

BIG SKY COUNTRY

Pilot

Written by

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Inspired by historical accounts of the murders of
Gevaudan, France 1764 - c. 1767

EXT. JOHNSON FARM, MONTANA PLAINS - EARLY MORNING

A rustling barley field, fenced in by barbed wire for miles. An angry mechanical whirring noise O.S., speeding closer and closer.

A single GUNSHOT rings out, then several more.

Three GRAY WOLVES suddenly fly by between the stalks. They break out of the field, sprinting towards a hole in the fencing.

One of the wolves BURSTS APART under a wave of bullets. The other two, we'll call MOTHER WOLF and FATHER WOLF, escape the scattershot and crawl through the fence back onto the open plains.

A YOUNG FARMER, 20s, hardened, pulls up on an ATV - he holds a modified AR-15, there's also a Remington 700 long range rifle stowed in the vehicle.

Despite the cold, he's flush with adrenaline. He inspects the wolf corpse before driving off in pursuit.

EXT. LAKE MARY RONAN - MIDDAY

Rugged plains meet a crystalline green lake. The wolves lope towards the water, tired and thirsty after hours of running.

EXT. NEARBY HILL - SIMULTANEOUS

Atop a hill, two hundred yards off, the Farmer kneels behind his ATV and props his rifle on it, adjusts the scope.

EXT. LAKE MARY RONAN - SIMULTANEOUS

The wolves gulp water. They lift their heads at the sound of a *crackle* in the distance.

Father Wolf yelps, spasms in the air, lands dead in the water. Mother Wolf cries out and takes off like lightning.

EXT. NEARBY HILL - SIMULTANEOUS

THROUGH THE SCOPE we see the wolf corpse in the water, red seeping out around it.

Kill confirmed, the Farmer packs up. One left. The lake's beauty forces him a moment's pause. Then he speeds off.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - SUNSET

Low-light as the Farmer pulls up to the edge of an imposing forest, conifers tower overhead. Too dense to ride the ATV.

A signpost reads, "Lonepine Forest Refuge - Protected Federal Lands."

Following Mother Wolf's tracks, he takes the AR-15 and marches past the sign without concern.

EXT. FOREST GULLY - DUSK

Near dark. The Young Farmer makes his way down a steep incline. His movements are methodical, military in style.

At the bottom of the gully now. A branch cracks, and there's a tiny whimper. He spins towards the source, a hidden refuge beneath a massive fallen trunk.

There is MOTHER WOLF with her THREE CUBS. The cubs are feasting on TWO HUMAN CORPSES - unidentifiable, utterly mangled - *beyond the capability of any wolf.*

The Farmer is frozen, absorbing the sight. The Cubs gather behind Mother Wolf as she make her last stand against the man. HOLD on her, teeth bared, preparing to charge, as we--

CUT TO BLACK.

INSERT TITLE: **BIG SKY COUNTRY**

CHYRON: **2 days later**

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

The old train tilts & rocks as it pulls past mountain vistas. It's cold out there, unforgiving autumn in Montana.

MARIE KEATON, 30s, Kootenai descent, a woman with a survivalist's unease, sits by the window. A keen eye would notice a standard-issue Glock beneath her coat.

She sees a YOUNG MAN, 18, also Kootenai, fidgeting with his phone out of boredom a few rows back. He puts it away, takes his backpack and walks out of the train car.

Moments later, she sniffs the air - decides something with a sigh and goes in his direction.

EXT. TRAIN CORRIDOR CONNECTION - CONTINUOUS

It's loud in between the train cars. The kid smokes a joint, plays it cool when Marie joins him. He waits for her to say something, but she doesn't. He checks her out, decides he likes what he sees.

YOUNG MAN
Come out for the fresh air?

MARIE

Too bad that's not what I'm getting.

YOUNG MAN

You want some?

MARIE

Of that skunk?

YOUNG MAN

Ha! Yeah, yeah, they only got midi's at M.S.U. but I'm about to get the good shit back on the res.

MARIE

You're from Lonepine?

YOUNG MAN

Kootenai, full blood. But we call it--

MARIE

Ktunaxa.

(before he can respond)

So, you must buy from Littlejohn.

YOUNG MAN

Aren't you full of surprises. I'm Jeremiah. How'd I miss you? You grow up on the res?

She nods, smiles - motions for him to share the joint. Liking where this is going, he passes it to her.

JEREMIAH

What's your name--

She throws the joint to the wind, then proceeds to grab his bag, root through it. She removes a large baggie of weed.

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)

Bitch, what the fuck--

She casually takes out her FBI badge.

MARIE

Says my name right here.

A tense beat. He stares her down, is this for real? Her gaze convinces him to accept the situation. She tosses the bag to the tracks below.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Jeremiah, you're what, 18? First time coming back from college?
(off him, not denying it)
Montana State University. Fancy. Must be scholarship, parents aren't paying for it. So now you're hot shit, big man back on the res. I get it.

JEREMIAH

Lady, it's just some weed.

MARIE

Wrong. It's luxury -- that you don't have anymore. Maybe Sheriff Keaton would let you off, but *their* cops - snatch you before you can blink. And 18 means real prison.

JEREMIAH

I've been doing fine in Bozeman.

MARIE

Gevaudan is not Bozeman. Remember that.

She gives him his backpack. He shrinks, like a kid again.

JEREMIAH

Why are you coming back? Is something bad happening?

MARIE

They don't send us in if it's good.

INT. GEVAUDAN TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

Marie & Jeremiah are the only two exiting the station.

MARIE

(stopping him)
You look like an Aitken. That right? Your dad Hank, or Joseph?

JEREMIAH

Joseph. Uncle Hank doesn't have kids. Too fucked up for that.

MARIE

Listen, I'll make you a deal. Don't tell Joseph about me being here, I won't tell him about what I found.

Jeremiah stomps off. She watches him meet his dad, JOSEPH, 40s. Marie, some sadness apparent, waits for them to leave.

SERIES OF SHOTS: TOWN OF GEVAUDAN

A) Marie drives down main street in her rental car. A few chainstores prop up a town otherwise unchanged since the 50s.

B) She waits at a red light by the town church. Service lets out. 100% blue-collar, white crowd. A few give her looks, she looks right back.

C) She drives out of town, taking a fork in the road past a sign, "*Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Lonepine Reservation.*"

There are a few Kootenai DAY-LABORERS, trying to hitch to Gevaudan. She speeds by, going in another direction.

EXT. JOHNSON FARM GATE - EARLY EVENING

Barley fields and barren plains stretch on in every direction from the lone house. A few grain silos behind it.

Marie enters a long driveway. She stops next to a "Gevaudan Police Department" cruiser idling there.

The windows are down - SHERIFF JACK HEMSTAD, 60s, sits enjoying a cigar. Broad shoulders, big gut, more politician than cop, he wears an El Patron Stetson hat. He nods to her. She rolls down her windows.

MARIE
Sheriff Hemstad?

SHERIFF JACK
Pity. You're right on time.

MARIE
Sorry to interrupt. Will it keep?

He laughs, tosses the still-lit cigar out the window.

SHERIFF JACK
I got plenty more. Just hoping to put off the inevitable conversation with Mr. Nathan Johnson. Not my favorite constituent.

MARIE
I was barely briefed at my regional office. Can you tell me what you have before we go in?

SHERIFF JACK

Thinking I'll tell you and Nate simultaneously, save us all some breath. The FBI values efficiency, don't it?

He starts his car, which sounds more like a truck.

MARIE

(shouting over the noise)
Let me at least give you my background--

SHERIFF JACK

You know me, don't you?

He punches it down the driveway. She watches him go, recalculating her approach.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - SOON AFTER

NATHAN JOHNSON, 60s, grizzled, alcoholic, opens the door and lets them in. Nathan gives the Sheriff a stern handshake.

NATHAN

Sheriff Jack, good to see you - and not your son in your place.

SHERIFF JACK

Only the best of the Hemstads for you, Nate. But in all seriousness, this is our top priority.

Nathan barely nods to Marie as they move to the living room - knowing she's an outsider is enough for him.

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Taxidermy abounds; Black Bear, Mule Deer, beside ratty furniture. No presence of a woman here, not for a while.

SHERIFF JACK

You sounded concerned on the phone yesterday but I want to assure you there's no need to fret.

NATHAN

I'm not fretting, just need to know where the hell my boy went. There's work to be done.

SHERIFF JACK

Well, you know how he's been since his discharge. Something set him off you think? There a woman?

NATHAN

Goddamn wolves. Got his dog, just out back. Tore him up.

SHERIFF JACK

Shit! See? Junior probably just went on his own for a bit, blow off some steam n' get them bastards.

Nathan considers this, it seems to mollify him.

MARIE

No reported sightings for over 24 hours. That'd make Nathan Jr. the fourth missing person from Gevaudan in four months.

The men both bristle.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I'm Special Agent Marie Keaton with the FBI, by the way. The Sheriff let you know about my involvement?

