from the street. Joyce and
Will wave them off, standing next to their parked car.
Hopper's wagon is parked behind them.

Jonathan and Nancy talk by the front door as Hopper and Jane
walk around to the front sidewalk.

HOPPER

Yeah, we'll keep things close to
the shore, huh?

Joyce approaches them.

HOPPER

(to Jane)

I'll be right over.

Jane continues on toward Will.

JOYCE

Did they leave room for the Holy
Spirit?

Hopper laughs. Jane walks up to Will.

WILL

Hey, how about that game, huh?

JANE

Your dream. The Mind Flayer.

WILL

You saw it too?

Jane nods. Will sighs.

WILL

I'm...I'm sure it was just a dream.
I have random dreams all the time.

(CONTINUED)

JANE
About the Upside Down?

WILL
Sometimes. But sometimes I have
dreams about the Thundercats.

JANE
Weird--

WILL
I know, I only watched that show
once--

JANE
No, that I saw your dream.

WILL
Oh. I don't know, maybe
you...picked up my frequency. Just
please don't tell anyone.

JANE
What if this is more than a dream?

WILL
It isn't! I don't think it is, it's
just...I'm tired of being a walking
rain cloud, you know? Two years in
a row, I got teleported then
possessed... I'm just tired. We're
going on an actual vacation
tomorrow. We can relax for the
first time in forever. I don't want
to be the one to ruin that.

Beat.

JANE
I won't tell anyone.

WILL
You won't?

Jane nods.

JANE
Promise.

Joyce and Hopper laugh while they stand in the driveway.

(CONTINUED)

JOYCE

Looks like they're getting along.

HOPPER

Yep. Nice to see her mingling.
Acting like a kid. How was the
graduation?

JOYCE

Long and loud, you would've loved
it. They all seemed so tired. I
think this week is just what they
need.

HOPPER

Them and us both. Think you're
ready to step foot back onto the
legendary Lake Manabozho?

JOYCE

Oh yeah, all ten square legendary
acres. Those were two summers I
still haven't gotten back.

HOPPER

Ah, wasn't all bad. I have a very
distinct image of Lonnie taking a
nose-dive off of the utility shed.

JOYCE

Him being the only tool not inside
of it.

They laugh.

JOYCE

How was Owens?

HOPPER

Oh, same old. Y'know, part-time
therapist, full-time pain in the
ass and backseat parent.

JOYCE

Did you tell him about your dream?

Beat.

HOPPER

It didn't come up, no.

(CONTINUED)

JOYCE

Hopp--

HOPPER

I told you, it's nothing.

JOYCE

"Nothing" doesn't happen repeatedly. We talked about this; How important transparency is in our situation. What if this--

HOPPER

I...I know. I'll tell him about it when we get back. But until then, we have a week of absolutely "nothing" ahead of us. They need this. WE need this. We all just deserve a break, don't we?

JOYCE

Yeah.

Beat.

JOYCE

So how'd you convince Owens to let her be out and about for the week?

HOPPER

I have my ways...and the next four rounds were on me.

INT. THE EGG'S NEST BAR - NIGHT

The old, rustic pub is lit dimly. Overhead bulbs spot pockets of the narrow establishment with yellow light.

Numerous flyers posted around the walls read "Veteran's Night," explaining the clientele of bustling OLDER GENTLEMEN wearing green Vietnam War fatigues.

A clear bin labeled "Hawkins PD Donations" sits on the bar, filled a quarter of the way with dollar bills.

At the end of the bar sits SAM OWENS, dressed casually, with two empty glasses to his side and one half full, or half empty, in his grip. He watches a bright TV, hanging from the ceiling and broadcasting Hawkins National Lab news.

Owens empties his last cup and motions to the BARKEEP.

(CONTINUED)

OWENS

Let's get that last one over here,
huh?

Barkeep nods to him.

The front door creeps open. Familiar converse shoes step in.
Slim enters.

His mask is gone. In its place, an early 20s human face
hangs beneath moderately-lengthed hair and a thick, short
beard. His right hand, hanging higher than the left,
twitches. Pulling on a phantom trigger.

He sifts through the crowd and sits next to Owens. Owens
notices him and removes the empty glasses in his way.

OWENS

Oh, I'm sorry.

SLIM

All fine.

Slim studies his face; squinting as he does.

SLIM

You look familiar. You famous, or
something?

OWENS

You probably have that to thank for
seeing this mug.

He motions to the TV, then extends his hand to
Slim. They shake.

OWENS

Sam. I'm sort of overseeing the
lab's evaluation. Lucky me.

SLIM

Oh yeah, been hearing about that.
Never woulda thought something like
that could happen here, y'know?

OWENS

Yep.

Beat.

OWENS

You from around here?

(CONTINUED)

SLIM

Nah, just passing through.
Actually, I used to be. Born here,
at least. My old man always moved
around.

Slim twirls his finger, motioning around the room.

SLIM

Military. He passed when I was
young. My mom and I settled down
out east. I always considered
following in his footsteps, but I
don't think they'd take me.

He gestures toward his right shoulder.

SLIM

Call it a hunch.

OWENS

Hm. So what brings you back?

Slim's eyes fix on the TV.

SLIM

Business.

Barkeep comes back with a full glass and hands it to Owens.
He collects the empty glasses.

SLIM

Not driving tonight, I hope.

OWENS

Oh, I've got all night to water
these down.

BARKEEP

What'll you have, son?

SLIM

Coke. Please.

Barkeep nods and heads back.

SLIM

So which of the American flags on
wheels is yours out front?

Owens laughs.

(CONTINUED)

OWENS

Dodge Charger. I unfortunately did not get the red-white-and-blue paint job memo.

SLIM

American made. Close enough.

