

UNDERLAND

Pilot

written by

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INT. ABANDONED SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Sunlight streams through gaps in the ceiling and lands on an other-worldly type flower... the WYVERN.

A dirt-stained hand plucks the florescent blossom from the vine that has twisted around the fallen beams.

MAE (V.O.)
The world is shit.

MAE, 16, broken and far too old for her years, holds the flower up and studies it in the sunlight. The tiniest smile creeps across her face.

EXT. SOUTH SIDE FAMILY CAMP - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sheets of RAIN pound the pavement. Ragged, mismatched, Converse high-tops with ripped laces knotted at the eyelets, hurry past an abandoned parking garage and sea of forgotten vehicles.

MAE (V.O.)
No one makes it out alive.

The sneakers stop before a drain grate. With a quick look over her shoulder, it's clear the drowned rat is Mae. She lifts the grate, shimmies down into the hole, and disappears underground.

INT. ABANDONED SUBWAY STATION - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Mae spins the flower between her fingers - its shape could almost look like the face of a dragon.

MAE (V.O.)
When wyvern first appeared, we didn't know what it was, what it could do...

She plucks a petal and places it to her lips. A moment of ecstasy... with one lick, and a bite of her lips, it's gone.

MAE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It didn't take long for them to make it illegal.

Pain and grief reflected in her eyes as she stares ahead, somber. Nothing to do but wait for the flower to do its magic... silence the screams inside of her.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The relentless RAIN hammers every exposed surface as the Converse sneakers pound the pavement.

MAE (V.O.)
They claim we need all our faculties
to survive this hell.

Mae slides down the mud-soaked hillside and lands at the edge of a broken fence. A moment of hesitation as she studies the dense forest beyond the fence. With resolve, she squeezes her slight frame through the narrow opening.

MAE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I disagree.

She vanishes into the thick, black forest.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

MUSIC plays. As she glances around, the city vibrates with COLOR. Now, free as a bird and high as a kite, Mae strolls down the middle of the city street, arms outstretched as she relishes in the euphoria. Her mismatched Converse shuffle across the pavement with every carefree step.

MAE (V.O.)
Sometimes you need to turn off...
feel numb for a while.

A soft colorful glow swirls over DEEP, LONG CLAW MARKS etched into the side of a building - the MUSIC SKIDS TO A STOP.

MAE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But reminders are everywhere.

Mae's brow furrows, as the chaos within bubbles up.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

HARLAN, 17, baby-faced militia soldier, wipes the RAIN from his face as DEEP GROWLS grab his attention. He turns toward SOMETHING UNSEEN behind him.

MAE (V.O.)
There is no escape.

SLOW MOTION as horror falls across his face and he points then mouths "GO, NOW!" Harlan rifle up, turns to run.

MAE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And when they come... no one survives.

Mae, a deer in headlights, stands frozen in the RAIN. GUNSHOTS fire... BLOOD SPLATTERS Mae's face.

MAE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I should be dead.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

HARLAN'S GUTTURAL SCREAMS echo through the streets as Mae drops down into a seated position in the middle of the street. She closes her eyes. A single tear rolls down her cheek.

RYA, 10, an urban street-kid, seen through Mae's hallucinogenic lens, races straight toward us, in her hand dangles a DEAD RAT.

RYA

I got one!

Rya steps in close, the dead rat hovers over Mae's head.

RYA (CONT'D)

You found some wyvern?

Mae looks up to Rya as she opens her hand to reveal a small bunch of the bizarre flowers.

RYA (CONT'D)

Wanna hide them in the rat?

TITLE: UNDERLAND**EXT. SOUTH SIDE FAMILY CAMP - DAY**

Mae and Rya hike through what was once a busy city, now in ruins. Several DEAD RATS hang from Rya's belt as Mae lugs her overstuffed backpack, full of the day's finds.