NATHAN

Four missing? Thought there was only Colleen Haverford?

SHERIFF JACK

(staring daggers at Marie)
Colleen was a troubled woman, and yes she's been missing two weeks. The other two, geo contractors, were *not reported* in... just left town. They're not related.

Beat. Marie decides not to argue with him at this juncture.

NATHAN

If it *is* four missing then you got me worried. You fucking know what that means, don't you?

SHERIFF JACK

Nathan, be calm.

NATHAN

You need to get the goddamn battering ram.

Nathan gets up, starts pacing.

MARIE

Excuse me, battering ram for what?

NATHAN

The pukers!

MARIE

Who?

SHERIFF JACK

See? The FBI aren't even familiar with the damn People's Unification Church.

MARIE

Ah... I am. They've been buying up parcels of land about fifteen miles out of town the past two years. You've connected them to these disappearances?

Sheriff Jack shrugs the question off.

NATHAN

What else would be causing them?! No way my son just got lost, or whatever shit happens to normal people.

MARIE

All due respect, why not?

NATHAN

Doubt you'd understand, unless the 75th means anything to you, girlie.

SHERIFF JACK

Mind showing me what happened with the dog?

Nathan is losing it, his fear seeping past an angry facade. He marches out to the back of the house - grabs a beer from the kitchen en route.

SHERIFF JACK (CONT'D)

(to Marie, shit-eating smirk)

Didn't see the "Proud Parent of an Army Ranger" bumper sticker?

Sheriff Jack, with some effort, gets up. They follow after.

EXT. JOHNSON RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Out back, a large green yard leads to the barley fields. A tarp lies over the dog's corpse on the grass.

SHERIFF JACK
Jesus, you didn't bury it?

NATHAN
Junior would whup me if I did it
for him.

Marie inspects tread marks in the soil, leading away. And bullet casings. Lots of them.

MARIE
Where were you when Junior went off
in pursuit?

NATHAN
In the silo, preparing a shipment.

MARIE
Did you hear the shots?

NATHAN
Ever been in a tower pouring two
tons of barley? Can't hear shit.

MARIE
Are you aware that your son had an
AR-15 rifle? By the looks of these
casings, illegally modified for
rapid fire.

SHERIFF JACK
You trying to find Junior or
prosecute him, huh?

Nathan downs his beer, pissed, about to head inside.

SHERIFF JACK (CONT'D)
Hold a sec. Knowing your boy, Nate,
he'd follow those wolves to the end
of hell. Am I right?
(off Nathan's nod)
Now, I heard from the Morgans they
had a run-in with a pack last week.
Probably the same wolves, getting
uppity. They tracked 'em far as
Lake Mary Ronan. And... it hasn't
rained in five days.

NATHAN

What's your fucking point?

SHERIFF JACK

It's still dusty by the lake. I'll put my two best guys out there. They track the paws - track your boy's treads. We'll find him. Probably holed up in a cave eating wolf meat like a Neanderthal.

The Sheriff laughs. Nate doesn't - just shrugs, conceding, the alcohol doing its job. The Sheriff pats his shoulder as they head inside together. On Marie, outmaneuvered. She looks back to the dog's corpse.

INT. JOHNSON DRIVEWAY - SOON AFTER

Sheriff Jack & Marie walk back to their cars.

MARIE

Two men on Junior's tracks. That's it? What about Colleen Haverford?

SHERIFF JACK

I got an idea. It'll solve all your problems, and mine.

They arrive at their cars. She waits for him to go on.

SHERIFF JACK (CONT'D)

You pair up with my son, Diego.

MARIE

Let me guess, your top detective?

SHERIFF JACK

Nah, that'd be Officer Coates. Diego's my only boy, off my third ex. Inherited her Salvadoran spice, if you know--

MARIE

A rookie blue?

SHERIFF JACK

Match made in heaven. He'll set you up in town, answer your questions.

MARIE

I'm checking in with my superiors soon. Know what I'll say?

Sheriff Jack picks his old cigar off the ground, brushes it, relights it. Huh - still tasty.

SHERIFF JACK

No, but would you mind asking them a question for me?

Marie's done with this bullshit, she goes to her car.

SHERIFF JACK (CONT'D)

Ask 'em why they sent me an agent fresh out of Critical Incident Response.

(off Marie, stopping)

You may be shocked to hear it, but I got friends far as Salt Lake City. FBI's a big regional HQ. You're not from Investigations. But you are from around here, Agent Keaton, aren't you?

MARIE

Yes. From Lonepine.

SHERIFF JACK

Same Keaton as Sheriff Nika - from Lonepine.

MARIE

That's correct.

SHERIFF JACK

What a goshdarn coincidence then - sending you here, and with no practical experience, too.

MARIE

I've been transferred--

SHERIFF JACK

The more you talk, the more I want to get your superiors on the horn myself. I got so many questions--

MARIE

That... won't be necessary.

SHERIFF JACK

Oh? Why not?

MARIE

I came here to do a job. That's all. If working with your son means it gets done, then it's fine by me.

SHERIFF JACK

Shoot, maybe we'll get along after all. Let's hold off on that call, for now. Diego will be excited to meet you.

He tosses his cigar again, tips his hat, leaves. She turns to the house - sees NATHAN'S SILHOUETTE in the window; new drink in hand, staring across the fields. Sad and lonesome.

Then, the soft howl of a wolf far away? Hard to tell. She gets in her car.

INT. GEVAUDAN POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

Marie enters the small but bustling police station. Apart from DIEGO, 20s, handsome, an over-compensating posture, Marie is the only non-white person there.

Marie approaches the Front Desk Sergeant ALICE, 40s - the only other woman in the room.

ALICE

(eyes on her computer)
My, this blizzard hitting the south of the state looks mean.

MARIE

How mean?

ALICE

Biblical. Three feet n' sleet.
Power lines are going down for sure-
(looking up)
Oh sorry, dear, got distracted! How can I help you? Passing through? Think I got some tourism pamphlets...

MARIE

(flashing her badge)
Marie Keaton - FBI. I guess Sheriff Hemstad didn't let you know I was coming?

ALICE

Sometimes I'm a little out of the loop here.

They hold each other's gaze just long enough for Marie to know exactly what she means.

DIEGO (O.S.)

Special Agent Keaton!

Marie walks over to Diego's desk. On the way, two men - OFFICERS HASKELL, 30s, and COATES, 50s, intercept her.

HASKELL

So, you're the cavalry, huh?

MARIE

Excuse me?

COATES

Translation: government thinks we need help - so they send one lady to back us up?

MARIE

Yeah, one lady. With the resources of the FBI at her disposal.

HASKELL

An Indian lady. That must be a first for the Bureau.

MARIE

And if it is? Does that affect this investigation?

HASKELL

Not as long as you stay out of our way, it won't.

COATES

Hey, he just means, it's one of our own who's missing, so--

MARIE

I know what he meant first time he said it.

She shoulders past them to finally make it to Diego.

DIEGO

They give you a hard time?

MARIE

Here, Quantico, Salt Lake City... Different shades of blue, same shade of white.

DIEGO

I like you already. Let me show you the station we cleared for you.

He walks her over to a cubicle, small, no privacy.

MARIE

Thanks. I don't mean to be blunt,
but can we debrief somewhere
private?

Diego eyes her. He knows just the place.

INT. GEVAUDAN P.D. ARMORY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They're in the station's armory room. It's ready for *Red Dawn* with more assault rifles & grenade launchers than there are cops. Of course, they also have a Keurig. Diego makes coffee.

DIEGO

They got hardware like this in the
FBI I assume? You ever need to use
military-grade?

MARIE

Tell me about your town.

DIEGO

(clocking her pivot)
Gevaudan, Montana.

MARIE

Pop. 1400. 8 active officers. About
6 sq mi. Right?

DIEGO

Sure, but really we're the only
civilization for 80 miles of
wilderness in any direction.

MARIE

Except for Lonepine Reservation.
That's where I grew up.

DIEGO

Oh. Yeah, of course. I group us
together in my head sometimes.

MARIE

You're probably the only one.

DIEGO

We should include the P.U.C. too.

Diego hands her a cup of coffee, which she downs like water.

MARIE

Did the disappearances begin when
the People's Church showed up?

DIEGO

Honestly, no. They've been here almost two years with no incidents. Not to say we're happy neighbors.

MARIE

Has there been any "incidents" going the other way?

DIEGO

How you mean?

A harsh knocking at the door. Officer Coates comes in.

COATES

Donny, we got to go.

There's a serious commotion in the station, people heading outside. Marie & Diego rush to join.

EXT. GEVAUDAN MAIN STREET - DAY, MOMENTS LATER

They come outside to find DOZENS OF P.U.C. MEMBERS, 20s-40s, across all backgrounds, clad in black robes - heads shaved, marching down main street in close formation.

DIEGO

Holy fuck.

MARIE

Two years with no incidents?

