

Liberty University

Christian Values Guide Generation Z to a Better Future in Post-Apocalyptic Screenplay

A Thesis Submitted to

Dr. Durrell Nelson

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By

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis and artifact, “Christian Values Guide Generation Z to a Better Future in Post-Apocalyptic Screenplay” and *Echo’s Calling* to my teachers, Angela Pond and Carrie Sheehan, who showed me that with a little imagination and a whole lot of faith, anyone can make a positive difference in the world.

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Abstract

Echo's Calling is a screenplay written with the intention to relate to modern teenagers and young adults (Generation Z) and teach them the Christian values of forgiveness, love, and acceptance. According to research, Generation Z relates to post-apocalyptic narratives because they feel as if they are currently living in the apocalypse. Their dismal worldview is perpetuated by negative news, "cancel culture," and the media. Despite all this, Generation Z strives for a better future free from hate. In order to produce such a future, the Christian values of forgiveness, love, and acceptance need to be relatable and teachable to Generation Z. Therefore, through cultural artifacts like the post-apocalyptic screenplays, *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*, *Warm Bodies*, and *A Quiet Place*, teenagers and young adults can relate to and learn from their inherent Christian values. Artifacts and stories like the aforementioned screenplays are vital models and guidebooks for young generations to create a successful positive future.

Artist's Statement

The worn calico seats shook and vibrated, sending tingles up my spine at every laser beam the Stormtroopers shot from their blasters. I was in awe of the narrative that sent my young mind to an outer space adventure where heroes triumphed, and villains fell (Lucas). George Lucas' *Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace* was the first science fiction film I saw in theaters, and the genre captured my imagination, perpetuating my love for the art of cinematic storytelling.

In addition, *Star Wars* and science-fiction films like it inspired me to create within the genre of screenplay because they not only pull in a vast audience, but they also act as commentaries for positive cultural change. As a high school teacher, I witness teenagers and young adults who are so disturbed by the current state of the world that they cling to science-fiction narratives as both warnings and instruction manuals for how to positively influence the future. Therefore, knowing that humanity's future is in the hands of our current teenagers who are so inclined by science fiction narratives, it is vital that such narratives are written with this generation's culture in mind.

Furthermore, it seems like science-fiction screenplays constantly ask their young audience imaginative "what if" and "so what" questions about current and future state of the world. Whether those questions are about technological or medical advances, racial or gender equity, or any other type of social change, science-fiction screenplay has the potential for vast positive change. Therefore, the science-fiction films such as *Star Wars* and others like it that promote the philosophies and conversations of what is good, beautiful, and true in relationship to mankind's divine existence are my impetus for creating a science-fiction screenplay.

Characters are the Heart of Science Fiction

The juxtaposition of the science-fiction screenplay narrative is what captured me the most. When I first began analyzing science-fiction films, I believed that future worlds in such narratives with their advanced technology, chaotic class systems, and esoteric environments would lend to unimaginable and unrelatable characters, but the opposite is true. Whether human or humanoid, the characters in science-fiction are often more authentically human than narratives outside the genre, and the fascinating settings accentuate the lessons taught in their stories of struggle and triumph. Take Yoda from the *Star Wars* saga, for example. The small goblin-like creature captured the hearts of millions not because he was an alien with telekinesis but because he taught us that even in the darkest times, a little bit of faith can go a long way (Lucas). There are many instances where our faith is shaken as we are surrounded by the darkness, just like Yoda, but if we can have even an ounce of his faith, we will overcome.

Another example from the same saga is the relationship between Han Solo and Princess Leia. Like most relationships formed in stressful situations, theirs most certainly has its ups and downs, yet it is those struggles that make their relationship stronger. For example, Han exhibits a quality that many strive for in a relationship: unwavering forgiveness. Any other man in his right mind would have denied Leia after she kissed another man in front of him, yet Han never doubted Leia's love for him, earning her the closure she so desired from him right before he was captured by the villain with an "I know" to her "I love you" (Lucas).

Science Fiction screenplays, and particularly post-apocalyptic or dystopic sub-genres like *Star Wars* place their characters in a hopeless setting. Therefore, more than fictional romance, comedy, or drama which are typically set in reality, science-fiction shows its audience that relationship drama, tough lessons, and any other conflict can be overcome even in the worst of

circumstances. Han and Leia struggled in their relationship, but they still overcame even with the pressure of being an entire Galaxy's saviors from a evil totalitarian cyborg (Lucas). Yoda's faith still endured enough to pass on that faith to his apprentice despite being forced to be a hermit on a dark swamp planet (Lucas). These characters unlike those in other genres face struggles that everyone endures, yet theirs are pushed to the extreme showing their audience that hope is a powerful force.

Whether Yoda is teaching us about faith or Han and Leia are showing us how to accept one another despite our flaws, it is the beauty of the human condition that shines so beautifully and truthfully in worlds that are quite the opposite, which inspires me to write science-fiction films. Characters that develop to inspire hope when hope is impossible are what I intend to relate to my audience in order to invoke a similar development of hope in humanity's future.

Screenplay and Christian Influence

In my experience, because science-fiction screenplays are brought to life in film, they provide audiences with a physical experience that literature of the same genre, such as short stories, poems, or novels cannot and do not accomplish. More than any other genre of screenplay, science-fiction invites me and my fellow audience members into the world of the narrative through their films' unique visual and auditory effects that are provided by the action of the written narrative. Also, through the audience's interaction with the narrative worlds of science-fiction screenplay, empathetic connections with the characters inspire us. Such empathy initiates a desire for inner and outward reflection on how we influence society. In other words, science-fiction screenplay and film are massive cultural influencers. According to a statistical study by Sarah Pattinson, "Around 85% of U.S. households now have at least one subscription to a video streaming service, such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video or HBO Max" where the

most science-fiction cultural artifacts (films) are accessed at the touch of a button, it is easy to reason how much impact such narratives have on the world (Pattinson).

Furthermore, if a science-fiction screenplay is successful in presenting themes through its character development, then the audience is inspired to have conversations and later take action to initiate a positive change in the world. Those conversations, the ones that direct audiences to change the world under the ideals of what is good, beautiful, and true are what I seek as a screenwriter, teacher, and Christian. As Acts 20:28 commands, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God" (Acts 20.28) In accordance with God's Holy word, it is my duty as a Christian and one who seeks to be a culture maker to ensure that my contribution to society is one that inspires goodness, beauty, and truth. While the vast cultural impact and exciting narratives screenplays have to offer are impetus for my thesis, *Echo's Calling*, so is the command of God to produce hope through the values of forgiveness, love, and acceptance in a world so often crippled with the absence of it.

It is not only because I am a teacher but also because I am a Christian that I feel a need to write a science-fiction screenplay that inspires our future generations to utilize and share forgiveness, love, and acceptance to create a society that looks toward the future with hope. Psalm 127:3-4 says, "Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him. Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior's hands" (*New Living Translation*, Psalm 127.3-4). Recognizing that children are God's gift to us is only part of acknowledging one's responsibility as a Christian. As Christians, we must consistently strive to create a world that reflects the values of God's holy words. In other words, we must teach our children and guide our young adults in lessons of love, acceptance, and forgiveness if we want our society to thrive. I

intend to shine an encompassing light on such values in my science-fiction screenplay through the development of my young adult main characters.

Post-apocalyptic Screenplay for Teenagers

Within science-fiction is the subgenre of post-apocalyptic fiction which has taken teenagers from all cultures and backgrounds by storm. In the article "Why Teens Find the End of the World so Appealing" by Elissa Nadworny of North Carolina's Public Radio, a handful of teenagers are quoted saying that they love the science-fiction sub-genre post-apocalyptic fiction. In responding to the teens' comments about the genre, Nadworny concluded, "Teen readers themselves are characters in a strange land. Rules don't make sense. School doesn't always make sense. And they don't have a ton of power" (Nadworny, 2017). Every year for the past seven years that I have been a high school English teacher, the students are more interested in *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner*, and *Divergent* than they are in other young adult coming of age narratives such as *Speak*, *The Hate U Give*, or *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. It is nearly impossible to get my students to engage in modern coming-of-age fiction set in their everyday world. Like Nadworny states in her article, young adults relate more to the strangeness of dystopic futuristic stories because the powerless characters overcome their impossible reality, which is where most teens believe they are living: an impossible reality (Nadworny). So, if I offer to study a post-apocalyptic narrative, my students' eyes light up as if their brains had caught fire.

Furthermore, as a teacher, I have a great passion for teenagers and young adults; they are, after all, the ones who have the power to destroy or better our future. Knowing the power that our modern young adults hold, and that the post-apocalyptic genre captures and inspires them more than any other form of storytelling, I firmly believe that it is my duty as teacher, mentor,

and writer to create a story within the sub-genre that teaches powerful lessons that encourage the young generation to make the future more loving, forgiving, and accepting.

A Screenplay for the New Generation

My proposed screenplay, *Echo's Calling*, is a science-fiction narrative shaped around God's values of love and acceptance, set in a post-apocalyptic world.

The protagonist of *Echo's Calling*, Devyn Briggs, is an eighteen-year-old girl forced to survive alone for eight years in what popular culture calls a "zombie apocalypse." In Devyn's world, the "zombies," called Feeders, are cannibalistic mutants created by a virus. The virus attacks cells and transforms their genetic makeup into that of hungry rotting corpses. Over the course of five days, the Feeder virus fills the bloodstream, then through the transmission of saliva from their bite fully turned, Feeders spread the virus like wildfire. So, with only her shaggy dog, Blu, for companionship, Devyn must live every day on high alert, doing her best to avoid inciting a horde of Feeders.

Although the Feeders pose a constant threat to Devyn's well-being, it is a class of surviving humans called Scavengers who utilize the apocalyptic chaos to their advantage that she must worry about above all else. Unlike the Feeders, Scavengers are still human and, therefore, can reason. Scavengers are groups of the worst of society, murderers, thieves, and masochists. Devyn's number one adversary is the worst of them all, a sick, demented man nicknamed Monger by his followers.

Apart from the extreme external conflicts Devyn must face constantly, there is a tremendous internal pain gnawing inside her every second of every day. Though there are other survivors apart from the Scavengers and other small encampments she could join, Devyn does her best to avoid any human contact except when her survival depends on it. The loathing she

has for others infects her as the virus infects the Feeders, created by what she believes was her parents' abandonment of her. Devyn refuses to believe her parents gave her to the military when the virus first broke out to save her. More than that, Devyn hates that when she escaped the convoy and somehow made her way back home, her parents were gone even after her mother promised she would be home waiting for her whenever Devyn came back. Devyn's parents, especially her mother, broke her trust, and years of avoiding Feeders and Scavengers as a child on her own erased any love or acceptance Devyn could have had for another human being. As a result, Devyn trusts no one and hated others, projecting her misery over her mother's abandonment of her onto the rest of mankind. So, there she is, a miserable soul wandering a bleak world with no one except a dumpster dog for companionship until fate brought Echo into her life.

After accidentally waking a horde of Feeders while scavenging for supplies in a supermarket, Devyn and Blu ran for their lives, finding solace in a gothic church. To Devyn's surprise, a little girl emerges from behind the pulpit. When Devyn approaches her in a moment of empathy, she suddenly realizes the girl is literally split down the center; she is half Feeder and half human! Unfortunately, Devyn's empathy quickly diminishes, and she pulls her gun on the girl.

Though horrified by her, Devyn cannot bring herself to kill the girl because there is something still very much human in her single sky-blue eye, so she leaves her. The half-zombie girl recognizing that Devyn is the one who took mercy on her decides to stealthily follow Devyn. Devyn and Blu carefully make their way back to the abandoned Supermarket to retrieve her rifle and backpack full of her scavenged supplies. Keeping to the shadows of broken-down cars and military tanks that line the otherwise empty streets. They do their best to stay downwind from

Feeders hunting under the moonlight. Finally, Devyn reaches the far end of the supermarket parking lot but is stunned to see that Monger and his gang of Scavengers surround the place. Desperate to regain her supplies, Devyn attempts to sneak past the Scavengers but is captured, and the only one that can save her is the half Feeder girl.

The half-Feeder girl helps Devyn escape, but in the process, Devyn kills Monger's little brother, Frankie. Monger then swears to avenge his brother by hunting Devyn down and killing her after he's had his fun.

After saving Devyn from Monger and his Scavenger minions, Devyn decides to keep the girl around, eventually naming her Echo because she repeats nearly everything Devyn says or does. For the first time in eight years, Devyn's heart feels love and acceptance from the most unexpected entity.

While trading her goods for ammunition with a young aspiring scientist at a college laboratory, Devyn discovers with his help that Echo's blood absorbs the Feeder virus but prevents it from taking over. If Echo's DNA could be extracted, it would be turned into a vaccine that could save humanity. The scientist urges Devyn to take Echo to the coast, where a large military encampment is shuttling survivors to an offshore Safe Haven on an aircraft carrier. At the Safe Haven, he says, are equipment and doctors which could turn Echo's blood into humanity's salvation. Devyn refuses. She could care less about the rest of humanity; they have done nothing but abandon and hunt her. Then when the scientist gets bitten by a Feeder, he thinks he is subdued with the drugs Devyn would trade him, Devyn is emotionally forced to save him, and the only way to do that is to take them both to the encampment on the coast.

Through an epic journey to the coast to save the scientist and humanity, Devyn and Echo bond further as they dodge Feeders and confront Monger, barely escaping with their lives time

and time again, Echo always being the one to get Devyn out of sticky situations. Devyn and Echo teach each other not only how to love and accept themselves but also how to be human again.

Devyn's epic journey of survival and growth ends in a reunion with her mother at the encampment. Although Devyn's hate returns at first, her love for Echo pushes her return to forgive. Even though Echo's purpose is to save humanity, it is Devyn's last-minute act to redeem herself and forgive her mother, which saves the world after a combined Scavenger and Feeder attack on the encampment risks everything.

Generational and Cultural Influence

In a literary sense, *Echo's Calling* is a narrative centered around the coming-of-age journey of a teenage girl who craves to be loved in a world that does not love her back. Like many science-fiction narratives, in which the main character is faced with issues centered around dystopic sub-cultures, disease, advancement of technology, and equity, Devyn faces similar struggles, yet hers are shaped around the Gen Z teenager. Much like the modern teenager, Devyn's internal conflicts are built up by parental disagreements leading to isolation, and her forced survival in a world where she feels she does not belong.

Therefore, even though Devyn's world is unfathomable, her character is one that significantly relates to young adults today. Today's teenagers are filled with angst and apathy about the state of the world they are living in, just like Devyn. In addition, many teens abandon real-world relationships with their peers because of the constant fear of abandonment and rejection fueled by social media and toxic societal standards such as unattainable beauty, popularity, or wealth. So, while Devyn's flaw and internal conflict of abandonment trauma (on top of trying to survive as a child in a Feeder-infested world) drive her, it also makes her

character relatable to young adult audiences. Devyn fears rejection because she believes she was abandoned, and today's teenagers fear rejection because they face it every time they log on to social media or even step inside their high school.

Furthermore, like Devyn, many young adults often resent their parents. Though there are a plethora of possible reasons why teenagers resent their parents, the underlying motif is that, in some way, at some time, their parents, much like Devyn's, disappointed them.

On top of their internalized trauma and frustration, Devyn and young adult audiences face physical obstacles they must overcome while still learning to cope with their internal conflicts. Though no flesh-eating Feeders are waiting to pounce on the nearest living hunk of meat, nor are there gangs of murderous Scavengers lurking for the thrill of a kill, the real world for teenagers is not without its own obstacles. For teenagers, there are sports tryouts, exams, family separations, lost friendships, and challenges inherent to trying to figure out how they will make their way in a world that often makes no sense.

Devyn is a protagonist who young adults will resonate with, and beyond that, she teaches teenagers the values that Christians hold so dear, forgiveness, love, and acceptance. That is where Echo comes in. Echo is both the catalyst that takes Devyn on her hero's journey and the key to opening Devyn's locked heart. Ironically, Devyn becomes what she resents most in the world, a mother to Echo. Echo's innocence and isolation resonate with Devyn as she empathizes with the girl who is both Feeder and human yet fits in with neither. It is that emergence of empathy—driven by a spark only Echo could provide which begins to open Devyn's heart.

I hope that someday while watching *Echo's Calling*, will resonate with young adults as they journey with the main characters and learn to forgive, love, and accept others in a world that so often prevents them from doing so. There is so much hate in the world today; it is no wonder

why young adults seek answers and resolve in fiction. Within young adult post-apocalyptic fiction, it is my duty as a Christian writer to provide those answers and that resolve through the lens of God's holy word. Through my screenplay, I hope that young adults learn that they hold the power to shape the future in God's image, an image in which Devyn and Echo act as models.

Echo's calling is to save humanity's future, yet she could not have done so without teaching Devyn that there is still goodness and a future worth fighting for. So, while Echo's blood will save the world from disease, it is Devyn's resurrection from a life of hate into one of love that will create a better future. So, in conclusion, my artistic ambition and faith in God drive me to be an "Echo" for "Devyns" everywhere in the hope that they will translate love into the future world they are destined to create.

The Critical Essay

Importance of Christian Values in Screenplay for Generation Z

Its skin melts away from the bone, black ooze exudes from its detached jaw, and its filmy eyes urge the creature into the frame, intoxicated with an unsatiable desire for human flesh. The teenage audience eases forward, eyes glued to the screen, waiting for the undead to attack the already exhausted hero. Nevertheless, the hero must save the world, so they rise because their divine purpose is to cleanse the world of its unliving infection. Such is the narrative structure for a 21st-century post-apocalyptic zombie film. Post-apocalyptic screenplays have dominated box offices and young adult popular culture in the United States.

In his novel, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, Andy Crouch, explains that those who belong to the young generations are the people that shape and influence popular culture (Crouch). Generation Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, is the youngest generation and therefore are the most powerful cultural influencers. In 2022, Generation Z makes up

approximately 42% of movie-goers, and around 32% of those movie-goers are there to watch science-fiction films (Navarro; Rubin). So, if Generation Z, the generation comprised of society's future, is so fascinated with commercial science fiction narratives like the post-apocalyptic film, how do the values and ideals represented in such films reflect on the nature of society, culture, and ethics in our future world?

A typical post-apocalyptic film is often thought of by Christians as brutal, morose, and violent, which are ideals that would lead to society's downfall rather than its betterment. Christians believe that values such as forgiveness, love, and acceptance are the ideals that so desperately need to be represented in Generation Z's culture if society's future is to thrive. Furthermore, forgiveness, love, and acceptance are foundational Christian values, yet Generation Z is the generation that abstains most from Christianity and Christian teachings. According to the study, "Evangelical: Why Millennials and Gen Z Are Leaving the Constraints of White Evangelicalism" by Colleen Batchelder, Generation Z shuns modern Christianity because they view the religion as an antagonist of diversity and liberal acceptance (Batchelder). In other words, Generation Z's frustration with Christianity inadvertently leads them to see Christian values as hypocritical or damaging. Their resentment toward Christian values is one reason why teenagers feel they are currently living in the apocalypse. Christian values and faith teach hope, and if Gen Z shies away from Christianity, then they lack the hope their generation so desperately needs.

So, what can Christian screenwriters seeking to write in the post-apocalyptic sub-genre do to solve the problem of hopelessness in today's youth? First, they must understand, acknowledge, and represent Generation Z's values in screenplay. For example, Linda Seger's guide, *Making a Good Script Great* says, "If you know the demographics of your intended

audience, you can capitalize on themes that will appeal to them. For instance, about fifty percent of today's moviegoers are between the ages of twelve and twenty-nine. That's why so many coming of age narratives about the pressures and issues faced by this age group are so popular" (143). Along with representing today's teenagers and young adults, Christian screenwriters must learn to incorporate biblical lessons of forgiveness, love, and acceptance into their screenplay's narrative in such a way that Gen Z relates to, understands, and then acts on them after they have finished watching the film. Therefore, an analysis of successful post-apocalyptic screenplays which represent Generation Z and teach them biblical values is how Christian screenwriters will learn to write unique and authentic narratives that teach love, forgiveness, and acceptance.

The Zombie Generation

So why is it that post-apocalyptic films are so enticing for today's teenagers and young adults? The first step in ensuring teenagers not only relate to a screenplay's narrative, but the Christian values it teaches is to understand Generation Z's culture and their inclination toward post-apocalyptic artifacts. To explain, the text, *Everyday Theology: Understanding How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* explains that if Christians wish to instill God's teachings in hopes of a better world, they "must understand the culture before they exclude or embrace it" (Vanhoozer et al. 33). With that knowledge, cultural artifacts like coming-of-age post-apocalyptic screenplays will make a significant positive difference in the lives, spirituality, and attitude of today's teenagers.

Andy Crouch says, "The essence of youth is awareness," and that "awareness" is what separates earlier generations from Generation Z (Crouch 9). From the explosion of technology that rests in the palm of one's hand to the twisted and tangled web of social media, modern teens and young adults are more aware of the world around them than any other generation. In an

article about news statistics, Maria Pengue concludes that nearly 90% of all media news coverage is negative and approximately 63% of teens admit that the news makes them feel anxious or inadequate. (Pengue). Therefore, it is no wonder Generation Z's cognizance of current events moves them toward end-of-the-world narratives.

Furthermore, in the article, "Understanding Gen Z: The Post-Apocalyptic Generation," Jack Myers explains through his research why Generation Z is so enamored by post-apocalyptic artifacts. Myers says that Generation Z's "understanding and many of their perceptions have been defined by post-apocalyptic media they've been exposed to throughout their young lives" (Myers). He continues by detailing post-apocalyptic media topics of disease, war, technological uprisings, environmental disasters, dystopian governments, and more that teens are exposed to daily (Myers). In other words, Generation Z relates to post-apocalyptic artifacts such as screenplays because they believe they are currently living in the apocalypse.

However, just because today's teenagers are exposed to world-ending news and ideologies does not mean that they do not want to prevent it from happening even if on the outside hope seems lost. For example, a study done by Pew Research in 2020 concluded that nearly half of Generation Z individuals believe that societal change is a good thing (Parker and Igielnik). In other words, teenagers believe that increasing diversity, acceptance of others, and awareness of global issues, are the changes society needs to prevent the world from its demise. In an interview with two sixteen-year-olds titled, "Modern Teens, The Post-Apocalypse, and Christianity," they stated that even through the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic and an onslaught of racial justice issues Generation Z did not lose hope, in fact, these recent atrocities inspired them to seek action against pestilence and hate. For example, after the George Floyd incident in 2020, teens rallied with one another in the streets protesting for racial equity. This action-driven

response to atrocity concludes that Generation Z is not hopeless, they simply need a cause that inspires them to seek actionable change (Rice, et al.).

Yet, Generation Z does not just wait for society to change once they are inspired. Instead, they are a generation of leaders and motivators who take charge of the changes they seek to occur worldwide. In the article by Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "6 Things Christians should know about Gen Z," she discusses that actions are more important than words to Generation Z. The article says, teenagers and young adults appreciate "matching actions to words," and that "About four out of five Gen Zers said they would 'stop buying brands and spread the word' about companies if they thought their campaigns were macho, racist, or homophobic" (Zylstra). Therefore, if today's teens and young adults put effort into believing something, they will not just sit around and wait for change to occur. In fact, whether they know it or not, Generation Z wants and often acts on what Christianity values: the world to be more forgiving, loving, and accepting. So perhaps teenagers and young adults are nicknamed Generation Z because they act like zombies, not because they mindlessly drag one foot behind themselves, but because they, like zombies, are undeterred in reaching their goal.

According to the teenagers in the interview, "Modern Teens, The Post-Apocalypse, and Christianity," Generation Z's pessimistic outlook on the future of society due to growing up in a world envired by sad news, pandemics, and social injustice is why they resonate so well with post-apocalyptic literature that details such issues. In addition, both teens said that they appreciate films where the characters help improve society in some way (Rice et al.). Therefore, if cultural artifacts such as screenplays are going to instill and inspire teenagers to take on Christianity's versions of unwavering forgiveness, love, and acceptance, they need to show action and prove change is occurring within the world of the narrative. Furthermore, according to

Linda Seger in her guide *Making a Good Script Great*, screenwriters need to be researchers and look to the future for cultural trends that will capture their audience (144). She explains, “Most successful films that depend in some way on trends and topicality make the most of these commercial connections by emphasizing a personal side of a story” (145). In other words, if Christian screenwriters want to teach Gen Z Christian values in the hope of a better future, then it is imperative that they write in the genre that captures them the most (the post-apocalyptic sub-genre) and that they understand and acknowledge their culture in screenplays. Therefore, combining the settings and conflicts of a post-apocalyptic narrative with a teenage protagonist whose actions speak louder than words is what is going to inspire Gen Z that practicing Christian values is the hope they need for a better future.

Generation Z and Christianity

In continuing the interview with two teenagers discussing Gen Z’s proclivity toward post-apocalyptic literature and artifacts, the question of whether or not they would watch a film in which Christian values are presented provoked an interesting discussion. Both teenagers said they did not understand why a story had to be Christian if it presented the positive social values of forgiveness, love, and acceptance (Rice, et al.). Though the teenagers are correct that a screenplay does not have to be Christian to exhibit positive values, Christianity provides society with faith, hope, and moral values. To explain further, The *Conversation Journal*’s article, “Faith Still Shapes Morals and Values Even After People are ‘Done’ With Religion,” references studies of religious and nonreligious identifying groups to conclude, “Religion influences morals and values through multiple pathways. It shapes the way people think about and respond to the world, fosters habits such as church attendance and prayer, and provides a web of social connections” (Schwadel and Hardy). The article also discussed that in a psychological study,

religious people are more likely than nonreligious people to support moral foundations such as kindness, loyalty, fairness, respect for authority, and innocence (Schwadel and Hardy). Such moral foundations align with the Christian values of forgiveness, love, and acceptance. The article and studies analyzed within it prove that religion is necessary for morality. Therefore, films that exhibit and teach Christian ideals are also necessary to maintain morality and instill hope in young generations for a better society.

In the interview, the students also revealed that if a film is advertised as being Christian, they would not watch it. The teenagers' dismissive stance toward Christian films and Christianity as a whole is not uncommon among today's youth. For example, Ryan Burge of Eastern Illinois University conducted a survey that concludes that only 36% of Gen Zers identify as Christian and 48% identify as non-Christians (Burge). While the percentage of teenagers and young adults identifying as non-Christians represents nearly half of Generation Z's population, the question remains: Why are so many young people not identifying with Christianity or Christian values? Daniel A. Cox, of the *Survey Center on American Life*, explains based on various surveys and studies that Generation Z is leaving Christianity due to a lack of parental figures in the home, a shift toward liberalism, and a societal lack of participation in Christian culture or activities (Cox).