As the girls near the makeshift walls that enclose a concrete camp in the city's center, Mae ties her hair up - ON THE BACK OF MAE'S NECK a stick and poke tattooed "S" and beside it, a "B" with an "X" over it.

Ahead of them, CULLIN, 12, rifle in hand, stands on a precarious platform as camp lookout.

CULLIN

(to someone below him)

They're back. Open the gate!

A corrugated iron slab rolls open. The two girls pass through the gateway. As the gate closes behind them, BRIAN, 12, makes a beeline for Mae's backpack and digs through it before she can even take it off.

BRIAN

Did you find any blades?

She opens her mouth to respond as he pulls out a small pocket knife and opens it. He glares at the tiny blade...

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 Couldn't find anything smaller, huh?

MAE
 Then give it back--

She reaches for the knife, but Brian holds it away, snaps it shut, then takes off in a sprint across the camp.

Tents, most made from rigged up plastic sheets, lay scattered across the pavement. On the far side, CHILDREN (6-16) work in raised gardens while others wash clothes by hand then hang to dry on the rope strung behind them.

As Rya and Mae cross the camp, DAISY, 6, the last spark of innocence buried beneath overused hand-me-downs, skips over.

DAISY
 Can I help you clean them, Rya?

RYA
 No.

DAISY
 Why not?

RYA
 You don't know how.

DAISY
 So?

RYA
 So, you'll ruin them.

Mae's eyes land on PETER, 17, projects coolness greater than his small build and acne ridden complexion would suggest, as he struts across the camp like a king.

She drops the backpack at her feet.

MAE
 Here, Daisy, you can take this to Suzi for me.

Mae makes a beeline for Peter as Daisy whines behind her.

DAISY
 But I want to gut the rats.

RYA
 Well, you can't.

Rya abandons little Daisy with the heavy bag and heads for the tents with the rat carcasses.

VESPER, 17, a drama queen with attitude, crosses Mae's path and pauses to look her up and down.

MAE

What are you looking at?

VESPER

Nothing important.

Vesper, pleased with herself, moves on as Mae glares at her. Mae turns her focus back to the task at hand... Peter is nowhere in sight.

MAE

Fuck.

She hurries off in the direction he was headed.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE IN RUINS - DAY

As Mae half-jogs past, Peter jumps out from behind the wall and grabs her by the waist. Mae yelps and he jams a hand over her mouth then shoves her backward, against the wall.

PETER

Did you think I wouldn't notice you following me?

Mae, far too calm, shakes her head. Peter glances around to make sure there are no onlookers, then drags her inside.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE IN RUINS - DAY

Peter tosses Mae against an abandoned van. She slams into it and stumbles, but finds her footing and stands tall as she turns back to him.

PETER

There are rules, Mae. You can't just--

MAE

Fuck the rules.

Peter grabs her throat. She stares back, unemotional.

PETER

One word is all it would take to destroy you.

MAE

I know.

His frustration builds with every non-reaction she gives.

PETER

I matter!

MAE

Okay.

He looks into her eyes then releases his grip as he steps back.

PETER

Your eyes are dilated.

Peter clenches his fists as he paces, an internal debate tears at him... He turns back to her.

PETER (CONT'D)

You bring any back?

Victory is hers and she knows it, Mae opens her clutched fist to reveal a single wyvern petal.

MAE

Just for you.

His GQ cover grin flashes and charm pours out of him as easily as anger had the moment before. He reaches for the petal. Mae closes her fist.

MAE (CONT'D)

The rarest items are always the most expensive.

She leans back against the van, places the petal on her tongue. Fear washes away his arrogance as the payment becomes clear.

PETER

Fuck you.

She licks her lower lip. Her eyes dare him to come get the flower petal.

Everything inside him screams don't do it, yet he can't pull his eyes away from her.

Mae arches her back as she lays back, against the van, and slides her shirt up. She closes her eyes as her hand caresses her abdomen... fingers tease the top of her pants.

Peter swallows hard...

PETER (CONT'D)

Fine. Give it to me!