DIEGO

They've never done anything like this before.

The two of them join a squad of cops walking down the street, keeping pace with the marchers. Gevaudan LOCALS are lining the sidewalks. Some start to boo and curse at the Marchers.

Some of the Marchers carry wooden crosses, others carry signs that read "CLEANSE YOUR SOUL OF LIES" and "REPENT BEFORE THE SEVEN SEALS ARE BROKEN."

MARCHER #1

The Holy Beast of Judah has risen - prepare yourselves to be judged by its teeth!

MARCHER #2

It has come to open the divine seals. Only we will ascend!

MARCHERS (ALL AS ONE)
We are the incarnate assembly.

MARCHER #1
Join us before it is too late!

A LOCAL WOMAN & LOCAL MAN step into the street to block them.

LOCAL WOMAN
We don't want you here!

LOCAL MAN
Get the fuck out of our town.

The Marchers ignore them, walking by. The Local Man grows infuriated -- violently grabs one by his robe. The Locals cheer, growing in numbers and anger. The Man takes the Marcher's sign and smashes it, but they keep going.

MARIE
(shouting, to the Sheriff)
You need to de-escalate this now!

SHERIFF JACK
And stop the people's will? This is
American Democracy at work.

The Locals keep shouting and begin throwing things at the Marchers - who continue on, stoic, repeating their chants.

DIEGO
They'll be gone soon - just let it
ride out.
(before she can rebut)
Agent Keaton, it's not your fight.

Marie watches the Sheriff. Seems he's trying to stay calm, too - can't bring himself to intervene against his town.

As the main group of Marcher's continues on with the local mob in-tow, a group of THREE MARCHERS (male) stop. They stare at a LOCAL MAN, gaunt, pale, 20s - a quiet bystander, he seems terrified. Marie notices.

Without warning, the THREE CHARGE THE BYSTANDER. He bolts down an alley. None of the townsfolk or cops notice, or care.

MARIE
C'mon!

DIEGO
No, he's--

But Marie runs after. Diego reluctantly follows.

EXT. GEVAUDAN ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The Three Men have surrounded the Local - he desperately swings at them.

MARIE

Move away from him now!

They ignore her. Two of them grab the man - start beating him before they haul him off - *AN ABDUCTION*.

Marie advances, draws her pistol, only to have the third man charge her with total abandon. He knocks the gun out of her hand before she gets a shot off. They grapple. Marie expertly gets the upper-hand and throws him to the ground.

Diego appears, fires a warning shot into the air. That distracts the men long enough for the Local to jab his way free.

DIEGO

That's the last warning you'll get.

The three robed men sprint away -- Diego aims at them but the Local is right in the line of fire.

MARIE

No, don't!

In moments, they're gone. Diego, pissed at Marie's interference, takes off after them. She stays with the Local.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(helping him up)

Are you alright? What's your name?

LOCAL MAN

...Ed.

MARIE

Let's get you to the hospital, okay
Ed?

Like he's snapping out of a daze, he blinks and then bolts right past her -- disappears onto the main street.

EXT. GEVAUDAN POLICE STATION - DAY, SOON AFTER

Marie moves past Alice, the only one holding down the fort, to her cubicle. In the FBI database, she scrolls through a scant photo collection of "PEOPLE'S UNIFICATION CHURCH" suspects; tax issues, gun sales, manifestos... none match the guys she just saw. Then, Diego returns, empty-handed.

DIEGO

They've escaped. Should've let me take the shot. I would've just pegged them.

MARIE

You ever shot anyone before?

Off his silence, she goes back to her research.

MARIE (CONT'D)

What about the victim? Ed?

DIEGO

What about him? You saw him last.

MARIE

He ran. As scared of me as of them.

DIEGO

Not surprising. He used to be one of those goons.

MARIE

You know who he is?

DIEGO

Everybody knows who everybody is...
(off Marie, waiting)
Ed Patterson. Not from here. A P.U.C. runaway - he hitched into town about three weeks ago. Creeps must've recognized him just now.

MARIE

Why would they try to abduct him?

DIEGO

Why the hell did they march through our town? Cuz they're insane.

MARIE

Maybe. But that was attempted kidnapping. Fair to think they might have kidnapped someone else?

DIEGO

They might be capable of anything. I don't know.

MARIE

You don't - Ed might. So where can I find him?

DIEGO

No, listen, Patterson is a whole other situation. You'll see. Our boys will find Nate Jr. tonight.

MARIE

Diego, this is my job: to confront all possibilities, all connections.

DIEGO

Yeah, and lots of folks think it's your job to make them up.

MARIE

Is that what you think we do?

DIEGO

No, no, it's just... Ed's a loner - he won't talk to a soul in town--

MARIE

You want to obstruct an FBI investigation, or help one?

A long beat. He sighs, puts his jacket back on.

DIEGO

Ed's been scraping by with odd jobs, now's a bar-back at the Greasy Grass.

MARIE

Let's go.

They head out, Marie in lead. As they exit, the entire squad of cops returns - rowdy, talking about the crazy occurrence.

HASKELL

Where are you two off to? Hot date?

Marie pays him no mind, exits. Diego tilts his head, as if to say *who knows, maybe?* They laugh, quietly. Diego exits as Sheriff Jack walks in, he gathers everyone round.

SHERIFF JACK

I'll tell you this - having seen these people's faces... If it is a sex cult, I don't want no part!
(off the frat cheers)
But seriously, they came in uninvited to our town. We can't abide that. Who knows what else they have planned.

The men simmer down, regarding Sheriff Jack like a general.

SHERIFF JACK (CONT'D)

I want alternating patrols past every home in Gevaudan. Got it?

(off their sober nods)

Fellas, you see a single puker - take photos and make arrests. Then I can round up a warrant and clean 'em out for good. Sound fun?

That gets a few cheers. The men break apart to prepare. Sheriff Jack approaches Officers Haskell & Coates.

SHERIFF JACK (CONT'D)

Why don't you boys head out now to start tracking Junior down. Remember what I told you?

COATES

Mary Ronan, look for ATV tracks. Pack the autos?

SHERIFF JACK

Don't think you'll need them, but you know how Junior's been -- and he had his arsenal with him.

COATES

We'll be ready for anything--

HASKELL

-- but expecting a shit-faced kid passed out on a rover.

Sheriff Jack laughs, sends them on their way.

EXT. POLICE TRUCK - DUSK

TRACKING Haskell and Coates's truck as they pass out of town - the land quickly transitions into wild, open plains.

INT. POLICE TRUCK - SOON AFTER

In the truck, they drive by the Johnson farm. They take a turn onto a dirt road, heading to the lake.

COATES

You're making that face. The constipated face.

HASKELL

No, I'm not.

Coates eyebrow raises him, like an all-knowing uncle.

HASKELL (CONT'D)
Just wish we were in town.

COATES
On patrol?

HASKELL
Yeah, you know - keeping people
safe. My family.

COATES
Jack Hemstad might sometimes be a
hot air balloon with too much fuel,
but he's a good sheriff. With him
watching, they're safer than any
person on a NYC street, you know?

HASKELL
Yeah. Yeah, you're right.
(then, smirking)
And now I got you calling him a hot
air balloon on record.

COATES
Oh really?! Might have to have a
casualty out on this expedition...

They laugh, turn on some Chris Stapleton. The sun's just set.

INT. GREASY GRASS BAR - NIGHT, TWO HOURS LATER

Marie & Diego have been in the bar for some time, evidenced
by several beer cans around Diego. Marie's stuck to coffee.

DIEGO
(slightly drunk)
We done here yet? He's a no-show.

MARIE
Does Ed have a cellphone, or an
address on record?
(off Diego's silence)
Then we're not done yet.

Diego huffs, goes to get another beer. Marie checks her phone
- a new text: **Made contact with Lonepine yet?** She responds:
Pressing matters in Gevaudan. Updates soon.

DIEGO
Boyfriend check-in?

MARIE

Why would I answer that question?

DIEGO

Oh, okay! Yeah... I'm single too.

MARIE

This how it is? So few options here
you're reduced to hitting on FBI?

Diego retreats into his beer. Marie scans the bar, plenty of
LOCALS, lively, talking about the day's main event. No Ed.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I was checking in with my superior.

DIEGO

So, you guys actually think there's
something bigger happening here.

MARIE

Four potential disappearances in
one county. Could be nothing.

DIEGO

So they send you in alone just to
check? Sounds like bullshit.

MARIE

Yeah well, it's the Bureau - as in,
Bureaucracy. What'd you think?

He downs half his drink, his tone softens.

DIEGO

Truth is, my dream's always been to
get out, be a part of something
bigger. Never really fit in, you
know? So easy to be on the outside
here.

That hits a chord with Marie, she nods - regards him again.
He seems to read her, decides to seize the moment--

DIEGO (CONT'D)

Yeah, so I was thinking - maybe you
could help me with the application
process to the FBI? Streamline it
or something? Since you get where
I'm coming from so well.