Barkeep returns with a glass of Coke.

SLIM

Thank you, kindly.

He takes a sip.

SLIM

Gotta say, this town has gone through quite the shit since I've been gone, hasn't it? Kids disappearing. Dying. Coming back from the dead.

OWENS

Some haven't been so lucky.

SLIM

Yeah, I heard about the one kid with the spill. Barbara...

OWENS

Holland.

SLIM

I'm sorry. That one must be personal.

OWENS

There's plenty wrongs to be righted. I'm just glad I get the chance to do it.

SLIM

What have times come to where we can't even trust our own? And the screw-ups at the lab are only half the trouble. How many of these whistle-blowers do you think actually had solutions in mind? I mean, how much good is filling the place with cops?

(CONTINUED)

OWENS

You think they were better off
leaving things be?

Slim looks into his glass.

SLIM

Look, everybody wants to be a hero,
right? But is it really the
smartest idea to take out the troll
that's been holding up the bridge?

Owens SCOFFS and sips his drink.

SLIM

Between a crooked lab and the
Russian "bear in the woods," just
seems people are more willing to
call Big Bad Wolf when it paints
them to be the woodsman, filling
its belly fulla stones.

OWENS

Yeah, well, now it's my job to find
the root of the trouble.

SLIM

If you don't mind my saying, that's
your first mistake. Trouble isn't
found, it finds. You wanna track
it? You sit back, relax, and wait
for it to find its target. Works
every time.

Slim gazes into his glass.

SLIM

Trouble always comes knocking.

On Slim's right, a VETERAN reaches for a glass on the bar,
but he BUMPS Slim's shoulder and drops it. SMASH.

VETERAN

Shit! The hell, hunchback?

Slim shoots Owens a look.

SLIM

See?

The Veteran steps closer to Slim and pokes him.

(CONTINUED)

VETERAN

You got something funny to say,
Notre Dam?

OWENS

Okay, easy now, why don't we--

Slim CLENCHES the veteran's extended finger and TWISTS. The man falls to a knee as Slim grabs his glass.

SLIM

Quasimodo.

VETERAN

AGH...what?

SLIM

Hunchback's name. It's Quasimodo.

Barkeep STORMS over.

BARKEEP

Hey, hey! Let's break it off, you
two.

Slim downs the rest of his Coke and PUSHES the veteran back.

SLIM

I was just leaving.

Slim stands, takes out a wallet, and places a five dollar bill on the bar. He turns to Owens.

SLIM

Good talkin to ya, Doc.

Barkeep collects the money.

BARKEEP

Uh...would you like to donate to
our Hawkins Police Department fund?
They're trying to expand
recruitment.

Slim locks eyes with him.

SLIM

Of course I would.

Slim digs back in his wallet and a drops twenty into the clear bin. He goes to the exit, looking back to Owens.

(CONTINUED)

SLIM
Our nation's finest.

Old Time Rock & Roll begins on the jukebox.

INT. HARRINGTON RESIDENCE - DAY

The narrow suburban home hallway is lit by the early sun.
The song continues as--

STEVE HARRINGTON, wearing only a blue collared shirt,
boxers, and crew socks SLIDES into view. His back to us.

He SWIRLS around--

STEVE
JUST TAKE THOSE OLD RECORDS OFF THE
SHELF!

The song continues.

As he DANCES, Steve polishes a BADGE with his shirt. It
reads "Hawkins Police Department. Deputy."

INT. HARRINGTON RESIDENCE - STEVE'S ROOM

Steve dresses himself; He slides a HOLSTER around his waist.
He holds a modest REVOLVER in his hand and FLICKS it up at
his waist, aiming it at no one.

He spins the gun in his hand and FUMBLES it.

STEVE
Shit.

He grabs a round-brimmed campaign hat.

EXT. HARRINGTON RESIDENCE

Steve struts out, hat in hand. He walks past his car and to
a an HPD wagon. He gets in.

EXT. HAWKINS POLICE STATION - DAY

Steve RIPS into an parking spot in front of the station.

He hops out and struts into the building.

INT. HAWKINS POLICE STATION

The station seems busier than usual.

Hopper, mug in hand, and OFFICER CALVIN POWELL hover over an open file amid other bustling OFFICERS.

Steve prances in.

POWELL

Well well, if it isn't Dirty
Harrington. Uniform doesn't look
like COMPLETE garbage on you.

STEVE

Well, it looked a lot better on
your mom's floor last night.

Steve laughs. Powell's face is stone. Steve's grin fades.
OFFICER PHIL CALLAHAN enters, holding flowers.

CALLAHAN

Mornin' everyone. These are for
your mom, Powell. Hope she's
feeling better.

STEVE

Jesus Christ.

FLORENCE enters, holding a piece of paper.

FLORENCE

Chief, we have a reported overnight
cabin fire just off of Locust
Street.

POWELL

Locust? Isn't that out of our
jurisdiction?

FLORENCE

The cabin's actually in Elm Park.

HOPPER

Just under our umbrella. Great.
Alright, let's check it out.

Powell closes the file and gets up. Hopper finishes his
coffee and looks at Steve's product-filled hair.

HOPPER

You realize you'll be wearing that
hat most of the day, right?

(CONTINUED)

STEVE

Yeah, well, I have to take it off
some time. Gotta keep up
appearances.

Hopper takes the hat out of Steve's hands and DROPS it on
Steve's head. He lifts it off to reveal disheveled hair.
Hopper walks away.

STEVE

Great.

INT. WHEELER HOUSE - BASEMENT

Mike TOSSES clothes into a suitcase with one hand, holding
his radio in the other.

DUSTIN (O.S.)

I said "NOT GREAT." Over.

MIKE

How? We have plenty. Over.