He grabs her and licks the flower petal from her tongue. They stare at each other, bodies close. Peter kisses her.

INT. ABANDONED VAN - PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Windows steam as Mae and Peter make out on back bench seat.

He lifts her shirt over her head. His hand runs over a couple thick scars across her back, he freezes--

PETER

If they find out--

MAE

Stop talking.

He watches her unfasten his pants. His head spins as the wyvern takes hold. Mae's hand slips inside his pants. Fuck it. Peter gives in... to Mae, to the drugs, to his desire. He yanks down his pants and moves on top of her.

She lays her head back on the seat, eyes closed, ready--The van door FLIES OPEN...

SUZI (O.S.)

What the hell do you think you're doing?

Peter jumps back, off of Mae, hands in the air.

PETER

We didn't do it! I swear!

Mae doesn't bother to move. She just sighs and glares at...

SUZI, 18, very pregnant, stands outside the van with the attitude of an uptight den mother.

SUZI

Out. Now!

It's a stare-down between Mae and Suzi as Peter clambers to pull up his pants. He stumbles out of the vehicle.

PETER

She drugged me!

Suzi shoots a look of fury at Mae who lays back and rolls her eyes with a laugh -- he's such an asshole.

Disgusted, Suzi turns back to...

MYKIE, 16, tomboy with an attitude problem, and DREW, 15, the biggest kid in camp in height and width.

SUZI

Get her out of there.

She shakes her head at Mae one last time before she walks away.

SUZI (CONT'D)
And get her dressed.

Mykie and Drew climb into the van.

EXT. SOUTH SIDE FAMILY CAMP - DAY

All heads turn as Mykie and Drew drag Mae through the campground. Suzi marches behind them, Peter, now flying high, by her side.

SUZI
(whispers)
You're about to become a father, so
get it together or I swear I'll tell
them... everything.

Peter lifts his head high, tries to appear sober.

Mykie and Drew shove Mae down onto a cobbled together stage in the center of camp. Rya, rat blood smeared clothes, races over.

A CROWD of youths, 6-16, gather. Tattoos mark the back of all necks for those age thirteen and older with either an "S," "H," or a "G." Among the crowd, Rya, stares up at Mae, helpless.

Mykie and Drew strap Mae's wrists to a post with old leather belts. Mae's eyes meet Rya's with a little shrug. Mykie retrieves a leather strap and holds it out. Suzi steps forward, looks down on Mae.

SUZI (CONT'D)
You brought this on yourself.

Mae stares at Suzi's belly, then into her eyes.

MAE
Did I?

Head high, Suzi snatches the leather strap from Mykie and takes her place, center stage, before the crowd. As Suzi holds the leather strap high - all MURMURS CEASE and a hush falls over camp. The "B" on the back of Suzi's neck now prominent as she speaks.

SUZI
Mae, while under the influence of
wyvern, has been caught partaking in
behaviors outside her class...
Luckily, before any damage was done.

Suzi glances at Peter. He lowers his head, ashamed.

SUZI (CONT'D)

For some reason, Mae seems to believe she is above our laws. Obviously, three lashes wasn't enough to convince her differently. How many should she get this time?

Excitement builds among the kids.

CROWD MEMBERS

Five! Seven!

Daisy reaches for Rya's hand, but Rya snatches it away as she looks over the group with disgust.

Vesper steps forward, the "B" on her neck prominent.

VESPER

Ten!

Suzi, taken aback, looks to Mae then back to Vesper.

SUZI

Accepted. Ten it is. To be delivered by the one offended.

She hands Peter the strap and steps aside. Peter stares at the strap then looks up to the crowd... A psychedelic glow floats over all the faces. He sways a bit, steps forward, and bends down close to Mae.

PETER

You can't touch me.

Peter stands and delivers the first blow across Mae's back. WHACK! The strap rips her shirt, a few spots of blood seep through the fabric. Mae clenches her jaw.

WHACK! It rips into her back again. WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!