Her gaze goes cold, this is what he really wants: a shortcut.

MARIE

Thought we were all conspirators to you.

DIEGO

No, course not! That's just local ignorance talking. I see the real power you guys have, the strength.

MARIE

Well, there is no streamlining.

DIEGO

But if I help you with this case, that lends some... some merit--

MARIE

If you help me with this case, then you'll have done your duty as a police officer. *If* you help me.

DIEGO

If I help you?! You don't think I'm worth shit, do you?

MARIE

No, Diego, that's not--

DIEGO

What if I let all the other officers know about you, Agent Keaton? Yeah. You didn't think my father would give me access to his files on you? On my new partner?

(then)

I wonder if they should know about Palomas River? How would that *help*?

MARIE

(calm, stoic)

You're ambitious, Diego. Just like *they* were. I'd be more careful.

We'll find out who *they* were, later. Because just then Ed Patterson slinks in through the door. Marie gets up, leaves Diego with his beer, following Ed, who's off to the backroom.

EXT. POLICE TRUCK - NIGHT, SIMULTANEOUS

From the POV of the headlights, we barrel across the open plains in tunnel vision - following the faint ATV tracks illuminated in the dirt. Darkness all around.

Trees come into view. The tracks abruptly stop at the edge of the forest, Lonepine Federal Refuge. We've been here before, except the ATV is gone.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - CONTINUOUS

Coates & Haskell get out of the truck. There's an impression of where the ATV was parked.

COATES
(flashlighting the area)
Oil stains.

HASKELL
He was definitely here. The vehicle sat right at this spot.

COATES
No way he took it between the trunks.

HASKELL
But there's no tracks leading anywhere else. Just... disappeared?

Coates photographs the whole thing, jots the coordinates. Haskell tries his cell, no service of course, then radios in - - nothing but static.

HASKELL (CONT'D)
Remind me to trade a couple of our AR's for new radios.

COATES
Yours maybe, I'll take a good gun over a radio any day.

HASKELL
Seriously, these should work here.

Beat. An immense silence, the wilderness setting in.

HASKELL (CONT'D)
What you think, Tom?

They look to the woods, the only place to go from here.

COATES
Might be he's trapped up there. Either we go looking, or we report back.

HASKELL
Think you can guess my vote, boss?

Coates laughs, in agreement. But then there's a quiet noise from within the forest. Hard to hear at first. Then louder. Branches cracking, and some sort of vocalization - the echo of a man calling?

HASKELL (CONT'D)
You heard that?

COATES
If there's even a chance...

They nod, solemn agreement - fix flashlights to their rifles before walking into the dark woods, like regular cops, in stark comparison to the ex army ranger we saw before.

INT. GREASY GRASS, KEG ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

In the refrigerated back room, Ed changes out the lines, stacks empty kegs. Marie enters, notes the bruises showing from his scuffle before, but also the track marks on his arms. Self-conscious, he rolls his sleeves over them.

ED
No customers back here.

MARIE
Ed, you remember me?

He turns away, skittish, continues stacking the kegs.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I didn't get a chance to introduce myself before - Marie Keaton, I'm with the FBI.

She holds her badge out, he steals a glance.

MARIE (CONT'D)
You sure you're feeling alright?

ED
Well enough to work.

MARIE
Would you feel comfortable taking a break to talk?

ED
My boss'll hate that. I'm on thin ice as it is.

MARIE
Is that cuz you're former P.U.C.?

Ed loses control of the keg tower, it comes crashing down.

ED

Fuck!

He tries to gather them up, she moves in to help.

ED (CONT'D)

Just leave me alone, please!

MARIE

(flipping a barrel)

I'm sorry, Ed, but I can't. People are missing. You may know things --

ED

No, I can't--

MARIE

You could save lives. Or, have them on your conscience. Your choice.

Nearly to tears, Ed relents - sits on the floor.

ED

They've had people go missing too. Past year, maybe six, I don't know - the way they hide things.

MARIE

And they haven't reported anything?

ED

The Revelators would never go to the police. They don't even acknowledge it to the followers...

MARIE

Is that why you left? You questioned them on it?

Ed meets her gaze for the first time, that same look of snapping out of his own thoughts.

ED

No - no. Just got scared I could've been next.

MARIE

Do you have any idea why they--

ED

No, just felt it in my gut. Ran out, hitched to town.

(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

It's safer here. I'm living simple,
over at the motel.

The BAR MANAGER walks in - pissed. He warily regards Marie.

BAR MANAGER

Jesus, Ed, get off the goddamn
floor and get back to work.

Marie flashes her badge at him, he retreats out.

MARIE

But it's not safer here, is it?
They almost dragged you back today.

He's done engaging. She sighs, scribbles something out on the
back of her card. An address - on Lonepine Res.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Here's my card, call me anytime you
want to talk. On the back is a
support group at Lonepine Res. Ask
for Taylor.

(before she leaves)

They won't judge you for being an
outsider. Not like here.

OFF Ed, he won't look up, but listens all the same.

INT. GREASY GRASS - CONTINUOUS

Marie heads out. Diego comes up next to her.

DIEGO

Let me buy you a drink, please. An
apology drink.

MARIE

Drinks aren't good for saying
sorry. Words are. Or better yet,
actions. Good night.

Diego regards her, stung again, angry. Marie leaves cash for
her coffee, exits into the darkness.

EXT. FOREST RIDGE - NIGHT, SIMULTANEOUS

A much heavier darkness here. The cops head up a steep
gravelly incline towards a ridge overhead. Coates is winded.

COATES

Enough of this. I haven't heard
another peep since we started.

HASKELL

At least Joanne will be happy you got your exercise for the year.

HASKELL (CONT'D)

Well, fuck- ... Hear that, Davy?

Movement from over the ridge. In a split second they've been pushed by something - now they're flying down the hill. They crash into a dead thornbush, flashlights lost, guns too.

COATES

You with me, Davy?!

Momentary moonlight shows a deep gash across Davy's face. He just wheezes, in shock.

A strange whistling sound, sounds of heavy breathing. Rocks sliding down the ridge. The thornbush gives way, and the men tumble again.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Coates hits a pine, hard stop. Beneath the trees there's no moonlight - just black. He sits there, spinning.

HASKELL (O.S.)

Oh God, no! No-no--

Haskell shrieks, then screams bloody agony. He's not in shock anymore. That snaps Coates out of it. He spots a sliver of the flashlight, his rifle stuck in the ground - he stumbles on all fours to it.

The screams turn to gurgles as Coates grabs the gun, gets up.

COATES

Goddamn you, Nate, if that's you...
best show yourself now or I won't
be taking you in talking!

Silence. Coates scans. Is that a shadow coming closer?

WIDE SHOT: from a mile away, we see Coates unloading his AR on the mountain side, tiny fire-cracks beneath dark trees.

BACK ON COATES, he stops shooting - a pale look on his face. He starts sprinting with all he has --

WIDE SHOT: the mountain side is dark and quiet. Gaspred screams. Then quiet again. Until it starts to rain.

CLOSE ON the ATV & truck's tracks - washing away...

EXT. GEVAUDAN POLICE STATION - EARLY AM, THE NEXT DAY

The sun's just risen when Marie approaches the station. Sheriff Jack frantically organizes all his cops into vehicle pairings (ad lib) - one truck speeds off, dangerously close to Marie. She navigates her way to the Sheriff, he's loading up his cruiser with Diego, who could do with some coffee.

MARIE

A moment?

DIEGO

Don't think my father has a moment.

MARIE

Sheriff? I have new information on the P.U.C.

SHERIFF JACK

Then share it with your liaison.

DIEGO

I'm right here.

Marie moves away from Diego, gets close in front of Jack.

MARIE

We need to come up with a real strategy. I can cover other bases--

SHERIFF JACK

Covering bases? I need to cover 3000 hectares of land today. I need to bring back my two best officers, *today*.

MARIE

They haven't reported back? Give me an area, I can help.

SHERIFF JACK

Like you helped my son? We had a deal, Keaton, to help each other.

Jack slams the door. Diego holds her gaze, a crack of remorse. They drive off.

MARIE

(to herself, to no one)
Good luck out there.

INT. GEVAUDAN POLICE STATION, MARIE'S CUBICLE - MIDDAY, LATER

Alice attempts a nonchalant peek as she walks by Marie's cubicle. They're the only ones in the station house.

Marie's spread a regional map across her desk, three distinct areas colored: Gevaudan district / Lonepine Res / People's Unification Church land - dotted with "'s" as to its boundaries. A dot for each disappearance, all over the Gevaudan area - six for P.U.C. Marie's gaze lingers on the Res geography.

MARIE

Alice, how long you been a policewoman here?

ALICE

Without giving my age away, a long ass time.

MARIE

Any tips for me?

ALICE

Not sure they apply the same to you.

MARIE

Because I'm brown?

