

SCENE ONE

At rise: late afternoon, although a relentless winter storm makes it seem more like dusk. Frequent gusts of wind disrupt the quiet. At center, a cramped, drafty, improvised, dilapidated shelter. Luggage for a ski trip is arranged inside to block some of the wind. The shelter is surrounded by woods and deep drifts of snow.

JOYCE, bundled in mix-matched winter clothes and ski wear, sits to one side of the shelter, braced against the elements beside a suitcase. She's damp, dirty, and sick, sniffing and coughing. One arm is in an improvised sling made of clothing. She tries to stay warm and conscious, and quietly weeps.

Across the shelter, CHASE sleeps on a pallet of clothes and car floor mats. His face is bruised, both legs are splinted with ski poles, and he has broken ribs; he's essentially immobilized. He's damp and dirty, dressed in a shirt, light jacket, and jeans. Layers of clothes cover him like blankets.

Near the shelter, but out of view of its occupants, RHONDA stands near a small bag - perhaps an overnight or gym bag. She's stoic. She's dressed warm in ski wear. One knee is wrapped tightly with scarves and she walks with a limp. She holds a bundle wrapped in a bloody scarf, warming it with her bare hands. There's blood on her hands. She bites her lip until it bleeds. She wipes the blood from her lip with her fingers, mixing

it with the blood already on her hand before sucking it off her fingertips.

RHONDA puts the bundle down and opens the bag, producing a lighter and partially smoked cigarette. She lights up and warms herself with a long draw. She extinguishes the cigarette and takes a stick of lip balm from her pocket. She treats her lips while she allows the cigarette to cool, then puts the cigarette, lighter, and lip balm away. She picks up the bundle and enters the shelter.

RHONDA

(Withdrawing a small piece of meat from the bundle; approaching JOYCE)

Here.

(A long beat)

Joyce -

JOYCE

I can't.

RHONDA

Then you'll die.

JOYCE

(coughing)

I don't care.

RHONDA

I know what I'm talking about. You're sick. You're injured, you're sick, and you're not keeping your core temperature up. You're probably gonna lose your toes as it is. You might even lose your feet. Your immune system is weak and your lungs are filling with fluid. If you don't eat something soon, you'll die.

JOYCE

I said I don't care.

RHONDA

I do.

RHONDA (cont.)
(Forces the meat into JOYCE's good
hand. JOYCE won't look at it.)

Eat it.

JOYCE
Please, Rhonda, don't -

RHONDA
It's just a little piece, but the protein will help.

JOYCE
I can't!

RHONDA
You have to! It's been five days. I told you about the
ketosis. You're breaking down. Your body's eating itself
just trying to find enough energy to stay warm. If you
don't eat something -

JOYCE
Then I'll die! Fine! That's what I want!

RHONDA
That's the hypothermia talking.

RHONDA *forces JOYCE's hand to her
mouth.*

JOYCE
No! Please, just let me die already!

RHONDA
Oh, now that's a fine way to honor your husband. Just give
up, right? That's what Arthur would want, right? The least
you could do is honor him now that he's -

JOYCE
(Pulling her hand away from
RHONDA, throwing the meat away)
God, Rhonda! Please! Just leave me alone!

RHONDA
(Picks up the meat and forces it back
into JOYCE's hand.)
Eat!

CHASE *stirs in his sleep,*
distracting JOYCE. RHONDA pushes

JOYCE's hand to her mouth, but JOYCE holds her mouth tightly shut. RHONDA takes the meat from JOYCE's hand, puts her in a headlock, and holds her nose. JOYCE resists but gasps. RHONDA shoves the meat into JOYCE's mouth and forces it shut, still holding her nose. JOYCE spits it out once or twice, but RHONDA persists until JOYCE is forced to swallow the meat in order to breathe. JOYCE gags, coughs, and cries.

JOYCE

Stop! I'm gonna choke to death!

RHONDA

You said you wanted to die.

(Rising)

That's enough for now. Wash it down with some snow.

(JOYCE catches her breath. She rises, frostbite making it difficult for her to walk, and leaves the shelter to eat some snow. RHONDA crosses to CHASE and shakes him.)

Chase. Wake up. You need to eat this.

CHASE stirs and wakes to pain.

RHONDA puts a wad of clothing under his head which, for the moment, creates more discomfort.

CHASE

(Catching his breath)

Damn, that hurts!

RHONDA

I know, but you need to get your head up a little. How are the legs?

CHASE

Not that bad. But the ribs hurt like hell.

RHONDA pulls CHASE's covers and jacket back and pulls up his shirt to reveal black and yellow bruises.