Mae can't hold it in any longer - she cries out in agony as blood soaks through her shredded shirt.

The crowd CHEERS... all but Rya. Peter pauses. The cheers wash over him like heroin. He resets, his hand tightens around the strap, ready to go harder, faster.

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK! Half-conscious, Mae whimpers as the final blows tear her flesh.

Suzi stares straight ahead, chin high, she feigns confidence.

Rya pushes back through the crowd and races for her tent.

INT. MAE AND RYA'S TENT - DAY

A makeshift tent. Old, heavy tarps strung up with rope create three sides and a concrete slab, covered in chalk drawings, for the forth wall. A lantern on an overturned crate beside two sleeping bags spread over small cots. On the far cot waits...

Rya, a bowl of water and a pile of rags by her side, jumps to her feet as the tent flap opens.

Mykie and Drew drag a semi-conscious Mae in and dump her on the ground then turn to exit. Mykie stops to look back at Rya.

MYKIE

She's not your problem.

Rya studies Mykie.

RYA

Drives you nuts, doesn't it?

MYKIE

No. What?

RYA

You'll never mean as much to Suzi as she did.

MYKIE

You're a little cunt.

Mykie nods toward the bloody mess that is Mae.

MYKIE (CONT'D)

Take a good look where you're headed.

She storms out. Rya bends down beside Mae to assess the damage.

EXT. SOUTH SIDE FAMILY CAMP - NIGHT

Mykie marches through the camp as its RESIDENTS gather around rubbish-bin fires. Some roast rats while others tell stories.

CULLIN

(to kids)

The ground shook as it came near.
Boom. Boom. Then with a growl and
flash of it's teeth--

Drew sneaks up and grabs Cullin from behind - the boy jumps out of his skin. Drew and the other kids laugh their asses off.

CULLIN (CONT'D)

Fuck-tard!

Brian races over to Mykie, out of breath.

BRIAN

Where's Suzi?

MYKIE

Why?

INT. BREEDER HOUSING - NIGHT

The basement area of what was once an office building, re-imagined as "family quarters," fashioned from scavenged leftovers of a world long gone.

Mykie descends the stairs as Vesper climbs past her.

VESPER

Oh wow, is it ass-kissing time?

MYKIE

Ew, your face does a weird thing when you get jealous.

VESPER

Play pretend all you want, but we all know you're just a hunter.

MYKIE

And good with a knife. Where is she?

Vesper glares at Mykie then nods down the stairs, toward a table in the far corner.

VESPER

Trying to enjoy a minute without you nagging her.

Mykie pushes past Vesper and marches down the stairs and crosses to the "dining area." Lanterns strung along the walls provide light as Suzi sits across from Peter, half-eaten, cooked rats on their plates.

MYKIE

(to Suzi)

Brian's looking for you.

Alarm washes over Suzi as she turns to Mykie.

SUZI

A pigeon?

Mykie nods and Suzi jumps up, grabs a lantern, and hurries for the stairs. Mykie on her tail.

EXT. ROOFTOP - BUILDING RUINS - PIGEON HOUSE - NIGHT

Brian reaches into a large pigeon cage, pulls out one of the small birds, and removes the note attached to its foot.

BRIAN

Arrived about ten minutes ago. It's a guard pigeon.

He hands the note to Suzi then returns the pigeon to its house. Mykie watches Suzi read the message.

MYKIE

One of ours?

Suzi shakes her head.

SUZI

No. Another Northern Heights soldier...

BRIAN

Then why recruit from us?

Mykie slaps Brian upside the head.

MYKIE

They don't exactly have any replacements to send now, do they?

BRIAN

Right.
(to Suzi)
Who you gonna send?

SUZI

Don't be a nosy shit.

Suzi crumples the note in her hand as she heads toward the fire escape. Mykie races after her...

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

Mykie follows Suzi down the fire escape.

MYKIE

She's next up... You have to send her!

SUZI

Don't tell me how to do my job.