ALICE

Because you got out. You know more than all of us, and that'll scare a person or two.

(looking at her map)

I used to be with someone from Lonepine.

MARIE

What happened?

ALICE

Couldn't choose which town for us to settle down in. So we both picked home.

MARIE

Makes sense I suppose.

ALICE

No it doesn't.

Alice walks away. Marie's caught off guard by a ring from her computer - opens a secure vidchat with her superior, DIRECTOR DARTNELL, 40s, misses field action too much for his own good.

MARIE
Director Dartnell.

INT. DARTNELL'S OFFICE, SALT LAKE CITY FBI HQ - CONTINUOUS

A sterile office marked by Dartnell's disdain to decorate it. He lies lazily in his chair, thumbing Marie's report.

DARTNELL
You don't waste time Keaton, I give you that. Yesterday "1400, three suspects, *Physical Confrontation*" ?

INTERCUT BETWEEN DARTNELL & MARIE:

MARIE
It was by the book, local PD assisted.

DARTNELL
You sure it wasn't a physical confrontation *against* local PD?

MARIE
Sir?

DARTNELL
Marie, they've filed a complaint. Obstruction. You know, usually cops love a little FBI backup.

MARIE
Not here they don't.

DARTNELL
That bad? Why don't you just get out of there for a while.

MARIE
Get... out? And do what? Hit the slopes?

Dartnell shrugs as if to say, *you know what I'm thinking.*

DARTNELL
I already contacted Lonepine. You're to meet ASAP.

MARIE

Director, this will... delay the investigation, I have leads--

DARTNELL

Lonepine can assist. You have the connection - why not lean on them for support instead of these redneck bushwhackers?

Marie lowers the video's volume... leans in.

MARIE

So, I need support?

DARTNELL

You're doing well, Keaton. You'll do better with his help. Lonepine's a totally different jurisdiction, no baggage to deal with. Right?

MARIE

(pure skeptic)
Sure. Understood.

DARTNELL

(a playful jab)
Unless you want the other type of support? I can send in Halloran as S.A.C with his team anytime.

MARIE

Permission to sign off to make contact with Lonepine P.D., sir?

Dartnell laughs, waves goodbye. She slams the laptop shut, looks at her phone - hesitant to make the call.

EXT. CROSSROADS DINER - AFTERNOON

A sprawling diner in the middle of nowhere, by the intersection of two empty highways.

INT. CROSSROADS DINER - AFTERNOON

Quiet on the inside, save for a few TRUCKERS. Marie sits rigid across from her father, SHERIFF NIKA KEATON, late 50s, slim, 90 degree posture, three thousand yard stare.

They both work their way through a cup of black coffee. It's all business between them.

NIKA

How long you been back?

MARIE
Yesterday morning.

NIKA
Case kept you in Gevaudan till now?

MARIE
Four civilians missing, two cops
haven't returned since last night.

NIKA
Why aren't you out there with them
right now?

MARIE
This is bigger than field searches.
We need to get a bird's eye view.

NIKA
Is that what Sheriff Jack said?

Nika's eyes seem to smirk. Marie doesn't bite.

MARIE
Every jurisdiction requires their
own unique handling procedures.

NIKA
Marie, knock it off. You been here
a day. I reckon Jack's been stiff-
arming you every minute of it.

MARIE
Of course. But I have it in check.

NIKA
Then why did your supervisor
contact me?

MARIE
He thinks I could use your help.

NIKA
Why else?

MARIE
I don't have time to guess your
mind, dad. Never have. You going to
help me or not?

NIKA
It's because Lonepine has had
disappearances too.

MARIE
 Different than the usual?
 (off his nod)
 Tell me about the cases.

NIKA
 Not until you see the whole swamp
 you're standing in, chickadee.

MARIE
 Don't call me that. If this is what
 it's going to be, then I'll go it
 alone--

NIKA
 They sent you in because you're
 native. You and I both know
 Lonepine's not within their
 authority. One of the few res's
 left that's not.

MARIE
 For all the good that's done.

NIKA
 Don't talk about what you don't
 understand.

MARIE
 Don't understand?! Every year,
 every case - I was right there with
 you, dad!

She was loud enough to turn a few heads. Nika doesn't care.

NIKA
 (calm, moving on)
 They knew Lonepine would be
 involved eventually, and they
 wanted an insider into the
 investigation. It's smart.

MARIE
 I see. So you think I'm a puppet.

NIKA
 No, Marie, you're lucky. Last time
 I checked, you don't even have
 investigation experience.

MARIE
 How would you know? It's been a
 year since you thought to call me.

NIKA

Figured you might want some space after Palomas. I know with what I went through after the Hill gang fiasco--

MARIE

That was *nothing* like what I experienced. You have no idea.

NIKA

I don't know what you experienced, chickadee, because you never told me.

That hangs in the air. Nika tries to flag down a WAITRESS, white, who walks right by. It turns the awkward moment silly. They share a look, *some things never change*.

MARIE

Wish I could bring my invisibility cloak on back to Salt Lake.

That gets a laugh out of Nika. Marie softens.

MARIE (CONT'D)

There's not much more to tell about Palomas than what you read online.

NIKA

The "American Frontier" extremists had their stronghold on the river border. Hostages - Mexican and American. Your Critical Incident Response team tried to negotiate, said force was required. So, you used force. Casualties, sure, but no hostages harmed in extraction. That's a job well done.

MARIE

Hey, you should write PR for us--

NIKA

Why'd you switch to investigations then, Marie?

MARIE

(sarcastic)

I hadn't realized! It was my choice to switch?

Nika wants to press further, but he doesn't. Marie finally gets the waitress' attention - signals for the check.

NIKA

All I ever meant by 'lucky' is that you can prove yourself now. Show your spirit on this case.

MARIE

I will. I have to.

The Waitress appears with the check.

WAITRESS

Here you are.

(then)

Passing through?

MARIE

No. But don't worry, you're not the first to ask us that.

Marie drops a bill on tray, the Waitress skitters off.

NIKA

Shouldn't draw attention to yourself like that... If locals found out about your negotiating role at Palomas--

MARIE

That's not your concern.

NIKA

The Frontier are *martyrs* here.

MARIE

Fuck their martyrs. I'm not here to run for election.

NIKA

You've been away too long. Why don't you stay with me on the res? It'll be safer. Use my office.

MARIE

(dodging the question)

You bring your case files? That's all I need to get started.

Nika's face hardens, he stands up - rigid again.

NIKA

No. We're going to Lonepine.

Nika walks out, Marie reluctantly follows after.

SERIES OF SHOTS: RETURN TO LONEPINE

A) We TRACK their two cars as they take the fork in the road, towards the "Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Lonepine" sign. A vast open land lies ahead.

B) Inside Nika's car, entering the res, the land is dry, all-brown. The few LOCALS walking around wave to him warmly.

C) Inside Marie's car, it's like driving through the past. The buildings much smaller & sparsely spread out than Gevaudan's. The same Locals just stare at her blankly.

D) An empty playground. They park their cars out front.

EXT. LONEPINE PUBLIC PLAYGROUND - DAY

Marie walks the perimeter of the playground with her father. Empty, eerie, on the edge of a pine barren. Empty and eerie. Nika jabs a stick into place, then another.

NIKA

(pointing to each stick)

Maria Morigeau, Vernon Morigeau.

Last seen right here, a month ago.

They were kicking a soccer ball.

Marie can only nod - an unexpected well-up of emotions hitting her. She's not asking questions - but Nika goes on...

NIKA (CONT'D)

Mother, Anita, was at work. We only have a couple kids as witnesses.

Morigeaus were still playing here when they left around 4PM that day.

A MAN, 30s, speeds by on a dirt bike. He slows to a crawl, makes eye contact with Marie, then just stops - watching.

NIKA (CONT'D)

Found minor traces of blood in the woods, nothing else. Haven't told anyone that yet...

MARIE

(still watching the man)

Why not?

NIKA

Don't want it getting back to Anita... She almost O.D.'d last week. Probably on purpose.

Nika pats Marie's shoulder, breaking her trance with the man on the bike. They return to their cars.

EXT. LONEPINE SUPERMARKET - DAY

A small supermarket, the lot three times as big. A couple SHOPPERS idle by the entrance, watching Marie & Nika.

NIKA
Winona Tanner, 55.

MARIE
I remember her. High-school counselor. Had a crazy laugh.

NIKA
Two weeks ago, late-night run to the store. Was seen inside by employees, never made it to her car. Groceries on the ground.

MARIE
No family, right?

NIKA
Not since her husband died.

Marie notices Jeremiah (the kid from the train) exiting the store with his father Joseph. He catches her gaze, freezes - *is she here to snitch about the weed?*

She forces an assuring smile. He breathes relief, catches up to his dad. Soon as he turns away, concern washes over Marie's face; he could just as easily be the next one to go.

NIKA (CONT'D)
Hey! You're home now. Be strong for them. Understand?