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - DUSTIN'S ROOM

Dustin holds his radio. He stands next to a bag, mostly full
of various snacks.

DUSTIN

It isn't quantity I'm concerned
with, it's QUALITY. We need a
perfect snack balance of salty and
sweet and we are leaning FAR too
heavily into salty territory.

MAX (O.S.)

No, I think that's just you.

INT. MAYFIELD HOUSE - MAX'S ROOM

Max ZIPS up her suitcase. In her open door frame, BILLY
walks by, shooting her a stink eye.

LUCAS (O.S.)

Zing...Over.

Max SLAMS the door.

INT. WHEELER HOUSE - BASEMENT

Mike PUSHES down on the messy pile of clothes in his case.

Nancy pokes her head down the stairs as Dustin TIRADES over the radio.

NANCY

Jonathan and I are heading up to check the camp's power. Need us to take anything?

MIKE

I'm still working on it. Thanks, though.

NANCY

Alright. Did she like it?

MIKE

Don't you have somewhere to be?

Nancy smirks and ascends the stairs.

NANCY

See ya there!

MIKE

Bye!

Mike holds up his radio.

MIKE

Dustin, we have plenty of snacks for the week. Over.

DUSTIN (O.S.)

The week? I'm talking about the car ride! Over.

LUCAS (O.S.)

Isn't it just two hours? Over.

DUSTIN (O.S.)

Not with Mrs. Byers driving.

INT. BYERS HOUSE - WILL'S ROOM

Will stands next to his bed, his suitcase packed neatly.

He MUFFLES the speaker on his radio.

(CONTINUED)

WILL
Hey...Over.

DUSTIN (O.S.)
Just saying. Over.

WILL
Well...we have some oatmeal cookies
I can bring.

DUSTIN (O.S.)
You mean circular LIES? Over.

MIKE (O.S.)
Dustin...

JANE (O.S.)
Oatmeal cookies?

INT. HOPPER'S CABIN

Jane sits cross-legged on the couch, next to a packed bag,
holding her own radio.

DUSTIN (O.S.)
It's an oatmeal patty masquerading
as a cookie. Over.

JANE
Masquerading?

INT. SINCLAIR HOUSE - LUCAS' ROOM

Lucas places his camouflage bandanna in his bag.

LUCAS
Forget it. Don't we have more
important things to talk about
packing? Like weapons? Over.

MAX (O.S.)
Weapons?!

LUCAS
Let's be real. What do you think
the odds are that this week doesn't
go to shit.

MIKE (O.S.)
Lucas--

(CONTINUED)

LUCAS
I'm just saying. Better to be
prepared for the inevitable.

Lucas grabs his slingshot and throws it in his bag.

INT. WHEELER HOUSE - BASEMENT

Mike SLAMS his bag shut.

MIKE
No! Okay? We're going on vacation.
Can we please treat it that way?
Over.

WILL (O.S.)
Thank you. Over.

DUSTIN (O.S.)
Okay, onto more important matters.
I call dibs on the Hoppmobile.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The LOCUST STREET sign looms over the sight of last night's crash. There are no signs of evidence.

Two HPD wagons ZOOM by the intersection.

EXT. CABIN REMAINS - DAY

The wagons pull up to the cabin's charred, smoldering remains. Some of the structure remains in tact.

Beside the structure, a FIRE ENGINE sits parked with a few FIREMEN roaming around.

FIRE CHIEF JOE WALSH stands beside the engine with his arms crossed.

Hopp, Steve, Powell, and Callahan exit their vehicles.

HOPPER
Joe. Good to see you again.

Hopper and Joe shake hands. Powell and Callahan walk on.

JOE
Under better circumstances, I wish.
We have a casualty in there. Poor
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (cont'd)
sonovabitch's burned to a crisp.
Looks like half the cabin fell on
top of 'em beforehand.

STEVE
You think it was foul play?

Hopp looks at Steve. Steve shrugs.

JOE
Looks like he had the stove on.
Might've been the cause.

HOPPER
We'll take a look around. Thanks,
Joe. Say hi to Marge for me.

Joe walks off as Hopper and Steve approach to the cabin.

INT. CABIN

Hopper and Steve cautiously step into what remains of the
cabin. Powell and Callahan circle the exterior.

HOPPER
Watch your step.

STEVE
Trust me, I'm like a ninja.

HOPPER
Uh-huh.

Nearby PECKING catches Hopp's attention. He looks out what
remains of a window to see a woodpecker on a tree.

STEVE
You know, when she said a cabin
burnt down, I thought it was yours
for a second.

HOPPER
Keep your voice down. I told you
about that in case of an emergency.
Only.

STEVE
I know, I know. What do you make of
this?

(CONTINUED)

HOPPER

Dunno. Joe said the stove was on.
Plus we're in a heat wave; one of
the hottest on record. Probably
didn't help.

STEVE

Don't think someone did this?

HOPPER

Watchin too much TV, kid. We could
very well have an accident on our
hands here. Call it wishful
thinking.

Steve steps and hears a CREAK in the scorched wood. He
kneels down, moves some debris out of the way, and discovers
the compartment in the floor.

HOPPER

What do you got?

STEVE

Little hidey hole.

Steve pulls on the hatch.

STEVE

Please don't be weird porn, please
don't be weird porn.

The hatch RIPS open; ash and dust PUFFS into Steve's face.
Hopper reaches in. He pulls out a pile of half-burnt
documents. He shuffles through them.

What remain on the papers are mostly gibberish out of
context, save for a few context clues.

"LAB," "HAARP," "HAWKINS NATIONAL" catch Hopp's eye. He
shuffles through more. "NEST," "DIVE."

Hopp stops and holds one closer to his face.

A picture of Sam Owens.

HOPPER

We need to go.