She takes a few more steps down, then looks up at Mykie.

SUZI (CONT'D)
She's not in any condition to make
the journey. Who's else is up?

MYKIE
Me.

Suzi stares at Mykie -- fuck. She continues her descent.

SUZI
I need to think--

MYKIE
You need me! The Guard's a death
sentence. Is that was I deserve,
after everything I've done for you?

Without a second glance back at her, Suzi reaches the bottom
and marches off across camp.

INT. MAE AND RYA'S TENT - DAY

Face down on her cot, Mae winces as Rya applies a homemade
salve and fresh bandages to the cleaned wounds. Daylight
streams in as Suzi steps through the tent flap.

SUZI
(to Rya)
Leave us.

Rya clocks the note in Suzi's hand. Her wide eyes meet Suzi's
in search of confirmation. Suzi gives her a nod - not the
answer Rya wanted.

SUZI (CONT'D)
Rya, come on, don't make me ask again.

Rya secures the last bandage and exits the tent as Mae sits
up with a grunt and pulls a clean shirt over her head.

SUZI (CONT'D)
Why do you do this to yourself?

MAE
Pretty sure you delivered the
sentence.

SUZI
It's my responsibility.

MAE
Oh, I'm sorry. It must have been so
hard on you.

SUZI
 Jesus, Mae, stop acting like you're
 the only one whose suffered. We've
 all watched our families die--

MAE
 No. You watched them walk away. It's
 not the same.

As Mae reaches for her canteen, Suzi snatches it from her and
 gives it a sniff.

MAE (CONT'D)
 It's water.

Satisfied, Suzi hands it back to her.

SUZI
 We used to depend on you.

MAE
 Spare me the pep talk.

SUZI
 You should never have gone after
 Harlan--

Mae jumps up, in Suzi's face.

MAE
 Don't.

SUZI
 You sneak off and get him killed and
 then mope around like you're some
 kind of victim. It's pathetic.

MAE
 You don't know anything.

SUZI
 You weren't the only one to care
 about him. I miss him, too.

Overcome with rage, Mae shoves Suzi into the wall.

MAE
 You are so full of shit!

Mae clocks the fear in Suzi's eyes and steps back, hands up.

MAE (CONT'D)
 Why are you here?

SUZI
To deliver this.

Suzi holds out the crumpled note. Mae stares at it. A pained silence between them.

MAE
I was marked breeder. Just like you!

SUZI
You lost that status.

MAE
When you took it from me!

SUZI
You surrendered your position the moment you set foot in that forest. You can't break laws, get people killed, and expect no recourse.

MAE
Peter is older and he, literally, just broke the law!

SUZI
No. You illegally fed him wyvern then tried to seduce him to get your status back. Believing that if you got pregnant--

MAE
He asked for the wyvern! He made the first move--

SUZI
We need him!

The subtext lands heavy on Mae. She struggles to hold back the tears as she avoids eye contact.

SUZI (CONT'D)
You're a scavenger now, eligible for the Guard.

She shoves the note into Mae's hand.

SUZI (CONT'D)
And you've been called. Leave before sundown. You already know the way.

Suzi turns to go.

MAE

I could still tell... What do you think they'd all say if they knew the truth about that baby?

SUZI

No one would believe you.

Suzi exits. Rya ducks back in, a dead rat in hand. She holds it out to Mae.

RYA

It's the one we stuffed.

Mae takes it.

RYA (CONT'D)

I liked you.

Without waiting for any kind of response, Rya hurries back out. Mae stands alone with the wyvern stuffed rat in her hands. Behind her, a child's chalk drawing of a tall, thin monster with huge teeth on the concrete wall.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - SUNSET

Mae, backpack on, homemade spear in hand, stands before the same broken fence we saw in the earlier flashback. She stares at the ominous, dark tree-line just beyond.

EXT. TREETOP - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

RAIN drenches Mae's blood-spattered face as she clings to a high tree branch. THROATY GROWLS reverberate from beneath her.

Eyes wide, her face quivers as she tries not to shake or breathe. Tears streak her blood-stained face.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - SUNSET (BACK TO PRESENT)

Mae tosses her backpack over the fence, then squeezes through the opening. She lifts her pack up over her shoulders with an audible wince, then takes a moment to recover from the intense pain before she trudges on into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Mae's hand CRANKS the flashlight's wheel until the LIGHT SHINES onto the overgrown path ahead of her. A RUSTLE of trees and SNAP OF A TWIG. Fear washes over her. Panic sets in.

She listens hard... Her eyes search the surrounding forest for any sign of movement. Her breath increases with each moment.

Mae closes her eyes and inhales. With a slow exhale, she opens her eyes. Searches... Silence. The light from her flashlight dies. She walks on, in the dark.

EXT. HILL - NIGHT

Mae, muddy and sweat-soaked with bits of tree in her hair, pauses at the top of the hill. Below her, small lights flicker through the trees around what appears to be a fence line, smoke rises from a fire.

She looks down at the crumpled paper in her hand. Then maneuvers her way down the hill toward the camp.

EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT

Mae steps out from the dense tree-line into a clearing.

She crosses to the barbed wire fence, armed with dozens of tree branches carved into spears, that encircles the camp. Lanterns strung haphazardly from the fence sprinkle light onto a dilapidated cabin on the far side.

Mae holds up the note and a YOUNG SOLDIER opens the barrier and allows her to pass. He nods his head toward...

A group of MILITIA SOLDIERS, 17-23, gathered around an open fire as they pass around a bottle.

YOUNG SOLDIER

Report there.

Mae takes a deep breath and heads for the group.

FIRE PIT

She approaches the group, note in hand.

MAE

Who do I check in with?

The soldiers fall silent as they turn to her. LUCAS, 17, swallows his sip of whiskey then grins up at her.

LUCAS

What'd you do? Crawl here on your hands and knees?

MAE

I lost the trail. It was dark.

LUCAS

You didn't bring a light?

MAE

The crank was loud-- Forget it.

Mae turns to walk away...

PAULA (O.S.)

Halt!

She turns back as PAULA, 23, troop leader, stomps toward her.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Name?

MAE

Mae Claire.

Soldiers all share a look.

PAULA

Harlan's baby sister?

Mae nods. Paula looks her up and down, unimpressed.

PAULA (CONT'D)

You've earned yourself quite the reputation.

Mae stares ahead -- unflinching.

PAULA (CONT'D)

See these faces...

Paula gestures to the troop behind her. All eyes on Mae.

PAULA (CONT'D)

They're the last you're going to see. Whatever games you've been playing and any life you thought you might have had back in the family camp, is over.

She steps in close enough to smell Mae's breath.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Because when they come, and they will come, you sure as hell won't be watching from up in a tree this time like some goddamn monkey.

(to Joe)

Take her to the wash, she smells like shit.

(to the troop)

The rest of you, turn in.

Paula marches off toward the cabin.

JOE, 22, tosses his tin cup to the ground and stands.

JOE
You heard her, little Monkey, follow
me.

Mae glances at Lucas as he and the other soldiers imitate monkeys and laugh. She follows after Joe.

EXT. WASH BAY - NIGHT

A rusted sheet of corrugated iron propped up beside a hose.

JOE
Strip that shit off and stand over
there.

Mae drops her bag and removes her clothes.

Joe eyes the bloody bandages on her back.

JOE (CONT'D)
And Harlan always said you were sweet.

MAE
I'm not.

JOE
Good. Cuz we'd be calling up your
replacement within a week if you
were.

Joe flips on the water and sprays her down with the high pressured water. Mae gasps.

JOE (CONT'D)
Cold, ain't it? Probably stings,
too...

Mae presses her hands up against the sheet of iron as blood drips down her legs and washes away.

INT./EXT. SHED - BASE CAMP - NIGHT

A partial shelter with a roof and two walls.

Mae, now dressed in mis-matched militia style remnants, huddles in the corner as Soldiers sleep on the ground around her.

Without a sound, she pulls the dead rat from her bag and glances around to ensure no one sees.

With her pocket knife, Mae cuts the stitches in its belly.

She stuffs a finger deep inside the rat and retrieves a small cloth pouch, opens it, and slides a wyvern petal out.

Relief washes over Mae, she closes her eyes and swallows the tiny piece of flower. Feeling the weight of someone's stare, her eyes pop open.

Across from her, Lucas watches.

LUCAS
Looks like Monkey's a junkie.

MAE
You gonna tell?

Lucas ignores her, fluffs his pillow, and lays back down.

INT. MAE AND RYA'S TENT - DAY

Mykie storms in through the tent flap.

MYKIE
Jesus, Rya! Where the hell are they?

Rya, asleep on her cot, opens her eyes to the intrusion.

Mykie scans the tent... her eyes land on the pile of gutted and cleaned rats.

MYKIE (CONT'D)
These belong in the kitchen.

She grabs the little pile of skinned corpses.

RYA
Right. I meant to bring them over
but then Mae--

MYKIE
Don't really care.

In a whirlwind Mykie is gone again. Rya's head lands back on her pillow -- WTF?

INT. SHED - BASE CAMP - DAY

A bucket of water splashes over Mae. She jolts up with a start.

Paula, Joe, and NIGEL, 19, capable soldier with a sense of humor, tear through Mae's belongings as Lucas stands at attention to the side.

MAE
What's going on?

JOE
Well, well, rough night, little
Monkey?

MAE
No one woke me.

PAULA
They tried.

Paula tosses the gutted, DEAD RAT on Mae's lap.

PAULA (CONT'D)
It's empty. Any left?

Mae shakes her head.

PAULA (CONT'D)
Wyvern is illegal. It happens again,
I'll shoot you, got it?

Mae nods. Paula turns to Lucas.

PAULA (CONT'D)
Since you're so keen to report on
the little beast's movements... she's
your responsibility now. She screws
up, you both pay.

Lucas opens his mouth to respond but thinks better of it. He
glares at Mae then back to Paula.

LUCAS
Yes, Captain.

Joe shoves a rifle into Mae's hands.

PAULA
(to Lucas)
Take her out and show her how to use
it.

Paula storms out, Joe on her heel.

Lucas snatches the rifle from Mae and slips the strap over
his head, along with his. He exits the shed, then turns back...

LUCAS
You coming?

MAE
No breakfast?

LUCAS
You slept through breakfast.

Mae stands and gestures to her soaked clothing.

MAE
 Seriously?

Nigel hands her a towel.

NIGEL
 He's always serious.

MAE
 Yeah, I'm starting to get that.

Mae follows Lucas out.

INT. BREEDER HOUSING - DAY

Suzi, seated at the table, reviews a calendar against menstrual cycle reports as Mykie approaches with a cooked rat and vegetables on a plate. She peers over Suzi's shoulder.

Suzi stops and looks up at her.

SUZI
 Do you mind?

MYKIE
 We're not breeding enough.

SUZI
 Thank you. Helpful.

MYKIE
 Mark me breeder.

Suzi puts her pen down... she knows where this is going.

SUZI
 No.

MYKIE
 You never replaced Mae after she lost status. We're short--

SUZI
 I know what you're doing. But, breeders can get sent to the Guard, too. Both Rya's and Daisy's did.

MYKIE
 Yeah, but only because no one else was old enough to hold a gun at the time.

SUZI
You're not breeder material.

Mykie eyes the cooked rat then drops the plate before Suzi.

MYKIE
Understood. Enjoy your meal.

She stomps back up the stairs.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Lucas marches at pace as Mae struggles to keep up, her clothes half-dried now.

MAE
How much further?

LUCAS
No unnecessary gunfire within a five-k radius of camp.

MAE
They're drawn to the sound?

LUCAS
We don't know what draws them.

MAE
I get the sense you don't like me?

LUCAS
I don't.

MAE
You don't even know me.

Lucas turns back to her.

LUCAS
I know your type. Addicted to wyvern, doesn't care about anyone but themselves, always in trouble... You're a ticking bomb that's about to explode, and you're gonna get any poor assholes who stand too close killed along with you.

MAE
That why you're walking so fast?

LUCAS
And everything's a joke.

He continues onward. Mae follows.

MAE

How long you been with the Guard?

LUCAS

Long enough.

MAE

What camp you from?

LUCAS

Do you ever shut-up?

MAE

I just like to know a bit about the
assholes around me before I get them
killed.

Lucas raises a brow and walks on, unamused.

MAE (CONT'D)

Ah! I know your type... wasn't marked
breeder so went into the woods and
stuck a stick up your--

He spins on her...

LUCAS

I'm from Northern Heights!

Mae stops in her tracks, her face pale.

MAE

I'm... sorry.

He shoves the rifle into her hands.

LUCAS

We're here.

Lucas slides down the hill toward an open field below. Mae
slips the gun strap over her head and follows.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

In the middle of the field stands a TARGET built from junk to
look like a monster. Sharp teeth drawn on an old tire, where
the face would be, an old street sign for the body, and dead
tree limbs hang down as long arms.

THROATY GROWLS and HARLAN'S SCREAMS echo from memory as Mae
stares at the target before her, rifle up, she aims.

Lucas stands at a distance behind her.

LUCAS

Hold it firm so you don't knock out
your teeth.

Mae focuses. Her finger squeezes the trigger... and FIRES!

She cries out in agony as the kickback slams into her shoulder.
Mae drops the rifle and falls to the ground. Lucas stomps
over and snatches the rifle.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

What the hell was that?

MAE

Nothing. I'm sorry.

LUCAS

Come on, go again.

He grabs hold of her arm and yanks her up. She cries out in
pain at the sudden movement.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Are you injured?

MAE

No. It's nothing. I'm fine.

She grabs for the gun, but he holds it out of reach.

LUCAS

Prove it. Show me your back.

Mae rolls her eyes then lifts her shirt to reveal the strap
gashes on her back - her skin now red and inflamed.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Jesus! What the--

MAE

It's fine. I can do this.

LUCAS

Did you think maybe you should have
mentioned your back was infected
before we came all the way out here?

She looks over her shoulder, as if she could see it.

MAE

It's infected?

LUCAS

We need to get something on those
now. No way I'm carrying you back.

Lucas, exasperated, scans the area -- they're in the middle of fucking nowhere.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Just... stay there. I'll be back.

He tramps off toward the bush, then pauses to look back.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Stay put!

Lucas disappears into the trees. Mae crosses to the target, then sits down, her back against it.

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out the little pouch, and removes a tiny piece of wyvern. She glances behind her to make sure Lucas is gone, then swallows it.

Head back against the target, she closes her eyes. MEOW. Mae's eyes open wide. She looks around... MEOW.

A long-haired CAT rubs up against the base of the target. MEOW. Mae stares at it in disbelief.

Her hand reaches for a lower leg pocket. Her fingers unbutton it and slide out a switch blade. Eyes on the cat, she opens the knife and winces as she scoots herself a little closer.

The cat freezes. It stares at Mae, as if to dare her--

HANK (O.S.)
Don't touch it!

Mae spins toward the voice...

HANK, 52, a gruff and moody militia soldier, pistol aimed on her as he marches out from the far tree-line and across the clearing toward.

HANK (CONT'D)
I will shoot you.

Mae snatches the cat up by the scruff, her knife to its neck.

MAE
Find your own. This one's mine!

Hank steps in close, pistol aimed directly at Mae's head.

HANK
He's mine actually. Name is Chester and I doubt he'd be good eating. He's old and ornery probably taste like rubber.