She nods. They return to their cars.

INT. LONEPINE POLICE STATION - EARLY EVENING, HOURS LATER

Lonepine's station is nowhere near as nice as Gevaudan's, but it's clearly a communal place - a tutoring room, group meeting areas, etc.

Marie & Nika stand over a mass of files spread out on the table. The photos of the missing: different ages, genders. They stand in silence, drinking more coffee.

MARIE

Given this place's history... I mean Chrissake, our women are murdered at more than ten times the national average--

NIKA

This is different. A drunk white man takes a woman. Or drugs lead a bunch of scum to do something worse. I've seen it all before, every year. Even the year mom died--

MARIE

Do you have to bring her into this?

NIKA

(continuing on)

The year she died, we had just as many disappearances as now. But there was a war going - with the Hill gang and the distributors. That's why I had to spend so much time away.

Marie won't engage him on this, not now at least. He waits.

NIKA (CONT'D)

I know you remember. That was different. What I showed you? They're too close together. Too random. Too.. clean.

MARIE

What about the blood by the playground? Find any near the lot?

NIKA

It rained heavy that night. Muddy. But I thought maybe...

MARIE

What?

NIKA

I saw tracks. Big imprints.

MARIE

You talking about shoe prints? We can run a product ID--

NIKA

No, never mind.

OFFICER ALPHONSE BIGSPRING, 20s, heavy, enters the station.

BIGSPRING
Howdy, sheriff.

NIKA
Al, this my daughter, Marie - with
the FBI. Marie, this is Officer
Alphonse Bigspring.

BIGSPRING
You don't look a thing like him,
I'm happy to admit! How long you
back home?

MARIE
Just heading back to Gevaudan now.

NIKA
What did I tell you, Marie?

MARIE
You told me your piece. And now I'm
leaving, dad. Call you tomorrow.

Nika watches on, stern but quiet, as she gathers all the case materials & marches out. She spares a smile for Bigspring, who's halfway smitten already.

EXT. LONEPINE POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Marie finds the dirt bike from before parked by her car, alongside TAYLOR YOUNG, 30s, handsome but a bit prematurely aged - he gives her a wave.

TAYLOR
Lonestar's back. It's a bonafide
surprise.

MARIE
I thought that might've been you.

TAYLOR
Hell, who else would have the nerve
to stare down Marie Keaton?

MARIE
Only you, Taylor Young.

Marie catches herself, getting too comfortable. She stiffens - marches to her car.

TAYLOR
Leaving again without saying
goodbye?

MARIE
Ktunaxa never say goodbye.

TAYLOR
Because they're never supposed to
leave home.

MARIE
I can't be here alright!?
(trying to cover)
Not now. There's a case.

TAYLOR
I won't question you on what's
right, but I want to see you again--

Marie slams the door without another word. Taylor watches her sit at the wheel, not doing anything - trying to appear calm. She takes a breath, drives off.

LONEPINE LOCALS walk up, greet Taylor, here for AA.

EXT. MONTANA HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Darkness across the plains and the highway as Marie's car gets back en route to Gevaudan. It's a long lonely drive.

INT. MARIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Marie passes a sign for Gevaudan, 20mi. Lonepine, 3mi. A flicker of doubt crosses her face when suddenly she hears a low thrumming sound. It grows louder.

Suddenly - *BLINDING HIGH BEAMS FLOOD IN FROM BEHIND HER* - an elevated truck is right on her, it slams into her bumper.

She regains control of her car as the truck pulls up beside her, two MEN IN BALACLAVAS mad-dog her from the driver's seat & backseat, they roll down the windows.

ASSAILANT #1
Get out of our town, prairie
nigger! Let's see you run!

The truck tries to slam into her car, but Marie pulls away just in time. They stay tandem - going 75mph. Marie can see a gun barrel protruding from their back seat. She slyly starts to draw her Glock.

ASSAILANT #1 (CONT'D)
 Ruby Ridge! Mt. Carmel! Palomas
 River! Never forget!

ASSAILANT #2
 We'll never forget, FBI whore!

She's about to raise her pistol when the truck swerves fast, her focus is too split - and the vehicles connect, hard.

Marie's car fishtails off the road.

Once stopped, Marie runs out to spot their license plate - but it's covered in duct tape. Furious, she aims her pistol -- but wooziness takes over, whiplash catching up to her. She squats, hands in the dirt.

It doesn't take her long to stand up again.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Marie's battered rental parks in front of her room. She gets out, rubbing her neck. She hears the raucous noises of the Greasy Grass bar across the street. She starts walking.

EXT. GREASY GRASS - NIGHT

It's a crowded parking lot. She stealths between the cars. No truck here. But then, around the side of the building - something under a tarp.

She yanks the tarp off. Sure enough it's the same model - an old Chevrolet Avalanche. Marie checks the license plate, no tape, but on the backside she finds a sticky glue residue.

INT. GREASY GRASS - CONTINUOUS

Marie barges in. It's mostly cops, some locals, still in their search gear. They haven't found their missing brothers, and the air is ripe with drunken anger because of it. News plays in the B.G.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S. - BAR TV)
 Almost half the state has been hit
 by Winter Storm Wilbur. Volunteers
 are pouring in from all over...

She scans the place: SHERIFF JACK, DIEGO among many men. It could've been any one of 'em. A TALL MAN, 40s, passes by her - she steps in front of him.

MARIE
 Hey, that your Chevy under the tarp
 outside?

He doesn't even make eye contact as he shoves off past her.

MARIE (CONT'D)
 (SHOUTING to the bar)
 Who owns the Chevy Avalanche hidden
 out back?!
 (then, as heads turn)
 The same one that some ignorant
 pair of cowards used to run me off
 the road.
 (then)
 No one?!

From a back-door, Ed emerges - he takes in the situation.

MARIE (CONT'D)
 I'm going to find you eventually.
 Now's the time to come forward.

Still, pulsing silence. Diego leans over to another Officer.

DIEGO
 (jokey, drunk whisper)
 I would not want to be that fella.

But Marie saw him whisper, she marches right up to him.

MARIE
 You sent them after me?!

Diego clams up, no response - more shocked than guilty.

SHERIFF JACK
 Now, now, Agent Keaton you said
 yourself - we'll get 'em
 eventually. No need to bother these
 good citizens, who've been helping
 us all day search for our missing
 men. Bit more important, wouldn't
 you say?

MARIE
 "Wouldn't I say?" I think that's
 the first time you ever asked me my
 mind. So, I'll tell it.

SHERIFF JACK
 Watch yourself, little lady.

MARIE
 I'd say, you got a case on your
 hands that's more than you can
 handle. It's bigger than you.
 (MORE)

MARIE (CONT'D)

Goes through Lonepine too, and the P.U.C. There's a pattern that you're too scared to recognize!

SHERIFF JACK

Don't you dare disrespect me in front of my men, and my town! Who are you, huh?! I lost two men out there, and you act like you give a goddamn?! Some big government pawn sent here to interfere!

He's looming over her now, teetering with rage. She stares him down, and just shrugs. She starts to exit. Diego, drunk, suddenly rushes up to her.

DIEGO

Hey listen, this got out of hand--

He makes the mistake of grabbing her arm.

Marie's adrenaline shatters what's left of her self-control - she throws an elbow to his eye, twists his wrist off. He goes reflexive too, shoves her hard. She recovers with a boot to his foot and knee to his gut. He goes down.

In moments, all his beer comes back up. The crowd just watches. Ed watches, stricken but also exhilarated.

EXT. GEVAUDAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Marie's crossing the street - reckoning with what she's done.

ED (O.S.)

Miss Keaton!

Ed jogs up. He stops, gives her a wide berth.

MARIE

It's Special Agent.

(then)

What can I do for you, Ed?

ED

Well, you already did a whole lot in there.

He means it as flattery, but she starts to walk away.

ED (CONT'D)

I didn't tell you everything, okay?

(off Marie, stopping)

What I saw. You deserve to know.

MARIE

Are they taking people?

He shakes his head. Ed is starting to shake, a bit manic.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Breathe. Why don't you start with
where you were, what you were
doing?

THIS FLASHBACK UNRAVELS SURREALISTICALLY, THROUGH A STRAINED LENS. THERE IS NO SOUND. ED'S NARRATIVE WORDS FADE IN AND OUT, INCOMPLETE, LIKE HIS MEMORY.

EXT. P.U.C. COMPOUND - NIGHT - FLASHBACK (3 WEEKS AGO)

A near pitch black open area, outlines of shacks on the periphery. Ed, head shaved, and a P.U.C. GUARD, male, patrol with maglites in hand.

ED

...the seventh day, holy day...

They approach a huge cross in the ground, get on their knees and pray. Tears come to the Guard's eyes. They stand, continue their patrol. Ed turns, searches for a noise we can't hear. He hones in on a large shack, door open.

Ed & the Guard look to one another, but don't speak.

ED (CONT'D)

...obey the heavenly silence of the seals...