EXT. CABIN REMAINS

Hopper and Steve storm out of the cabin. Hopp folds and stuffs the documents into his pockets.

STEVE

What is it? Was that, that, lab
shit?

HOPPER

Stop.

STEVE

Was I right? You think someone did
this?

HOPPER

Stop!

STEVE

Look, let me help, man. You know I
know what I know. And what I did to
all those...

Steve motions a baseball bat swing. Hopp stops.

HOPPER

Alright, look.

Hopp takes out the papers.

HOPPER

I don't know what these mean, but
this situation doesn't make it look
like nothing. We need to find out
what these are.

Hopp lets out a long SIGH.

HOPPER

We need to go through the lab's
archives, find out whatever the
hell these things mean and why
someone would...shit.

Hopper steps into his car.

STEVE

What?

HOPPER

I need to go break a promise. I'll
drop you off at the station and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HOPPER (cont'd)
meet you at the lab. You know how
to get there, right? Steve gets in
the car.

STEVE
Yeah. I mean, we kinda fumbled
through the woods to get there last
time.

HOPPER
Okay, you're gonna take Main from
the station to the library
then...you know where the library
is, right?

STEVE
I, uh--

HOPPER
Oh my God.

INT. HOPPER'S CABIN - DAY

Jane sits beside her suitcase, watching the clock on the
wall. It reads 1:49.

Hopper's KNOCK echoes from the door. Jane SPRINGS up,
shifting the locks open, a smile on her face.

Hopper opens the door and leans on the frame. His head down.
He looks up with a pout. Jane's smile fades.

HOPPER (O.S.)
I know what I said.

Hopper now stands in the cabin, a phone to his ear. Behind
him, Jane carries her bag outside.

HOPPER
We need to meet tonight. None of
this can be coincidental.

INT. HAWKINS NATIONAL LAB - DAY

Sam Owens leans on a wall, phone to his head. Behind him,
OFFICERS shuffle by.

OWENS
It'd be too easy otherwise. How'd
my picture look?

(CONTINUED)

HOPPER (O.S.)
This is serious.

OWENS
I know, I know.

INT. HOPPER'S CABIN

OWENS (O.S.)
We just have to be careful about this. If this WAS someone, they seem to have a very specific target whose description may apply to us.

HOPPER
All the more reason not to drag our feet on this.

OWENS (O.S.)
You're right. I have some more cleaning up to do here. You have no idea how big a pain in the ass it is to keep track of who knows what, or how much of what. Meet at six, Egg's Nest.

HOPPER
I could always swing by your hoity-toity Ridgewood apartment if that's easier--

OWENS
I'm a scientist, I know not to cross-contaminate. We'll talk about the archives then--

HOPPER
Oh, I have someone coming to you about them now.

INT. HAWKINS NATIONAL LAB

A RECEPTIONIST approaches Owens.

RECEPTIONIST
Doctor Owens, there's someone downstairs for you.

INT. HOPPER'S CABIN

HOPPER

Have fun.

Hopper hangs up the phone.

INT. HAWKINS NATIONAL LAB - LOBBY

Owens steps out of an elevator. The lobby is strewn with metal detectors, security cameras, filing cabinets, and bustling OFFICERS and STAFF.

Steve is being patted down by a SECURITY GUARD.

STEVE

Okay. OKAY.

OWENS

Afternoon. You must be Mr. Harrington.

STEVE

If you took any longer I might have been Mr. whatever this guy's last name is. How 'bout dinner next time, man?

The Guard steps back.

OWENS

Some extra precautions. I'm sure you can imagine why.

STEVE

So. How 'bout those...

Steve looks around. Back to Owens. He raises his eyebrows.

OWENS

...the archi--

STEVE

Yeah.

OWENS

This way.

INT. HAWKINS NATIONAL LAB - HALLS

Owens and Steve stroll through the halls, past more GUARDS. They approach a set of double doors, guarded by a...GUARD.

GUARD

Doctor Owens. Whoa, whoa, who's this?

OWENS

He's with me.

The guard looks at Owens. He opens the door.

OWENS

Thank you.

INT. THE STUDY

Owens and Steve enter a bland, empty room. A map of Hawkins adorns one wall, a row of five filing cabinets on another. Across from the map, a wooden wall stands, blank.

STEVE

This is it?

OWENS

No.

Owens SLIDES the blank, wooden wall. Behind it, dozens of filing cabinet rows stretch across what seems to be the entire floor.

STEVE

Whoa. This is like, uh, Raiders.

Owens looks at him with a raised brow.

STEVE

The, uh...Indiana J--

OWENS

I get it.

STEVE

Dustin would've appreciated it.

OWENS

Alright, well, here you go.

Owens heads to the exit.

(CONTINUED)

STEVE

Whoa, whoa, wait. You're not gonna help?

OWENS

I did help. I got you in. You got it from here.

Owens leaves. Steve stands amid a sea of cabinets.

STEVE

Son of a bitch.

EXT. BYERS HOUSE - DAY

Joyce, Will, Mike, Dustin, Lucas, and Max stuff their belongings into Joyce's car.

Hopper and Jane pull up to the house in his wagon.

INT. HOPPMOBILE

Hopper puts the car in park as the kids wave to Jane.

She waves back, forcing a smile.

HOPPER

Here you go. Off to the best camping grounds the immediate area has to offer.

Jane forces a light giggle.

HOPPER

I know, I'm sorry. This is a minor setback. I'll probably be up there by the time you all unpack and've already had a load of fun. You won't even know I'm not there.

Jane's eyes remain to the floor.

HOPPER

What, you nervous? Jane shrugs.

HOPPER

It'll be fun. You're gonna hang out, eat some anti-nutritious garbage, watch a buncha movies. It'll be good for you. For all of you. This is what kids do.

(CONTINUED)

Jane looks at Hopper and smiles.

JANE

Okay.

They HUG and she exits the car. Joyce comes to the door.

JOYCE

Hi sweetie. Need a hand?

Jane pulls her bag out of the back seat.

JANE

No, thank you.

Jane walks over to the kids, who CHEER her approach.

Joyce leans into the wagon.

JOYCE

So JUST a fire?

HOPPER

JUST something I have to stick back
a bit longer for. Really--

JOYCE

Hopper. Transparency.

HOPPER

If the ground opens up, hellfire
starts raining down, or dogs and
cats start living together, I will
call you immediately.

JOYCE

That's all I ask.

HOPPER

Now go. Have fun.

JOYCE

Okay. Don't take forever. I'm only
fit to single parent two kids at a
time.

HOPPER

I promise.

Joyce walks back to the kids.

(CONTINUED)

HOPPER

Hey! Don't let them hog all the good candy.

JOYCE

I can't promise that.

Hopper smiles; After a moment, it fades.

He PULLS the clutch into drive. The engine--

EXT. ROADS - DAY

VROOMS. Jonathan and Nancy zoom by on the empty, rural road.

INT. JONATHAN'S CAR

The car is a little messy. Two bags sit together in the back seat as Jonathan drives and Nancy watches the trees go by.

NANCY

You haven't even...applied?

JONATHAN

I still have time. I'm...weighing my options.

NANCY

Your options? Having trouble picking between NYU and NYU?

JOHNATHAN

They both strike mean bargains.

Nancy laughs.

JONATHAN

Look, I'll get it done once we get back.

NANCY

Still undecided?

JONATHAN

Yes, mom. Speaking of, your investigative journalist is showing.

NANCY

They somehow didn't offer a Monster Hunting major. And, hey, until you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NANCY (cont'd)
figure out what you want to do,
newspapers always need a
photographer. I mean, you really
have a talent for--

JONATHAN
Aren't we heading to a vacation?
Just to relax, forget about stuff
for a week?

NANCY
I figured "stuff" was mostly our
siblings being pulled into parallel
dimensions and us fighting monsters
from said dimensions, not our
college plans.

JONATHAN
One in the same to me.

NANCY
Fair enough. You're right. Let's
enjoy this week. Then, all bets are
off.

JONATHAN
Fair enough.

EXT. ROADS

The car speeds along the tree-flanked road.

DUSTIN (O.S.)
I spy with my little eye...

INT. JOYCE'S CAR - DAY

Joyce captains this curiosity voyage with Will in the
passenger seat. Behind them, Dustin, Lucas, and Max sit
shoulder-to-shoulder. Mike and Jane press together in the
back seat next to a pile of luggage.

DUSTIN
...something beginning with...W.

LUCAS
W? What begins with W?

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Yes, it does.

JOYCE

I'm gonna say...wafers?

DUSTIN

Negative. Ate all those already.

MIKE

It's Will.

DUSTIN

Nope. But close.

Will's eyes flutter. He leans his head on the window and--

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Will gently wakes up on the grass-covered ground. He stands up, barely over the chest-high grass.

He is much closer to the dense woods than before. A few yards away, a dead, crooked tree stands just before where the woods start.

It is mangled and charred, as if struck by lightning.

A light RUMBLE echoes from the woods.

INT. JOYCE'S CAR

The kids continue to argue.

Jane, leaning against Mike, looks around. Then to Will.

EXT. FIELD

Far away trees SWAY wildly. Then closer trees follow. And closer. And even closer.

The rumble grows louder; a massive TIDAL WAVE RIPS through the woods and SMACKS against the mangled tree.

INT. JOYCE'S CAR

Will SHAKES awake, Jane JOLTS up--

JANE

Water!

Everyone looks to her.

DUSTIN

...yeah, it was water.

Dustin reveals a water bottle, which he sips.

MAX

Oh, boo.

LUCAS

How's that close to Will?

Will looks back. Jane is staring right at him.

DUSTIN

Speaking of water, I may need to release some soon, Mrs. Byers.

JOYCE

Didn't you go before we le--

DUSTIN

Yes, but no bladder preparation could have thwarted the amount of liquid I've consumed in this car.

JOYCE

Well, ok, if there's a stop up--

Dustin pulls out a map.

DUSTIN

There's gonna be one on the left in about a mile.

JOYCE

Alright then.

EXT. STOP-IN-GO - DAY

Joyce pulls into the Stop-In-Go convenience store/gas station. The kids waste no time getting out.

(CONTINUED)

DUSTIN

It worked. Commence Operation
Recharge. Sweet over salty, let's
go.

Dustin heads into the store. Lucas and Max follow. Will circles around to the front of the car as Mike and Jane get out. He makes eye contact with Jane and quickly pivots toward the entrance. She follows.

INT. STOP-IN-GO

Dustin darts through the isles, surveying his snack options. Lucas and Max are calmer about it.

Will speeds to the men's room. Jane stomps to a halt behind him. Mike catches up.

MIKE

Hey, what's up?

JANE

Bathroom.

She goes to the women's room.

Dustin drops a bunch of sweets in front of a CASHIER.

CASHIER

We have a two for one sale on
Musketeers.

DUSTIN

Son of a bitch.

Dustin sprints back to the sweets.

EXT. STOP-IN-GO

The gang piles out of the convenience store and back into the car.

MAX

No, we are NOT watching that first.

LUCAS

What? You scared?

MAX

No, it sucks.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

It's alright.

MAX

It takes forever for everyone to get to the camp, then before you get the chance to even CARE about any of them, they're already getting slashed.

Joyce pulls out of the lot, past a massive black semi truck. The Cullen.

Next to it, Slim stands filling canisters full of gas. He watches them as they go.

EXT. LAKE MANABOZHO - DAY

Jonathan and Nancy cruise through the deserted camp ground.

Sprawling trees cast the sporadic cabins in shade. A previously bright "Welcome to Lake Manabozho" sign shows the years of dormancy.

NANCY

Ten bucks this was a Native American burial ground.

JONATHAN

Don't even joke like that... I'll raise you twenty.

They approach a GENERATOR TOWER. Jonathan parks beside it.

NANCY

Welp, let's go piss off some spirits.

EXT. GENERATOR TOWER

Jonathan and Nancy approach the slender tower. A red door adorns the front.

NANCY

Maybe you can be an electrician.

Jonathan smirks.

Nancy cautiously opens it with a CREAK.

(CONTINUED)

The tower goes as deep as a closet, and the space has been appropriated as such. Various holiday decorations clutter the small interior; pumpkins, Christmas wreathes, lights.

A large red SWITCH protrudes out of the back wall.

Jonathan and Nancy look at each other. They nod.

Nancy slowly grabs the switch. She PULLS.

A green light IGNITES to life beside it. Distant generators kick on. No Native American spirits attack.

NANCY

That went better than I expe--

A SKELETON lunges out of the inside tower's shade.

Jonathan and Nancy YELL. Jonathan PULLS Nancy back as she SWINGS at the skeleton with a WHACK!

The figure's skull FLIES off of the body. It rolls to a stop on the grassy ground; A decoration.

The two of them settle, giggling together.

JONATHAN

I'm gonna go ahead and cross
mortician off the list.

EXT. THE EGG'S NEST BAR - DAY

The sun is dropping as Hopper pulls up to the Egg's Nest.

He steps out and to the bar. A SHADOW grows on the ground around him. He SPINS around and sees--

A thick cloud is moving over the sun.

Hopp shakes his head and enters the bar.

EXT. LAKE MANABOZHO - DAY

Joyce and the kids pull through the increasingly-shaded camp site. Jonathan and Nancy sit on the stoop of a CABIN.

They wave as the car pulls up.

Joyce and the kids clamor out of the car. Dustin looks to a nearby LAKE.

(CONTINUED)

DUSTIN

Look at that beaut. Can't wait to leap in!

JOYCE

Oh, no. There are two other lakes in this camp, you will NOT be going in that one.

DUSTIN

Why?! Is it haunted?

LUCAS

Did someone drown in it?!

JOYCE

No, it's polluted to all hell.

Mike YANKS his bag out of the car. He is more careful with Jane's. Will looks around the immediate area. Something in the distance catches his eye.

He SQUINTS and inches forward. Between two towering trees, Will sees a far-stretching field which meets thick woods.

At the field's end, a mangled, charred tree stands in solitude; exactly as it appeared in Will's dream.

Will turns to see Jane approaching. She shoots him a look. Will's posture droops. He looks past her, to the group.

WILL

Guys?

INT. OWENS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

The narrow space is cluttered with boxes of files and testimonies. It appears as an office away from the office.

Owens leans back on a chair behind a modest desk. He holds an open dossier in one hand while SQUEEZING a bouncy-ball in the other.

Owens reads, or re-reads, forged birth and educational records for JANE HOPPER. He flips to the front, revealing a document with a picture of Jim Hopper's face and his woodland cabin stapled to it.

Owens SIGHS and places the file in the desk's bottom drawer. He stands, grabs his keys, and goes to the front door. Owens opens the door and exi--

Slim SLINKS into the frame. Owens HALTS.

(CONTINUED)

SLIM
Neighbor. Got any spare milk? Do
people still say that?

OWENS
I--I'm sorry, son, you're catching
me on my way out.

Owens steps to the hallway, Slim BLOCKS his way. He holds a
gas canister.

SLIM
I really need that milk, Doc.

INT. THE STUDY - NIGHT

Steve leans back on a metallic chair behind an identically
metallic table. He spins his hat on one finger like a
basketball.

A towering pile of files stands on the right side of the
table across from a much smaller stack on the left.

Steve SMACKS the hat into rotation and groggily turns his
attention back to the open folder before him.

He turns a page over. The next makes him JUMP closer to it.

STEVE
Ahhhh, shit.

INT. THE EGG'S NEST BAR - NIGHT

Hopper holds a phone to his ear as he leans against a wall,
close to the bar's end. He coils the wire around his finger.

BEEEEEP.

HOPPER
You know, I thought we had
something special here. Didn't
think you'd stand me up like this.
I hope this means you're on the
way. You owe me a dollar twenty-
five for this call. And some spare
dignity for leaving me here to eat
peanuts alone for an hour and--

Hopper looks at the hanging TV. Above a "BREAKING NEWS"
banner, a BURNING APARTMENT complex is shown. A crawl reads
"Apartment Fire in Ridgewood."

(CONTINUED)

Hopper's radio BUZZES.

STEVE (O.S.)
Hopper! Hopp!...Chief?

Hopper SNATCHES his radio.

HOPPER
Tell me you found something.

STEVE (O.S.)
I did, it's some sh--

HOPPER
Cabin, now. Don't tell anyone.

Hopper SLAMS the phone into its receiver.

EXT. HOPPER'S CABIN - NIGHT

Hopper jogs through the dark woods toward his cabin. Light emits out one of the boarded-up windows.

HOPPER
Idiot.

He ascends the short stairs to the door. It is cracked open.

INT. HOPPER'S CABIN

The cabin is ominously dark; a single lamp strains to illuminate even a corner of the space.

Hopper STORMS in but FREEZES in place.

Slim, wearing glasses, sits comfortably in an armchair, facing the door. He holds a file in one hand and Owens' ball in the other.

A pile of folders rests on a nightstand next to his right. To his left, a gas canister leans on the chair.

Slim removes his glasses and puts them in his pocket.

SLIM
You know, I've been sitting here this whole time trying to think of something better to say than "I've been expecting you," but it just feels right. Can't always top the classics, I guess.

(CONTINUED)

Hopper pulls on his revolver. Slim COUGHS and taps the gas canister with the ball. Hopper lets go.

HOPPER

Who are you?

SLIM

I'm a concerned citizen. I also hate wasting time and I'm shit at small talk, so I'll cut right to the chase: I don't like talking to people. Makes me uncomfortable. It's a real bitch of a thing when you need answers, so I'll keep my questions nice and simple. Are you harboring a Russian weapon with malicious intent?

HOPPER

I don't know wh--

Slim WHIPS up a picture of Hopper.

SLIM

This you? Simple question, simple answer. Here's another: Are you harboring a Russian weapon? I can give you the serial number to jog your memory. You know, your doctor buddy kept a lot of records. I'm hoping you can be as helpful as he was.

HOPPER

I'm not exactly in the business of helping killers, kid.

SLIM

Well isn't that the pot calling the kettle black. Forget about your little incident back in your big city cop days? That's right, you don't like talking about New York. There's a note right here that says "sore subject." I've read up on you, Chief. You come from a long line of veterans. Done some service yourself. Respectable.

HOPPER

You here for my memoirs? What do you want?

(CONTINUED)

SLIM

Same thing you do. A safe country. I'd hate to kick you while you're down, but you're making that real difficult on my end.

HOPPER

Well, why don't you apply to HDP? We're looking for more recruits.

SLIM

So I've heard. I think the others may have a shoulder up on me. I'll help you do your job, though.

HOPPER

I'm sorry to tell you, we have a strict no arson policy. That's your handiwork the last two days, right?

SLIM

I took a weapon off of the stree--

HOPPER

Christ, they're PEOPLE--

Slim SLAMS his fist on the nightstand.

SLIM

NO! That's what makes them dangerous, Chief. They're convincing. I've seen her mugshot the Doc had in here. She's cute. She's also killed about a dozen people. That we know of--

HOPPER

It's more complicated than th--

SLIM

It's murder.

HOPPER

And what you do is any different.

SLIM

What happened to the--Owens was regrettable. But he was a loose end that needed to be cut. I'm sorry about it. Truly, I am. But if you're still hung up about your new crispy town resident, let me paint you a picture.

(CONTINUED)

Slim adjusts his posture, leaning forward.

SLIM

Serial number five, escaped the lab around winter 64. Killed three people to do it, but it must have been more complicated than that. Kept a low profile for a while. Started going by the name Freeman. How poetically on-the-nose, right? April 18th, 1976. Finds himself in a bar, his advances on a woman don't work like he practiced. Guy wasn't really a Casanova. She denies him, but he had other methods of convincing her.

Slim holds a finger up to his left temple.

SLIM

Works so well the first time, he tries it again. And again. And againandagaiandagainanda-get what I'm getting at? This guy seem like an upstanding citizen to you, Chief?

HOPPER

That wasn't your call to make.

SLIM

You people didn't exactly leave me a committee to work with. Congratulations, you drove all the witches away and replaced them with a bunch of plebeians who have no idea how their potions work. What happens when another doorway to hell opens up under that dump, Chief? Your cops gonna shoot it closed?

HOPPER

We'll figure it out.

SLIM

There it is. The hero complex. That, Chief, is a grenade in a playpen. Take Freeman, for example. Maybe he saved a cat from a tree at some point in his life. Just because someone does something good, doesn't make them a good

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SLIM (cont'd)
person. I'd wager the same can be
said of the opposite.

HOPPER
I don't think you have the full
picture about these people.

Slim leans back into the seat.

Behind him, Steve's hair and then face rise into a window
frame from outside. He looks to Hopper, whose eyes WIDEN.

SLIM
You seem like a good guy, Chief.
And I believe you are. But all I'm
saying is maybe the "good guys"
aren't always the best for the job.

Steve gently guides the window up from. Hopper readjusts his
footing, making the wooden floor CREAK.

SLIM
If they were, I wouldn't have to be
here cleaning up their messes. I'm
sorry it has to be this way, Chief,
but everything you and I both know
poses a risk to the country should
the wrong people learn about it. We
can't let that happen.

Steve raises his revolver into the frame, shaking.

SLIM
I'm going to ask you again, and I
want you to know that it...SHE
won't suffer. Where is--

HOPPER
Counter-offer. I'm gonna give you
five seconds to get the hell out of
here, kid. I'm not playin your
game.

Slim sits silently. He casually reaches behind the
nightstand on his right and pulls up his Winchester rifle.
He holds it gently on his lap.

SLIM
What if I say please?

Steve extends his gun into the window, aiming at Slim.

(CONTINUED)

STEVE

H--Hold it right, there?

Slim's head tilts. Hopper rolls his eyes.

SLIM

Hm. Our nation's finest.

Slim CLENCHES the rifle and--

BANG! Steve FIRES at Slim, the shot pushes through the chair and grazes Slim's leg. He GRUNTS, throwing the ball.

Hopper DRAWS his pistol as Slim DIVES behind the chair.

BANG! Hopper shoots the chair and SPRINTS out of the cabin. Slim holds his leg wound and SNATCHES the gas canister.

EXT. HOPPER'S CABIN - NIGHT

Hopper and Steve regroup in the dark woods.

STEVE

I shot that guy--

HOPPER

Where did you park?!

STEVE

Uh, shit, this way!

Steve sprints into the woods, Hopper in tow.

INT. MANABOZHO CABIN - NIGHT

Small lamps do their best to blanket the single room cabin with light.

Joyce, Will, Jane, Mike, Dustin, Lucas, Max, Nancy and Jonathan sit in a circle. All of their bags rest behind them, still packed.

LUCAS

What did I tell you?

MIKE

Lucas...

Joyce places her hand on Will's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

LUCAS

No, this is just our luck that we take a vacation from a place where crazy stuff happens...in ANOTHER place where crazy stuff happens.

WILL

We don't know what any of this means yet.

MAX

He's right, it could be nothing.

DUSTIN

What do you honestly think the odds of that are?

MIKE

Hey! Whatever this is, we'll deal with it like we always do. We're basically the Masters of the Universe at this point.

Mike turns to Jane and Will.

MIKE

But we need to be completely honest with each other from hereon out.

Jane nods.

JANE

Friends don't lie. Mike smiles.

JOYCE

We need to get a message to Hopper.

Jane looks at Mike.

MONTAGE:

- Jonathan pulls a small radio out of his bag and hands it to Mike.
- Mike plugs it into the wall.
- Jane uses Lucas' bandanna to make a blindfold.
- Mike cycles through stations, past a beat of Bad, Bad Leroy Brown. He finds STATIC.

The gang forms a semi-circle around Jane, sitting cross-legged on a bed.

EXT. THE VOID

Blackness stretches eternally over a thin layer of water.

Jane has entered The Void. Bright orange light IGNITES before her. The flickering illumination solidifies as she inches closer to it. FIRE.

She looks around. Portions of Hopper's cabin are familiar.

JANE
Fire...fire!

INT. MANABOZHO CABIN - NIGHT

JANE
Fire!

JOYCE
Where?

JANE
...home.

The kids look at Joyce.

EXT. THE VOID

A smokey figure rushes behind Jane. She SPINS around. It heads out the front door. She follows.

The orange light shrinks behind her as she follows the figure. It takes shape. Slim. He limps into the Void.

INT. MANABOZHO CABIN - NIGHT

JANE
I see a man. He's...crooked.

LUCAS
A crooked man?

DUSTIN
Is it a Demagorgon?

JANE
No, it's a...

EXT. THE VOID

JANE

Person.

Jane follows Slim. He limps on his wounded leg. A piece of cloth is wrapped tightly around it.

Their steps SPLASH in the Void's murky surface.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Slim limps through the dark rows of trees. He carries the Winchester in his right hand while pressing down on his wounded leg with his left.

He pushes off of the leg like a paddle in water.

His head COCKS to the left. He STOPS.

EXT. THE VOID

Slim stands still. He looks around.

Jane approaches, studying him up and down.

Slim raises his rifle forward, his head to his side.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Slim surveys the empty woods. He pans his rifle past the innumerable trees.

EXT. VOID

Jane steps to Slim's side. She looks out in the direction he aims. She sees nothing.

She looks back to him. She slowly reaches out to the gun. She's almost touching it. She inches closer, she--

Slim GRABS Jane's arm in his left hand.

She GASPS. His eyes widen, still forward.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Slim's left hand is CLENCHED shut on nothing. It shakes in the air. He TWISTS his head to it.

EXT. THE VOID

Jane tugs her arm, Slim holds her in place. He looks at her, almost locking eyes.

He SWINGS the rifle, the muzzle faces her.

She PUSHES her free hand at Slim. He FLIES back.

INT. MANABOZHO CABIN - NIGHT

Jane's hands are extended as she SCREAMS. Everyone sitting in front of her FLIES to the cabin wall.

They THUD and ROLL on the floor.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Slim SLAMS against a tree and drops to the ground.

He pushes his face off of the ground. His eyes dart around, looking for Jane in the dark woods.

INT. MANABOZHO CABIN - NIGHT

Jane rips the blindfold off of her face. Joyce, Nancy and Jonathan help the kids up as Mike RUSHES to Jane.

MIKE

What happened?! Are you okay?

JANE

He saw me...the crooked man...

Mike turns back to everyone getting to their feet.

JANE

He saw me...

INT. HOPPER'S TRAILER - NIGHT

The place is cluttered. Trash and clothes are piled up.

Hopper and Steve STORM in. Steve holds a box of files.

Hopper SLAMS the door behind him and looks out the window.

Steve drops the box on a table and tugs on a lamp's string. Nothing.

STEVE

Miss a bill?

HOPPER

Barely ever here anymore.

Hopper uncovers a flashlight and IGNITES it. He pulls the box closer to him and digs in. He plants papers onto the table as he shuffles through them.

HOPPER

What did you find?

STEVE

Nothing good. Shocking to no one,
I'm sure. This shit storm goes past
Hawkins. Talking about finding
things in rivers and--

HOPPER

Lakes.

Hopper leans over a map. A red circle encloses a small body of water in what appears to be a camp ground.

HOPPER

Mother fu--

INT. THE CULLEN - NIGHT

The mammoth truck's driver's side door CREAKS open.

Slim stands outside, panting out of a clenched-shut jaw.

He climbs in with a GROAN. He drops the rifle into the back seat and slinks into where he sits.

He looks to the seat on his left; his gas mask rests on it. Slim reaches to the glove compartment and unhinges it; a small COMPUTER MONITOR drops down. He pulls a transmitter out from under the passenger seat and extends its antenna.

A red dot BLINKS on the screen.

EXT. LAKE MANABOZHO - NIGHT

Joyce's car rests a few meters away from the main cabin. A faint red light BLINKS underneath the car.

We pan away from the car and hover over the lake, looking straight down into the murky water, which dimly reflects the starry night sky.

Light waves ripple over the otherwise still lake.

Silence.

BLURB. A bubble POPS on the surface.

CUT TO BLACK.