First, in order to utilize screenplay to combat Gen Z's dissent from Christianity and its values, Christian writers must show within their narratives that parental figures who act as moral role models are available to them and they are necessary for promoting forgiveness, love, and acceptance. Cox explains that nearly 23% of American youth are raised in a single-parent home, and that "Americans raised in single-family homes report being less involved in a range of different religious activities" (Cox). Though instilling the value that a nuclear family has on

older generations will increase the likelihood of future generations identifying with Christianity, it will not help the teenagers and young adults of society's current generation. Because today's teens lack a parental figure that will teach them Christian values, they are forced to look elsewhere like in cultural artifacts, for example, for such role models. If a screenplay is going to be successful in promoting Christian values, then a parent or role model type character that practices forgiveness, love, and acceptance needs to be present and interact with a Generation Z protagonist. Furthermore, a narrative aimed at catering to Gen Z should mirror the life of a teenager by inciting conflict or tension between the young protagonist and their parental figure that is slowly resolved through Christianity's notion of endearing love. Doing so will not only draw in a Gen Z audience due to the narrative's relatability, but it will also teach society's future parents and role models that parent-child relationships are needed in order for a loving future to occur.

The second aspect that Christian screenwriters need to include in their narratives if they are going to relate to today's adolescents and teach them values that instill hope are examples of liberalistic ideals coinciding with Christian values. In a Student Union article, "Gen Z: Politically Leaning to the Left," the author states that most Gen Zers hold strong liberal stances on social and humanitarian issues (Seymour). Liberal stances include a reduction of firearm access, an increase in vaccine use, the elimination of racial injustice, and the acceptance of gender and social diversity. Therefore, for a screenplay to be successful in relating to Gen Z and promoting the Christian ideals of forgiveness, love, and acceptance then the narratives must include, at least in part, motivation or conflict that develops a character's knowledge or action toward progressive social issues. According to *GotQuestions.org*, a Christian forum, Christianity's take on progressive issues focuses on social justice and humanitarian and environmental issues. The

forum explains that “The Bible is replete with instructions to “visit orphans and widows in their distress” (James 1:27, NASB) and to protect the environment that God has entrusted to us (Genesis 1:28). Insofar as Progressive Christianity is a movement that seeks to emphasize and honor these principles, it certainly lines up with Scripture” (GotQuestions.org). Furthermore, the site warns that sometimes progressive ideals can lead Christians to deviate from accepting the Bible and the lessons it teaches as the true word of God (GotQuestions.org). Therefore, it is imperative that if Christian screenplays are going to incorporate liberalistic beliefs into their plot then they need to ensure that Biblical principles are not being overshadowed by ideals that do not align with God’s word.

In addition to catering to Generation Z’s parental struggles and progressive ideals to teach Christian values, it is crucial to revisit the student’s interview responses which note that they would not watch a film, even a post-apocalyptic one if it was advertised and written directly as a Christian film. Therefore, the question arises, is it possible to teach the Christian versions of forgiveness, love, and acceptance in secular screenplays? The answer to that question is found within current cultural artifacts that empathize with Generation Z. The success of the post-apocalyptic films, *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*, *Warm Bodies*, and *A Quiet Place* are only three examples of how Christian values can be portrayed and taught while relating to Generation Z.

The Power of Forgiveness

Maze Runner: The Death Cure, is a young adult post-apocalyptic film written by T.S. Nowlin and directed by Wes Ball. The screenplay’s narrative is adapted from the novel written by James Dashner. The setting of the film occurs years after a solar flare scorched a large portion of Earth and caused a zombie-like virus to mutate the majority of humanity’s surviving members

(Ball). Living in a world where no one really belongs, the screenplay follows its teenage protagonist, Thomas, who learns about the power of forgiveness, one of Christianity's foundational values (Ball).

The film begins with Thomas and his friends on the run from a WICKD (World in Catastrophe Killzone Department), the evil ruling government of the narrative's world. WICKD's goal is to utilize the immunity of Thomas and his friends. They wish to experiment on them in tortuous ways in hopes of studying their brain to find a cure for the Cranks (zombies) who are decimating the human race. While WICKD's goal seems justified, its means of obtaining it is far from ethical (Ball).

Thomas and his friends rebel against WICKD with the hope of finding a less violent and more ethical way of curing the Crank virus. Thomas counts on his friends to help him defeat the world's corrupt leader and survive in a Crank-infested world, so he is utterly broken when his best friend, Theresa betrayed him to WICKD. Theresa joins WICKD in hunting Thomas down. Thomas' pain over Theresa's betrayal is more intense than the pain after any ordinary break-up because he and Theresa share a telepathic connection. In the past, WICKD conducted numerous experiments on their brains which resulted in Thomas' and Theresa's telepathy (Ball).

After learning of Theresa's betrayal, Thomas' heart grows cold and bitter. He refuses to forgive her, and she refuses to let go of him and WICKD. The climax of the narrative, where Thomas is close to destroying WICKD, forces him to make a crucial decision. Theresa, after witnessing WICKD's atrocious experiments on immune humans firsthand, changes her perspective and attempts to help Thomas. Thomas must decide whether he will forgive Theresa and trust her to guide him into WICKD and destroy it or to complete his goal on his own. This intense decision-

making in the narrative increases the young audience's engagement by leading the protagonist to find the truth about their world and themselves (Ball).

K. M. Weiland says in her guide, *Creating Character Arcs*, that a successful story possesses a character arc where the protagonist believes a lie, and over the course of the plot they come to realize the truth (Weiland). Weiland says, "Before this story can end, the Lie has to appear front and center and confront the protagonist head on" (115). Thomas' lie is that he believes forgiving Theresa will lead him to his physical and philosophical death. Though still broken from her betrayal, Thomas chooses to forgive Theresa ultimately accepting her help in destroying WCKD once and for all. Thomas' forgiveness of Theresa shows its teenage audience that absolution is not only possible but is necessary even when an impossible setting like the post-apocalypse stacks all the odds against them (Ball).

While *Maze Runner: The Death Cure* is not a Christian film, it appeals to Generation Z through its teenage characters, post-apocalyptic setting, and negative liberal stance on extreme corporate power. Like many teenagers, Thomas faces friendship loss, betrayal, and hard decision-making. Thomas also lives where he doesn't belong, in a post-apocalyptic world overrun with dystopic ruling bodies, environmental disasters, pestilence, and humanitarian crises (Ball). Like Thomas, Gen Zers feel they are also stuck in a similar apocalyptic setting in today's reality. Lastly, *Maze Runner: The Death Cure* is successful with young audiences because the writers made sure to include the progressive ideal of anti-corporation by constructing WCKD as a corrupt entity with too much power. It is easy to comprehend why the screenplay was so successful with Generation Z, but it is also successful in teaching the Generation the Christian value of forgiveness.

Christianity's value of forgiveness teaches that forgiving those who have done wrong is the best path to peace and that is exactly what Thomas's forgiveness of Theresa shows.

Movieguide, a Christian organization that interprets popular films, says that "The movie has a strong Christian, redemptive, moral worldview. The good guys put their lives on the line to save their friends. Also, the main moral message is that the ends don't justify the means" (Mott). In other words, the screenplay's development of Thomas' journey of seeking the strength within himself and humanity to forgive Theresa exhibits the Christian value of forgiving those who have done wrong.

Forgiveness, as Thomas learns, is a powerful tool that invokes hope for a better future, such a sentiment is something that every generation, even Gen Z can learn about. For Christians, the power of God's forgiveness equates to His generosity and unwavering love for humanity. Christians believe that if one repents with earnestness, they are forgiven. On the other hand, Generation Z's version of forgiveness is harsh and nearly non-existent. They only value forgiveness when a 180-degree actionable change has occurred within an individual. In the journal, "The Omnipresence of Cancel Culture: A Balanced Contrast," Generation Z is described as an often-unforgiving generation due to their affiliation with the cancel culture movement (Ahuja and Kerketta). Cancel culture is "a phenomenon that cannot be bound to one explanation or definition. The general definition of this concept is constrained to the condemnation and ostracization of individuals, or 'influencers' on social media" (Ahuja and Kerketta). Gen Z is known to use cancel culture to drive those they deem racist, homophobic, xenophobic, or generally problematic out of the social sphere. Therefore, examples of teenage characters like Thomas that exhibit Christianity's unwavering forgiveness in popular cultural artifacts are vital

to showing Generation Z that such a value is powerful enough to “cancel” racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and any other injustices.

Because Theresa's betrayal of Thomas leads him to hate anyone that stands in his way, his hate turns into the character flaw that often impedes his journey of saving the world (Ball). At the climax of the screenplay, Thomas grapples with the moral decision of forgiving Theresa, who claims she has given up WCKD's ideals. Ultimately, Thomas chooses to forgive Theresa, which produces a positive internal character development and allows him to guide the world into a forgiving and loving future (Ball). By forgiving Theresa, Thomas demonstrates how Christianity's principle of unwavering forgiveness of even just one person can lead to saving humanity from atrocity.

In the end, Thomas realized that "canceling" Theresa, would not lead to change. Instead, he sought forgiveness for her, which became the catalyst for the narrative's resolution of a healthy society. He learned what the study of Generation Z's cancel culture narratives describes as, "calling out someone for mistakes they have made and holding them accountable is fine - in fact, encouraged - as long as you educate them and give them the space to learn from their mistake and move on" (Ahuja and Kerketta). Thomas' pardon of Theresa overshadows Generation Z's notion of cancel culture because his forgiveness created change.

Though not a Christian film, *Maze Runner: The Death Cure* shows Christian values that are relatable to Generation Z. For example, when Jesus forgives and accepts Zacchaeus, a greedy tax collector, he changes by giving his money to the poor and restoring those he extorted (Matt. 18. 21-22). Zacchaeus' change due to Christ's forgiveness ultimately created a positive societal change for a town overburdened with his former tax collection. Because Christ forgave Zacchaeus, he not only changed, but he also helped society thrive. The same could be said about

Thomas and his forgiveness of Theresa, that his forgiveness of her wrongdoings created a better society in the long run (Ball). Therefore, Christians and Generation Z value action-taking forgiveness when it comes to building better relationships and community.

Maze Runner: The Death Cure is an excellent example of how a post-apocalyptic film that teaches Christian values to Generation Z can be successful. The Christian value of forgiveness is structured for Gen Z in the screenplay through the conflict of man versus society which leads the protagonist to the point of no return. At the point of no return, Thomas reaches his dramatic character arc within the third plot point where he must overcome the lie that absolution is impossible for those who have done wrong, he has believed from the beginning. Just as Christ forgave Zacchaeus for the wrongdoings he inflicted on society as a tax collector, Thomas forgives Theresa for her allegiance to WCKD, the evil corporation that tortured people under the guise of being society's savior. Christ's and Thomas' forgiveness of others ultimately created a better world whether it is saving a small town from a greedy tax collector or saving the world from an evil corporation. Because Thomas' positive change character arc is centered around forgiveness that results in an actionable change in society, teenagers empathize with *Maze Runner: The Death Cure's* narrative and the Christian value it teaches. Therefore, Christian screenwriters seeking to relate to Gen Z should use the film's dramatic apocalyptic setting and conflicts that force a dynamic character arc into play if they hope to create a cultural artifact that instills the biblical principle of forgiveness which is foundational to producing a hopeful future.

Diversity is a Driving Force

A second screenplay that resonates with Generation Z while teaching a Christian value is *Warm Bodies*. Screenwriter and director, Jonathan Levine combined Shakespeare's narrative of

star-crossed lovers who by all standards are not supposed to be together into a zombie-infested post-apocalyptic narrative. While *Romeo and Juliet* have shown young audiences for centuries that the Christian value of acceptance is necessary for peace and love to thrive, the characters in *Warm Bodies* relate to modern teenagers because they explore the progressive ideal of diversity acceptance more than the Shakespearean narrative (Levine).

While the post-apocalyptic setting of *Warm Bodies* already intrigues a Gen Z audience because they feel they are currently living in one due to trauma-inducing negative media, an increase in humanitarian disasters, and world pandemics, the story engages them further and teaches them Christian values through the protagonists' acceptance of each other despite one of them being a brain-eating zombie (Levine).

Furthermore, Gen Z values diversity acceptance because they are the most diverse generation in United States history. In 2019, the *Pew Research Center* conducted a study that concluded that nearly fifty percent of Generation Z are classified as either Hispanic, African American, Asian, or other (Parker and Igielnik). Being such a diverse group, it is not surprising that today's teens fight for more diversity acceptance in society. In addition, it is also not surprising why they would empathize with a screenplay like *Warm Bodies*, which discusses the progressive, yet biblical value of acceptance.

In *Warm Bodies*, R is a lonely teenage zombie who wanders around his post-apocalyptic world without purpose, until his eyes lock with Julie's. Julie is a human who is sent on a mission by her father to collect supplies for the human encampment. On the supply run with her friends, a horde of hungry zombies along with R attack them. In the skirmish, R and Julie stare into each other's eyes, yet it is not love at first sight for Julie. Instantly feeling a connection with Julie, R

rescues her from the attack by disguising her as a zombie and taking her with him to the airport where he lives (Levine).

During the second act of the screenplay, Julie learns that R is more human than she and the rest of humanity thought. Also, the more time Julie spends with the R and the more she accepts him for the anomaly he is, the more human he becomes. In other words, Julie's acceptance of R, despite their differences is the catalyst for his change (Levine).

By the third act of *Warm Bodies*, Julie has both forgiven R for his cannibalistic past (because he could not help it) and accepted him for the zombie he is, yet another obstacle stands in the way of R and Julie's journey. They must convince the rest of the world, and especially Julie's father that zombies, deep down are still human beings and that if the rest of humanity accepted them and treated them as such then they can change back. During a heroic final battle with some zombies that are too far gone, R and Julie prove, with the help of R's zombie friends that their souls are no different than non-zombies. By the resolution, R and Julie convince humanity that acceptance of the non-zombies is the way to saving the world. Slowly, because the zombies are loved, they change back into humans (Levine).

Warm Bodies' lesson of acceptance despite physical differences and all else is a Christian one. *Movieguide* says this about the film's Christian messages, "the core story of love curing death has some positive Christian, redemptive, biblical connotations" (Movieguide). In other words, it is Julie's love of R that leads her to accept him for who he is, and her acceptance of him teaches others that love for one another can cure anything (Levine). Furthermore, it is vital for screenwriters to teach acceptance to their Generation Z audience because just like they struggle with forgiveness, they also struggle with complete acceptance of one another. While it is easy for teenagers and young adults to accept others based on their physical attributes because they relate

to each other's diversity, they find it difficult to accept others for who they are. The lack of acceptance for those with different ideals derives from access to negative and conflict-instilling media. "Conflict sells, that's why the media perpetuates it. Because of that we [Generation Z] don't accept others who have different opinions or who make mistakes very well" says a sixteen-year-old student in an interview about Generation Z (Rice et al.) Therefore, because Generation Z struggles with acceptance because they only know conflict, instilling Christianity's version of the ideal is vital in preventing societal conflict.

The Bible teaches the lesson of acceptance equating to love in a handful of narratives. For example, Jesus accepts the Leper despite his grotesque appearance and disease, and in loving him and treating him like a human being, the Leper is healed (Luke 5.12-16). Like the story of Jesus and the Leper, *Warm Bodies* shows young audiences that acceptance can heal. Another biblical example of acceptance that goes beyond loving someone despite their physical appearance is when Christ accepts the Samaritan woman at the well. In Christ's time, Samaritans and Jews hated each other for ancient cultural differences. So, when Jesus asked the woman for water from her well, told her about God, and accepted her despite her ethnicity, she in turn accepted Him as her redeemer (John 4.1-42). Christ's example of acceptance has shown generations that loving others can heal both the individual and society. Through their redeeming/positive change character arcs, R and Julie in *Warm Bodies* relate to young audiences by showcasing diversity acceptance and they teach Christ's example of acceptance by loving others despite their physical appearance, ethnicity, and history.

What Christian screenwriters writing in the post-apocalyptic genre can learn from *Warm Bodies* is that if they are seeking to teach Generation Z the biblical value of acceptance, then the best way to do so is through classic storytelling, with archetypal motifs of good versus evil and

teenage love, and with fascinating characters that showcase diversity through their character arcs. Another lesson screenwriters can take away from *Warm Bodies* is that if they intend on the lesson their characters teach to stick with their audiences long after the film is over, the resolution must clearly answer the narrative's thematic question. Weiland says, "You never want to slap readers in the face with 'the moral of the story,' but you do want the answer to your thematic question to be perfectly clear" (146). *Warm Bodies'* thematic question of 'How can two opposing races come together in order for the world to heal?' is answered through the example of acceptance R and Julie share with the rest of society (Levine). Therefore, providing an example through one's characters that proves acceptance of one another can occur is a good way to show Gen Zers that they too can be examples of endearing acceptance. Through the character arcs like those written in *Warm Bodies*, Generation Z will understand that acting on the Christian value of acceptance is what will change the world that they believe is so filled with hate into one overflowing with love.

Love is the Answer

One of the biggest struggles Generation Z faces is forging and maintaining bonds with their parents. Dr. Daniel A. Cox concludes that Generation Z would be happier, more hopeful, and spiritual if they respected their parents. The respect and love for teens have for their parents is lacking in part to single parent homes (Cox). Being the sole protector of the children and home can lead to parents being overprotective of their teenagers who are moving into adulthood. Jeff Cunningham, a moral psychologist at Arizona State University says that teens of single parents are often depressed, anxious, and resentful toward their families because their parents are more overprotective than any other generation (Cunningham). Cunningham states, "The worry about children's safety was fueled by several random but tragic incidents of kidnapping during

Generation Z's formative years. These kinds of events are every parent's worst nightmare, and they led to understandable paranoia" (Cunningham). The parental overprotectiveness that Cunningham describes is why Generation Z struggles with loving parent-child relationships. The "generation of action" feels confined by their parents' strict rules about what they can do and when they can do it. Therefore, Christianity's principles of obeying and loving one's parents, turn teenagers away from Christian values because they believe their parents are holding them back. Yet, as Dr. Cox explains, teenagers are less likely to have faith if they lack a parent that represents the values of that faith (Cox). Therefore, it is imperative that Christian screenwriters are sensitive to balancing Christianity's value of a steady and loving child-parent relationship with that of the struggles Gen Z faces with their parents or lack of. Showing that parental figures or role models can be just as meaningful in a teen's life and that parents are only overprotective because they care through the characters in a screenplay will allow Gen Zers to relate to and better comprehend the Christian value of familial love.

Furthermore, parental strictness causes Generation Z to feel betrayed and isolated. The results of a study, "Betrayal Trauma in Youth and Negative Communication During a Stressful Task," show:

"That adolescents with a betrayal trauma history reported more emotion regulation difficulties and exhibited more aggressive and fewer positive communication behaviors when engaged in a stressful interpersonal task with their mothers than did adolescents exposed only to nonbetrayal trauma." (Jacoby et al.)

In other words, teenagers face overprotective parents on a daily basis and sometimes betrayal trauma follows. Therefore, Christian post-apocalyptic screenplays where the teenage protagonists experience the issues of overprotective parents and betrayal trauma will relate to

Generation Z. Also, with Christianity's version of love shown within the protagonists' familial bonds, teenagers will learn that irrevocable love is the answer to mending broken relationships.

A recent screenplay that exhibits Christianity's ideal that love is the answer to solving all problems within a family is John Krasinski's *A Quiet Place*. Though not a zombie narrative, the characters still face a post-apocalyptic world decimated by monsters. Furthermore, Gen Zers relate to the teenage character, Regan as she certainly lives in a world where she does not fit in (Krasinski).

Regan struggles more than any other member of her family in a world overrun with monsters. One of the reasons that Regan struggles is because the monsters only hunt by sound, and she is deaf, so she cannot hear any noise that she or anyone else, or monsters make. Besides her disability, Regan's most profound struggle is that of her internal conflict. During the screenplay's exposition, Regan gives her youngest brother a space shuttle toy that makes noise, despite her father, Lee, telling him he could not have it because it is too loud. On the way back home from getting supplies, the little boy turns the toy on, Regan and the rest of her family look on fearfully, and before Lee can grab him, the boy's life is taken by a monster. From that moment on Regan blames herself for her brother's death and she believes her father blames her too (Krasinski).

Throughout the first and second acts of the screenplay, Regan rarely interacts with Lee and when she does, she is distant and resentful. Also, Lee refuses to let Regan participate in protecting the family and getting supplies, further isolating her from having a relationship with him. Even though Regan has two parents, she feels and acts like she only has one (Krasinski). Such an internal struggle with a parent relates to Gen Z because they too, struggle with having a single parent and/or having one that is overprotective.

In the third act, a horde of monsters invades the family's farm. Stuck in a silo with a monster and her only remaining brother, Regan is given the opportunity to redeem herself and save both him and her, yet she doesn't know how. Then as the monster creeps closer, Regan's hearing aid that her father tinkered with emits a high-pitched sound that irritates the monster causing it to flee. It is at this moment while holding the broken hearing aid that Regan realizes her father saved her life (Krasinski).

Regan and her brother climb out of the silo and back to their house where they are attacked once more. Suddenly, Lee intervenes and in an act of love and protection, he sacrifices himself to save his children. Before the monster takes him, Regan looks into Lee's eyes and realizes that he never blamed her, only himself for the death of his son and that he only protected her so much because he loved her (Krasinski).

In the end, Regan saves her family with the hearing aid her father made (Krasinski). Regan's positive arc shows the teenage audience that the Christian ideal of love between a parent and child is irreplaceable and needed if one is to grow into what they seek to become.

A Quiet Place sets an example for Christian screenwriters seeking to write in the post-apocalyptic genre and cater to a Gen Z audience. Not only does the screenplay follow a dynamic plot structure with in-depth symbolism about family, sacrifice, and relationships, its characters are pushed to the extreme in their setting, yet their development still teaches the Christian value of unwavering love and the importance of such between a parent and child. Ben Kayser of *Movieguide* describes the film as exhibiting Christianity's, "Themes of love and protection provide a refreshing, healthy depiction of family bonds" (Kayser).

Teens can definitely relate to Regan's struggles in her world and the tension between her and her father. In addition, Generation Z is able to learn through Regan's character development

that their parent's overprotectiveness is not meant to make them feel isolated or betrayed.

Teenagers will learn through Lee and Regan's example that they should try to understand each other's motives before harboring resentment toward one another. Furthermore, Kayser says, "Lee reveals his fatherly love for his daughter in a way that echoes biblical themes" (Kayser). For example, just as Mary, the mother of Christ, quickly found out that she need not protect Him from everything because He will not be able to complete His mission of saving humanity if she does so, Lee also learns to that he must allow Regan to do what she is more than capable of doing: protecting the family (Luke 2.41-52; Krasinski).

Writing Regan and Lee as dynamic characters within the context of Christian ideals creates a powerful message of love, sacrifice, and redemption that Gen Z empathizes with. In her screenwriting guide, Linda Seger says that a successful screenplay is capable of "connecting with audience in a personal way can be achieved by two modes of writing, descriptive and prescriptive" (145). Descriptive tells the audience "how it is" while prescriptive tells them "how it should be" (145). *A Quiet Place* expresses both modes of writing. Regan and Lee's relationship for most of the film is tense and resentful which is how many teenagers and parents feel in reality. Then in the third act, Regan is shown how her relationship with her father should have been when she comes to understand his overprotectiveness of her (Krasinski). In doing so, *A Quiet Place* shows screenwriters that exhibiting character relationships that begin with "how it is" and develop into "how it should be" will teach teenagers and parents that even though they are stuck in resentment, communication and the biblical notion of unwavering love can transform their relationship to "how it should be" (Seger 145-146).

Through Regan and Lee's character arcs, Generation Z and even their parents will learn that love and communication are the answer to solving trauma, betrayal, and resentment between

each other. In acting on the Christian ideal of endearing love between a child and parent, the future of the world will become one that is full of compassion, hope, and understanding.

A Screenplay for Gen Z

With the knowledge and application of a strong plot structure, relatable themes, and dynamic character arcs as taught through the films, *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*, *Warm Bodies*, and *A Quiet Place*, the proposed screenplay, *Echo's Calling*, has the potential for success. Like the aforementioned films, *Echo's Calling* relates to Generation Z while teaching biblical lessons of forgiveness, love, and acceptance. Yet, unlike the previously listed and analyzed films, *Echo's Calling* is written specifically for Gen Z with the direct intention of teaching Christian values without it being advertised as a Christian film. *Echo's Calling* takes examples of strong character development, learning to forgive, accepting others, and forming loving and lasting relationships with one's parents and promotes them as essential Christian lessons for a teenage audience.

Also, the young adult post-apocalyptic narrative follows what Weiland describes as culture's most popular and complicated narrative, the positive change character arc, proving that the screenplay has the potential for success (17). According to Weiland, the positive character arc directly influences the story's structure forcing the character on a coming-of-age journey, it also showcases themes that resonate with society long after the story has ended (15-17). Therefore, the protagonist's character arc in *Echo's Calling* is a positive one which showcases the lessons of forgiveness, love, and acceptance as she embarks on her coming-of-age journey. Teenagers will empathize with the coming-of-age journey the protagonist takes them on and learn powerful Christian lessons along the way. In doing so, *Echo's Calling*, more so than any

other post-apocalyptic film, will teach Generation Z the lessons they need if they are to look toward their future with hope.

In *Echo's Calling*, Devyn Briggs, is the teenage protagonist, who is abandoned by her family and forced to live in a Feeder (the narrative's name for zombies) infested post-apocalyptic world. Not only must Devyn avoid the Feeders, whose virus has inoculated most of humanity's population, but she must also confront Scavengers or groups of surviving members of humanity that use the Feeder apocalypse to their insidious advantage.

On top of having to survive in a world where everything wants to kill her, Devyn's parental abandonment trauma causes her to self-isolate. Devyn's only companion is a scrappy stray dog named Blu. Fueled by the PTSD of her mother's abandonment, Devyn trusts no one and loathes the ideals of love, forgiveness, and acceptance because, in her mind, those ideals are the ones that got her heart broken in the first place. So, not only is Devyn's physical world dark, but so is her mental one, that is, until a divine encounter with a little girl who should not exist changes Devyn and her world forever. The little girl and Devyn's catalyst for change is a half-Feeder, half-human who clings to Devyn. Eventually, Devyn names her Echo as the girl repeats whatever Devyn says.

At first, Devyn wants nothing to do with the girl due to her appearance and the fact that within an hour of finding her, Echo unintentionally pits Devyn against the masochistic Scavenger from Devyn's past, Monger. However, after being put into precarious situations where only Echo can help, Devyn begins to bond with her, showing the young adult audience that acceptance is a powerful notion when creating relationships.

Towards the second act of the screenplay, Devyn discovers that Echo's unique genome is the key to creating a vaccine that would save the world. Devyn, still unwilling to help humanity

because of her resentful nature, is forced through an unforeseen circumstance to go on a journey with Echo. Their destination is the only known military base where the scientists and resources to create a vaccine exist. On the journey, Devyn and Echo encounter Feeders and Monger's unrelenting gang of Scavengers. While overcoming obstacles, Echo teaches Devyn that to love one another is a light in the darkness, so Devyn takes on a motherly role to Echo, the role she never had for most of her childhood.

Once at the military base, Devyn is surprised and angry when her mother comes forward as the scientist who put in charge of caring for Echo. All of Devyn's abandonment trauma and PTSD rushes back to her in an instant, and the ideals of love, acceptance, and forgiveness that Echo taught her are gone.

Once again, resentful, and full of hate, Devyn leaves Echo at the base, abandoning her as her mother once did. It is not until Devyn witnesses Monger with his horde of Scavengers and Feeder attack dogs heading to destroy the base that her love for Echo overwhelms her, and she hurries back to save everyone. In a final epic battle, Devyn has no choice but to team up with her mother and fight for humanity's survival against the Scavengers and Feeders. If Echo is taken by Monger or killed, all hope is lost. At the height of the battle, Devyn risks her life to save Echo, her mother, and humanity. When the smoke clears, Devyn reunites with Echo, and she and her mother forgive each other for their past mistakes, finding love and acceptance in each other's presence once more.

Through Devyn's journey with Echo, her character arc is complete because she learns that forgiveness, love, and acceptance are needed to overcome both internal and external conflicts. In other words, Devyn's character arc is successful because as Weiland explains, the lie she once believed is slowly erased as she learns the truth (27-29). The lie Devyn believes in

act one is that humanity is not worth saving, but she comes to understand that truth which is that they are worth saving. Devyn only learned the truth through learning and acting on Christian values.

Furthermore, Devyn, her mother, and Echo represent hope based on Christian ideals as each teaches one another lessons that are crucial to not only improving themselves, but the world in which live. The more loving, accepting, and forgiving improvement that the characters undergo sets them up to be examples for the rest of society. Such character development shows Generation Z that first change must occur within themselves and then they can become examples for others just like Devyn, her mother, and Echo are examples for others in their world. For Christians, Jesus Christ is the example they must take if the world they seek to create is a hopeful one. In a similar way, the characters in *Echo's Calling* act as examples for teenagers who seek to create a more hopeful future.

While post-apocalyptic films and screenplays like *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*, *Warm Bodies*, and *A Quiet Place* all resonate with Generation Z and exhibit the values of forgiveness, love, and acceptance, *Echo's Calling* intentionally promotes Christianity's version of those values. It is crucial that Christian values are shared with Generation Z, not only because acting on these values are the way to divine salvation, but they also promote hope for a generation that is so overburdened with despair. In the screenplay, Christian values are explored, tested, and consistently stimulated through the development of the teenage protagonist. Furthermore, like previous films, *Echo's Calling* focuses strongly on character development, yet that development is specifically and intentionally shaped around Christian values that mirrors the dilemmas Generation Z is consistently challenged with.

Comparatively, in *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*, Thomas forgives Theresa so positive societal change will occur (Ball). However, Devyn, in *Echo's Calling* must not only forgive Echo for her innocent mistakes and forgive her mother for abandoning her, but she also must forgive herself for any pain her resentment initiated. According to a study published in the *International Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences*, as a culture, Generation Z struggles with forgiving others, so much so that they created a movement called "cancel culture," where no one is free from their past mistakes (Ahuja and Kerketta). Contrary to Generation Z's cancel culture values, where forgiveness is only acceptable when illicit change has occurred, Christianity promotes unwavering forgiveness. Therefore, Devyn's character must balance both ideals to relate to teenagers and young adults while promoting Christianity's version of forgiveness. To do so, she forgives her mother and herself even when no actionable result is clear. Devyn realizes that for change to occur, unwavering forgiveness must happen first, which is Christianity's philosophy. Hence, when Generation Z travels with Devyn on her redemptive journey, they will understand that forgiveness must often come before action if a change is to occur. Devyn's character is the catalyst for eliminating toxic cancel culture, thereby creating a more tolerant society. A more tolerant society is a peaceful one, which foundationally is what Generation Z and Christians both strive for.

In the same way that *Echo's Calling* takes *Maze Runner: The Death Cure's* motif of forgiveness a step forward, the screenplay also advances the motif of acceptance that coincides with Christianity's philosophy with Generation Z in mind. In *Warm Bodies*, for example, acceptance of diverse groups of people is easily attainable because there is little visual and emotional disparity between the opposing characters (Levine). On the other hand, Generation Z

will learn more from *Echo's Calling* because the gap between biological diversity is broader.

Also, the characters must accept each other inwardly despite flaws.

The characters, specifically Devyn, in *Echo's Calling* emphasize accepting others for who they are and where they are in life as Christian teachings detail. For example, the Bible says, "all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another and be compassionate and humble" (1 Peter 3.8). Devyn must accept Echo's help despite her grotesque appearance if she is going to survive in the Feeder apocalypse.

Furthermore, Devyn must accept her mother's help even when doing so reignites trauma. Because Generation Z is goal-driven, they need to see positive change in the individual and society if they are going to believe in the doctrine of acceptance. So, it is Devyn's unwavering acceptance of both Echo and her mother that allows her to overcome her external and internal conflicts. Through Echo, Devyn, and Devyn's mother, Generation Z will learn that acceptance is how one overcomes bias, trauma, and any other obstacles thrown their way. In turn, the future that Generation Z creates based on the screenplay's Christian ideology of acceptance will be a harmonious one.

Lastly, in consonance with leading psychologists, Generation Z has difficulty with family relationships due to parental betrayal and overprotectiveness (Cunningham; Jacoby et al.). Often parental betrayal and overprotectiveness are why Generation Z resents Christianity's doctrine of maintaining a solid and loving relationship between parent and child. Such is seen in the tense character relationships in screenplays like *A Quiet Place* (Krasinski). *Echo's Calling* exemplifies *A Quiet Place's* lessons of unconditional love between a parent and a child through Devyn's estranged relationship with her mother.

Devyn learns that her mother did not abandon her, instead her mother believed she was saving Devyn from the apocalypse. This realization would not have occurred if Echo's childlike innocence and her isolation did not resonate with Devyn. Devyn see herself reflected in Echo which allows a loving motherly bond to grow between the two. Devyn's unconditional love for Echo shows her that she, like her own mother, will do anything to protect her "daughter." So, when Devyn reunites with her mother, it takes some encouragement, but eventually Devyn comes to understand that she and her mother never stopped loving each other. Devyn's reunion with her mother will show Generation Z that the Christian value of loving relationships with one's family is possible if the child and parent take a moment to walk in each other's shoes.

Loving one another unconditionally, creates strong and lasting relationships with family and others, and those relationships act as the glue that holds society together. Because Generation Z often feels isolated due to their negative outlook on the world, a narrative such as *Echo's Calling* that shows them loving and lasting relationships are possible through its character arcs will guide them out of isolation to share love with the rest of society.

Building Bridges, Closing Gaps

Generation Z is one that is often difficult for other generations to understand. They often view the world as grim and hopeless, yet they still want a future where forgiveness, love, and acceptance can thrive. Teenagers too often get stuck in their hopelessness and shy away from the Christian teachings and values that would create the future they seek. Gen Z needs cultural examples that can relate to which also showcase biblical values if they are going to return to Christianity. The best way to do that is for Christian screenwriters to write films tailored toward an adolescent audience with dynamic characters who learn, exhibit, and change the world through forgiveness, love, and acceptance.

Building a bridge to close the gap between secular films and Christian films, whether they be commercial or literary is how Christian screenwriters and filmmakers can showcase Christian values in a world and culture that so desperately needs them. To build the bridge, Christians, not just screenwriters or filmmakers, must learn to accept that even secular films such as a coming-of-age post-apocalyptic film have something teach the world. Jeffery Overstreet, a creative writing and film studies Professor at Seattle Pacific University, urges Christians especially evangelicals to appreciate all cultural artifacts, even secular ones (Seattle Pacific University). In his *Christianity Today* article, “The Truth of Scorsese’s Faithless Characters,” Overstreet uses filmmaker Martin Scorsese film, *Silence*, to show that even the questioning, the sinful, and morally corrupt can be used to teach Christian lessons, which are human lessons (Overstreet). He says that Scorsese’s film is not to “glorify” the sinful, but rather “his art is an expression of sympathy for, empathy for, and even identification with these ‘failures’” (Overstreet). In other words, making mistakes is human, and Christians who look down on narratives that tell of characters who make mistakes are wrongly glorifying themselves.

Overstreet’s conclusion about the lessons secular films can teach Christians if they do not discount them is imperative for Christian screenwriters to recognize and understand if they wish to bridge the gap between secular and Christian films (Overstreet). By placing God and His lessons in a box and the reality of our world and culture in another, screenwriters are telling their audiences, particularly the younger more malleable generations like Generation Z, that God only exists in isolation. God does not exist in isolation; He is in everything. Therefore, to bridge the gap between secular and Christian films, screenwriters must intentionally place His teachings in them. The best way to include Christian teachings in secular films is to start relating to and understanding the culture of the newest generation so they can continue sharing Christ’s

message. Christian screenwriters can learn how to write films in secular Gen Z genres, like post-apocalyptic ones, by studying and analyzing popular secular films.

Maze Runner: The Death Cure teaches screenwriters how to shape a teenage protagonist's character arc around the Christian value of forgiveness (Ball). Also, *Warm Bodies* shows writers that diversity can be a driving force when charting the path of a character's lesson of acceptance (Levine). Lastly, *A Quiet Place* educates Christian screenwriters on the power of developing tense parent-child relationships that develop into understanding and loving ones (Krasinski). *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*, *Warm Bodies*, and *A Quiet Place* are just three examples of secular post-apocalyptic films that teach screenwriters that authentic and unique character development is the best way to teach young audiences Christian values.

In utilizing the examples of the aforementioned films, *Echo's Calling* will be a narrative that exemplifies character development while relating to Generation Z's culture and teaching them Christian values that will lead them to create a better future. Not only does the setting of *Echo's Calling* resonate with teens because, like a zombie apocalypse, they too, feel as if their reality is at its end, but the inherent Christian values exhibited by its characters are well developed and relatable.

All generations, especially Generation Z, struggle with what it takes to forgive, love fully, and accept one another, which Devyn, the angsty teenage protagonist, also conflicts with throughout the narrative. In addition, the ideals of diversity, acceptance, and compassion which Gen Z values, are shown throughout the plot and Devyn's character development as she embarks on a positive character arc from angry and unforgiving to loving and accepting. Also, Devyn's actions toward unveiling the truth about the lie she believes make her character successful in relating to both Generation Z and Christian ideology. Therefore, *Echo's Calling* is a post-

apocalyptic screenplay made for Generation Z that showcases and teaches Christianity's unwavering forgiveness, love, and acceptance. With its utilization and exemplification of believable and unique character arc examples from *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*, *Warm Bodies*, and *A Quiet Place*, *Echo's Calling* has the potential to be a successful film. The success of the narrative will be shown by the loving, forgiving, and accepting actions that teenagers and young adults share with society after viewing it.

To create a future without an apocalypse, the values of forgiveness, acceptance, and love must be shared with future generations in a relatable way. Characters like Thomas, Theresa, R, Julie, Regan, Lee, and especially Echo and Devyn in post-apocalyptic cultural artifacts like screenplays who exhibit dynamic Christianized development, philosophies, and actions act as instruction manuals for Generation Z to create a hopeful, more loving future. So, while the ravenous zombie-filled setting is an exciting and relatable hook for Gen Zers, it is the inherent Christian characterization within a post-apocalyptic coming-of-age narrative that will have lasting positive impacts on humanity now and in the world to come.

The Creative Manuscript: *Echo's Calling*

ECHO'S CALLING

Written by

Charlotte Rice

FADE IN:

EXT. A STREET IN SUBURBIA (SUMMER 2038)- EVENING

A distant ALARM echoes through the streets of suburbia. FAMILIES rush out of their homes, taking only what they can carry on their backs. MEN and WOMEN dressed in military combat attire carrying heavy artillery direct families out of their homes and into the street where a convoy of military trucks waits.

A MILITARY COMMANDER (30s) in camouflage uniform stands on the hood of a Humvee and speaks into a megaphone. She is stern and erect, but there is a hint of fear in her voice.

MILITARY COMMANDER
Those with children promptly escort
them to the convoy parade for
relocation to the offshore Naval
Safe Haven. One carry-on per child.

EXT. PORCH OF SUBURBAN HOME

On the front porch of a white home with a red door and welcome sign that reads: BLESS THIS MESS. DR. SHERRY BRIGGS, a lean woman with dark curly hair and bright green eyes (30s) sticks a syringe into her daughter, DEVYN'S (12) neck. Devyn does not flinch.

Devyn, is a petite girl with wavy brown hair to her shoulders, and bright blue eyes.

Devyn's father, MICAH BRIGGS (30s), an average built man with dirty blonde hair kneels behind Devyn and shoves water bottles and a blanket into her backpack.

Devyn looks at the curly blonde-haired, pimple-faced boy who sits on the porch next door. This is THOMAS FODRIE (16).

Thomas walks over to Devyn, Sherry, and Micah.

DEVYN
What about Thomas, mom?

Sherry draws blood from Devyn, then caps the syringe and puts it in her jacket pocket. She looks up at Thomas.

Thomas steps up on the porch. A CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL ID BADGE hangs from his shirt, it reads "LIMITED ACCESS."

SHERRY

No, he isn't going. He's too old.
And besides, he's my intern, I need
him to help me save the world.

Sherry winks at Devyn.

THOMAS

Does she have it Mrs. B? That why
you sending Dev with the other
kids?

Sherry scowls at Thomas.

SHERRY

Thomas, not now. And for the last
time, it's Doctor Briggs.

MICAH

We need to go.

DEVYN

I don't want to.

MICAH

You have to. Be brave now. Come on.

SHERRY

Your dad's right.

(to Thomas)

They aren't going to reach the
suburbs for another forty-eight
hours. Prepare the research and
we'll leave for the base tomorrow,
meet the children there. It's safer
if they go ahead of us...just in
case.

THOMAS

Yes, ma'am.

Thomas turns to Devyn and ruffles her hair. Devyn swats him
away.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

See ya soon, kid.

Thomas runs back to his porch, and enters his house.

Sherry glances at Devyn, tears well in her eyes.

Micah holds out his hand, Devyn takes it. The family walks
down the driveway towards the military convoy.

MILITARY COMMANDER (O.S.)
All adults must quarantine in their
homes until further notice. Blood
screenings are mandated week-

A loud GROWL comes from the opposite side of the street. The Military Commander looks toward the direction of the growl.

EXT. STREET

A MAN (50s) dressed in golf attire charges out from behind a home with a white picket fence. Black blood leaks from his eyes, rotting patches of flesh cover his arms and face, and dark veins pulse like lightning under his pale skin. The man is a FEEDER.

People nearby scream and scatter in terror.

The Feeder man growls like a wild animal, deep and guttural, as he races toward the Military Commander, but before he gets no more than twenty feet away, TWO MILITIA MEN shoot him, and he falls dead.

MILITARY COMMANDER
Maintain order! Pass the children
along! Adults without children
under the age of sixteen, stay in
your homes! Those who fail to
follow the mandated procedures will
be shot on site!

A chaotic crowd of PARENTS shoves their CHILDREN to the militia members. The children wail.

One by one, a MALE MILITIA OFFICER in a hazmat suit grabs the children's hands and holds a white device to their fingers.

MILITIA OFFICER
Line up! Hold out your hands, for a
blood test!

The device lights up consistently lights up green and the Militia Officer nods to SERGEANT ONE to load up the children onto the convoy.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Devyn, Sherry, and Micah huddle in the driveway. Devyn kneels between her parents and holds her hands over her ears.

DEVYN

I can't. Please don't take me over there!

Suddenly, Devyn stands up, squeezes out between her parent's legs, and bolts towards the front porch.

Micah runs to Devyn and picks her up. Devyn cries, kicks, and hits Micah.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

No! Please, no!

Sherry runs to Micah and Devyn.

SHERRY

Look at me, baby.

Devyn wipes her eyes and looks at Sherry.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

We will be together soon. I promise. It's a couple days, like going to camp. I'm going to fix this, Okay? That's my job, it'll all be over soon.

DEVYN

You promise? Only a couple days?

SHERRY

A couple days. Families can never be broken apart. We are in here.

Sherry places her hand over her heart and pats it.

Tears well in Devyn's eyes as she mirrors Sherry.

In the STREET, three of the caravans startup, their engines ROAR, and they head down the road. Only one remains.

MICAH

Sherry, come on. They're leaving!

EXT. STREET

Sherry, Micah, and Devyn jog to the caravan. They shove their way through the shouting crowd of parents and children.

Two militia men, dressed in armored suits SERGEANT ONE and SERGEANT TWO hang on to the back of the truck and push people away.

SERGEANT ONE
We're full!

SERGEANT TWO
Back up! Stay back!

SERGEANT ONE
Another caravan will arrive in a week. Stay in your homes until then!

MICAH
(Shoves through crowd)
Sergeant! My wife is Dr. Sherry Briggs! Dr. Briggs with the World Health Organization! Please! Take our daughter!

SERGEANT ONE
I don't care who she is! We don't have room!

Sherry shoves through the crowd and holds up a military clearance ID badge.

SHERRY
Look! Please! I am an agent for HOMELAND SECURITY and Doctor at the CDC! I've been injecting her! She could be the one, but she needs to go get tested at the base! My lab is compromised!

The sergeants look at each other and nod in agreement.

SERGEANT ONE
Alright. Hand her up here!

Micah lifts Devyn over to Sergeant One, who places her in the back of the Humvee's caravan.

SERGEANT TWO
(Hits side of the truck)
Let's go!

Devyn peers out the tailgate of the caravan as Sergeant One holds her back by the back of her shirt.

DEVYN
Mom! Dad!

The crowd of remaining parents and children rush after the moving caravan, pushing the Sherry and Micah away.

Sherry rushes to the front of the crowd. She runs fifty feet, stops, and waves at Devyn.

SHERRY

Devyn! I'll see you soon! I'll meet
you at the base! I promise!

Devyn stares out the back of the caravan, places her hand over her heart and pats it.

Sherry places her hand over her heart and pats it.

INT. RUINED GROCERY STORE - AISLE (FALL 2043) - DAY

A young woman in an oversized army uniform with a backpack and rifle slung across her shoulder, and a pistol at her hip rummages through mostly empty shelves of canned goods. Her brown wavy hair is tied in a messy ponytail. Her face is caked with dirt. This is DEVYN BRIGGS FIVE YEARS LATER (17).

Devyn gently places cans in her backpack as if she is afraid any noise will waken something nearby.

A DOG WHIMPERS.

Devyn turns from the shelf and kneels beside a large fluffy white DOG. This is BLU.

DEVYN

(whispers)

I know you're hungry. We both are.
But I need you to be quiet, as soon
as I get what we need, we're out of
here.

Devyn ruffles the fur on Blu's head. She rises.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Be good. I mean it.

Devyn turns away from Blu and walks around the end of the aisle towards the PHARMACY.

Blu follows, but stops. He catches a whiff of something. He follows the smell with his nose in the air down the opposite aisle. The smell guides Blu to a spillage line of red sauce on the floor.

Blu laps up the sauce as he follows the spillage trail around the end of another aisle.

INT. GROCERY STORE - PHARMACY

Devyn places her rifle on the pharmacy counter, and leaps over it.

She lands with a loud CRUNCH on the skeleton of a pharmacist still in its lab coat. She shudders at the sound. She tries to move away, but cannot. She glances down and sees her foot stuck in the skeleton's ribcage.

DEVYN

Dammit.

Devyn carefully removes the bones; this does not phase her. She meanders through the mostly empty pharmacy aisles as she scans the labels of the pill bottles.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Painkillers...anxiety meds...here
we go...sedatives.

Devyn reaches her arm deep into the shelf, grabs a couple dusty pill bottles, and shoves them into her backpack.

INT. GROCERY STORE - AISLE

Blu rounds the corner of an aisle as he laps up the sauce.

An ANIMAL GROWLS.

Blu halts and looks up. It's a RACCOON. The raccoon growls at Blu with a mouthful of tomato sauce. Blu growls back and approaches, haunches raised.

Suddenly, the raccoon launches itself toward Blu and attaches to his back!

Blu loudly crashes into shelves causing cans to clatter on the floor. He bolts through the store trying to shake the raccoon off.

INT. GROCERY STORE - PHARMACY

CRASH!

BANG!

Devyn drops her bag, whips around, and rushes out of the pharmacy toward the chaotic noises.

INT. GROCERY STORE - AISLES

Devyn darts through the aisles following the sound of commotion and Blu's distressed whimpers. She sees a white flash dart behind an aisle heading to the FROZEN GOODS section of the store. She chases after it.

INT. GROCERY STORE - FROZEN GOODS SECTION

Devyn skids in front of the meat freezer just as Blu and the raccoon leap into its opaque abyss. Devyn does not follow.

DEVYN

Blu. Blu! Blu, come!

Blu whimpers softly from inside the freezer.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Blu? Come here, boy. It's okay-

Suddenly, the raccoon darts between Devyn's legs. She quickly covers her mouth to stop herself from screaming.

Blu whimpers louder.

Devyn takes a step into the freezer. Her foot lands inside its shadow. Suddenly, Blu hurdles out of the darkness and knocks her on the ground.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

(rubs head)

Stupid dog!

As she begins to push herself up, Blu GROWLS at the freezer. Devyn rushes to get up, but it's too late!

A bony, gray, decayed hand jolts out of the darkness, grabs her ankle and yanks her toward it!

Devyn kicks the hand, and it releases. But, the muscled FEEDER BUTCHER claws its way on top of her.

The Feeder Butcher's slack jaw leaks thick black liquid onto Devyn's torso as she struggles to fight it off.

Devyn holds its flailing arms away, but it uses its sheer body weight to force its head and mouth toward her head.

The Feeder Butcher dislocates its jaw, and its black tongue grazes Devyn's cheek.

Blu leaps on top of it and bites its shoulder.

The FEEDER Butcher SCREECHES in pain as it shakes Blu off. It releases Devyn.

Then, in a lightning quick draw Devyn takes the pistol from her hip, cocks it, and shoots the Feeder three times in the head. It flops on top of her, dead.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
(shoves Feeder off)
Ugh!

Devyn flops her shoulders on the floor and laughs in relief.

Blu licks her face.

She tries to shove him off.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Get off! You almost got me killed!
Slobber will not make me forgive
you.

Devyn chuckles, and scoots Blu off her.

Suddenly, Blu stops licking Devyn. He stares into the freezer and puts his tail between his legs.

A low moan emanates from inside.

Devyn sits up.

The moan grows louder and turns into a rumble of ethereal growls.

Devyn slowly and quietly stands, grips Blu's harness, and backs away slowly.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Easy. Easy, Blu. Back up.

The GROWLS turn into SCREECHES as a horde of SIX FEEDERS bursts out of the freezer. One is a POLICE OFFICER, another is a GROCERY WORKER, one is a PHARMACIST, another is a GRANDMOTHER, one is a PUNK TEENAGER, and the last is a SUBURBAN MOTHER. Their clothes are dirty and torn, black veins slither under their gray skin, and patches of rotten flesh hangs off their bones.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
RUN!

Devyn and Blu sprint through the store, sliding on the linoleum floors.

They leap out the shattered glass doors of the store just as the one of the Feeders from the horde claws at Devyn's jacket, ripping the back of it.

Devyn yanks herself from the Feeder's grasp and darts out of the store and into the open street.

EXT. A RUINED CITY STREET - DAY

Cars, tanks, abandoned vehicles litter the city streets. Tall weeds, trees, and vines meander amongst the debris and surrounding buildings.

Devyn and Blu skid into the center of a ruined street.

The Feeders tail them by a few seconds.

Devyn takes off down the center of the street, Blu runs beside her. Dodging cars and debris, they sprint and leap forcing distance between them and the ravenous Feeder horde.

Devyn is fast, but the Feeders are gaining! She darts into a side street.

DEVYN

Blu, turn!

EXT. SIDE STREET

Devyn and Blu sprint down the street.

An old barricade made from vehicles with a tank perched on top blocks the exit.

Devyn whips around.

The Feeders block the other exit.

Blu scrabbles into the mountain of cars, and disappears into the debris.

DEVYN

Crap!

Devyn winces, turns, takes a huge gulp of air, then sprints up the barricade. In one gigantic leap Devyn soars through the air and lands chest-first on the turret gun of the tank. The leap knocks the air out of her. She gasps and slips.

Devyn grips the long turret pipe with everything she has.

The Feeders are nearly to the barricade.

Devyn nearly sits on the turret gun. Then the Suburban Mother Feeder grabs her ankle and yanks her down, but she catches the gun with her hands just in time. Devyn dangles from the pipe and kicks at the Feeders reaching and clawing below her.

The Feeders pile on the barricade, and pile on top of each other as they claw and snap their way toward Devyn.

Then, a CAR HORN blares from the center of the debris; it's Blu stomping on the steering wheel of one of the cars!

The Feeders push their way toward the sound.

Devyn takes the opportunity to swing and fling herself up to the top of the barricade. She lands with a loud THUD on the metal roof of a car.

The PUNK TEENAGER and GRANDMOTHER notice and they claw their way up the pile to her.

The rest of the Feeders smash the windshield of Blu's car.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Blu! Blu! Blu, come!

Blu jumps to the backseat of the car and shinnies out of a hole in the floorboard.

Devyn watches Blu's white tail disappear into the barricade. She leaps off the back of the pile. She falls onto the hood of a truck, but quickly rolls off onto the pavement.

Blu darts out of the barricade as soon as Devyn's feet touch the ground.

The Feeders crawl over the barricade, piling over each other as they force their way toward Devyn.

Devyn and Blu dart down the road, and back onto the main street.

EXT. A RUINED CITY STREET

Devyn and Blu run down the center of the road. They are far away from the Feeders.

In the distance, the Feeders run as they push and shove each other in attempts to get to Devyn and Blu first. They lag far behind.

Devyn looks back, and grins at the Feeders' animalistic whims, but she trips over Blu and tumbles to the ground. Devyn grabs her bleeding elbow and winces as she flips over.

Blu stands in the middle of the street.

DEVYN
Seriously!? What the-

The Feeders GROWL as the distance between them and Devyn lessens.

Devyn winces, but stands quickly.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Come on, mutt! Let's go!

Blu does not move. His nose sniffs the air as it points toward an alley by an ABANDONED CHURCH.

The Feeders are gaining!

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Ugh! I don't have time for this!

Devyn lunges toward Blu in an attempt to grab his harness, but before she can grip it, he takes off down the alley. Devyn almost falls, but catches herself.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Come back here! Ugh!

Devyn watches Blu's tail disappear into the shadowed alley.

She turns and looks at the Feeders heading her way. She spins around and looks at the open road, her only escape, behind her. She runs down the open road, but stops when she hears the Feeders' growls. She huffs in frustration.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
I really hate that dog.

Devyn spins on her heel, rips off a piece of her shirt, and cuts her palm on a nearby car's broken window. She coats the rag with her blood, shoves it down a nearby SEWER GRATE, and wraps her hand in her jacket.

She turns and ducks behind an overturned BUS just in time for the Feeders to pass without seeing her.

The Feeders chase the smell of Devyn's blood to the sewer grate.

EXT. CHURCH ALLEY

Devyn runs into the alley. She stays close to the far wall of a NEIGHBORING BUILDING. She meanders deep into the alley as she searches for Blu.

DEVYN
Blu! Come here! Now!

Blu WHIMPERS and SCRATCHES something concrete.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Wha- Where are you? Come here!

Devyn follows the sounds, and sees Blu. She stops cautiously and looks at Blu.

Blu digs dirt and debris away from an open vent on the side of the church.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Get away from that! You're going to attract the FEEDERS-

Blu hurriedly shinnies into the open vent.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Stop!

Devyn tries to grab Blu, but he goes through the vent. She HUFFS and punches the side of the building.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Ow! Gah...

Devyn holds her fist and shakes it to rid herself of the pain, then she squeezes into the vent.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH/SANCTUARY/ALTAR AREA - AFTERNOON

Devyn squeezes out of the vent, dusts herself off, and peers around the room.

The SANCTUARY OF THE CHURCH is large, and adorned with old Christmas decorations. A stained glass window in the image of THE VIRGIN MARY holding the CHRIST-CHILD in her arms lights the area.

Devyn rolls her eyes at the stained glass image, and walks between the pews to the center aisle.

DEVYN

Blu. Blu! Come here you dumb mutt!

She searches over and under pews for Blu.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

I swear, to—

Suddenly, a CHILD'S LAUGHTER emanates from the altar area, and echoes throughout the sanctuary. Devyn spins on her heel to face the altar.

She slowly takes her pistol out of its holster and stealthily moves toward the direction of the laughter.

As Devyn approaches the front of the church she sees Blu's fluffy white tail wagging from behind the altar. She lowers her gun and goes over to him.

Devyn steps on a candy wrapper, and looks down. There are candy wrappers, and empty food cans everywhere. She steps closer to Blu and grabs his harness.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Please don't tell me you found
another raccoon, cause I'm gonna—

As Devyn pulls Blu to her, a girl (12) stretches her left hand out from inside the altar reaching for Blu. Only her arm is fully visible, the rest of her is hidden in shadow. This is ECHO.

Devyn squats as Blu whimpers.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Hush, Blu. Um. Hi? How did you get
in here? Are you alone? You can
come out. I'm not infected. See?

Devyn shoves her sleeves up and shifts side to side to reveal nothing out of the ordinary.

Echo does not answer; she stays in the shadows.

Devyn leans closer to the altar and reaches her hand out to Echo, but she shudders further away. Devyn snatches her hand back and huffs impatiently.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Fine. Stay there. What am I
supposed to do with a little kid? I
can barely take care of a damn
dog...

(looks up)

(MORE)

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(back to Echo)

And I survive just fine by myself.
You're better off alone in this
world anyway. Less people to care
about. Less people to care about
you. Less...

Devyn glares at the stained glass window of The Virgin Mary,
but quickly darts her eyes away as if in pain.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Heartache.

Devyn turns away from the altar with Blu, and walks away.

Suddenly, Echo grabs Devyn's ankle.

Devyn turns to face her.

Echo is out of the altar, she sits in the light. Her clothes
are three sizes too large, torn, and dirty. The left side of
her body resembles a normal girl, but her right side is
rotten and gray with black veins under her skin. Her right
cheek is void of flesh save a few sinews of muscle, which
reveals the inside of her mouth. Echo is HALF FEEDER!

Devyn quickly draws her pistol and aims it at Echo.

Echo puts an arm over her head and points to Blu. Echo
slowly crawls closer to Devyn still pointing at Blu.

Devyn grips her pistol as if it is the key to her survival.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Stay there! STOP!

Echo stops a couple feet from Devyn.

Devyn holds the gun close to Echo's head.

Echo reaches out to Blu with her left (human) arm.

ECHO

Bah...bah...blah...baloo.

Blu wags his tail, and stretches toward Echo. Blu licks the
Feeder side of Echo's face. His tongue reaches inside of her
open jaw.

Devyn shudders at the grotesque sight and stares at Echo. She
lowers her pistol, and pulls Blu close.

DEVYN
What are you?

Echo opens her mouth as if she is going to say something.

ECHO
Mmmmm...ummmm...urgh...

Unable to form words, Echo looks down and away, frustrated and embarrassed.

Blu cocks his head.

Echo reaches out for Blu again, but Devyn quickly steps back and pulls him with her.

DEVYN
No. Stop! I don't know what you are
or...why you are. It doesn't
matter. Part of you is infected.
You're a Feeder! I'm not taking the
chance.

Devyn raises her pistol to Echo's head.

A single tear rolls down the left side of Echo's face.

Blu whimpers.

Devyn puts her finger on the trigger.

Echo hangs her head defeatedly.

Devyn shuts her eyes and turns her head away from Echo. Devyn breathes heavily. Her finger squeezes the trigger ever so slightly.

Blu barks.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Okay! Okay! Okay...

Devyn drops her arms letting the pistol hang loosely at her side.

Echo looks up at Devyn from under her brow. Then, Echo stands and walks back to the altar where she crawls back into the shadows.

Devyn steps toward the altar.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
I...I'm...

Devyn shakes her head, turns, and with Blu in tow walks back through the nave of the church.

Devyn shoves Blu back through the open vent.

Then, she glances toward the altar, frowns, and glances at the stained glass window once again. She sighs heavily, turns, and crawls through the vent.

Echo peeks out from behind the altar, sniffles, and stares toward the open vent. She crawls out, and walks stealthily over to the vent. Echo looks at the vent, looks at the altar, looks at the vent, and then looks at the stained glass window.

A cloud moves past the sun, which causes the Virgin Mary image to glow. The light covers Echo as if hugging her. She smiles and she crawls through the vent.

EXT. ALLEY BY ABANDONED CHURCH - EVENING

Blu stands outside of the vent as Devyn shinnies out. She rises and brushes herself off.

DEVYN
Come here, leash time. You've
caused me enough trouble to-

Devyn reaches behind her back as if to grab her backpack, but nothing is there.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Dammit!

Devyn kicks a nearby dumpster in anger.

A metallic BOOM echoes down the alley and into the street.

Devyn shudders at the noise. She takes a deep breath and frustratingly runs her hands through her hair.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
We have to go back.

Blu paws at her leg and whimpers.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
I know, it's dangerous. We don't
have a choice.

Devyn looks up at the sky.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

The sun is setting. The Feeders will be more active soon. But, if we can get back to the store before dark, we can grab the bag and my rifle, and get out of there.

Devyn kneels beside Blu and ruffles his fur.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Yep. We can do this. I can do this.

While Devyn ruffles Blu's fur, his eyes dart to the vent.

Echo eavesdrops on Devyn from the vent.

Devyn does not notice Echo.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

(to Blu)

Okay. Here's the game plan: We already lured the Feeders out of the store...There shouldn't be any lingering...at least I hope not. So, we'll make our way back to the store quietly and carefully. Then I'll go in, grab the stuff, and leave. Got it?

Blu sticks out his tongue.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Good. But first, I'm finding you a leash.

At the word "leash" Blu slurps his tongue back in his mouth.

Devyn rises holding onto Blu's harness. She stealthily walks along the wall of the church until she makes it to the edge of the alley and the main street.

Devyn peeks out of the corner of the alley and scans the open street, she steps into the street with Blu in tow.

Echo sticks her head out of the vent and looks around. She squeezes out of the vent, rises, and touches the wall of the church with her decomposing hand as if saying "goodbye." Her pinky breaks off. She darts into the street.

EXT. A RUINED CITY STREET

Devyn crawls through an overturned car's windshield; she haphazardly drags Blu behind her.

She takes her KNIFE out of her boot and cuts the seat belt off the SKELETON in the passenger seat. She grimaces at the large hole in the skeleton's skull.

DEVYN
(to skeleton)
Sorry about this, bud, but you
don't need it anymore.

Echo hides behind a PICKUP TRUCK as she watches Devyn.

Devyn crawls out of windshield and ties the seat belt to Blu's harness.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Alright. Let's go.

Blu launches forward pulling Devyn with him.

Echo hides and laughs quietly as she watches Blu yank Devyn forward and pulls her face first in a mud puddle.

Devyn angrily wipes her face off and stands.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
No pulling!

Devyn tightens her grip on Blu's leash, then she and Blu carefully walk down the road ducking behind cars as they make their way back to the store.

Echo quietly follows them at a distance.

EXT. A RUINED CITY STREET

Devyn and Blu duck behind a large truck as the horde of Feeders from the store stalks through the center of the street.

The POLICE OFFICER FEEDER stops as the rest of the Feeders moves on. He sniffs the air.

Devyn watches under the truck as the Police Officer Feeder stalks toward them. Devyn peers around the side of the truck, then pulls back as she sees the Police Officer Feeder move closer.

Devyn scrambles around for a rock, a piece of metal, anything to subdue to Police Officer Feeder without alerting the others, but there is nothing.

Devyn pulls Blu close and grips his mouth shut to stop him from panting. Shiny black goo sticks to Blu's fur and rubs off on Devyn's fingers.

DEVYN

Oil.

Devyn looks on the ground near the engine of the truck. A small trail of motor oil shimmers in the waning sunlight. Devyn follows the trail with her eyes up to the oil container of the truck.

She crawls under the truck, scoots over to the container, delicately unscrews the lid, sticks her hand inside, and scoops up some oil.

Devyn spreads the oil on Blu, then on her exposed skin. She peeks out from behind the truck and into the open street.

The Police Officer Feeder stops, sniffs the air, grunts, and then stalks back to his horde.

Devyn leans back on the truck and sighs in relief. She stands, then she and Blu duck and dodge their way down the road.

EXT. OPPOSITE SIDE OF A RUINED STREET

Echo walks through the horde of Feeders from the store as she follows Devyn and Blu. The Feeders are unfazed.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

A large group of SCAVENGER MEN LAUGH nearby.

One of the Scavengers, FRANKIE (20s) is a stocky man with a scraggly beard. He wears a rock and roll T-shirt and torn jeans.

RAT (30s) is a Scavenger, he is lanky and balding, he wears overalls.

Keith (30s) is muscular and has dread locks to his waist, he has no shirt and wears worn cargo pants.

Twenty other SCAVENGER MEN dressed in worn clothes, with cattle prods and rifles on their backs sit by the ATVs in the front of store. They load crates of canned goods.

Devyn and Blu jog up to the grocery store and crouch behind a pile of debris.

FRANKIE (O.S.)
Check that back freezer!

RAT (O.S.)
There ain't nothing back there,
Frankie! I already told ya!

KEITH (O.S.)
I found some! Woohoo! Blueberry
Bourbon!

FRANKIE (O.S.)
Blueberry? What kind of sissy
liquor is that?

Devyn peers over the concrete pile at the store.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Scavenger Men are going in and out of the store. Some load crates of canned food onto ATVs and others stand guard with automatic rifles around the perimeter of the store.

A tall man with one eye bright green eye, and a blood-red hole where the other is supposed to be, sits on the back of an ATV watching the rest of the men. He is slender, but clearly strong. He lights a hand-rolled cigarette. This is MONGER, FIVE YEARS OLDER.

EXT. DEBRIS PILE

DEVYN
It's him!

Devyn slinks to the ground and faces Blu.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
It can't be him. I don't
understand. I...I...killed...he
died in the woods! How can-

Devyn grabs her chest and breathes heavily.

Blu licks Devyn's face and she slowly calms down.

Devyn peers over the pile. Her eyes scan the parking lot. She counts the Scavengers.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
(mouths)
...four...seven...thirteen...

She slinks back down and faces Blu.

She grabs his leash and ties it to a piece of rebar that juts out from the concrete.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

There are no Scavengers by the alley entrance. I'll sneak in, grab the bag and gun, and be right back.

Devyn darts behind a nearby car.

RAT (O.S.)

Look what I found!

Devyn peers out from behind the car, and grits her teeth in frustration.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Rat holds up Devyn's rifle and backpack.

FRANKIE

So what? Some LONER probably got their brains slurped out by a group of Feeders, and left it. Put the gun on the four-wheeler.

RAT

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rat puts the gun on an ATV, then empties the backpack on the ground. The pill bottles, canned food, a fire-starter, blanket, fishing line, and bra fall out of the bag.

Rat kneels down.

RAT (CONT'D)

Well...well...well. Look what we have here.

Rat sifts through the stash on the ground. He picks up the bra, smells it, and waves it in the air.

RAT (CONT'D)

Lookie, lookie, boys! Yoohoo!

FRANKIE

Give me that! Get back to work--

MONGER (O.S.)

No.

Rat and Frankie stop and look over to Monger.

Monger drops his cigarette and walks to Rat and Frankie.

FRANKIE

Bro, he's screwing around when he
should be working!

Frankie aims his foot to kick Rat in the face. Monger puts
his hand on his BROTHER'S shoulder. Frankie lowers his foot.

Monger takes the bra out of Rat's hand and holds it out and
away from his body as if he is disgusted by it.

MONGER

Men!

EXT. STREET

Devyn watches the Scavengers gather around Monger. She darts
to a car closer to the store, and peers around it.

EXT. PARKING LOT

MONGER

Do you know what this means?

RAT

Uh. Someone didn't get a lot of
attention in high school? Am I
right boys?

The Scavengers don't laugh, they stare at Monger.

Monger walks close to Rat and leans in inches from his face.

MONGER

Are we trying to be funny?

RAT

Well...uh...yes? It's the freaking
apocalypse! Darnit. You gotta find
some reason to fool around every
now and then. Right boys?

The Scavengers do not respond. They stare at Monger.

Monger knees Rat between his legs, he hunches over in agony.

MONGER

I don't have energy for funny. I
don't energy for games. Got that?

RAT
Yeah. Yessir.

MONGER
Good.

Monger punches Rat in the face then straightens, and turns back to the Scavengers.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Men, there is a young woman
somewhere nearby.

The Scavengers laugh and chatter. Monger glares at them.

FRANKIE
Shut up!

The Scavengers stop talking, and stand at attention.

MONGER
As I was saying. There is a woman
nearby. She's a Loner, an easy
hunt. It's been a long time coming
since we have had run-ins with the
female sex. So, whoever brings her
to me first can enjoy her after I
do!

The Scavengers cheer.

Frankie steps close to Monger.

FRANKIE
Bro, we swept the entire store and
alley. There was no woman.

MONGER
Frankie, when are you going to
learn to trust your big brother?
Hm?

Monger walks over to an ATV, grabs Devyn's rifle, holds it in the air, and walks back to the group.

MONGER (CONT'D)
No one would have left their weapon
or their supplies. She's close. I
can feel it.

FRANKIE
(to Scavengers)
Alright! You know what to do!
Spread out! Find Her! Go!

The Scavengers break off and search for Devyn.

Monger goes inside the store.

Frankie walks over to Rat, and picks him up by his hair.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Move!

Rat holds his swollen eye with one hand and his crotch with the other as he stumbles away from Frankie.

EXT. DEBRIS PILE

Blu WHIMPERS and lays down.

Echo approaches him from behind.

ECHO

Bah...Bah...Blah...Bloo?

Blu stands, turns, wags his tail, and licks her.

Echo puts her human finger to her lips, and holds out her Feeder palm (STOP). She climbs up the concrete debris pile and peers over. Her eyes dart to Devyn's unattended backpack. She grins.

KEITH (O.S.)

Come on. This way!

EXT. STREET

Keith heads straight for Devyn.

EXT. DEBRIS PILE

Echo quickly looks around, she picks up a large chunk of concrete and throws it at a car in the opposite direction of the parking lot.

The concrete chunk hits the car with a loud THUD.

EXT. STREET

KEITH

Did you hear that?

RAT

Over there!

KEITH
The corner of the lot!

EXT. DEBRIS PILE

Echo smiles. She climbs back down and holds up both hands out to Blu (STAY), and stealthily walks toward the parking lot.

Blu lays down, huffs, and puts his head between his paws.

EXT. STREET

Devyn watches the Scavengers head toward the THUD. Then, she looks up to the sky.

DEVYN
(mouths)
Thank you!

She rises and jogs over to the empty PARKING LOT. Suddenly, Devyn stops.

Echo darts into the parking lot from the opposite direction and grabs Devyn's bag.

Devyn's eyes grow wide.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
What the--? Stop! No, no, no! Put that--

Echo glances at Devyn, grins, and walks over to her holding the bag out.

ECHO
I...He...hel...pa...pa...help.

DEVYN
Wha--What?...No! Drop-

FRANKIE (O.S.)
I'm going to make a sweep. God knows, these freaks can't do nuthin' right.

Frankie backs out of the store.

Echo drops the bag and darts off into the night.

DEVYN
(mouths)
Dammit!

Devyn sprints for the bag, squats, and grabs what supplies she can.

FRANKIE (O.S.)

Oh hello!

Devyn whips herself around and faces Frankie.

Frankie holds a pistol to her head.

DEVYN

Wait--

Frankie flips the pistol around and swings the butt of it across Devyn's head.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

FLASHBACK - EXT. A DESERTED HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Humvee, carrying Devyn and FIFTEEN other CHILDREN ages four to twelve, makes it way down a dark desolate highway surrounded by a thick forest.

INT. THE BACK OF THE HUMVEE

All the children are asleep apart from Devyn who stares longingly out the back canvas hatch.

Sergeant Two sits beside Devyn and holds a rifle between his knees.

SERGEANT TWO

So your mom is Dr. Briggs, yeah?

DEVYN

(sniffles)

Yeah.

SERGEANT TWO

Well, you're lucky cause you can live with her at the base. No other kid's parents are allowed in. She probably just sent you on ahead cause it's safer with us. There's a lot of bad things...and people out there. But it's my job to protect you and your mom knows that. She needs you safe.

Devyn looks up at Sergeant Two.

SERGEANT TWO (CONT'D)
I mean it. I—

Suddenly, the Humvee SCREECHES to a halt! The children and the militia members crash into each other.

SERGEANT TWO (CONT'D)
What's going on?

DRIVER (O.S.)
Some idiot is standing in the middle of the road!

SERGEANT TWO
Hey! Sergeant! You good?

SERGEANT ONE (O.S.)
Yeah!

SERGEANT TWO
Alright. Let's go see what this guy wants. Come on!

Sergeant Two brushes himself off, swings his rifle around on his back and heads out the back of the caravan.

Devyn grabs his forearm before he exits.

DEVYN
No! Don't!

Sergeant Two turns to face Devyn.

SERGEANT TWO
I'll be right back, I promise.

Devyn releases her grip on him, and he completely exits.

EXT. DESERTED HIGHWAY

Sergeant One and Smith walk slowly toward a tall slender MAN in the middle of the road. This is MONGER.

SERGEANT TWO
Hello? You okay over there? Do you need help? State your name!

MONGER
Help? Nah, I don't need no help. My fellow men call me MONGER.

SERGEANT TWO

Alright, Mr. Monger, what do you want? State your business or move on! There's Feeders out here!

MONGER

Oh, I know all about Feeders.

The Man raises his arm in the air and quickly drops it. Then, out of the thick forest, SCAVENGER MEN circle around the Man and Humvee. Some are wearing old prison jumpsuits, and others worn clothes, all are carrying weapons (axes, guns, machetes, etc.)

MONGER (CONT'D)

I'd drop those guns if I were you.

SERGEANT TWO

Like hell I will! What do you want?

MONGER

Flesh.

Monger nods at a Scavenger holding a rifle beside him. The Scavenger shoots at the windshield of the Humvee.

INT. DRIVER'S SEAT IN HUMVEE

The Driver's body slams on the steering wheel's horn sending a TRUMPETING BLARE throughout the surrounding area. Then, he slides off, dead.

SERGEANT ONE

You've just killed us all! They're going to come for us! You're crazy!

SERGEANT TWO

Shut up!

Ethereal GROWLS echo through the trees as if the forest itself were alive.

Monger laughs.

EXT. ROAD

SERGEANT TWO

Smith! Retreat!

Sergeant One and Smith sprint back to the Humvee.

Bullets whiz past Sergeant One and Sergeant Two, then Sergeant One collapses, dead!

MONGER

My fellow liberators of the new
world, hurry and take what you can!
We have work to do!

Monger leads the Scavengers as they rush toward the Humvee.

Sergeant Two dodges bullets, and slides behind the Humvee. He pulls himself up on the bumper of the caravan.

INT. THE BACK OF THE HUMVEE

SERGEANT TWO

Come on! Let's go! To the woods!
Hurry!

He helps all the children exit through the back. A few jump out, then Devyn grabs his hand.

SERGEANT TWO (CONT'D)

I got you, it's ok—

A serrated blade with a black handle made out of human bone protrudes out of Sergeant Two's chest.

Devyn SCREAMS, and cowers to the back of the caravan while the rest of the children jump out the back.

Sergeant Two falls dead.

EXT. ROAD

The horde of Scavengers grabs the children one by one as they scurry in various directions to the forest. Children SCREAM. Men LAUGH.

Monger climbs into the Caravan after Devyn.

MONGER

Come over to Mr. Monger, sweetie.
I'll take good care of you, I
promise.

Devyn huddles in the corner.

Monger reaches to grab her, and she bites his hand. Monger SHOUTS in agony.

Devyn darts out of the caravan.

In an instant, she bends over and yanks out the knife from Sergeant Two's chest, then she sprints into the FOREST on the side of the road.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The forest is pitch black. Tall pines create a maze with their similarity. A thick fog carpets the ground. Feeders MOAN in very direction, and SHOUTS of chaos from the road echo.

Devyn runs behind a thick pine, and peeks out into the darkness.

MONGER (O.S.)
You know they can smell us, right?

Devyn ducks behind the tree, and cries covering her mouth.

MONGER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Yessir, and the faster your heart
beats, little girl, the faster the
Feeders will come! I can protect
you! Come on out!

A shadowy outline of a hunched over Feeder creeps out in the nearby fog, sniffing the air as it moves closer to Devyn.

Devyn rises slowly, puts the knife into her waistband, then lunges out from behind the tree, but her feet don't return to the ground, Monger has her in his arms. Devyn SCREAMS.

The nearby Feeder straightens its deformed body and sprints, toward Monger and Devyn.

Monger's eyes widen as the Feeder draws nearer.

MONGER (CONT'D)
(whispers in Devyn's ear)
This is going to be fun!

Suddenly, Devyn reaches in her waistband, pulls out the knife, and backhandedly stabs Monger in the eye!

Monger drops Devyn, and holds his eye in pain.

Devyn takes off into the forest just as the Feeder lunges onto Monger forcing him to the ground.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST - EARLY MORNING

Knife in hand, Devyn runs past trees, then a GUNSHOT is heard from behind her.

Devyn pants and slows to a halt, looks at the knife, and grips the locket at her neck. A slight grin forms at the corner of her lips, but quickly fades into a tight line. She looks ahead into the EARLY MORNING and begins to walk.

END FLASHBACK.

FADE IN:

INT. RUINED GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Devyn's hands and feet are tied tight with wire. She sits limp upon a cashier's booth.

She GROANS.

Devyn's head hangs loosely. Her right eye is purple and swollen shut. Dried blood crusts her right temple.

FRANKIE

(waves Devyn's knife in
her face)

Lookie what I got! Nice blade,
beautiful, just wait till I use it
to-

MONGER

(pulls Frankie away)

Move!

Frankie staggers back, and hides Devyn's knife in his boot.

Devyn's head lolls to one side.

Monger leans in inches from her face, and gently lifts her chin up to face him.

Devyn does not open her eyes.

MONGER (CONT'D)

Time to wake up, beautiful.

Monger brushes a piece of Devyn's hair behind her right ear. She cringes, his touch is just as rough and cold as the first time he touched her five years ago.

MONGER (CONT'D)

Look at me.

Devyn does not look. She turns away.

Monger's brow twitches in irritation. He violently yanks her by her hair and turns her to face him.

MONGER (CONT'D)

I said, LOOK AT ME!

Devyn slowly opens her eyes and looks at Monger.

MONGER (CONT'D)

That's bet--

Devyn spits in his face.

Monger smiles, and licks saliva off his lips.

MONGER (CONT'D)

Oh, you and I are going to have fun.

DEVYN

What are you going to do to me?

MONGER

Whatever uh...intrigues me.
Something painful most likely.

DEVYN

But why? Why me?

Devyn swallows.

MONGER

Two reasons. You remind of someone I met years back, but that girl is long gone by now.

Monger sneers.

Second, I collect people, Loners like yourself, mostly.

DEVYN

Why?

MONGER

I guess you could say I'm a farmer. My drunken asshole daddy was a farmer and forced me to work till my hands bled.

(MORE)

MONGER (CONT'D)

But, I was never good at farming or anything for that matter, at least according to daddy, so I decided to prove him wrong by utilizin' this apocalyptic pandemic to my advantage. See my livestock is new, born outta a human negligence and that itty bitty flesh hungry bug that likes to attach itself up here.

(Points to his head)

DEVYN

Wha--?

MONGER

To be a good farmer, I need to feed my livestock, and that's where you play a vital role in makin' my Feeders better than the rest—

DEVYN

You're insane! There's no point to keeping Feeders! They do nothing, but kill people!

MONGER

Ha! So close-minded. They are weapons, that this world of inferior idiots has yet to take control of! They are the key to giving us—

(motions to Scavengers)

The world! Scavengers and Feeders are the next generation of humanity!

DEVYN

You're sick!

Monger grabs Devyn's face.

MONGER

I am. And you are my medicine at least until you become fodder for my soldiers.

Monger sniffs Devyn's cheek. Devyn winces. Monger laughs.

Frankie approaches Monger. He stares at Devyn looking her up and down, assessing her.

FRANKIE
(chuckles)
When do I get a turn with her?

Frankie quickly runs his hand up Devyn's thigh.

Monger lunges after him and grabs him by his shirt collar nearly lifting him off the ground.

MONGER
I said after I've had a turn! You
will not touch her!
(screams)
No one touches her!

FRANKIE
Yes. Okay. I'm sorry.

Monger sighs and releases Frankie.

MONGER
No, no. I'm sorry, little brother.

He turns to Devyn.

MONGER (CONT'D)
I'll see you soon. I have a good
feeling that you'll just love my
farm!

Monger winks at Devyn, takes out a hand-rolled cigarette from his pocket, lights it, and blows the smoke in her face.

Devyn coughs.

Monger walks toward the back of the store.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Frankie! Load her up!

DEVYN
Don't touch me!

Frankie grabs Devyn. She squirms out of his grasp.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Get off!

Frankie punches her in the stomach. She groans.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Ugh. Bastard!

FRANKIE

Shut up.

Frankie yanks Devyn off the cashier's booth. She falls on the floor.

He grabs her arms and pulls her out of the store.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Frankie drags Devyn behind him by her wrists into the dark abandoned parking lot. Devyn squirms and fights against Frankie.

DEVYN

Stop! Let go of me, you sick-

Frankie whips around, faces Devyn, and grabs a handful of her hair which he uses to pull her face close to his.

Devyn winces.

FRANKIE

Listen, bitch. Somethin' bout you
gets under my brother's skin.
Whatever it is, you're goin' to pay
for it. I promise you that much.

Rat and Keith stop loading the ATVs and listen to Devyn and Frankie.

DEVYN

Your brother told you not to touch
me! Wouldn't want to upset him now,
would we? Be a good little slave to
your brother-

The Scavengers laugh at Devyn's taunting.

Frankie's lip curls, and he violently pulls Devyn up and shoves her to the ground in front of him.

FRANKIE

Walk!

Devyn staggers toward the far dark end of the parking lot.

Rusty abandoned cars, broken shopping carts, rubble, and garbage litter the area. No streetlights are on, and an eerie sea of fog coats the end of the lot.

EXT. DEBRIS PILE

Echo faces the Scavenger infested Grocery Store. She watches Frankie push Devyn to the far end of the parking lot.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF PARKING LOT

Frankie shoves Devyn forward. She stumbles to her knees. Frankie grabs her by the back of her jacket collar and forces her to an ATV.

The front and back of the ATV is stacked with gas containers and various haversacks of canned goods. Strapped with rope to the front grill of the ATV is a deer skull complete with large antlers and rusted nails for teeth. The body of the ATV looks as if it was painted by child who got a hold of some spray paint; it is covered with cartoonish red and yellow flames.

EXT. PARKING LOT

The Scavenger men load TWELVE ATVs with goods from the store.

Monger exits the shattered glass front doors of the store, smokes a cigarette with one hand, and in the other he holds Devyn's backpack.

MONGER

RICK!

A Scavenger, RICK (40s), a slender man with a scraggly beard and a fringed mullet, slings an AR-15 rifle from his shoulder to his back and runs to Monger.

MONGER (CONT'D)

(hands Rick backpack)

Strap this to my Yamaha.

RICK

Yessir.

Rick starts toward the parking lot, but Monger grabs him by the arm and pulls him inches from his face.

MONGER

Rick?

RICK

Yessir?

MONGER

Where's the girl?

RICK

Uh...um...Frankie took her to his
Grizzly. On the outskirts of the
lot.

MONGER

Now, why would he do such a thing?

RICK

He...he said...you said it was his
turn with the chick.

MONGER

Hm. Thank you, Rick. Get the boys
loaded up.

Monger releases Rick. Monger stares into the foggy black
outskirts of the parking lot.

RICK (O.S.)

Load 'em up, boys! We're about to
get outta here!

Monger grips the handle of his pistol sheathed at his waist.
His knuckles turn white as his fingers tighten around the
handle. He spits on the ground.

EXT. DEBRIS PILE

Echo desperately looks back and forth between the two scenes:
Monger heading toward Frankie and Devyn, and Frankie and
Devyn at the ATV on the outskirts of the lot.

She huffs, closes her eyes, and inhales.

ECHO

(whispers)

Fra...fran...friend...ha...help.

Echo darts into the night and fog as if the empty, dangerous
world doesn't bother her.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF PARKING LOT

Frankie pins Devyn to the back of the ATV. He kicks Devyn's
legs apart, sniffs down her neck, and licks her cheek.

Devyn tries to wiggle free from his grasp.

Suddenly, the deep BELLOW of a hungry FEEDER MOANS in the
distance.

At the ethereal moans of the Feeder, Frankie looks over his shoulder into the opaque night. He maintains his grip on Devyn against the back of the ATV.

The MOANS of the Feeder turns into MANY. Frankie's eyes grow large at the sound of impending doom, then he snaps his head back to Devyn.

FRANKIE

Damn, Feeders suck the fun outta everything!

DEVYN

They're going to kill us! You're crazy!

Feeders MOAN in the distance.

Devyn struggles in Frankie's grip. Frankie shudders slightly, but then shifts his weight to stand erect.

FRANKIE

Ha! I ain't afraid of THOSE Feeders!

Frankie leans to look in the back cargo carrier of the ATV. He smiles, then he releases his hold of Devyn's left forearm.

Devyn squirms, but Frankie's free hand punches her square in the jaw. Devyn collapses on the pavement.

Frankie lifts Devyn up by her shirt collar.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Try that crap again, and I'll kill ya. Don't care what my brother says. Ya, hear me?

Disoriented, Devyn nods and holds her jaw with her free hand.

The Feeders' MOANS turn into GROWLS close by.

Devyn looks in the direction of the Feeders' GROWLS, she sees a small SHADOW coming towards her as it weaves in and out of debris piles and abandoned cars.

Frankie grabs two zip ties out of the ATV's cargo carrier.

Devyn squints into the darkness, her eyes follow the shadow figure.

The figure jumps into a dim strip of light emanating from the far grocery store on the other end of the parking. The shadow is ECHO!

Devyn's eyes widen.

Frankie loops Devyn's wrists into the zip ties and tightens them to the metal bar of the ATV's back cargo carrier.

Devyn winces as the skin around her wrists turns white from the tight zip ties.

The sound of concrete slamming into metal is heard.

Frankie jerks around, and grips the handle of the machete sheathed at his waist.

Devyn's eyes scan the horizon for Echo, but only grotesque shadows of Feeders dart between distant ruins and debris piles.

Frankie releases his grip on his machete and chuckles manically.

DEVYN

Those Feeders are coming! There's
no way you can fight them off on
your own! Look, just let me go and
I can help you fend them off, ok-

Frankie lunges on top of her. He attacks her with a sloppy kiss on her mouth. Suddenly, Frankie jerks his head back and spits blood on the ground.

FRANKIE

You bit my tongue!

Devyn licks his blood off her bottom lip, then spits it on his face.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Oh, I see. You like it rough.

Frankie steps back from Devyn, pulls up his pant leg, and takes out Devyn's knife sheathed to his calf. Frankie flips and twirls the knife in the air as if fighting off an invisible force.

Devyn watches Frankie in disgust.

Then, behind Frankie, several yards away in the moonlight, the small shadow of a young girl crawls, without making a sound, on top of a toppled van.

Echo waves her arms and points toward Frankie.

Devyn's eyes dart between Echo and Frankie.

DEVYN

Wha-

Frankie jabs knife in the air.

FRANKIE

Ya like that, huh? My brother
taught me these moves.

Frankie laughs.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Yup...my brother, he's...always
gotta plan.

Frankie looks back at the store.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Damn, they're loading up. Better
hurry-

Meanwhile, Devyn's eyes dart to Frankie and then to Echo,
behind him.

Echo points vigorously to the knife in Frankie's hand.

Frankie turns back to Devyn.

DEVYN

(mouths)

I can't-

Devyn moves her hands as much as possible to show Echo she is
zip-tied to the ATV.

FRANKIE

You got somethin' you wanna say?

Devyn ignores him.

Frankie steps close to Devyn.

Devyn keeps her eyes on Echo.

Frankie watches Devyn's eyes.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

What are you lookin' at?

Frankie whips his head around.

Echo is gone.

DEVYN

Nothing. I...just...uh...I always
thought that knife was a bit much-

Frankie turns back to Devyn and steps even closer.

FRANKIE

What about it?

DEVYN

Well, I mean...it just screams
overcompensation.

Devyn smirks.

Frankie's jaw twitches and his knuckles turn red as he grips the knife's handle. He lunges to Devyn and pulls her head back with a fistful of her hair. He runs the point of his knife down her bare throat.

FRANKIE

You ain't gonna think that when you
see what I have to offer.

Frankie releases Devyn, slams the knife on the cargo carrier box on the back on the ATV, just barely out of reach for Devyn's fingers.

Frankie steps back and begins undoing his cowboy-style belt buckle.

Suddenly, Echo lunges out of the darkness, onto his back, and bites his ear. Frankie SCREAMS and wildly flails his arms out, trying to pull Echo off him.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Frankie's SCREAMS echo through the darkness, and the MOANS of the distant Feeders turn into GROWLS like battle cries.

Monger jerks his head in the direction of his brother's shrieks. He loads a rifle at the back of his bike. Then, he cocks the gun and jogs in the direction of Frankie's screams.

HALFWAY BEWTEEN the GROCERY STORE and Frankie, Keith and Rat lean on an abandoned car and smoke hand-rolled cigarettes.

Monger jogs to them.

MONGER

What the hell are you doin'?

KEITH
Nuthin' boss.

RAT
(coughs smoke)
We was just keepin' watch like ya
told us to.

MONGER
You-

Frankie lets out a shrill screech.

KEITH
Do ya hear Frankie, boss? That
chick sure is givin' him the time
of his life!

Keith and Rat laugh.

Keith playfully punches Monger in the shoulder, but before he
can withdraw his hand, Monger grips him by the forearm and
pulls him close, their noses nearly touching.

MONGER
You idiots think my brother is
screamin' like that cause he's
havin' fun?

KEITH
Well, uh-

MONGER
Listen!

The ethereal GROWLS of Feeders come from Frankie's direction,
almost drowning out his screams.

Keith and Rat stare fearfully into the foggy night.

Monger lets go of Keith and shoves him away.

RAT
Oh sh-

MONGER
Get the others and meet me back
here. Bring the collars.

Keith grabs a shotgun leaning on the side of the abandoned
car, and Rat unsheathes a rusted machete from his hip.

Keith and Rat sprint back to the store.

Monger stealthily heads toward Frankie's screams at the far end of the parking lot.

EXT. FAR END OF PARKING LOT

Echo straddles Frankie's torso and buries her teeth in his ear. Frankie flails his arms in desperate attempts to knock the Echo off him.

Devyn stretches her fingers for the knife as far as the zip ties allow. The zip ties cut into her flesh; her wrists bleed. Devyn strains. She touches the blade's hilt with her fingertips, but cannot grip it.

Frankie leans over, grabs Echo by the waist, yanks her off, and hurls her to the ground.

Echo's head hits the pavement with a CRACK. She lays with her human side facing upwards, motionless.

Devyn glances at Frankie as he steps toward Echo. He presses his palm to the hole that used to be his ear.

Devyn bends her knees, allowing her hands some slack as she tries again to grab the knife.

FRANKIE

What the-?

Frankie uses his heel to flip the girl over, revealing the Feeder half of her body. Frankie jumps back in fear.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

She's... it's...holy...

Frankie holds his head wound and then looks at the blood on his hand. His face turns white.

The GROWLS of the Feeders are louder and closer than ever.

Frankie looks into the black void of the abandoned city.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

I'll be one of them bastards soon,
thanks to this little freak!

Frankie spits on Echo.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Welp, better make the most of da
time I got left.

DEVYN

You're insane! We are both gonna die if you don't let me go now! I can help you!

FRANKIE

Nah, I don't think you can.

DEVYN

You got bit...okay, but you still have a few days. And look, there's obviously something off about that girl. You might be fine!

Frankie faces Devyn and smiles.

FRANKIE

Maybe. Maybe not. Either way, I'm goin' out havin' a good ole time!

Devyn squirms uneasily.

Frankie rushes to her and leans into her ear.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Now, where were we?

Frankie grazes his lips down Devyn's jawline.

Suddenly, Frankie jolts back in surprise! Frankie lifts his head and looks down to see Devyn's hands on the hilt of the knife which protrudes out of his stomach! Frankie looks Devyn in the eyes, shock and fear paint his face.

Devyn watches Frankie as he totters backwards.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

My brother will-

Frankie collapses on the ground. Devyn stares at him.

MONGER (O.S.)

Frankie! Frankie!

Devyn runs into the night.

She hides behind a nearby truck and catches her breath.

Suddenly, the GROCERY STORE FEEDERS from earlier charge past the other side of the truck toward Frankie, they sniff the blood in the air.

Devyn puts her hand over her mouth to quiet her breathing. Then, she peers under the truck and looks Echo on the ground.

DEVYN

No. Nope. Not gonna do it.

Devyn watches the Feeders descends on Frankie's body.

Suddenly, GUNSHOTS burst through the air!

Monger and the Scavengers shoot at the Feeders.

The Feeders attack them from all directions! Pouncing on the Scavengers like animals!

Most of the Scavengers shoot the Feeders before they attack, but others are eaten alive!

Devyn looks at Echo, looks at the Scavengers and Feeders, and looks at the dark city in the distance.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Dammit.

Devyn gets up and carefully makes her way to Echo. She crouches low to avoid being seen by a Scavenger or a Feeder. She uses the chaos as her cover.

Devyn winces as she lifts Echo over her shoulder. Then, she takes off with the her into the night.

EXT. FAR END OF PARKING LOT - LATER

The Scavengers finish off the maimed Feeders with handmade machetes, axes, and clubs.

Others tie some of the Feeders down and using poles with electric collars attached to the ends, and they force the collars onto the Feeders.

Monger kneels beside Frankie. Monger gently places his hand on his brother's forehead.

Frankie's breaths are shallow. His clothes are torn, asphalt gravel protrudes out of his skin, his ear bleeds, and so does the wound with the knife protruding from his stomach. In addition, there are Feeder bites on his arms and legs.

MONGER

Frankie, Frankie, Frankie...

He looks at the knife in Frankie's abdomen. His face grows pale, then red as his jaw clenches. This is his knife, the one Devyn stole after she took his eye five years ago!

He leans down and kisses Frankie's forehead while pulling the knife out of his chest.

Then, Monger pulls his pistol out of its holster, cocks it, and presses the barrel to Frankie's temple.

MONGER (CONT'D)

You're too tore up to be any use.

Frankie's eyes widen.

Monger's pulls the trigger. A GUNSHOT echos through the parking lot.

All of the Scavengers stop and stare at Monger. His back is to them, and his pistol smokes in the air.

Keith drops an ax into a Feeder's chest and walks up behind Monger. He stands a few feet away.

KEITH

Boss? Uh, Monger, sir?

Monger places his gun in its holster and turns to face Keith.

MONGER

Tell Rat and Rick to go back to base and bring our best soldier.

Monger grins as he cleans the blood off his knife with his shirt.

MONGER (CONT'D)

We're going hunting.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. STREET OF SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

The streets are empty, there is no sound apart from the wind.

YOUNG DEVYN (12) knocks on the door to her house. She is dirty and scratches from branches cover her arms.

DEVYN

Mom! Dad! I'm back! Mom! Please!

No one answers, Devyn's voice echoes through the abandoned neighborhood.

Suddenly, a MOAN from the side of the house is heard.

Devyn rushes toward the sound.

Devyn's father, Micah, kneels on the ground with his back to Devyn.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Dad! Dad!

Micah rises unsteadily, and slowly turns to face her, his eyes are black and his skin pulses with black veins. He is a FEEDER!

Devyn SCREAMS, and Micah chases her into the street.

Then, a young white scrappy DOG bolts between them, and BARKS at Micah. This is BLU.

Blu runs circles Micah, causing him to spin around. Micah swings Blu.

Tires SCREECH!

Devyn and the Blu jump out of the way as a rusty Volkswagen slams into Micah, sending him flying behind the car!

The car halts beside Devyn, and the window rolls down. It's Thomas!

THOMAS

What are you waiting for? Get in!
Hurry!

Devyn goes to open the back door, then stops and turns to look at Blu.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(looks out rearview)
Come on! He's getting up!

Devyn rushes over to the dog, picks him up, opens the car door with one hand, and gets in.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING

Devyn cries in the backseat. Blu puts his head on her lap.

DEVYN

Where are we going, Thomas?

THOMAS

Don't know. Maybe the college? That place is like a fortress. Uh...I'm sorry about your dad. Right after they sent you off with all the other kids, he got bit.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

A horde came through the
neighborhood.

(somber)

Got my parents too.

DEVYN

I'm sorry. My mom, too?

THOMAS

Nah, she left with the military. I
was supposed to go too, but
uh...guess they don't care about a
dumb biochem intern-

DEVYN

She'll come find me...I know it.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The living room of the abandoned apartment is a time capsule to the couple that once lived there. A thick film of dust coats furniture and pictures. There are two coffee cups filled with bugs and sludge sitting on the coffee table, and beside each is two N95 masks. A newspaper dated 2038 also sits on the table with the headline "Mutated Virus Takes Over Europe: What Dr. Briggs Says You Should Do To Prepare."

Devyn lies on the couch on her side, facing the coffee table. She tosses and turns. Sweat beads are scattered across her forehead.

DEVYN

(asleep)

Mom! Dad!

Blu lifts his head out from under the coffee table and
WHIMPERS.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Don't leave me! Mom!

Blu shinnies out from under the coffee table, walks up to Devyn, and licks her face.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Uh. Ugh! Blu get off!

Devyn opens her eyes and sees Blu sitting on the floor, happily staring back at her.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
What? You're not-

Devyn cautiously turns her head and looks up to see Echo straddling her side and grinning at her.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Ah!

ECHO
Ah!

Devyn shoves Echo off of her and onto the floor.

Echo sits up and glances up at Devyn under her lashes.

Blu wags his tail, goes over to Echo, and licks the human side of her face.

DEVYN
(Sits up)
Jeez. I'm sorry.

Devyn holds out her hand for Echo to take.

Echo lifts her Feeder-infected arm and places her hand in Devyn's.

Echo's hand and arm are blotched with necrosis, and black veins pulse under her pale skin.

A COCKROACH crawls through a hole in Echo's hand and then skitters up Devyn's arm. Devyn grimaces but clasps Echo's hand and pulls her up to sit on the couch beside her.

The room goes silent apart from Blu's panting.

Echo stares at Devyn.

Devyn looks away.

Blu WHIMPERS, goes up to Devyn, and puts his head in her lap.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay, I know.

Devyn turns to face Echo.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Um...hi?

ECHO
Ha...ha...Hi.

DEVYN
Yeah, um. Thanks for, ya know,
saving my ass out there.

ECHO
Ah...ah...as...ask.

DEVYN
(Chuckles)
You just repeat everything you
hear, don't ya? Like an Echo.

ECHO
Eh...Eck...Echo.

Echo smiles a crooked smile, revealing yellow-stained teeth
that contrast the sinewy red flesh inside her exposed jaw.

Devyn cringes a little but smiles back.

DEVYN
ECHO. I think it suits her, what do
you think, Blu?

Devyn pats Blu's head, and he pants happily.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Yeah, I agree. It's a good name.

Echo and Blu stare at Devyn as if she is their entire world.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Um...uh...So, Echo, where are your
parents? Ya know, the people you
look up to.

Echo points to Devyn.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
No. I'm not...We're friends. Damn,
I never thought I'd say that to
another person, not since they sent
me away.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Uh, hold on.

Devyn stands, looks around the living room, and then walks
over to a shelf lined with dusty picture frames. She grabs a
frame and wipes the dust off the glass using her sleeve.

In the picture, a beautiful woman and a handsome man with a
curly-haired toddler on his shoulders smile back at Devyn.

She sighs, walks back to Echo, kneels, and points to the frame.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

See this? These are parents with their kid.

Echo points at the child in the picture and then points to Devyn.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

No. This isn't me. This kid is a lot cuter than I ever was. Blu and I just squat in places, anywhere that I can easily break into and has a clear view outside, really. I brought you here...and by the way, you're heavier than you look.

Echo's brows furl and Devyn grins.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Anyways, this apartment used to belong to these guys.

Devyn points at the picture.

Echo looks up and her eyes follow family photos on the walls.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

You have parents, Blu has parents, I have...I had parents. Where are yours?

Echo cocks her head to the side, frowns, and slowly walks to the window that overlooks the city.

She touches the glass and stares out the window.

ECHO

Fa...fa...fam...fa...

Echo turns to Devyn, frustration covers her face. Then she places her Feeder hand over her heart and pats it.

Devyn's eyes widen.

ECHO (CONT'D)

Ga...ga...gone.

DEVYN

Where did you learn that? What you just did with your hand? How do you know that means family?

(MORE)

DEVYN (CONT'D)

It's not sign language, only my mom
and I...forget it.

Echo goes to Devyn, grabs her hand and places it on her chest.

Devyn swallows as if about to cry, then takes a deep breath.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Yeah well families suck, mine
ditched me too. All they do is
break promises.

Echo shakes her head 'No.' Tears well in her bloodshot eyes.

ECHO

Gah...gone.

DEVYN

Oh, I didn't mean to...

Echo looks at her feet and wipes her nose with her hand. A long yellow and black string of snot stretches from her Feeder nostril to the top of her hand.

Devyn covers her mouth to prevent herself from throwing up. She grabs a throw pillow, walks to Echo, and hands it to her.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Uh, here, use this.

Echo shoves her face in the pillow and BLOWS. Then, she offers the pillow back to Devyn.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Um, how 'bout you keep it.

Echo drops the pillow, goes to the shelf, takes the picture out of the frame and puts it in her pants pocket, then turns to face the window.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

So how did you...uh...get like this-

ECHO

Sca...Sca...bah...bad...meh...men!

DEVYN

Huh?

Echo grabs Devyn's arm, pulls her to the window, and points to the sidewalk below.

On the SIDEWALK, Monger and Scavengers surround the building.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Shit!

Devyn crouches down and pulls Echo to the floor. Then, carefully, Devyn lifts her head and peers out the window.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

How the hell did he track us here?

On the SIDEWALK, Monger steps out into the street and waves his arms in the air.

Out of a dark alley beside the building, a large grotesque FIGURE emerges, pulling a smaller figure behind it, with two others walking beside it.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

What the...

Devyn squints. Suddenly, her eyes go wide!

Outside, the figure comes into focus. It's a FEEDER! The Feeder is no longer man nor woman, it is a SUPER FEEDER. Its naked muscles pulse with every step, and sinewy muscle and black veins cover its body. A makeshift muzzle is on the Feeder's mouth, an electric collar is locked around its neck, and its hands are bound with a chain.

Keith holds the Feeder back with a locked chain around its neck. Rat and Rick use cattle prods to keep the Feeder in line.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

How? It's not rotting like a Feeder, but it's skin...this is what he meant by raising soldiers, by constantly feeding them, the virus doesn't have to feed off of it's host...

The Super Feeder sniffs the air, then darts toward the apartment building, and pulls Keith behind him.

Monger looks up at the building and smiles. Then, he motions for the rest of the Scavengers to search the building.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

We need to get out of here! Right now!

Devyn shoves herself up and runs through the apartment's hallway and into the largest bedroom. Drawers and a closet door SLAM.

Suddenly, Devyn rushes out of the hallway with a large gym bag.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Echo, help me!

Devyn tosses the bag to Echo.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Grab any food you can find in the kitchen!

ECHO
Ha...Help?

DEVYN
Yes, help! Hurry!

Devyn darts into the kitchen and shuffles through drawers. She pulls out a large, kitchen knife from one and sticks it in her right boot.

Echo climbs up on a countertop and shifts through dusty cans of food, putting them into the bag.

Devyn rushes to the FRONT DOOR, cracks it, and peers down the APARTMENT COMPLEX'S hallway.

The hallway, apart from the overturned sofas, furniture, and various bags of garbage, is empty and SILENT. At the far-right end of the hall is a dark stairwell, the only way in or out.

Blu WHIMPERS behind Devyn.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Hush.

Devyn closes her eyes and tilts her ear out the door to listen.

The Super Feeder GROWLS. Scavengers MUMBLE.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
(locks the door)
Shit! They're already to this floor! We aren't going to make it.

Echo quietly hops down from the counter and slings the bag over her shoulder. The bag weighs her human side down. She walks to the window and looks out. She smiles, then rushes over to Devyn.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

(paces)

Okay. Think, Devyn. We can
barricade the door, maybe the
Feeder won't be able to get
through?

The Super Feeder GROWLS louder outside the door.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

No, he's huge, he'll crush it
easily. Fight? Absolutely, not.
God, we're gonna die. Think. We've
gotta get out of here. Think.

Echo grabs Devyn's hand and tugs on it.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Echo, no.

Echo pulls harder. Devyn continues to pace.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

No.

Echo darts in front of Devyn, and nearly topples over from
the weight of the bag.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Echo, I said—

Echo points to the window.

ECHO

Ow...Out.

Devyn looks at the window, runs past Echo and Blu towards it,
then opens it.

DEVYN

The fire escape!

Suddenly, a series of loud BANGS on the door is heard. The
door bends and splinters at the frame with each hit!

Echo slowly backs away from the door while Blu BARKS at it.

Devyn's eyes grow large. She sprints over to Echo, takes the
bag off and swings it over her shoulder. Then she pushes Echo
toward the open window.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Blu, come!

The door cracks open, the security chain lock is the only thing preventing it from swinging open. The Super Feeder sniffs inside the crack like a predator with its prey in sight.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Go!

Echo climbs out the window onto the fire escape. Devyn shoves Blu out the window with Echo pulls on this thick fur.

Suddenly, the door slams on the ground with a BOOM!

The Super Feeder drags Rat, Keith, and Rick into the foyer.

The Super Feeder lunges to Devyn, nearly escaping its chains. Thick black liquid drips from the Super Feeder's muzzle.

MONGER (O.S.)

Control it!

Rat and Keith, stab the Super Feeder with their cattle prods, sending electric shocks through it, causing it to relax.

Monger steps into the foyer and walks in front of the Feeder.

Devyn and Monger stare at each other. Monger traces a finger over his missing eye.

MONGER (CONT'D)

Didn't think I'd survive, girl from the woods?

DEVYN

Didn't think I'd take your eye and your brother from you?

Monger snarls.

MONGER

Release it!

Rat, Keith, and Rick, release their grip on the Super Feeder. Rat lightly shocks the Super Feeder's shoulder, waking it from its subdued state.

Devyn's eyes widen, and she lunges out of the window and onto the fire escape.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE

DEVYN

Let's go!

INT. APARTMENT ONE

The Super Feeder flings itself out the window like an animal on all fours.

MONGER

We'll meet them on the ground
floor. Let's go.

Monger and the Scavengers exit the apartment through the doorway.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE

Devyn, Echo, and Blu run down the rusted stairs of the fire escape.

The Super Feeder chases after them, skipping steps, closing the distance between itself and its prey.

Devyn takes the kitchen knife from her boot and throws it at the Super Feeder, hitting it in the forehead.

The Super Feeder stumbles back in surprise.

Devyn, Echo, and Blu stop at a large gap in the stairs.

Devyn leaps across the gap, and lands on the platform below.

DEVYN

Jump! Hurry!

Blu jumps after her, but Echo stays on the broken stairs, and shakes her head 'No.'

DEVYN (CONT'D)

(reaches out)

Come on! I got you, you can do
this!

Echo looks down at the street below.

The Super Feeder nears.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

I promise, I got you! Please! Come
on, it's okay! I won't let you
fall!

The Super Feeder is nearly on top of Echo!

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Echo!

Just as the Super Feeder swings its arms out to catch Echo, she springs forward across the gap, but she jumps too short and falls. Suddenly, Devyn grabs her human forearm and pulls her up to safety.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

I got you. You're okay.

The Super Feeder lets out a SHRIEKING GROWL.

Devyn and Echo smile at each other, and along with Blu they continue down the fire escape. As soon as they reach the platform below, the entire scaffolding shakes. The Super Feeder made its way across the gap!

Devyn, Echo, and Blu rush to the end of the platform, but the stairs are completely missing!

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Dammit!

Devyn desperately looks around, then goes to the apartment window bordering the platform. She struggles to open it. Echo rushes to help her, and the window opens, just large enough to allow them in. Echo goes in first, then Blu, followed by Devyn.

INT. APARTMENT TWO

The apartment is dark, apart from the slant of light that shines in through the open window.

DEVYN

Come on, find the door!

Echo shoves her rotting finger onto Devyn's lips.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

(muffled)

What?

Echo motions around the room. Devyn's eyes follow her arms.

TEN SLEEPING FEEDERS scatter the room, most are standing blocking a path to the apartment's door.

Two of the Feeders are BELLHOPS, Three are SOCCER MOMS, Four are their TEENAGE DAUGHTERS in jerseys, and the last is a tall BUSINESS MAN in a worn suit.

Devyn looks at Echo, nods 'okay,' and grabs Blu's collar pulling him close.

Echo carefully and silently leads Devyn with Blu in tow through the maze of sleeping Feeders.

Suddenly, the Super Feeder bursts through the window, sending shards of glass through the apartment.

The horde of sleeping Feeders wakes. They MOAN and GROWL.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Run!

Devyn shoves Echo in front of her and drags Blu to the door, she pushes, shoves, and dodges the waking Feeders.

The Super Feeder slams the other Feeders to the ground.

Devyn swings the gym bag off her back and flings it at SOCCER MOM FEEDER who blocks the door. The Soccer Mom Feeder stumbles back.

Devyn, Echo, and Blu sprint out the door.

The Feeders completely wake and follow the Super Feeder out the door!

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Monger sits on the back of an armored ATV and twirls his knife between his fingers.

Rat, Keith, Rick, and two SLENDER SCAVENGERS guard the door with guns and cattle prods. The rest huddle around ATVs.

RAT

How long is this gonna take?

KEITH

Dunno, but it better be quick, I'm hungry.

MONGER

Don't worry boys, our little monster friend will have her down in no time.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX HALLWAY

Devyn, Echo, and Blu run past a stairwell sign.

DEVYN

Stairs!

The horde of Feeders tails them down the stairs. The Super Feeder swings his arms and scratches Echo's arm who tails behind. Echo SCREAMS.

Devyn pulls Echo behind her as she runs down the stairs.

A red EXIT SIGN sits above to large doors at the bottom of the stairwell.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
(sees the sign)
Hurry!

Devyn, Echo, and Blu bolt out of the doors.

EXT. CITY STREET

Rick, Rat, Keith, and the Scavengers guarding the doors are shoved aside as Devyn, Echo, and Blu burst out of them.

Echo, Blu, and Devyn sprint down the street.

MONGER
What are you doing? Grab her!

The Scavengers shake themselves off and chase after Devyn, but are stopped by the RUMBLE of MOANS and GROWLS coming from the other side of the doors.

KEITH
What the—

MONGER
Move! Get outta here!

The horde of Feeders led by the Super Feeder CRASHES through the doors and attacks the Scavengers. A skirmish breaks out among the Scavengers and Feeders. GUN FIRE, SHOUTS, and SCREAMS of pain are heard.

Monger stands up on his ATV, shoots the Super Feeder in the head multiple times as it rushes toward him, killing it.

Monger sneers at the empty street.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF COLLEGE CAMPUS - NIGHT

Large brick buildings line an overgrown campus quad. Tanks and toppled cars scatter the campus, some lean on the buildings like tired ghosts of a long-ago battle lost. A large concrete sign almost completely covered by weeds reads "CAROLINA COLLEGE BIOCHEMISTRY BUILDINGS."

Devyn trudges past the concrete sign with Echo half-asleep on her back and Blu at her side.

Echo grumbles.

DEVYN

We can rest here. My frein- I mean
my uh...my...neighbor has food.
(under her breath)
And ammunition.

Devyn walks toward a large brick building with large windows in the center of the campus quad.

INT. COLLEGE BIOCHEMISTRY LAB

The large laboratory is dark, but the outlines of tables, microscopes, and glass beakers cover every inch of the open space. In the far corner there is a makeshift bed on a gurney piled with sleeping bags and SNORING is heard from underneath them.

Devyn lays Echo down against the doorway to the lab and Blu lays beside her.

Devyn walks to the far wall of the lab on which sits a towering stack of car batteries interconnected with electrical tape and wire. Attached to the side of the tower is a switchboard with wires that lead to the batteries, climb up the walls, and scatter across the floor.

Devyn flips one of the switches on the board, and Christmas lights on the ceiling flood the lab with white light.

DEVYN

Thomas! Get up!

The person on the makeshift bed in the corner GROANS, this is THOMAS five years later.

THOMAS

No, go away! I'm still working on
the next batch of bullets! Not
ready!

Devyn walks to Thomas and pulls the sleeping bag with him in it to the floor.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Who the—

DEVYN

It's Devyn. Get up. I need your help. I found something.

THOMAS

What? How'd you get in here?

DEVYN

You left the doors unlocked...again. Come on.

Thomas wiggles out of the sleeping bag. His once blonde ringlets resemble tangled yarn that hangs at his shoulders. Stubble lines his neck and jaw, and there are deep bags under his eyes. He wears worn scrub pants and an old rock band shirt.

Thomas grabs a worn hoodie from the bed and puts it as he follows Devyn to Echo who uses Blu as a pillow by the entrance.

Devyn squats in front of Echo.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Look at her.

Thomas pulls the hoodie over his head.

THOMAS

Look at who?

Thomas pushes the hood behind his head and looks at Echo.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(jumps back)

Oh my God!

Echo wakes up and cowers away from Thomas.

DEVYN

It's okay, Echo. He's not going to hurt you. He's an idiot, but he's...he's my friend.

THOMAS

Um, thanks?

Thomas squats down to Echo and studies her, looking her up and down. Echo repeats his movements.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Mother Mary and Joseph, she did it! I can't believe it worked! She really freakin' did it! Ha!

Echo looks at Thomas with concern.

DEVYN

Who is she? What did she do? Why are you so stupidly excited, and what does it have to do with Echo?

THOMAS

(chuckles)

Echo, huh? Cool name.

DEVYN

Yeah, well she repeats everything I do so I...not the point! What's wrong with her?

THOMAS

Nothing! She's perfect!

Thomas and Devyn stand up.

DEVYN

Have you seen her? She's part Feeder!

THOMAS

Exactly!

Thomas leans down and kisses Echo on the Feeder side of her forehead. Before he straightens, Devyn grabs a chunk of his hair and brings his head to face hers.

Echo makes a face of disgust and stands up, Blu follows.

DEVYN

Tell me what you know now, or I swear—

THOMAS

Okay! Okay! Easy!

Devyn releases him.

DEVYN

Go on.

THOMAS

Your mother—

DEVYN

Jeez—

Devyn walks past Thomas, fists clenched.

THOMAS
Devyn, listen!

DEVYN
Why should I?

THOMAS
You brought her here didn't you? So
you care about Echo—

DEVYN
No! No, I just...I...

Devyn looks at Echo and her faces relaxes and her fists
unclench.

THOMAS
You do. As much as you claim to
hate everything, besides that ugly
mutt...
(glances at Blu)
Sorry.
(faces Devyn)
I know you Devyn, whether you like
it or not, I mean we grew up
together, and because of that I
know that you aren't heartless. So,
if you care for this girl, like I
know you do, then you will want to
listen to me.

Devyn nods 'Yes,' goes to Echo, and pushes a frizzy strand of
hair behind her human ear.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Your mother created her.

DEVYN
What? Gross!

THOMAS
Not like that, let me finish. I
know it seems wild, but do you
remember your mother giving you
what she called vitamin boosters
right before all hell broke loose?

DEVYN
Yeah...she told me they were to
boost my immunity against the
virus. Let me guess, she lied about
that just like she lied about
sending me away too?

THOMAS

Yes.

DEVYN

Fantastic.

THOMAS

She was testing your blood against a vaccine she created that defended against the virus instead of attacking it. She hoped that if she could find the right gene mutation in someone, a mutation that acted like a wall against the virus then she could synthesize their mutation, enhance it, and create a vaccine.

DEVYN

How does Echo play into this?

THOMAS

I guess one of kids at her lab escaped from one of the transports kinda like the one you were on when the world went to hell. She probably survived this long because the Feeders would smell the virus in her blood stream, thinking she was one of them.

DEVYN

So, my mom was experimenting on me and God know how many other kids at her lab? Raising us like cattle. That's why she sent me away with the others. We weren't going somewhere safe. We were going to another one of her sadistic labs! And how do you know about all this?

THOMAS

Well, if you want to be dark and weird about it then yeah, I guess. I know because I worked with her, I was her lab assistant. She gave me a scholarship.

DEVYN

You knew all of this for years, even before the virus took over, and you kept it from me!

THOMAS

You were just a kid. It doesn't matter now. Listen, Devyn, it worked! Maybe not the way she suspected, but it worked!

DEVYN

What?

THOMAS

Look at Echo. The virus is stopped in its tracks. I can prove it.

Thomas walks to Echo, kneels down, takes a pen out of his pocket, and reaches for her Feeder arm where the Super Feeder scratched her.

DEVYN

What are doing?

THOMAS

(to Echo)

I'm not going to hurt you, I promise.

Echo holds out her arm and Thomas sticks the end of his pen into the wound. The pen comes out covered in black ooze. Thomas holds the pen out, and rushes over to a microscope.

INT. ON THE SLIDE

Half red and half black blood cells swim in a dark liquid. The dark liquid creeps into some of the cells, but it doesn't overcome them.

INT. COLLEGE BIOCHEMISTRY LAB

THOMAS

Haha! I knew it!

Devyn rushes over to Thomas and pushes him away from the microscope. She leans to look inside it.

DEVYN

Oh my god! The cells...they look like Echo. Half and half.

THOMAS

Told you. If her mutation can be enhanced, then we could save everyone! Your mom did it!

Devyn turns to Thomas.

DEVYN

We?

Thomas runs around the lab. He grabs textbooks, canned food, canteens, a backpack, and a map.

THOMAS

Yeah! We need to go to the coast,
to Port Haven. Here, look!

Thomas puts the map on a nearby countertop. He continues to pack.

Devyn pushes the map to the floor.

DEVYN

I'm not going anywhere.

THOMAS

Some Loners looking to trade for
ammo told me the military is taking
survivors on cargo ships out to
sea. The military made some kind of
oceanic city out there away from
Feeders. Everyone is screened for
the virus before going! And, they
have scientists there working on
the cure, but we have it! Damn,
your mom is going to freak!

DEVYN

My mom? What about her?

Thomas stops packing.

THOMAS

Um...your mom...she...she's the
lead doctor at Haven...I know I
should've told you sooner.

DEVYN

How long?

THOMAS

What?

DEVYN

How long have you known she was
alive?

THOMAS

Awhile. Look, some of the Loners who trade me meds for ammo heard about Haven and were going to go there. I asked about it every time another one came in to trade. I was actually going to go myself, but I...I was working on my own stuff...and then you were here...

Devyn picks up a beaker and throws it against the wall.

Echo hides with Blu in the corner of the lab.

DEVYN

You lied to me! You know how she abandoned me and used me! Left my father to die alone! It would've been better if she was dead!

THOMAS

But Devyn, it's not about her! I know she handed you off, and made hollow promises, but who cares about her? Think about what Echo can do! It's like fate or some divine power led her to you, the daughter of the woman that created her! It's like...Echo's calling to save the world!

DEVYN

No! Damn you, Thomas! I'm not going anywhere near her, and Echo isn't either! Look what she did to her! This is what humanity is! This is what we do! We mess up everything and everyone around us, we don't deserve to be saved. We deserve to burn!

THOMAS

Devyn, please—

Devyn throws some books and beakers to the ground as she walks past a table to the door. She grabs a flashlight on one of the tables.

DEVYN

Leave me alone!

THOMAS

(to Echo)

Yeah, I've known her for years,
she's uh...tough to love. I bet
you're tired, yeah?

ECHO

Ye...yes.

THOMAS

Go make yourself comfortable.
(points to bed)
It's not much, but it does the job.

Echo walks to the makeshift bed and climbs in with Blu.

Thomas smiles, and packs his bag.

INT. LAB HALLWAY

Devyn walks past stacks of broken desks, chairs, medical equipment, and books in the lab's long dark hallway. She jiggles door handles as she passes them.

DEVYN

No...No way...Who the hell does he
think he is? If she's alive...if
she's there...no absolutely not!
I'm not helping her twisted
experiment! Gah, is there anywhere
in this stupid place to get away
for a freakin' minute?

A bathroom door opens. The room is pitch black. Devyn turns on her flashlight and shines it inside.

INT. LAB BATHROOM

DEVYN

Finally, somewhere to be alone—

Devyn's light shines on a FEMALE FEEDER dressed in scrubs, chained to the toilet. It is in what seems like a deep sleep.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Thomas! Thomas! Thomas! Get in
here!

Devyn leans down, examining the FEMALE FEEDER.

Thomas rushes in the bathroom.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

What is this? What are you—

THOMAS

Uh...it was...she was, my old
biochem professor. Never really
liked her. Always had spinach stuck
her teeth, and her breath, I mean
don't get me started—

DEVYN

What are you doing with her? Is
this why you traded opiates and
sedatives for your crappy
ammunition?

The Female Feeder twitches her arm, but Thomas and Devyn are oblivious.

THOMAS

Well, yes. I was trying to find a
cure.

DEVYN

By yourself? Sure, you skipped a
couple grades, but you aren't a
doctor! You could've been killed!

Thomas walks up to the Female Feeder and grabs her arm,
braking off a rotten finger.

THOMAS

See? Safe. She's too out of it.

Thomas drops the arm and flicks the finger at Devyn.

DEVYN

You're disgusting.

Devyn rises and walks to the door.

Thomas laughs and steps toward Devyn. Suddenly, the Female
Feeder grips his leg and pulls him down. Thomas SCREAMS.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Thomas!

Devyn goes to grab Thomas, but it's too late, the Female
Feeder pulls him to her and bites down on his shoulder.
Thomas SCREAMS in agony.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Hold on!

INT. LAB HALLWAY

Devyn rushes through the hallway searching for, anything to stop the Female Feeder from killing Thomas.

Finally, a RED BOX on the far wall catches her eye. She sprints to it, and uses her elbow to shatter the box's glass door. She reaches inside and pulls out a FIRE AXE.

Devyn runs to the bathroom, axe in hand.

INT. LAB BATHROOM

The Female Feeder grinds her teeth into Thomas's collar bone. Thomas grunts in pain and tries to fight her off with his one good arm, but she doesn't move.

Devyn springs into the bathroom and hurls the axe at the Female Feeder's head, killing it.

Devyn pulls Thomas by the legs out of the Female Feeder's grasp and out the door.

INT. LAB HALLWAY

Echo and Blu meet Devyn in the hallway who sits on the floor with Thomas' head in her lap.

DEVYN

Thomas, I'm sorry...I don't know
what to do. What do I do?

THOMAS

(weakly)
I have five days. Echo is my only
hope, Devyn. The cure can still
work if I get it before then.

DEVYN

I can't. You know that! I can't—

Echo walks to Devyn, places her human hand on her cheek.
Devyn faces her.

ECHO

Ah...I...ga..go.

A tear falls down Devyn's cheek and onto Thomas' chest.

DEVYN

Echo, I can't. I can't do it.

ECHO
Ah...I...ca...can.

Echo smiles and places a hand over her heart.

A tear sheds down Devyn's cheek.

DEVYN
But...you...you don't know him,
Echo! You owe him nothing! You
don't know what she'll do to you.

ECHO
Ha...halp...fra...friend.

DEVYN
Okay...okay.

Suddenly, the SHOUTS of Scavengers and the GROWLS of Feeders is heard in the distance. Devyn gently places Thomas on the floor and crawls to the hall window.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF COLLEGE CAMPUS

Monger and twenty Scavengers pulled by SIX SUPER FEEDERS surrounds the outside of the building. The Feeders pull the Scavengers like hunting dogs caught on their game's scent.

MONGER
She's in here somewhere boys! Find
her!

INT. LAB HALLWAY

Devyn ducks back from the window and goes over to Thomas, Echo, and Blu.

DEVYN
(to Thomas)
Please tell me you have an exit
strategy?

Thomas smiles weakly.

THOMAS
Always.

EXT. CAMPUS PARKING GARAGE - EARLY MORNING

Devyn pushes Thomas on his makeshift gurney bed into a deserted parking garage. Echo and Blu follow closely.

DEVYN
We're here. Where is it?

THOMAS
Charging station.

Devyn turns the gurney and rushes over to Thomas' Volkswagen. It is rusted, and a pile of car batteries is strapped to the roof. Wires intermingle from the batteries and into the hood of the car. A large power cord protrudes from the side of the car and connects to the ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING STATION.

DEVYN
(looks at the car)
Uh?

THOMAS
What can I say? If Elon wasn't a Feeder he should hire me.

Devyn rolls her eyes.

Scavengers MUMBLE and Feeders MOAN through the garage.

DEVYN
Let's go.

Devyn opens the back door and Echo helps her slide Thomas from the gurney into the car.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
(to Echo)
Alright, get in.

Echo climbs onto the car floor. Devyn quietly closes the door, then goes to the hatchback. She folds up the gurney and shoves in the back over the seats.

Devyn jogs to the driver's seat, opens the door, and Blu jumps onto the passenger seat. Devyn gets in and quietly shuts the door.

INT. CAR

DEVYN
Okay, I can do this. Uh...ignition?

THOMAS
No, just a switch under the steering wheel. Flip it on. Just remember those driving lessons your dad made me give you.

DEVYN
That was years ago!

EXT. CAMPUS PARKING GARAGE

Monger rounds the far corner of the parking garage with his horde of Scavengers and Super Feeders.

MONGER
(points to car)
There!

INT. CAR

DEVYN
Crap!

THOMAS
Who are those guys anyway? Why are Scavengers after you?

DEVYN
Doesn't matter. Where's the switch, again?

THOMAS
Reach below the wheel!

Devyn flips the switch and the car cranks on!

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Reverse!

The Super Feeders attack the car! Blu BARKS. Devyn shifts the car into reverse, and slams her foot into the gas peddle!

EXT. CAMPUS PARKING GARAGE

The car backs up over a Super Feeder, then whips around, and takes off out of the garage and into the morning light.

The Super Feeders chase the car.

The Scavengers line up around Monger. Rat and Keith stand on either side of him.

RAT
What're we gonna do boss?

MONGER

We're goin' to find out where
they're going. Rat and Keith, get
my Feeders back! Rest of ya, search
the place!

Rat and Keith take two cattle prods from the two Scavengers
beside them and run out of the parking garage.

The rest of the Scavengers fan out.

Monger stares at the exit and grins.

EXT. DESERTED HIGHWAY

The old Volkswagen hums down the road. It passes a rusted
road sign that reads "Port Haven 200 Miles."

INT. CAR

Devyn firmly grips the wheel.

Blu's tongue flaps in the wind outside the passenger seat
window.

Echo is asleep on Thomas' chest in the backseat. Thomas' eyes
are glassy and black veins spread across his skin.

THOMAS

Devyn?

DEVYN

Yep. What is it?

THOMAS

Why?

DEVYN

Why what?

THOMAS

Why her? Why Echo?

DEVYN

I don't understand.

THOMAS

I don't know its weird. You hate
everyone and everything—

DEVYN

I don't hate everything.

THOMAS

You hate Scavengers, Feeders, other Loners even, but what you hate most is mothers.

DEVYN

Your point?

THOMAS

Well, isn't that what you are to Echo? Like the way she looks at you, and the way you look at her it's—

DEVYN

I'm not her mother! Never will be. I...Blu found her and she saved my ass from Scavengers, so I kept her around that's all. She's useful.

THOMAS

Yeah, okay, but I think that there's more to it...and who are those Scavengers anyway, what did you do to piss that ugly one off so bad? I mean he looked at you like you killed his entire family or something—

DEVYN

(grips wheel tighter)
How far did that sign back there say?

THOMAS

Oh, uh, a two hundred miles, I think.

DEVYN

Great. If we drive through the night we will be there in the morning. Get some rest, you need it.

INT. COLLEGE BIOCHEMISTRY LAB

Monger walks around the room. Glides his hand over a box of shell casings and pinches some gunpowder out of a beaker, then he sniffs it.

The other Scavengers search and loot the lab. Rick looks in the microscope Thomas used for Echo's blood.

RICK
Boss, over here!

Rick steps aside and Monger looks in the microscope.

RICK (CONT'D)
What is it, sir?

MONGER
That little one, I knew something
was strange...

RICK
I also found this map, sir.

Rick pulls large worn piece of paper out of the back of his pants and unfolds it on the counter by the microscope. The map is hand-drawn and it details locations of "Survivor Camps," "Food Sources," and "Military Bases." All of the locations apart from one have RED "Xs" through them. The remaining location is located by the coast and it reads, "LAST CHANCE! DR. BRIGGS??? PORT HAVEN."

Monger reads the map then steps away, his lip twitches.

MONGER
That little abomination!

Monger throws the microscope to the ground. At the CRASH, all the Scavengers stop their search and look up.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Boys, our hunt is now more than
vengeance, it is a hunt for our
freedom!

RICK
Sir?

MONGER
If that THING with the girl makes
it to the coast, there's a chance
our world will return to the past!
Again treated as shit and locked in
cages like animals!

RICK
(laughs)
Uh...how's that gonna happen?

Monger pulls Rick to his nose by the shirt collar.

MONGER

The Feeder child is the cure for
the virus. Without the virus, there
are no Feeders, without Feeders
there is no freedom!

Monger shoves Rick to the floor, then grabs the map.

MONGER (CONT'D)

They gotta go through our territory
to get to the port, so we'll cut
them off! Let's move!

SCAVENGERS

Yessir!

Monger steps on Rick as he exits. Rick grunts. The Scavengers follow Monger out.

EXT. DESERTED HIGHWAY - LATE EVENING

The Volkswagen swerves along the dark road surrounded a by
thick pine forest.

INT. CAR

Everyone is asleep apart from Devyn who is in and out of
sleep.

BEGIN DREAM:

INT. LAB EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT

Devyn (12) sits on an examination table in a small white
room. By the counter along the far wall Devyn's mother,
Sherry, dressed in a lab coat faces away from Devyn and
tinkers with something on the counter.

DEVYN

Mom? What's goin' on?

SHERRY

Almost done, sweetie.

DEVYN

What? I'm scared.

SHERRY

Don't be. You're helping all of us.

Sherry turns around and holds a syringe with a large needle.

DEVYN
No! I don't want to!

Devyn leaps off the exam table and runs out the door. Sherry chases Devyn.

INT. LAB HALLWAY

Devyn bolts down a white hallway with large windows on either side. In the windows, children scream and punch the glass trying to escape.

SHERRY (O.S.)
Devyn! I'll take care of you! I
promise!

Devyn darts down a hallway to the right. The children in the windows disappear.

Devyn approaches a window and peers inside. Suddenly, a FEEDER CHILD in a hospital gown jumps at Devyn from the other side of the window! Devyn SCREAMS and jumps back to the opposite hallway window, then another FEEDER CHILD jumps to that window.

Devyn crawls to the middle of the hallway and cries in a fetal position. A hand gently touches Devyn's shoulder.

SHERRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'll take care of you.

DEVYN
Mom? Please—

Devyn looks up at Sherry, but it's MONGER in Sherry's clothes. Devyn SCREAMS, and Monger grabs her arm and pulls her up to him.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
No! Mom! Help! Mom!

MONGER
I'm goin' to take good care of you,
Devyn!

END DREAM.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The car swerves violently down the road. Devyn's head lolls to one side. Monger's voice turns into Thomas'.

DEVYN
(asleep)
No! Mom! Help!

THOMAS
Devyn! Devyn!

The car runs off the road.

Thomas strains as he leans forward and grabs Devyn's shoulder. Devyn wakes startled just as the car almost hits a tree! Devyn yanks the steering wheel back onto the road and slams the brake! Echo wakes. Blu BARKS.

DEVYN
I'm sorry...I dozed off.

THOMAS
Maybe we should rest for the night.
Pull off, and you can sleep. I'd
rather not die before I get the
chance to live again.

DEVYN
No. We don't have time, I can—

Echo leans forward, taps on Devyn's shoulder, and points out the windshield. Devyn squints into the beam of the headlights.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
What? There's nothing—

Monger along with a horde of Scavengers and Super Feeders walk into the light.

Devyn closes her eyes, and inhales.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
He wants me, Thomas. That
Scavenger...I did something that I—

THOMAS
What did you do?

DEVYN
I killed his brother.

THOMAS
What? Why would you—

DEVYN
Stay here.

THOMAS

No—

Devyn turns to the backseat and looks at Echo.

DEVYN

Echo, if you can't figure out how to drive this thing, take the gurney out of the back and push Thomas down the road. It'll be close, but if you keep going and don't stop, you'll make it to Port Haven. Just don't stop, okay?

Echo reaches forward with her Feeder hand and holds Devyn's cheek, then she holds her hand over her chest. Devyn mirrors Echo's action.

Quickly, while Devyn looks longingly at Echo, Echo slides the folded FAMILY PHOTO from the apartment into Devyn's jacket pocket. Devyn does not notice.

Devyn takes a deep breath and turns away. Echo sits back.

THOMAS

She's a child, Devyn! She can't—

DEVYN

Blu will go with you. You're stronger than you know, Echo.

Devyn ruffles Blu's hair, inhales, opens the door, and steps out of the car.

THOMAS

Devyn! Wait!

EXT. DESERTED HIGHWAY

Devyn walks toward Monger. She stops about ten feet from him. The Feeders surrounding him GROWL.

MONGER

A bit of deja vu, innit?

DEVYN

Can we get this over with?

MONGER

Get this over with?

DEVYN

Yeah, you want to kill me for
taking your eye and killing your
brother, so do it!

MONGER

Ha! No. We're going to have our fun
first!

Monger pulls a pistol from his hip and quickly shoots Devyn
in the thigh. She SCREAMS in agony and falls to the ground.

MONGER (CONT'D)

(to Scavengers)

Search the car! Find the girl!

DEVYN

You want me! They have nothing to
do with this!

The Scavengers rush to the car.

Monger approaches Devyn who looks back at the car. Devyn's
eyes go wide, all the doors are open.

Rat leans in the car then looks toward Monger.

RAT

It's empty!

A tear runs down Devyn's cheek.

DEVYN

Good job, Echo.

Monger kneels down to Devyn.

MONGER

Don't worry about the girl, I have
a feelin' she'll come for ya. Then,
she can join the fun!

Devyn spits in Monger's face. Monger laughs then, slams
Devyn's head into the concrete, knocking her out.

INT. RUINED PRISON - DAY

A prison cafeteria room filled with concrete tables and
benches is surrounded by two levels of prison cells. A
staircase connecting the levels is at the far wall. The cells
hold about THIRTY SUPER FEEDERS. They wear shock collars
around their necks.

TWENTY SCAVENGERS along with RICK, RAT, and KEITH walk up and down the two levels holding cattle prods.

Devyn lays is cuffed on top of a cafeteria table in the center of the room. A large grated vent hums air on the ceiling above her. The gun shot wound on her leg creates a large pool of blood on the floor. Devyn weakly opens her eyes.

Monger circles Devyn like a shark. He twirls his knife in his hand.

MONGER

Ya, like it? It was my home for ten years before the virus set me free.

Devyn GROANS in pain.

MONGER (CONT'D)

I never thought I'd come back here, but I realized that in order to fully be free I needed to use the Feeders to my advantage. I figured out early on that if could capture one, I could make more. So I rallied some men and we took Loners to use as both weapons and food. And feeding them only makes them stronger. So, with an army of Feeders, men like me can shape the world in our image.

Devyn laughs.

MONGER (CONT'D)

Something funny?

DEVYN

Fee...Feeders...are a lost cause.

MONGER

Hm? And why is that? You're little Half-Feeder pet?

DEVYN

How...how...do you—

MONGER

I knew there was something off about her, but it wasn't 'til I saw her blood at the school when I realized what she really is: the end of my world...she will die with you.

DEVYN
She...she's gone.

Monger leans into Devyn's face.

MONGER
Oh, I have a inklin' she's nearby.
Girl sticks to you like sap to
bark. She just needs a bit of
persuadin'.

Monger jams his thumb into Devyn's bullet wound. Devyn
SCREAMS.

Super Feeders in the cells slam into the bars, hungry for
flesh.

Monger digs his thumb in deeper, but Devyn stays silent this
time, she grinds her teeth to bide the pain.

MONGER (CONT'D)
(laughs)
Not enough for you, eh?

Monger climbs on top of the table and straddles Devyn's
waist. He flips his knife in one hand then points it at
Devyn's left eye.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Eye for an eye?

Devyn shuts her eyes and squirms. Monger grabs her face.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Keith! Help me!

Keith runs up to Devyn.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Hold her head.

Keith grabs Devyn's head in both hands. Monger uses one hand
to hold her eyelid open as he lowers the tip of the knife in
his other hand toward Devyn's eye. Devyn can only look above
her. Suddenly, a shadow is seen in the vent on the ceiling.

The tip of the knife is near Devyn's pupil, but Devyn looks
at the vent. The screws of the vent come undone.

Monger laughs.

Suddenly, the vent grate crashes onto Keith's head, knocking
him out.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Told ya, she'd come!

Echo leaps out of the vent and jumps on top of Monger, but he throws her to the floor.

DEVYN
Echo! Get outta here!

MONGER
You named it? Adorable.

Echo stands up and GROWLS. The Scavengers circle around the cafeteria with guns pointed at Echo and Devyn.

DEVYN
Just...just let us go. We won't go to the port. I'll take her far away from here, and you can live your perverted life as free as you freakin' please.

MONGER
I don't think so...

Monger walks to Echo.

MONGER (CONT'D)
Rat! Collar!

From the side of the cafeteria, Rat tosses Monger a shock collar. Monger slowly goes to Echo who glares at him.

DEVYN
I'm sorry, Echo. I—

Suddenly, and ALARM RINGS and the cell gates open one by one.

The Super Feeders emerge, but do not attack. Then, each collar around the Super Feeders' necks pulses, unlocks, and falls to the floor. The Feeders GROWL, run after the off guard Scavengers and attack! The Super Feeders GROWL and the Scavengers SHOUT.

MONGER
What the hell?

DEVYN
Thomas...

MONGER
You little...

Monger reaches for the pistol at his hip, but its gone. He looks at Echo who holds her hands out. Suddenly, a GUN SHOT rings through the chaos of the prison as a bullet hits Monger's right shoulder, knocking him to the ground.

Echo runs over to Devyn who holds Mongers pistol in her hand.

DEVYN
We need the keys.

Echo pulls a set of keys out of her pocket and smiles.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
How did you—

Echo unlocks Devyns cuffs and nods toward Keith.

ECHO
Nah...no...not...sm...not smart.
In...in...in pock...in pocket.

DEVYN
I should've called you Houdini.
Let's get outta here.

Echo licks the side of Devyn's face leaving black ooze, then she helps Devyn up.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
What're you doing?

Echo points to the Feeders and covers her nose.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Oh.

Echo leads Devyn through the skirmish up the stairs, dodging Feeders as they attack Scavengers. The Feeders ignore Echo and Devyn.

On the cafeteria floor, Monger sits up holding his shoulder.

MONGER
(yells)
I'm coming for you! I swear it!
You're mine!

Devyn and Echo turn around and look at him.

DEVYN
Looks like you'll need this.

Devyn empties the bullets out of Monger's pistol onto the stairs, tosses the gun at him, then continues up the stairs.

Monger sneers and crawls to the pistol.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF PRISON - AFTERNOON

Overgrown bushes and tall pines encompass the prison. Scavenger ATVs sit are scattered nearby.

Echo helps Devyn to an ATV, and then rushes off into the trees.

Devyn rips off a piece of her shirt and ties it tight above the wound on her thigh. She grimaces as she tightens it.

Echo and Blu come out of the woods.

Echo pushes Thomas on a gurney to Devyn. Thomas holds a car battery with a remote attached to it. The Black veins cover every inch of Thomas' skin. His eyes are bloodshot and sunken in.

THOMAS

Hi, Devyn.

Devyn leans over the gurney and hugs Thomas. She ruffles his curls, but stops and straightens as clumps of hair fall out of his scalp.

DEVYN

No, this is too soon. You shouldn't be at this stage for another three days!

THOMAS

You were in there for three and half.

DEVYN

No! It wasn't that long...I...

Thomas pats the top of the car battery.

THOMAS

It's okay. You tried. And I'm like a hero now...Well, Echo helped... she snuck in and got the remote, and I used one of the car batteries to make this EMP. Brilliant, right?

DEVYN

No. This isn't over. I'm getting you to Port Haven.

THOMAS

There isn't time! Look at me! They won't have time to make a vaccine, even if we do make it.

DEVYN

No. We'll make it, and she'll make a cure, even if I have to beat it out of her. Echo, help me get him on here.

Echo and Devyn strap Thomas to the front cargo carrier of the ATV. Echo and Blu climb onto the back Devyn straddles the seat.

Super Feeders GROWL inside the prison.

Devyn turns the key, the ATV rumbles just as a horde of Feeders burst through the prison door. She squeezes the gas and the ATV takes off down the prison road.

EXT. GATES OF PORT HAVEN - MORNING

A fence with giant gates covered with rebar spikes and barbed wire surround the port. Gulls cackle as they fly overhead.

Devyn drives the ATV up to the gates.

Three SOLDIERS in armored hazmat suits carrying AR-15s run out of the gates.

Devyn, Blu, and Echo get off the ATV and approach the soldiers. Devyn limps from her leg wound.

SOLDIER ONE

Stop! Stay where you are!

The soldiers point their guns at Devyn.

SOLDIER TWO

It's infected!

The soldiers turn their guns on Echo. Devyn stops and pushes Echo behind her.

DEVYN

Wait!

SOLDIER TWO

Get out of the way!

DEVYN

No! Listen! She's not what you think! She is the cure!

SOLDIER THREE fires waring shots at Devyn's feet. Devyn stumbles back.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Just look at her! She's not attacking me! She's human!

SOLDIER ONE

(points to Thomas)

Then why is he infected? You're probably just showing symptoms your mind is infected!

DEVYN

She didn't bite him! A real Feeder did! That's why we're here, I need to Dr. Briggs! Now!

SOLDIER ONE

Prepare to fire!

The soldiers aim. Blu whimpers and Echo ducks behind Devyn.

DEVYN

Dr. Briggs! Sherry Briggs! Help!
Dr. Briggs! I have the cure!
Briggs!

The soldiers cock their rifles. Devyn kneels and hugs Blu and Echo close.

Then, the gates open, Sherry sprints out in a hazmat suit.

SHERRY

Stop! Put the guns away!

The soldiers lower their guns and Sherry approaches Devyn.

Devyn rises, and helps Echo up. Sherry kneels and studies Echo who hides behind Devyn.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Unbelievable. After all these years...it worked. Ha! I can't believe—

DEVYN

Can you fix him?

Devyn points to Thomas on the ATV behind her. Thomas GROANS.

Sherry slowly rises and stares at Devyn quizzically.

SHERRY

I...I...maybe. I need to test her blood. Um, I'm sorry, but do I know you?

DEVYN

No. You don't.

Devyn's jaw clenches and she turns away from Sherry.

Sherry moves with Devyn and stares at her.

SHERRY

You...it's just that you remind me of...it can't be—

DEVYN

Are you going to help him or not?

A tear runs down Devyn's cheek. She tries to hide it by rubbing her face on her shoulder.

Sherry removes the helmet to her hazmat suit. Tears well in her eyes. Sherry's hair is mostly gray, her cheeks hollow, and her green eyes are muddy. She looks exhausted.

SHERRY

(cries)

It can't be...is it you? Oh God. Oh my God! Devyn?

Sherry reaches to hug Devyn, but Devyn pushes her away. Sherry pulls her arms in and wraps them around herself as if in pain.

DEVYN

(sniffles)

I'm not here for you. I'm here because of Thomas. He says, Echo can fix him.

Devyn limps to Thomas who is weaker than ever. Patches of rotten flesh disfigure sections of his skin.

SHERRY

How...how are you here? Your convoy, they told me it was attacked, that you...Are you hurt?

Sherry looks at Devyn's bullet wound. She reaches for Devyn's cheek, but shudders away as Devyn flinches.

DEVYN

I'm fine!

SHERRY

If I would've known you were still
out there, I-

DEVYN

Please just fix him!

SHERRY

(sobs)
Devyn, please.

DEVYN

Echo, come on. This is useless.

Devyn goes to grab Echo's hand, but Echo snatches it away.
Echo sympathetically glares at Devyn.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Echo! Let's go!

Echo walks to Sherry, stands beside her, then holds her
Feeder hand to her heart.

Sherry smiles and holds her hand to her heart.

SHERRY

How do you know that? Did you teach
her this?

DEVYN

I didn't.

Devyn's eyes well with tears. Her face is red with anger.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

She won't help us, Echo! Don't you
get it! She's not my mother
anymore!

Sherry winces at Devyn's last words.

Devyn's face softens, anger turns to regret. She opens her
mouth as if to say something, but shuts it.

Sherry swallows her tears, wipes the rest from her cheeks,
and stands tall.

Sherry walks to Thomas.

SHERRY

(sniffles)

Oh, Thomas. He...uh...I'm not sure
I can synthesize a vaccine that is
strong enough in the time he has
left, but...

Devyn stands aloof and wipes tears from her eyes.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

I promise I will do everything I
can to save him.

(to soldiers)

Open the gates!

The gates to the port creak open.

EXT. PORT HAVEN - MORNING

The survivor camp is littered with tents. Some Loners pick vegetables from gardens made of crates. Others talk among themselves outside their tents. The hub of the port is a small community of survivors.

Soldiers guard the perimeter with rifles. A large watchtower made from shipping containers looms over the entire camp with RED ALARMS on all four corners.

A cargo ship is docked in the marina and loners and soldiers walk up and down its ramp carrying crates and barrels labeled OIL.

A large white event tent is heavily guarded. White plastic sheets surround the tent's walls.

Devyn carries Echo on her back as she and Blu follow Sherry and the gate soldiers who carry Thomas on a cot through the port.

EVERYONE in the camp stares at Devyn, Echo, and Thomas.

Echo fearfully buries her head in Devyn's shoulder.

DEVYN

It's alright. They don't know what
they don't know. Forget them. It's
just you and me.

Sherry opens the flap to the white tent as the soldiers carry Thomas inside.

SHERRY

In here, hurry!

Devyn, Echo, and Blu jog inside. Sherry zips up the flap.

INT. INSIDE MEDICAL TENT

Tables with beakers, microscopes, advanced computers, and various medical equipment lines the tables around the tent's perimeter. SEVEN SCIENTISTS in hazmat suits work in various stations around the tent.

Sherry leads Devyn, Blu, and Echo to a back room shut off from the rest of the tent by plastic sheets. The soldiers carrying Thomas stop.

SHERRY

My equipment is um...in here, in my lab.

Devyn, Echo, and Blu walk through the plastic drapes that frame the doorway. Sherry stays at the door and turns to the soldiers.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Lock him in the quarantine container.

Devyn steps out of the room.

DEVYN

No. He stays with us.

THOMAS

I'll be alright.

SHERRY

I'm sorry, but I can't risk endangering the entire camp if he turns.

DEVYN

Oh, so you finally care about the safety of others? The apocalypse changed you that much, huh?

Sherry swallows, but does her best to ignore Devyn.

SHERRY

He'll be right over there...

Sherry points to a vented shipping container at the far end of the medical tent. She nods to the soldiers and they carry Thomas to the quarantine container.

Devyn walks past Sherry, as she enters the room her hand brushes Sherry's. Sherry gasps and chokes back tears. Devyn stops and does the same, but Sherry does not see Devyn's reaction.

INT. SHERRY'S LAB - DAY

Sherry's lab resembles the rest of the tent with a table crowded with medial equipment, a large microscope, and a computer. Unlike the rest of the tent, there is an unmade cot on the far wall piled with stacks of lab papers and MRE wrappers, and in the corner is a LARGE BLACK MACHINE with tubes and wires running out of it connecting to various beakers and the computer. A SMALL WOODEN BOX with hot glued seashells on it sits on top of the machine.

Sherry desperately shoves off the stacks of paper, and MRE wrappers off the cot.

SHERRY
(sniffles)
Um...please, sit down.

Sherry motions to the cot. Devyn stands. Echo sits on the cot and Blu jumps in her lap.

Sherry goes to the table, sits on a stool, and prepares a syringe.

DEVYN
Did you even try to look for me, or
did you just believe everything
your precious military told you?

Sherry sets the syringe down and looks Devyn in the eye, her face kind and gentle, yet full of grief.

SHERRY
I tried. I tried so hard. As soon
as I heard I went after you, but
they dragged me away.

Devyn scoffs.

Sherry shakes her head defeatedly. She rises, takes the syringe to Echo, kneels, and gently grabs her human arm. Echo pulls it back and shakes her head 'No.'

SHERRY (CONT'D)
(to Echo)
It's alright. You'll feel a little
pinch and it'll be over real quick.

Echo scoots away on the cot.

DEVYN

She doesn't trust you. She was one
of your messed up child
experiments. You don't even
remember her do you?

SHERRY

(to Echo)

I never meant to hurt you, Echo.
I'm so sorry, I never meant to hurt
anyone.

Sherry rises, walks to the corner of the room and opens the wooden box. A picture of young Devyn happily swinging on a park swing looks up at Sherry, and she smiles. Sherry then grabs a box of NERD candy from the box.

DEVYN

But that's what you do isn't it?
You hurt people. And for what? To
get off on the idea of being the
hero that saves the world?

Sherry looks at Devyn.

SHERRY

I never wanted to be anyone's hero
but yours, and I'm so sorry that I
failed.

Sherry runs a hand through her tangles hair, then calmly walks to Echo, kneels, and hands her the box of Nerds.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

(to Echo)

These were Devyn's favorite. I
would stop by the gas station after
working late in the lab and put
them on her pillow for her to find
in the morning.

Echo takes the box of Nerds and empties it into her mouth. Most of them fall out of the Feeder side of her jaw, and Blu eats them as they drop on the cot.

Sherry once again grabs Echo's arm, this time Echo lets her. Sherry pushes the needle into Echo's arm and slowly draws out BLACK BLOOD into the syringe. Sherry removes the syringe from Echo's arm who continues eating the candy.

Sherry rises and takes the syringe to the counter where she squeezes the blood into a test tube.

DEVYN

The hero ship sailed when you gave me up with a bunch of other terrified kids to be experimented on, and when our convoy got ambushed you forgot about us, about me!

Sherry picks up another test tube with clear liquid in it and pours it into the other. Tears begin to well in her eyes once more.

SHERRY

(to Devyn)

I NEVER forgot about you. Not one second. You were my everything. If I could switch places with you I would in a heartbeat. I didn't know that you...Devyn, if I could go back I—

Devyn sneers and storms out the room.

Sherry shudders and takes a moment to compose herself. Then she takes the test tube to the machine, opens a hatch on it, puts the tube in a centrifuge, closes the hatch, and flips a switch to turn on the machine. The machine RUMBLES.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Okay, Echo. Let's try this. It should work, all of the other samples failed because they were either human or Feeder, never both. The defensive genes within her cells should provide the enhanced T cells I just added in enough time to attack the virus without being overcome.

Sherry goes to the computer, and types in a code. The machine stops rumbling and WHIRLS. Sherry types in another code and an image pops up on the screen.

On the screen is a blown up image of Echo's Half-Feeder blood cells.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

(to computer)

Come on. I can't fail her, not again.

Another set of RED T CELLS enters the screen. The black some of the black ooze of the Feeder cells tries to wiggle free of Echo's cells, but the human part of her cells won't let it escape.

Then, the red T cells attack the black Feeder side of Echo's cells and merge with it. The cells wiggle violently for a beat, then the black Feeder side turns red! Echo is the cure!

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Ha! Yes, yes, yes!

Devyn along with the scientists rush into the room.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

(points to computer)

Look! Oh, thank you, God!

Devyn shuts her eyes, inhales, and smiles.

The scientists CHEER! Devyn rushes to Echo and picks her up.

DEVYN

Thomas was right, yeah?

Echo smiles and hugs Devyn around the neck.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

(to Sherry)

How long til you can turn it into a vaccine?

SHERRY

An hour maybe? But, it hasn't been tested on anyone so...I just...don't get your hopes up.

DEVYN

Wouldn't be the first time.

Devyn sets Echo down on the cot and exits the room.

A tear sheds down Sherry's cheek as she turns to Echo.

SHERRY

You did it Echo, brave girl. You did it!

Sherry turns to the entryway and stares longingly after Devyn.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF PRISON - MORNING

Two Scavengers drag the body of another Scavenger out to a pile of dead Scavengers and Feeders.

Six other Scavengers including RAT tend their wounds leaning on ATVs and trees.

Monger, bruised and beaten, sits on an ATV and tightens a bandage around the bullet wound on his shoulder. Then, he takes out a hand-rolled cigarette and a lighter from his pocket, puts the cigarette in his teeth, then lights it.

RAT

What'll we do now, boss? That bitch definitely made it to the Port by now!

Monger puffs a ring of smoke into the air.

MONGER

We'll just have a pay a little visit.

RAT

Not to sound hopeless, or nuthin', but how? Most of our Feeders are gone and they got the army.

Monger looks up at the prison watch tower two-hundred feet away.

MONGER

Radio still work up there? Their stupid EMP didn't kill it?

RAT

Nah, shouldn't have. Should still work.

MONGER

Hm. Go up there and call the others. Tell 'em to bring the calvary and meet me at Port Haven. Tell 'em our future depends on it.

RAT

Yessir!

Rat runs toward the watch tower.

MONGER

Let's see how you do with a few hundred members of my army, girl.

Monger takes a long drag and exhales.

EXT. QUARANTINE CONTAINER - AFTERNOON

Devyn sits beside the vent of the container.

DEVYN

How ya doing in there? Feel any different yet?

THOMAS

A little. Your mom said it would take some time. A couple days for the full effect.

DEVYN

She's not my mom. Not anymore.

THOMAS

(mimics)

'That's great, Thomas!' You were right! Echo is the cure! I'm so glad you're gonna be okay!'

DEVYN

Ugh. I'm sorry. I just...I don't think I can do this.

THOMAS

Do what? You're already here, I'm getting cured, Echo's happy, and your mom said that once we load the ship in a few days, it'll take us to the sanctuary where they have the tech to make as many vaccines as needed.

DEVYN

Yeah, I know.

THOMAS

So what's the problem?

DEVYN

I can't just stay here and become one big happy family again. It's not that simple. She used me, then when I needed her most she left. I can't and I won't forgive her for that.

THOMAS

Have you every considered that she maybe did those things to not just save everyone else, but you as well? She loved you, and by the way she looks at you, I know she still does. She never stopped.

DEVYN

If she really loved me, she would have never sent me away, or she would've fought every damn day to bring me home, but she didn't!

Devyn stands.

THOMAS

You're right. But, Devyn, you're only hurting yourself by not forgiving her. You have a chance to start over, and with Echo you have a real chance. We all do.

DEVYN

It's too late! Your parents didn't ditch you, Thomas! Take care of Blu and Echo for me, I can't do this.

Devyn walks toward the medical tent.

THOMAS

Devyn, wait! Devyn!

INT. SHERRY'S LAB

Devyn watches through the plastic drapes as Sherry throws a handful of Nerd in the air and catches some in her mouth. Echo sits on the cot and LAUGHS. Blu BARKS. Sherry hands Echo a handful of Nerds.

SHERRY

Here, you try!

Echo takes the candy and throws it in the air, but they all bounce off her forehead and scatter on the cot.

Sherry LAUGHS.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Nice try!

Devyn sniffles and walks away.

Sherry turns and looks out the door, but no one is there.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Stay here.

Sherry exits the room.

EXT. PORT HAVEN - DAY

Devyn hides behind a crate and watches as soldiers go into a container and come out with weapons. She keeps low and moves closer to the container. She ducks behind an oil barrel and waits for the soldier that just entered to exit.

The soldier walks out with a rifle strapped to his shoulder.

Devyn sprints as best she can into the crate.

Sherry walks out of the medical tent.

SHERRY

Devyn! Devyn! Can we please, talk?

Sherry walks to the center of the port.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Devyn! Please! Devyn!

Devyn limps out of the shipping container with a AR-15 strapped to her back, a pistol on her hip, and a backpack in her hands that she stuffs a grenade in.

Sherry she sees Devyn walking to the gates.

SHERRY (CONT'D)

Devyn! Over here!

Sherry runs to Devyn and grabs her by the arm.

DEVYN

Let go of me!

SHERRY

Devyn, give me a chance, please.

DEVYN

Whatever you have to say means nothing. I don't trust you!

SHERRY

I won't lie to you...ever again.
I...I didn't say much in the tent
because you asked me to save
Thomas. I needed to focus, but now
we can talk. I've missed you so
much, more than you will ever know.
I'm so happy your alive—

DEVYN

You're only happy because I brought
you a cure, which is all you wanted
from me in the first place!

SHERRY

That's not true.

DEVYN

You let dad die, and you left me to
do the same!

SHERRY

I sent you away because a horde of
Feeders were coming, and there
wasn't time to save everyone. Your
father got bitten in the chaos, and
the military took me against my
wishes and shipped me here! They
tried to send me to the sanctuary,
but I fought against it! I knew in
my heart that somehow you were out
there and I prayed every day that
you'd make your way here.

DEVYN

You could've left. Searched for me.

SHERRY

They wouldn't let me leave. I'm the
only one who knows this virus well
enough to cure it!

DEVYN

Bullshit. I was lost, lonely, and
scared! I can't forgive you for
that.

Devyn limps to the gates.

SHERRY

Devyn, don't leave, please! Not
again! I can't lose you again.

Devyn stops and turns.

DEVYN

You have a new daughter now. One
that lives up to
your...expectations.

SHERRY

I never stopped loving you-

DEVYN

Just...take care of her.

Devyn limps to the gate and pulls out a grenade from her
backpack showing it to the THREE GUARDS.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Open it. Now!

The guards open the gate.

Sherry cries and falls to her knees.

Devyn exits as the gates close behind her.

EXT. FOREST OUTSIDE OF PORT HAVEN - EARLY EVENING

Devyn limps up to a large oak tree, swings her backpack
around, and sits.

She shuffles through her stash, laying out two grenades,
binoculars, a combat knife, rope, a wool blanket, two AR-15
magazines, a box of 9 millimeter bullets, and five MREs.
Devyn looks at her stash.

DEVYN

Should get me through a couple
days. Enough to get me to restock
at a town somewhere.

Devyn shoves the knife in her jacket pocket, grabs a magazine
and load it into her rifle, then she loads her pistol, bullet
by bullet.

Suddenly, multiple shots of GUNFIRE and an ALARM comes from
the Port and rings through the trees! Devyn grabs the
binoculars, jumps up, and runs into a clearing.

She looks through the binoculars and sees Scavengers rushing
through the gates, and Monger sitting on an ATV watching his
war unravel.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Damn cockroach! The military will
take care of you, I'm done being a
pawn in your game too.

Devyn drops the binoculars and turns to leave.

Then giant horde of Super Feeders GROWLS. Devyn picks the
binoculars back up and looks at the port. She sees hundreds
of Feeders climbing over the port's fence!

DEVYN (CONT'D)

No, no, no!

Devyn lowers the binoculars, looks at the empty forest ahead
of her, looks at the port, and looks at the forest. Her hands
shake.

She falls to her knees, punches the ground, and cries. She
puts her hand in her pocket to grab the handle of her knife,
but a piece of PAPER CRUNCHES in her fingers.

She pulls out the paper and unfolds it. It is the picture of
the family from the apartment. Devyn looks at the child and
mother in the photo, a tear falls on the mother.

Devyn smiles with tears in her eyes as she puts her hand over
her heart.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Dammit Echo.
(looks up at sky)
Thank you.

Devyn rises, grabs her backpack, stuffs the grenades inside,
puts the pistol in the back of her pants, and swings the
rifle on.

Devyn sprints, through the forest to the port as if her leg
wound no longer bothers her.

EXT. PORT HAVEN

Guns FIRE in every direction!

A FEEDER chases a LONER to a tent, the Loner SCREAMS and the
Feeder GROWLS!

Scavengers shoot at soldiers, but the soldiers are
overwhelmed, fighting off Super Feeders at the same time.

A Super Feeder launches itself from a crate and lands on a
soldier, his gun fires in the air as he goes down!

Rat prods a Super Feeder that feeds on a dead Loner.

RAT
Get goin' ugly! Woohoo!

The Feeder GROWLS and runs off attacking a scientist that runs out of the medical tent.

More Super Feeders drop down from the fence. The Super Feeders attack the Loners and soldiers picking them off one by one.

A group of Loners guarded by soldiers sprints to the dock attempting to get on the ship, but a group of Scavengers shoots the soldiers.

Then Super Feeders attack the Loners! SCREAMS of agony and terror echo through the camp.

Sherry runs out of the medical tent and into the chaos, dodging bullets.

SHERRY
Echo! Echo! Where are you!

Monger comes up behind Sherry and holds a knife to her throat.

MONGER
Where's that Feeder girl, doctor?

SHERRY
I don't know where she is! What do you want with her?

MONGER
Freedom.

Monger presses the tip of the knife into Sherry's neck...

DEVYN
Let her go.

Monger stops, grins, and turns around with Sherry still in his grasp.

Devyn, dripping wet, points her pistol at Monger's head.

MONGER
We've got to stop meeting like this.

DEVYN
I said, let her go!

Devyn steps closer...

Monger presses the knife into Sherry's skin cutting her...

MONGER

Give me the little Feeder, I'll
kill your mother, and we'll be
even. Scavenger's honor.

DEVYN

An eye for an eye?

A Super Feeder rushes toward Devyn...

Devyn shoots it through the eye without facing it...She keeps
her eyes on Monger...

The Super Feeder crashes to the ground beside Devyn.

Devyn drops her pistol on the ground.

MONGER

Eye for an eye.

Monger kicks Sherry to the ground, stands behind her, and
pulls her head back.

SHERRY

(cries)

I'm sorry, Devyn. I'm so sorry, for
leaving you, for everything. I'd do
anything to change it.

Monger focuses on Sherry's neck as he slices slow and steady
from her right jaw.

Sherry grimaces and looks at Devyn...

Devyn looks at her mother jerks her head back and winks.
Sherry's eyes widen. Devyn drops to the ground and grabs her
pistol.

DEVYN

Mom, now!

Sherry jerks her head back, butting Monger in the crotch!

Monger staggers back in pain...

Devyn cocks her pistol...

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Eye for a freakin' eye!

Devyn shoots Monger in his eye and he falls, dead!

Devyn puts her pistol back in her pants. She runs to Sherry and helps her up.

SHERRY

Devyn! I...I'm so sorry. I-

DEVYN

It's okay. Where's Echo? We need to leave!

SHERRY

I don't know! When they attacked she ran out of the tent, I was looking for her! I...

DEVYN

We'll find her. She's smart.

Devyn and Sherry look around.

SHERRY

Echo! Echo!

DEVYN

Echo! I'm here! Echo!

More Super Feeders drop from the fence...soldiers shoot them, but there's too many! The soldiers retreat.

SOLDIER ONE

To the ship!

SOLDIER TWO

Go! Hurry! I'll hold 'em off!

Soldier One guides twenty remaining soldiers to the dock...

The soldiers grab nearby Loners and shuffle them to the dock.

Soldier Two unloads his rifle into the horde of Super Feeders...

Sherry's eyes follow the Loners at the dock then a dog BARKS.

Sherry's eyes follows the sound of the dog.

She grabs Devyn's shoulder and points to the dock.

SHERRY

There! On the docks!

Devyn looks at the dock and sees...

Blu bark at soldiers and Loners as they run past Echo who struggles to push Thomas in a wheelbarrow.

DEVYN

It's Echo! Come on!

Devyn and Sherry sprint to the dock.

Devyn swings her rifle around and shoots a Super Feeder that leaps in front of her. The Super Feeder falls to the ground.

Sherry runs past the Super Feeder. Devyn jumps over it, but it grabs her ankle and pulls her to the ground. Devyn reaches for her pistol, grabs it, and tosses it to her mother as the Super Feeder pulls her to it.

Sherry grabs the pistol from the ground and cocks it.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

Mom! Shoot! Shoot it!

Sherry shakes, but aims the gun at the Feeder's head, and FIRES!

Sherry rushes to help Devyn out of the Feeder's grasp. Devyn stands. Sherry hugs Devyn. Devyn awkwardly hugs her back.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

We have to go, now!

Sherry releases Devyn and they run to the dock.

Soldier Two runs out of bullets, the Super Feeders race toward him, he runs for the dock, but a horde of fifty feeders jumps on him.

The rest of the Super Feeders sprint to the dock.

EXT. DOCK

Devyn and Sherry rush up to Echo, Blu, and Thomas.

The black veins are faint on Thomas' face and the rotten patches are gone.

THOMAS

Devyn.

DEVYN

You were cuter as a Feeder.

Thomas laughs.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
Echo, crazy, you alright?

ECHO
Ha...help.

DEVYN
Yes, you always help.

Devyn kneels down and hugs her, a tear rolls down her cheek.

DEVYN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

ECHO
It...it alll...ri...alright.

Devyn looks up at Sherry and smiles. Sherry smiles too.

The horde of Super Feeders rushes onto the dock.

SHERRY
Let's go!

Sherry picks Echo up and Devyn grabs Thomas' wheelbarrow handles and they run down the dock past barrels and crates of oil to the cargo ship.

The Super Feeders push and shove each other into the water as they run down the dock.

Devyn pushes Thomas up the cargo ship's ramp, Sherry follows with Echo, and Blu bolts in behind them.

EXT. TOP OF SHIP'S RAMP

The top of the ramp leads to a long corridor, and at both ends there are stairs, one leading to the bow's upper deck and the other to the stern's.

Soldier One runs up to the ship's RAMP CONTROL BOX and pushes the RED BUTTON to close the ramp.

SOLDIER ONE
Here!

Solider One tosses Sherry his pistol and Thomas his rifle.

Three Super Feeders run up the ramp, Devyn, Sherry, and Thomas Shoot them.

Echo ducks against the ship wall and holds Blu close.

Hundreds of Feeders swarm in the port and head to the dock.

Devyn's eyes go wide as she watches the Feeders swarm around the ship like angry wasps.

Devyn turns to Thomas, she nervously half-smiles at him.

Thomas' brows furl, confused.

Devyn runs to the side of the ship and looks over. She reaches in her backpack and pulls out two grenades. Her jaw tightens. She runs past Sherry, Echo, Thomas, Blu, and Soldier One, and leaps onto the ramp.

SOLDIER ONE (CONT'D)

Are you crazy!

SHERRY

Devyn!

ECHO

No!

Echo runs to the ramp after Devyn, but Thomas picks her up. She SCREAMS and kicks.

Devyn stops and turns toward Sherry and Echo.

DEVYN

Echo, I promised I'd be there for you, and told you that family isn't supposed to break promises, but I have to break my promise.

Devyn smiles at Sherry.

DEVYN (CONT'D)

I understand now. I hope you choose to forgive me now, it's not easy, I know because...well, I'm still learning how.

Devyn her hand over her heart.

A tear falls down Echo's human cheek, and she places her Feeder hand over her heart.

SHERRY

Devyn, please!

Devyn runs down the ramp and onto to the dock.

Sherry runs after her, and leaps out onto the dock just as the ramp closes.

Echo and Blu sprint up the stairs to the upper deck, and Thomas follows.

EXT. DOCK

Devyn slides on the dock under the legs of TWO Super Feeders. Devyn clears a path to a pile of oil barrels as she holds down the trigger of her gun and fires repeatedly into the horde of Super Feeders running at her on the dock.

Devyn runs to the barrels, takes the grenades out of her pocket. Suddenly, a Super Feeder lunges on top of her, knocking one grenade into the water and the other down the dock!

Devyn fights the Feeder off as best she can, but it's too strong! It bites her on her shoulder like a rabid dog. She SCREAMS in agony. She looks up at the ship, the Feeder still ripping into her flesh, a tear runs down her face, and she closes her eyes as she accepts death.

Suddenly, GUNFIRE erupts and the Super Feeder falls into the water, dead.

SHERRY (O.S.)

Devyn! Devyn!

Devyn opens her eyes as best she can and sees a blurry image of Sherry hovering over her.

DEVYN

Mom?

Sherry pulls Devyn around to the opposite side of the barrels.

SHERRY

(cries)

I'm not leaving you again.

Sherry places a grenade in her hand. She pulls Devyn into her lap and hugs her.

Devyn looks up at Sherry, tears run down her face, her blood pools on Sherry's lap.

The Super Feeders are only a few yards from them!

DEVYN

I—

SHERRY

It's okay. There's no time.

Devyn cries, and tries to lift her hurt arm to pull the grenade pin, but cannot.

Sherry kisses Devyn's forehead, and pulls the pin.

Super Feeders run to the barrels as it EXPLODES setting off a chain reaction to the other piles of barrels down the dock. Feeders and everything on the docks are obliterated.

EXT. STERN OF THE CARGO SHIP

Echo desperately peers over the railing as the smoke billows.

ECHO
(cries)
De...Dev...Devyn!

Blu jumps on the rail with his front paws and WHIMPERS.

The smoke clears, ash rains down, the dock is in shambles, the bodies of Super Feeders float in the water, Sherry and Devyn are nowhere to be found.

Echo sobs and collapses to the floor.

Thomas cries, approaches Echo, and sits beside her.

THOMAS
She saved us all.

Echo cuddles into Thomas' chest. Then, a large piece of ash lands on Echo's lap. She looks at it and her eyes widen; it's the picture of the family from the apartment that she put in Devyn's pocket! Echo smiles slightly, hold the picture to her heart and pats it.

Solider One walks up to them.

SOLDIER ONE
I'm sorry about Dr. Briggs and your friend, she...uh...she was brave.

THOMAS
Stupid, but brave.

SOLDIER ONE
The ships about to head to out, there are probably more of them coming. It's best if you come inside. There's blankets and medics.

THOMAS

Thanks.

SOLDIER ONE

Rest up. I hear you were Briggs' assistant. You and uh...it-

THOMAS

Her name is Echo.

SOLDIER ONE

Echo, will have your hands full at The Sanctuary.

Thomas nods as Solider One walks away. He stands, and them helps Echo up who sniffles and hugs the picture tight.

THOMAS

I'm so sorry, but we have to go.

Echo shakes her head 'No.'

Thomas kneels to face her.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Echo, Devyn...she...she would want you to. Please.

Echo closes her eyes and slowly nods her head in agreement.

Thomas exits the upper deck, and Echo begins to follow him.

Blu BARKS loudly over the railing.

ECHO

Bahloo! Ca...Come!

Blu BARKS more enthusiastically.

Echo walks over to Blu.

ECHO (CONT'D)

Dev...Devyn...ga...gone!

Echo HUFFS, looks over the railing and gasps! She instantly lights up, and a smile forms on the human side of her face.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

Annotated Bibliography

- Ahuja, Nitika, and Jessica Kerketta. "The Omnipresence of Cancel Culture: A Balanced Contrast." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2021, pp. 33–41., https://doi.org/http://www.ripublication.com/ijhss21/ijhssv11n1_05.pdf.
Ahuja and Kerketta discuss Generation Z's creation of "cancel culture" and how it often negatively impacts their worldview. They also discuss how the movement can be beneficial if used in a positive manner to decrease bullies. This source shows Generation Z's version of forgiveness and how it is nearly nonexistent.
- Ball, Wes, director. *Maze Runner: The Death Cure*. Warner Home Video, 2018. This film is an example of a coming-of-age post-apocalyptic film that captured young audiences. It is an example of a film that showcases the ideal of forgiveness through the teenage protagonist. The narrative shows that forgiveness can be exhibited and taught to young adult audiences.
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- Burge, Ryan. "Gen Z and Religion in 2021." *Religion in Public*, Religion in Public, 15 June 2022, <https://religioninpublic.blog/2022/06/15/gen-z-and-religion-in-2021/>. Burge

discusses Gen Z's distancing from religion. He uses survey statistics of those who identify as religious. The data reports that Generation Z is the least religion generation in centuries, proving that modern culture needs to showcase more Christian values that relate to teenagers.

Cox, Daniel A. "Generation Z and the Future of Faith in America." *The Survey Center on American Life*, The Survey Center on American Life, 4 Apr. 2022, https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/generation-z-future-of-faith/#_edn21.

Dr. Daniel Cox explains that a leading cause for Generation Z's decrease in faith is because of a lack of a two-parent household. He explains that having a parent that represents faith is crucial to children maintaining that faith into adulthood. Cox's argument proves that teenagers need role models and examples of moral-based faith systems like Christianity.

Crouch, Andy. *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. IVP Books, 2009. In his guide, Andy Crouch discusses that it is crucial for Christians to be culturally aware and participate in culture. He notes its importance by noting that if Christians refuse to be aware and create culture then their values and religion will be overshadowed and lost. This source helps to explain the necessity for Christianity's need to be aware of Generation Z's culture.

Cunningham, Jeff. "Why Is Generation Z So Depressed-Overprotective Parents." *Thunderbird School of Global Management*, Arizona State University, <https://thunderbird.asu.edu/thought-leadership/insights/why-generation-z-so-depressed-overprotective-parents>. Cunningham's research explains that overprotectiveness is why Generation Z's relationship with their parents is strained and often nonexistent. This

source proves that communication and the Christian value of unwavering love, especially between a parent and child needs to be shown to Generation Z. In doing so, parent and child will come back together.

Essential Teen Study Bible: Christian Standard Bible. Holman Bible Publishers, 2017. This is a Bible where the passages are written in easy to interpret language for a teenage or young adult reader. The passages in the Bible explain Christianity's version of the values of forgiveness, love, and acceptance.

GotQuestions.org. "What Is Progressive Christianity, and Is It Biblical?" *GotQuestions.org*, 6 Oct. 2010, <https://www.gotquestions.org/progressive-Christianity.html>. This article defines progressive Christianity, which Generation Z relates to. Furthermore, it discusses how progressive or liberalistic ideals can be biblical, and it warns about some ideals that deviate from Christian teachings. The article shows that progressive ideals can be explored with caution in Christian artifacts.

Hopper, Elizabeth. "Can Helping Others Help You Find Meaning in Life?" *Greater Good*, The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, 16 Feb. 2016, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_helping_others_help_you_find_meaning_in_life. Hopper discusses that helping others can help oneself to find purpose in their life. This source is used to show how the protagonist of *Echo's Calling*, through her acceptance and following assistance of others leads her to find purpose. Such a notion is an inherent Christian value that the screenplay plans on exhibiting to Generation Z.

Jacoby, Vanessa M, et al. "Betrayal Trauma in Youth and Negative Communication during a Stressful Task." *International Journal of Aging & Human Development*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2016, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28195013/>. This research

paper proves that betrayal from a parent can lead adolescents to experience trauma and self-isolation. The research is used to show that the protagonist of *Echo's Calling* experiences such trauma and thereby relates to Generation Z. The source is also used to show Generation Z through *Echo's Calling* that they can overcome such trauma.

Kayser, Ben. "A Quiet Place." *Movieguide*, Movieguide, 8 June 2021, <https://www.movieguide.org/reviews/movies/a-quiet-place.html>. Kayser's Christian analysis of *A Quiet Place* shows screenwriters that Christian values can be showcased in secular film. The article summarizes the film and discusses that it teaches the Christian value of love and family relationships. The article helps prove that secular films that teach Christian values can be successful to a young audience.

Krasinski, John, director. *A Quiet Place*. Paramount Pictures, 2018. This film and its screenplay are an example of a film which shows a strained parent-child relationship and how it can be mended with love. While the film sets an example of a parent and child overcoming trauma with love, it leaves the child without total resolve at the narrative's resolution. The narrative of this film is used to show that Generation Z will relate to and learn more from a narrative that shows the Christian value of unwavering love and complete resolve.

Levine, Jonathan, et al. *Warm Bodies*. Lionsgate, 2013. This film and its screenplay are an example of a post-apocalyptic zombie film with a target audience of teenagers and young adults. The film's example of accepting others is used to explain that the idea of acceptance relates to Generation Z, yet the notion could be explored further and relate to them more if the development of the characters was more extensive.

Lucas, George, director. *Star Wars, Episode I, the Phantom Menace*. Sony Classical, 1999. This film is an example of a successful science-fiction film. This film was the first science

fiction story I saw, and it was part of my impetus for creating my own science-fiction film.

Lucas, George, director. *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*. Lucasfilm LTD, 1980. This film and its characters are used as an example to show that science-fiction characters have great depth and teach their audience valuable lessons. The narrative is used to discuss examples of great character development and the lessons they share which act as part of my impetus for writing a science-fiction screenplay.

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Movieguide. "Warm Bodies." *Movieguide*, Movieguide, 13 July 2015, <https://www.movieguide.org/reviews/movies/warm-bodies.html>. This Movieguide article does not have an author listed, yet it describes the film, *Warm Bodies* in a Christian context. The article explains that the film shows the Christian value of acceptance through its character dynamics. The article helps prove that screenplays which show the Christian value of acceptance can be successful.

Myers, Jack. "Understanding Gen-z: The Post-Apocalyptic Generation." *HuffPost*, HuffPost, 23 Aug. 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/understanding-gen-z-the-post-apocalyptic-generation_b_599dc8f1e4b056057bddd04e. Jack Myers discusses in his article the values of Generation Z. He also discusses who they are as a distinct group centered around

diversity and social media. This source helps Christians to be aware of Generation Z's culture.

Nadworny, Elissa. "Why Teens Find the End of the World so Appealing." *NPR*, NPR, 18 Dec.

2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/12/18/536007249/why-teens-find-the-end-of-the-world-so-appealing>. Nadworny explains in her article why teenagers and young adults relate to post-apocalyptic narratives and cultural artifacts so much. Her research says that teens relate to world ending narratives because they believe they are living in the apocalypse now due to negative media.

Navarro, José Gabriel. "Number of Movies Seen Monthly in the U.S. by Generation 2019."

Statista, Statista, 12 Aug. 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/299154/movie-going-penetration-age-group-usa/>. Navarro's poll and statistics show how popular the film industry is and how many people it reaches. Furthermore, the statistics show what types of films by genre are most popular. This source shows that science-fiction films which include the sub-genre of post-apocalyptic films are consistently popular, proving that such narratives have the potential to greatly impact younger audiences.

Overstreet, Jeffrey. "The Truth of Scorsese's Faithless Characters." *ChristianityToday.com*,

Christianity Today, 12 Jan. 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/january-web-only/truth-of-faithless-characters-in-film.html>. Jeffery Overstreet is a Professor at Seattle Pacific University, a Christian blogger, and film critic. In his article, he discusses the importance of appreciating and learning from secular films through a Christian perspective. Overstreet's article helps prove that a bridge can be built between secular and Christian screenplay, and that there is much to learn from popular culture in the context of Christianity.

Parker, Kim, and Ruth Igielnik. "On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future:

What We Know about Gen Z so Far." *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic*

Trends Project, Pew Research Center, 1 Apr. 2022, [https://www.pewresearch.org/social-](https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/)

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[know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/](https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/). Parker and Igielnik discuss Generation Z's version of

forgiveness, love, and acceptance and how their versions of these values came to be.

They claim that diversity and the idea that their future is certain is a leading cause for

their harsher or stricter version of the values. This source proves that Generation Z's

versions of forgiveness, love, and acceptance are different from Christianity's

unwavering versions.

Pattison, Sandra. "35 Streaming Services Statistics You Need to Know in 2022." *Cloudwards*,

Cloudwards.net, 29 May 2022, <https://www.cloudwards.net/streaming-services-statistics/>.

Pattinson's statistics exhibit how much America utilizes film streaming services. This

source shows that cultural artifacts like screenplays which are made into film are the most

popular amongst western culture and that they are easily accessible. Therefore, because

screenplays have access to a vast audience it is imperative that the values they teach

young generations are ones that will create a positive future.

Pengue, Maria. "16 Eye-Opening Negative News Statistics for 2022." *Letter.ly*, Letter.ly, 28

May 2022, <https://letter.ly/negative-news-statistics/>. Pengue details that 90% of media

and news coverage is negative. She also discusses the detrimental impact that such media

has on Generation Z. This source explains why Generation Z relates to post-apocalyptic

artifacts and why they are often hopeless about their future, thereby indicating a need for

Christian values which instill hope.

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Rice, Charlotte A, et al. "Modern Teens and the Cultural Abundance of Diversity Acceptance." 2022. This interview is one I had with two of my sixteen-year-old students, with their parents' written consent. Rafe Fodrie and Riley Tosto discuss their generations inclination to post-apocalyptic literature. Their discussion also helps support the idea that Generation Z shies away from Christian values because they believe that such values limit diversity and social change. This interview proves that a post-apocalyptic screenplay like *Echo's Calling* which is not inherently Christian, but teaches Christian values would be popular with Generation Z.

Rubin, Rebecca. "Diverse Audiences Are Driving the Horror Box Office Boom." *Variety*, Variety, 26 Oct. 2018, <https://variety.com/2018/film/box-office/horror-movies-study-1202994407/>. Rubin indicates that science-fiction/horror films like a zombie post-apocalyptic screenplay bring in diverse audiences. The source also notes that younger generations view such films more than older ones, proving that these screenplays can be successful in reaching young audiences.

Seattle Pacific University. "Faculty Profile." *Jeffrey Overstreet - Seattle Pacific University*, 2022, <https://spu.edu/academics/college-of-arts-sciences/english-cultural-studies-department/faculty/overstreet-jeffrey>. Seattle Pacific University's "Faculty Profile" page provides background for Professor Jeffery Overstreet. The page proves the credibility of

Overstreet as an academic and professional in the film industry. Overstreet is referenced in this thesis to support bridging the gap between secular and Christian films.

Schwadel, Phillip, and Sam Hardy. "Faith Still Shapes Morals and Values Even after People Are 'Done' with Religion." *The Conversation*, The Conversation US, Inc., 13 Sept. 2022, <https://theconversation.com/faith-still-shapes-morals-and-values-even-after-people-are-done-with-religion-160328#:~:text=Religion%20influences%20morals%20and%20values,a%20web%20of%20social%20connections>. Schwadel and Hardy discuss how faith is valuable because it teaches moral lessons that humanity desperately needs. The article explains that morality would not be prevalent in society if religion was not present in most of the world's population. The article proves that teaching Christian values to a young is necessary to create a more loving, forgiving, and accepting society.

Seeger, Linda. *Making a Good Script Great*. Samuel French, 2010. Seeger's guide teaches the foundational elements of a successful screenplay. The point she drives consistently throughout the text is relatable and well-written character development. Seeger proves that a screenplay's character development is how to successfully teach motifs and values to an audience.

Seymour, Emily. "Gen Z: Politically Leaning to the Left." *VOA*, Voice of America (VOA News), 25 Aug. 2019, https://www.voanews.com/a/student-union_gen-z-politically-leaning-left/6174518.html. Seymour discusses via statistical evidence why Generation Z is more progressive than any other generation. The article discusses what liberal issues and values Gen Z cares about. The article helps Christian screenwriters understand what

themes, issues, and motifs need to present in their screenplays if they are to be successful in relating to teenagers while teaching them Christian values.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., et al. *Everyday Theology How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*.

Baker Academic, 2014. Like Andy Crouch, Vanhoozer's guide to culture teaches Christians that in order for the teaching of Christ to thrive, they must be aware of and sometimes participate in cultural trends. This source shows that understanding and relating the Generation Z through cultural artifacts is needed if Christian values are to be represented in society.

Weiland, K. M. *Creating Character Arcs: The Masterful Author's Guide to Uniting Story*

Structure, Plot, and Character Development. PenForASword Publishing, 2016. Weiland discusses the importance of meaningful and intentional character arcs. The guide indicates that the most successful character arc from an audience's perspective is the "positive character arc" The "positive character arc" develops a character toward morality and justice. This source supports the idea that the protagonist's positive arc in *Echo's Calling* will be successful.

Zylstra, Sarah Eekhoff. "6 Things Christians Should Know about Gen Z." *The Gospel Coalition*,

The Gospel Coalition, 15 Feb. 2022, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/gen-z/>.

Zylstra details in her article what Christians need to be aware of when it comes to knowing and even interacting with Generation Z. Her article helps to explain that Generation Z is a generation of action. In other words, if they are going to love, forgive, and accept they must see that those ideals lead to positive societal change. This article proves that in order for Generation Z to relate to and learn Christian values, the characters

in *Echo's Calling* must show that change has occurred within themselves and society through their exhibition of those values.