The Guard tries to keep Ed away from the shack, a nervous dissent, but Ed jogs to it anyway.

Ed approaches with the flashlight. Blood sprays across the window inside the shack. Ed screams and screams, we can't hear him. The wall of the shack BURSTS APART, Ed goes down amidst debris & blood. He lifts himself up, arm bleeding profusely.

A FLASH of a YOUNG WOMAN'S FACE, screaming, as she's dragged into the darkness. A flash of ROWS OF TEETH around her...

ED (CONT'D)

...a beast...

EXT. GREASY GRASS BAR - CONTINUOUS

Marie just stands, confused.

MARIE

You're saying a giant animal killed this woman?

ED

Large as a bull, bigger, but clawed. It made this horrible noise. It *took her*, gripped in its jaws. I thought... could this be the Lion of Judah? Come to begin the end times? But why attack us?!

MARIE

Have you told anyone about this?

ED

Wayne, who witnessed it with me, went to tell the Revelators. But for hours he didn't return. I turned coward. I ran and ran, until I collapsed by the highway.

MARIE

You're sure - an animal? You think that's what's caused all the disappearances on the compound?

ED

It was not just an animal. Something more. I don't know. There's so much I don't know anymore... But it's here to punish us, I'm sure of that.

Marie regards him; unstable, sleep deprived - desperate.

MARIE

Get some rest, Ed. Let's talk about this tomorrow.

Without a word, he wanders back to the bar.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(to herself)

If I'm still on the case by then.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

A comms alert from her computer, Marie jolts awake. She opens the vidchat with her boss, Dartnell.

MARIE

(girding herself)

Let me guess, Sheriff called you?

DARTNELL

Not since his initial complaint.
Why? What'd you do now?

MARIE

Nothing, nothing. Well, something happened. Two of his officers went missing. And some local right-wingers ran me off the road.

DARTNELL

Jesus fuck. And here I was calling about Ed Patterson and the Lonepine cases. Why wasn't this in your report from last night?

MARIE

The nazis aren't relevant to this investigation, I'll take care of them later. And Hemstad's given me nothing real on his missing cops.

DARTNELL

Keaton, this is an investigation. You cannot be in critical incident combat-mode anymore... You don't think the officers are missing?

MARIE

I think all the disappearances are tied. I'm trying to--

DARTNELL

Make Ed Patterson your golden ticket? History of mental illness, a former vagrant - before joining a *cult* - per your files!

MARIE

I'm not saying I believe him. But he's our way into the P.U.C., where I suspect the crimes originate.

A long beat. Marie knows it's not good.

DARTNELL

14 missing across jurisdictions. Either this case is colossal, or--

MARIE

I'm fucking it up big time, right?

DARTNELL

It's your first goddamn solo investigation, Marie - there's no shame in getting experienced help.

MARIE

I already got help, from Lonepine - like you wanted all along for me to get you their files...

(then, toning it back)

Let us prove our worth, okay? And if we fail, put the blame on me. I have a plan, Howie. It *will* produce evidence.

DARTNELL

Sorry, but I've made my decision. The team is inbound.

MARIE

(realization dawning)

You were never going to let me run with this. I was just... your golden ticket to get Lonepine onboard with the feds.

DARTNELL

You did well, Marie. You'll report to Halloran when he arrives.

Dartnell signs off. HOLD ON MARIE - absorbing, fury... turning into something else.

INT. GEVAUDAN POLICE STATION - MORNING

Marie enters the station, which is again hectic with men preparing for a search. She approaches Alice at the desk.

MARIE

Where's the sheriff?

ALICE

Now's not a good time.

MARIE

It's the only time I have. Please.

Alice subtly nods to the sheriff's office.

DIEGO (O.S.)

He won't open the door to you.

Marie turns to find Diego, with a black eye. She steps back, almost defensively.

DIEGO (CONT'D)

I just want to apologize.

(off Marie's wary silence)

I let it slip you were at Palomas,
okay? It was stupid. Then it got
really out of hand. I'm sorry.

MARIE

You think I care about an apology
right now? We need to get control
of this situation!

DIEGO

Let me help. This is my home. I'm
willing to do whatever it takes.

Marie takes that in, gears turning. She pulls him aside.

INT. SHERIFF JACK'S OFFICE - SOON AFTER

Sheriff Jack sits on the phone, agitated.

SHERIFF JACK

Listen, Mel, just a few men is all
I'm asking!... No? What's the
goddamn point of you bastards then?

He slams the phone down. Then, a knock at the door.

SHERIFF JACK (CONT'D)

What?!

DIEGO (O.S.)

It's me, dad. We need to talk.

Diego opens the door, comes in with Marie in tow.

SHERIFF JACK

What in the holy hell? Get her out
of my office. Now!

DIEGO

Please, she wants to help us.

SHERIFF JACK

She'd just as soon humiliate us
like she did to you, boy! Don't
trust a goddamn word she says--

MARIE

Forget talk then, let's act. I know
National Guard and the other
districts are turning down your
calls for backup.

(MORE)

MARIE (CONT'D)

Everyone's rerouted for the blizzard recovery. Let me bring in an FBI contingent.

SHERIFF JACK

So you can use them to strong arm me?

MARIE

No, when they come in I'll give up my leadership.

SHERIFF JACK

You give that up - for what?

MARIE

To follow a hunch as we approach the People's Unification Church. I'll need your permission to have Diego with me as backup.

SHERIFF JACK

Absolutely not!

Jack reaches for a cigar, cuts it poorly - curses under his breath. His world's closing in. Marie looks to Diego.

DIEGO

C'mon, dad. Hear her out.

Diego takes Jack's cigar, recuts it cleanly. Lights it up.

SHERIFF JACK

No. I need you here with me on the search team.

DIEGO

I'm her partner, it's my duty--

SHERIFF JACK

No, she's not loyal to you. You know this!

Diego hands back the cigar to his dad, who suddenly seems old - a little out of his depth.

DIEGO

I need to prove *my* loyalty. It's my choice, okay?

SHERIFF JACK

Goddammit. Call your superior right now, Keaton. Request backup - then I'll grant it.

Marie doesn't hesitate to take her phone and dial Dartnell.

MARIE
 (into the phone)
 Sir, calling to request a full team
 sent to Gevaudan ASAP. We need to
 open this search up wide.

We don't hear exactly what Dartnell says, but he sounds very confused given their recent conversation.

MARIE (CONT'D)
 Absolutely - we need as many men as
 can be spared for the Sheriff.

Marie hangs up, nods confirmation to Jack.

SHERIFF JACK
 (deflated)
 Shit, Keaton. I took you for a cog,
 not a mental patient. Even with a
 warrant, the pukers will never let
 you into their compound.

MARIE
 Warrant won't be necessary, I have
 a plan.

SHERIFF JACK
 And that is?

MARIE
 Trust us. We'll be fine. Backup
 will be arriving soon. Good luck.

SHERIFF JACK
 Yeah, good luck to you too.
 (after she's gone)
 Be careful out there, son. Take
 care of yourself first. Okay?

Diego nods, closes the door. Jack SLAMS on his desk.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - MIDDAY

KNOCK KNOCK. Diego and Marie stand outside the dirtied door of a room in the ratty motel complex. No response.

DIEGO
 Open up, it's the police!

Moments later, the door is unlocked very slowly. It opens to reveal Ed, clearly high - a fresh puncture on his arm.

ED

Oh. Here to take me in?

DIEGO

Jesus, might as well. Look at him.

MARIE

(ignoring Diego, to Ed)

No, we need you to take us back to the Church.

That sinks in for Ed. He wanders inside to sit on his bed.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Help us get into their territory, without attracting the compound's attention, and show us where everything happened, Ed. I just want to search the area.

ED

No, no. You want to bring me back? What if *it's* waiting for me?!

DIEGO

What if *what's* waiting?

Diego has no idea about Ed's story. Before Marie responds--

ED

I won't do it!

DIEGO

What if we take you in for Fentanyl possession instead?

ED

Take me in, please, I don't care. Just not back there...

He nearly dozes off on the couch. Marie steps close to him.

MARIE

Ed, believe me when I say: either way, you are going back. You can take us right now. Or I can notify the Revelators of your being held in custody at Gevaudan station. Bail will be set low. Guessing they'll be able to afford it. So, whichever you prefer.

Ed rouses the strength to stare Marie down, trying to call her bluff. He looks to Diego, who's just as surprised.

ED

So, I shall be the lamb.

OFF Ed, he allows himself a laugh as he accepts his fate.

INT. MARIE'S CAR - DAY, SOON AFTER

In Marie's rental, Diego sits shotgun - Ed sleeps off his high in the backseat. They drive a lone stretch of road.

DIEGO

So we're going into enemy territory
on the hunch of a drug addict who
saw a big fucking wolf?

MARIE

People have been disappearing from
their compound since before
Gevaudan. Teams are covering
everywhere but P.U.C. property. You
wanted to help, this is the way.

The road turns from paved asphalt to dirt. There's a truck parked by the road, not too far off.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Ed, wake up! Time to work.

Ed sits up, bleary. He spots the truck.

ED

That's a sentry... Their security
is increasing. We should turn back.

Diego looks like he might agree with Ed, but stays quiet.

MARIE

The investigation can't afford any
delays. How do we get by?

ED

Hope you know your scripture...

EXT. ROADSIDE SENTRY - DAY, MINUTES LATER

Marie's car slowly pulls to a stop in front of the pickup truck -- FOUR MEN, shaved heads, sleep deprived, stand beside it and on the truck's bed. They're all armed.

Inside the car, Diego & Marie have removed any sign of them being law enforcement. Ed lies beneath a blanket in the backseat floor space, hidden - if just barely.

The LEADER, shotgun in hand, approaches Marie's open window.

LEADER

(to Diego)

This is the holy terminus. Who led
you here?

Diego glances at his palm, inky words scrawled on it.

DIEGO

The Revelators.

LEADER

And what earthly faces did the
Revelators wear?

Diego freezes, looks at his hand. Marie's about to speak when-

DIEGO

We've never seen them, we only
talked to them online.

This pisses the Leader off. Two guards approach them. The
Leader starts to pore over their car, noting the blanket.

MARIE

Please, he's just tired. We've
traveled without stopping--

LEADER

Then answer! How did the Relevators
appear to you? Their face? Their
voice? Their words?!

As he brandishes his gun, Marie closes her eyes, calmly, as
if overtaken in bliss.

MARIE

They are faceless, voiceless. Their
words are those of God.

That appeases the man. But he doesn't soften his tone.

LEADER

When it is time for the seven seals
of the apocalypse to be opened,
what will the lion of Judah do when
it finds the holy lamb?

Doubt shoots across Marie's face. Diego's sweating bullets,
his hand slowly moving to his sidearm. Every moment she
doesn't answer, the men get closer.

MARIE

You... speak falsely? The lion & the lamb are the same beast - with seven horns and seven eyes, only *it* will open the seals.

Then, suddenly, it's all grins with the guards - like totally different people - warm and welcoming.

LEADER

You bring us joy - welcome to the fold!

Diego and Marie force a smile and a laugh.

LEADER (CONT'D)

Now, you must give us any technology you brought. The only truth you need awaits you here.

Marie looks to Diego, *don't falter now*. They give the man their cell phones.

LEADER (CONT'D)

Please, follow the road to the main compound. The Revelators bless you.

DIEGO

You too.

MARIE

May the Revelators bless you.

INT. MARIE'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON, SOON AFTER

Once they've got enough distance, Ed comes out from the blanket - a pale, terrified mess.

DIEGO

They would've fucking murdered us.

ED

Or worse.

DIEGO

How'd you know all that?

MARIE

Waco.

DIEGO

Waco? The same Mt. Carmel FBI mass murder *Waco*?

MARIE

If you wanna see it that way. We try to learn from our mistakes.

(MORE)

MARIE (CONT'D)

Had to study it to join Incident Response - every negotiator's transcription with Koresh.

ED

The Church is the same as the Davidians' - who burned alive?

MARIE

Well, you both see the end of the world the same way. And you both can't wait for it to happen.

ED

You talk like it's still my church.

DIEGO

How do we know it isn't?

ED

Because I still want to live...
Turn off to the right here.

Marie slows down, takes the car off road.

EXT. HILL NEAR THE COMPOUND - AFTERNOON

Marie's car is parked behind a small hill. Atop it, they spy the sprawling compound a couple hundred yards off. Countless shacks, and a massive central church building.

DIEGO

All that - for fifty people?

ED

Fifty? You think what you saw in town was the whole Church? That was only the elite.

MARIE

Ed, take us to the crime scene.

They set off on foot, leaving the car concealed.

EXT. COMPOUND PERIMETER - EARLY EVENING

The three of them lie on the grass. A couple hundred feet off marks the spot where a shack used to be, debris in its place.

ED

That's where it attacked.

MARIE

And what direction was she taken?

Ed points off to a different direction of the prairie, a low-hanging forest range sits on the other side. On the compound, DOZENS OF FOLLOWERS emerge from the shacks, chanting.

ED

It's the nightly prayer.

MARIE

They'll be in the main hall?

Off Ed's nod, Marie gets up - walks low, towards the shack.

DIEGO

Marie!

EXT. SHACK REMAINS - CONTINUOUS

Staying out of sight, Marie sifts through the boards piled where the shack used to be. She quickly finds dried blood and strings of golden hair. She pockets samples.

Next she scans the ground, finds an area, like a trail, that seems more smoothed out than the rest. The smoothed area leads to an edge of the prairie where the grass is still broken, tamped down. The path is wide. Marie spins to see a GIRL, 8, in a dirty dress - alone.

GIRL

Want to come with me to prayer?

MARIE

I can't. I have to go.

GIRL

But you have to come to prayer.

MARIE

Actually, the... Revelators sent me on a special mission. A secret mission. I'll tell you all about it when I'm done. Okay?

GIRL

"Whatever you have commanded us we shall do, wherever you send us we shall go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you."

MARIE

Promise to keep it our secret?

The girl nods, excited, runs off to join prayer. Marie exhales huge, runs off.

EXT. PRAIRIE PATH - MOMENTS LATER

Marie leads them through the tamped-down prairie path she spotted. It's near dark. Diego seems just as jittery as Ed.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

Hours have passed. They're going by small flashlights when they arrive to the edge of the forest.

DIEGO

Enough of this, Marie, it's time to head back.

MARIE

Can't - there's a clear trail that led us here.

DIEGO

Goddammit! You know P.U.C. is up to something, now let's get backup.

MARIE

Once we return to Gevaudan, it's out of my hands. What if we can't get backup?

DIEGO

Then it's for good reason!

MARIE

If they took her out here, if she's still alive--

ED

It wasn't them, it was the beast! Can't you feel it now? The darkness, the air - it's changed. Heavy. With rage. It could be anywhere... *We need to go.*

DIEGO

For once, I agree with the creep. We head back to the car. Now.

ED

No-no, wait, they might've found it by now. The guards come out after evening prayer. Oh, God!

MARIE

Ed, calm down.

There's a rustling noise, quiet, far off.

ED

Do you hear that? It might be coming for us! I don't care, oh God, Jesus, save me! Let's turn ourselves in to the Church, please!

The rustling gets louder. Marie & Diego hear it. Suddenly, Diego draws his pistol on Ed.

DIEGO

You been acting this whole time, that it?! Set us up for an ambush out here--

ED

No, I swear!

DIEGO

--or you want us to bring ourselves into that fucking cult. What are we - a sacrifice?!

MARIE

Officer, you're unnerved. We need to be calm now in order to survive.

DIEGO

No! Don't act like you know what it takes - you don't!

Off Diego, looking like he might pull that trigger any moment, Marie quickly draws on him.

MARIE

Diego, take a breath. And put the weapon down. Let's talk--

The rustling gets louder. Diego grabs Ed, holds him hostage.

DIEGO

We're not negotiating. I'm handling this now. Aim your gun towards the woods or drop it!

As if triggered by the sudden hostage situation - a *private flashback to Palomas* - Marie just freezes. Diego jams the pistol closer against Ed's head. She drops her gun.

DIEGO (CONT'D)

You know... I thought you were stronger than this. I was wrong.

(to Ed)

Tell me who's out there - now!

What sounds like a tree snapping in half close by causes everyone to pause.

Ed seizes the moment and elbows Diego - dead sprints off into the darkness. Diego runs after him.

Marie wills herself back into focus, into the action - she grabs her gun and runs after them both.

ON MARIE - sprinting through the dark, a half-moon overhead. She loses them. Can't decide which direction to pick.

ON ED - he trips over a rock, tumbles hard down a hill. Lands near the tree line of the forest.

ON DIEGO - he rounds the bottom of the hill, finds Ed crawling on the ground. A few feet away now, he takes aim.

DIEGO (CONT'D)

Not a foot further or I'll fire!

ON MARIE nearby - shouting her lungs out:

MARIE

No! Diego, don't!

ED SCREAMS O.S. as TWO SHOTS RING OUT. Then, MORE SCREAMING, MORE GUNFIRE. Marie runs in its direction.

Marie rounds the bend, flashlights the clearing to find Ed in the grass, DRENCHED IN BLOOD AND ENTRAILS - *clearly not his own*.

Ed grasps a bullet hole in his shoulder, otherwise unharmed.

Diego's gun lies in a red puddle, but the man is nowhere to be seen.

There are sounds of something padding off into the forest. Marie sees nothing as she scans the area.

Ed blinks the blood out of his eyes.

ED

Marie. We need to go.

HOLD ON MARIE, mesmerized by the big dark country around her, absorbing this nightmare as reality, we--

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE.