

THAW

Written by

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SNOW FALLS:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Eerily quiet.

A two-lane road is flanked by a dense skeletal forest.

A thick layer of snow covers every surface. This winter storm does not rage; it gracefully engulfs in silence.

The quiet is broken by heavy breathing--

COLE HOWARD, 32, Deputy Sheriff, a man who runs towards danger, stumbles down the road. A gash in his forehead seeps blood.

Behind him, a body lies half-buried in the powder. A Rorschach test of black blood and gore spread out across the snow from its ruined skull.

Cole looks out over the bleak landscape ahead.

COLE

Damn...

He moves to the tree line, using it as cover.

The sound of a car engine spins him back in the direction he came from--

A late-model Bronco rumbles in his direction. The vehicle slows to a crawl as it approaches the body in the snow, but keeps moving.

Cole stands in the middle of the road and signals for the vehicle to stop.

The Bronco stops thirty feet from him, exhaust spewing from the pipe like ragged breath. It's a stand-off.

After a beat, the driver's door swings open and a bear of a man steps out, metal pipe in hand. WILLIAM PRICE, African American, 40s, solid, intimidating.

William signals to someone in the Bronco to stay put, then closes the door.

Both men stand in the road facing each other. Once again, it's a stand-off.

TITLE CARD - EIGHT HOURS AGO

EXT. CLARKSTOWN - DAWN

The small, sleepy town is barely awake. Many of the homes have bars on the windows, and the burnt-out husks of buildings dot the landscape.

A fresh snow has left a blanket of white over the town as a Sheriff's cruiser drives down the quiet street and turns into an unplowed parking lot.

INT. FRONTIER COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

A young woman, MELISSA GERARD, 20s, wearing a metal band T-shirt and several piercings, is wiping down the countertop.

Headlights rake across the windows, and Melissa's hand moves below the counter to brush the handle of a shotgun by the register... a quick caress to let her know it's there.

Sheriff SOLOMON THATCHER, late 50s, rugged, weathered, with a large silver thermos tucked under his arm, enters to the sound of tinkling door chimes.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Morning, Mel. Coffee ready?

Melissa nods and grabs the coffee pot from the machine. She fills a takeaway cup.

MELISSA  
You're at it pretty early this morning, Sheriff.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Thaw's coming soon... too fast for my liking.

He places the thermos on the counter.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)  
Gonna need a fill-up on this one too.

Melissa grabs the thermos.

The Sheriff looks in the display case - a decent array of pastries.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)  
I'll take a few crawlers and all the chocolate-glazed as well.

Melissa bags the items.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)  
Mel, do me a favor...

He drops some cash on the counter.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)  
Lock the door behind me when I  
leave.

She hands him the bag.

MELISSA  
Sheriff?

SHERIFF THATCHER  
I'm putting the curfew back into  
effect starting tonight, so call  
over to the station if you're gonna  
be out after sundown.

MELISSA  
Really? We're expecting more snow  
tonight.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Just a precaution. Nothing to fret  
over.

Melissa stares back at the Sheriff, worry on her face.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)  
And you and your friends stay away  
from the Potter house.

MELISSA  
The Potter house?

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Stop it, Mel. I know you and your  
friends party there. That's over.  
It's too dangerous right now. Got  
it?

MELISSA  
Got it.

Melissa grabs a key ring and follows the Sheriff to the door.

INT. HOWARD HOUSEHOLD - MORNING

Gray, hazy light fills the room. SINCLAIR HOWARD, 65, bolts  
upright in bed--

HANNA HOWARD, 60, made of the glue that binds families together, stands at the barred window, having just thrown the curtains open.

A freshly pressed Priest's shirt and collar lie across an armchair. A shotgun is propped up against the wall.

HANNA

Not like you to sleep in... figured  
it was time to roust you.

Sinclair runs a hand across his weary face, squinting against the light.

SINCLAIR

Cole off to work?

HANNA HOWARD

Hours ago. You don't look good,  
hon. Did you sleep at all last  
night?

SINCLAIR

Barely a Goddamned wink.

HANNA

Sinclair.

Sinclair gets out of bed and walks past his wife, squeezing her hand gently before he disappears down the hall.

Hanna stares out the window.

INT. CLARKSTOWN COUNTY JAIL - DAY

ANNIE FOSTER, late 20s, officer, sits alone in the jailhouse.

Muffled voices from outside break the quiet, and the front door bangs open. Deputy Cole Howard steers a man in by the collar.

OLLIE REFFIN, late 40s, unshaven, drunk, staggering. Although it's cold out, Ollie is wearing only a t-shirt. His belt is undone, and he's holding his pants up with both hands.

OLLIE

Goddammit, Cole, this is a  
violation of my civil fucking  
liberty... I've done nothing wrong  
but have a few drinks.

Cole opens a cell door and gently guides Ollie toward a single cot against the wall.

COLE  
 You gotta keep your pants on in  
 public, Ollie.

Cole pulls off his jacket and hangs it on a coat rack.

COLE (CONT'D)  
 Annie, maybe we could pump old  
 Ollie here full of coffee, hurry  
 his stay a bit?

Annie pours two cups. She hands one through the bars to  
 Ollie, whose expression is apologetic as he fastens his belt.

OLLIE  
 Sorry for any trouble I'm causing,  
 Annie.

ANNIE  
 That's okay, Mister Reffin, it's  
 just a little coffee.

Ollie suddenly looks close to tears.

OLLIE  
 Alice and my baby girl sure would  
 be ashamed if they could see the  
 state I'm in these days.

ANNIE  
 Well, let's concentrate on getting  
 you sobered up.

Ollie turns away and sits down on his cot, staring into his  
 coffee. Lost in thought.

Annie moves to Cole's desk and hands him the other coffee  
 cup. She puts a hand on his arm.

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
 Cole, the whole town is getting  
 restless. Pauly's out on a  
 disturbance over at the Roost. I've  
 had three calls of drunk and  
 disorderly, and apparently, Miss  
 Tepency is out in her backyard with  
 a twelve-gauge, shooting at  
 anything that moves.

COLE  
 It's the thaw.

Annie looks at the front door. A shadow crosses the window.

ANNIE  
I talked to your dad.

COLE  
And?

On cue, the front door opens and Sinclair steps inside, shotgun in hand.

COLE  
Dad? You okay?

Sinclair looks around the room from the safety of the doorway.

ANNIE  
Reverend, you coming in?

This breaks him out of his spell. He shoots Annie a look and steps inside.

SINCLAIR  
That's in the past, Annie. It's not in me anymore. You can just call me by my given name.

Ollie pops his head up from his pillow.

OLLIE  
Morning, Reverend!

SINCLAIR  
Good morning, Ollie, sleeping one off again?

OLLIE  
Took my pants off.

SINCLAIR  
Fair enough.

COLE  
The town could use some guidance, Dad. These people need you. There are hard times ahead.

ANNIE  
We need you.

SINCLAIR  
Can't go back to that place. Not after that...

He struggles to get the words out.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Goddamned summer.

He turns to look out the window as a light snow starts to fall.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Anyway, I've come to offer my help.

COLE

Dad, go home, stay with Mom. I'll organize a small group and head out. I don't need you out there.

SINCLAIR

The hell you don't. You need all the help you can get.

COLE

It's too much.

SINCLAIR

Yes, yes, go home and give in to the infirmities of old age. Take all your Goddamn pills, they'll help you forget. Well, I'll tell you what... I don't want to forget.

Cole can see that there is no reason to argue with his father.

COLE

Fine.

ANNIE

Cole may not want to admit it, but we're all happy to see you up and about and grateful for your help.

SINCLAIR

Thank you, dear.

Ollie is standing at the bars of his cell, listening as he does up his pants.

OLLIE

I want to help, too, Reverend.

SINCLAIR

Please, call me Sinclair.

COLE

Absolutely not, Ollie!

Sinclair moves over to the wall and grabs the keys off the peg they hang from.

SINCLAIR

Let him help, Cole. We've a lot of ground to cover, and this snow will slow us down.

COLE

I can't put him at risk, Dad. We don't know what we're gonna find out there.

OLLIE

Listen, son, I'll sober up quick in this cold, and I know these hills as good as anyone around.

Sinclair moves to open the cell, but Cole steps in front of him.

COLE

I'm sorry, Ollie, I can't let you go; this is ugly business we've got ahead of us.

Ollie reaches through the bars and grabs Cole by the shirt sleeves.

OLLIE

Goddamnit all, Cole! What about Alice and my baby girl? There's not a thing in the world as ugly as what I've seen.

SHERIFF THATCHER (O.S.)

Let him out, Cole.

They all turn, startled by the sheriff's presence in the doorway. He enters carrying his bag of donuts and drops them on the nearest desk.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)

We're gonna need the help. Goddamn weather keeps changing so fast.

COLE

Snow's still pretty thick at Cavanaugh Lake, and there's a storm coming. That should help.

SHERIFF THATCHER

Annie, get on the horn, start letting people know the curfew's back in effect, but it's just a precaution at this point. We'll be back before sundown, and for God's sake, nobody should start panicking.

ANNIE

Yes sir.

SHERIFF THATCHER

And do me a favor, check on Mel over at the Frontier, later. She's a little spooked this morning, and I'm to blame for it.

Annie moves to her desk.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)

Let's get some more coffee in Ollie and get going.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A late-model Jeep rumbles through the snow, "Clarkstown Sheriff" painted across the side.

INT. CLARKSTOWN SHERIFF'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

The Sheriff drives, with Cole in the passenger seat, Ollie, and Sinclair in the back.

Cole scans the white landscape. He spots something.

COLE

Sheriff, pull over.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The jeep pulls to the side, and the men climb out with weapons in hand.

SHERIFF THATCHER

What have you got?

Cole heads to the tree line.

COLE

Over here.

They approach a tangle of bodies frozen in the snow. Zombies.

OLLIE (O.S.)  
Uh, Sheriff... you're gonna want to  
see this.

The sheriff and Cole turn and walk to where Ollie and Sinclair stand.

There is a mother holding hands with a young child, both zombies, both frozen in the snow.

COLE  
I've never seen that before.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Them holding hands requires a  
certain amount of consciousness  
that they shouldn't be capable of.

OLLIE  
Fuck me... this ain't good.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
That's what I just said.

Sinclair makes the sign of the cross. The child zombie's eyes snap open, and they all jump back.

OLLIE  
Holy mother!

The Sheriff and Cole share a look.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Cole, get on the radio. Let Annie  
and Pauly know what we found.

EXT. FRONTIER COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A Sheriff's cruiser pulls into the parking lot, and Annie climbs out. She walks to the door, and Melissa is there to open it for her.

INT. FRONTIER COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Annie steps past Melissa.

MELISSA  
Sheriff asked me to lock the door.

ANNIE

Yeah, that's kinda why I'm here.  
How's business today?

MELISSA

Pretty slow. Verging on  
nonexistent.

ANNIE

In that case, maybe it's best to  
lock up, and I can drive you home.

MELISSA

Oh, well, I've got my bike here.

ANNIE

Not a good idea, Mel.

Melissa looks out the window nervously.

MELISSA

What's going on, Annie? This sounds  
like more than a precaution.

ANNIE

Just between us, the Sheriff found  
something in the woods. They're...  
concerned.

MELISSA

My uncle worries.

ANNIE

Mel, we've moved past precaution,  
but yes, he worries... mostly about  
you.

MELISSA

I'll grab my stuff.

Melissa heads back to grab her things. Annie calls out after  
her.

ANNIE

And grab the shotgun behind the  
counter.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Cole holds his rifle up to the child zombie's head. The  
Sheriff places a hand on his shoulder.

SHERIFF THATCHER

Stand down, son. This burden falls on me. You, Sinclair, and Ollie go take care of that group of frozen adults. I'll take this one.

Cole leads them away.

EXT. FRONTIER COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Annie opens the back door of the cruiser.

ANNIE

You can throw the shotgun in the backseat.

Melissa places it on the floorboard, closes the door and climbs into the front passenger seat.

Annie stands next to the driver's side, frozen in place.

MELISSA

What are you doing, Annie?

Annie puts up a hand to quiet her. She looks to the sky and breathes deep.

ANNIE

That smell...

She pulls her gun out of its holster.

Melissa looks in the rearview mirror. A shadow runs past the back of the cruiser. Melissa screams.

Annie is slammed into from behind. She falls to the ground with a zombie on top of her.

A second zombie slams into Melissa's passenger side window. Cracks spiderweb through the glass.

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

The cruiser has a half-cage. Melissa unbuckles and scrambles into the back seat in a panic.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Annie holds the zombie at bay with one hand around its throat. She shoves the gun under its chin and blows the top of its head off.

The second zombie throws itself through the cracked window and into the front seat of the cruiser.

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Malissa grabs the shotgun off the floorboard. She fires as the zombie crawls over the seat, and its head paints the inside of the car red.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Annie gets to her feet. Two more zombies run at them from behind the building.

ANNIE

Melissa, get back in the store!

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Melissa tries to open the backseat door, but it's locked.

MELISSA

Fuck!

She climbs over the zombie's body and out of the cruiser, shotgun in hand.

EXT. FRONTIER COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Melissa fumbles with her keys at the door. There's a crash from inside, and a zombie bursts through the kitchen door. It charges the front door, slams into the glass, and falls to the floor.

MELISSA

They're inside!

The two zombies attack Annie. She shoots one, but just slows it down.

ANNIE

Get out of here, now!

Both zombies crash into Annie. They land in a heap and Annie's gun skids across the pavement.

The zombie inside the coffee shop throws itself into the glass again—the window cracks.

Melissa stumbles backward. She pulls upon her shotgun and moves to help Annie, but stops dead in her tracks--

One of the zombies buries its teeth into Annie's neck and tears away a mouthful of meat in a spray of blood.

Melissa turns and runs.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The snow is splattered in gore. Sheriff Thatcher stands by the road, visibly shaken. The men approach.

OLLIE  
Nasty work.

Cole puts a hand on the Sheriff's shoulder.

COLE  
You okay?

SHERIFF THATCHER  
It was a Goddamn child.

The Sheriff's radio squawks.

PAULY  
Sheriff... come in, Sheriff.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Go ahead, Pauly.

EXT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

Pauly, 32, exits the building, radio in his hand.

PAULY  
I can't reach Annie, boss. She was headed to the coffee shop to pick up Mel, but she's not responding.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Okay, get over there and report back.

PAULY  
Yes, Sir, I'm en route now.

Pauly climbs into his cruiser.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cole and the sheriff share a concerned look.

COLE

Maybe we should pack it up and head  
back that way?

SHERIFF THATCHER

Agreed. Let's get going.

Ollie points down the road. Two zombies are lumbering toward them.

OLLIE

Got a few more. I'll take care of  
these two.

Ollie walks away. Sinclair turns to Cole.

SINCLAIR

You fire up the jeep, and I'll back  
up Ollie.

Sinclair joins Ollie.

Cole and the Sheriff move to the jeep. A terrible undead  
scream rips through the quiet--

Two more zombies run out of the woods and charge at Ollie and  
Sinclair.

Cole and the Sheriff turn and run toward them.

Ollie fires, blowing one zombie's arm clean off.

Sinclair drops one with a headshot, but the next zombie is on  
him, and they crash to the ground.

Ollie pumps two rounds into the third zombie, and it drops,  
but the one-armed zombie is on him.

Cole rips the zombie off Sinclair. They tumble to the ground  
and separate.

Cole fires and blows the top of the zombie's head off.

The one-armed zombie tears the flesh off of Ollie's face.  
Sheriff Thatcher uses his shotgun like a club, and the  
zombie's head explodes in a fountain of blood and gore.

Cole rushes to his father's side. Sinclair has a hand to his  
neck, blood spilling over his fingers.

Cole puts his hand over his father's.

Cole  
Hang on, Dad. I'm gonna get  
something to stop the bleeding.

He moves to get up, but Sinclair grabs his arm.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)  
Son... I'm so proud of you... and the  
man you've become. I want you to  
know that.

COLE  
Dad, no.

SINCLAIR  
You and your mother are my whole  
world. I could never have dreamed  
I'd have such a blessed life.

Sinclair lies back on the snow-covered ground.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)  
Tell her that... will you?

COLE  
Of course... of course I will. I  
love you, Dad.

SINCLAIR  
I love you, too, Son. Now do what  
you have to do... please.

Sheriff Thatcher puts a hand on Cole's shoulder.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Let me.

COLE  
No... This one's my responsibility.

Sheriff Thatcher kneels next to Sinclair.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
You watch over us, will you,  
Sinclair?

SINCLAIR  
I'll do what I can... keep an eye  
on my boy.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
Will do.

The sheriff gets up and walks away. Cole stands over his father, rifle to his father's head.

He turns away and pulls the trigger.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Melissa runs through the woods, panicked. She stops, breathing heavily, and scans the woods.

A scraping from above her draws her attention. A zombie drops down out of the tree.

Melissa stumbles back and fires, blowing both the zombie's legs off at the knees. It begins crawling toward her, grabbing at her pant legs.

She breaks free and runs.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cole and the Sheriff have Ollie and Sinclair's bodies loaded into the back of the jeep.

SHERIFF THATCHER

Ollie's with his wife and baby girl now. It's where he wanted to be.

Cole nods.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about your daddy, Cole. He was a good man and he'll be sorely missed. Might be a good idea for me to be there when you tell your Mamma... add my support.

COLE

Thanks, Sheriff.

The sheriff's radio chirps--

PAULY

Sheriff! Sheriff! It's Pauly, come in, Sheriff!

SHERIFF THATCHER

I'm here, Pauly.

PAULY

Oh my god... it's... goddammit!

Cole and the sheriff share a worried look.

COLE  
Pauly, what's happened?

EXT. FRONTIER COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Pauly is in his car, surrounded by zombies trying to claw their way in. The car is rocking.

Pauly  
Oh, God... Annie's gone... she's gone! They were attacked... Melissa's missing.

COLE  
Fuck! Did you check the coffee shop?

PAULY  
She's not there. I found tracks leading into the woods, but these fucking things chased me. Now I'm trapped in my car... I'm fucking surrounded, boss!

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF THATCHER  
I'm coming to you now, Pauly. Hang on!

PAULY (V.O.)  
You better hurry, boss.

Cole slams the back hatch on the jeep.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
If Melissa ran into the woods, we both know where she's headed.

COLE  
The Potter house.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
I'll take the jeep and get Pauly. You've got the advantage of youth on your side.

COLE  
Yeah, I got this... I'll find her.

The Sheriff nods, jumps in the jeep, and fires it up as Cole grabs his rifle and runs into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Melissa crests the top of a slight rise. She stops to take a breath and scan the area. At the base of the hill, four zombies are following her. She runs.

EXT. woods - day

Cole runs full speed through the woods. He trips on a root, stumbles, and falls into a tree, headfirst.

He crumples to the ground, dazed, a gash on his forehead.

EXT. CLARKSTOWN - CONTINUOUS

The sheriff drives fast through the deserted streets.

INT. PAULY'S SHERIFF CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

The zombies are crawling on the car, beating against the windows. The front windshield cracks. It's giving way to the pounding.

PAULY  
Fuck, fuck, fuck...

INT. CLARKSTOWN SHERIFF'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

The sheriff's jeep flies into the parking lot, slams on the brakes, and fishtails into the passenger side of Pauly's cruiser, sending the zombies tumbling across the ground.

Pauly, dazed, jumps out of his cruiser and runs to the jeep as Sheriff Thatcher fires out his window, taking down a few stragglers.

Pauly jumps into the jeep, and the Sheriff hits the gas.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Cole lies on his back in the snow, dazed, staring up at the sky through the trees, snowflakes dancing around him, blood seeping from his wound.

His consciousness snaps back, and he shakes away the brain fog. He groans and pulls himself to his feet.

He stumbles to the road, trying to get his bearings.

Two zombies crawl over an outcropping of rocks and run for Cole.

He fires and blows one zombie's head off, but the second one is on him, and they tumble to the ground. Cole rolls free and fires--

His rifle clicks, out of ammo. He reaches for his holster, but it's empty. The zombie gets to its feet and charges.

Using the riffle as a club, he smashes the zombie in the face. It falls to the ground, still moving. It looks up at him, screaming, reaching.

Cole stands over it and pummels its head into a bloody mass.

He tosses the rifle aside and walks away. Scanning the tree line.

COLE

Damn...

EXT. WOODS - POTTER'S HILL - DAY

Melissa is exhausted. She pushes through the snow and overhanging branches to reveal the Potter house, alone in a clearing.

The house was once impressive, but has long been abandoned. Windows and doors are boarded up, grounds overgrown.

Melissa stumbles toward it, the screams of zombies in the distance shattering the silence.

EXT. POTTER HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Melissa pulls a hide-a-key from a fake rock next to the metal basement doors.

INT. POTTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The basement door opens, and Melissa steps into the gutted house.

She runs through the garbage-strewn floor, up the stairs, and into a bedroom, slamming the door behind her.

She huddles in the corner, clutching the shotgun to her chest.

EXT. WOODS - BACK TO PRESENT TIME

Cole and William face each other on the road. William gestures to his own forehead and tightens his grip on the pipe in his hand.

WILLIAM

You bit?

COLE

No... tree.

WILLIAM

That your handiwork back there?

COLE

It is. You're William Price.

WILLIAM

I am.

COLE

I'm assuming that's your boy,  
Jarred, in the truck?

WILLIAM

What of it?

COLE

He's dating the Sheriff's niece,  
Melissa. She's running from those  
things, and I think she's headed to  
the old Potter House.

The passenger door of the Bronco opens, and JARRED, 24, steps partially out of the truck.

JARRED

Melissa's out here?

WILLIAM

Get back inside, Son.

JARRED

Dad!

COLE

William, I need help. Potter house  
isn't far, but I'm unarmed, and  
every second counts. I need you to  
take me there.

William taps his forehead again.

WILLIAM  
You can understand my concern.

COLE  
I promise you I'm not bit.

William looks back at his son.

JARRED  
Dad, please. We have to help.

WILLIAM  
Well, let's go then. You show any signs of changing, I'll end you.

COLE  
Fair enough.

INT. POTTER HOUSE - DAY

Melissa peeks over the edge of the upstairs window. A dozen zombies are converging on the house.

She reaches into her jacket pocket and pulls out six shotgun shells.

MELISSA  
Fuck.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The Sheriff's jeep plows through the snow-covered road. Pauly is barely keeping it together, shotgun in hand.

PAULY  
How the fuck is this happening so fast, boss? These fucking things were frozen solid. It shouldn't be possible!

SHERIFF THATCHER  
None of this should be possible, Pauly.

The jeep rounds a blind corner and plows into a group of six zombies.

Sheriff Thatcher loses control of the jeep. Bodies go flying, the jeep skids off the road, and smashes into a tree. The airbags deploy, and there's a loud bang.

Sheriff Thatcher pushes the airbag away from his face and shakes out the cobwebs.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)

You okay--

From the impact, Pauly's shotgun has gone off, blowing most of his face off.

SHERIFF THATCHER (CONT'D)

Fucking hell... I'm sorry, Pauly.

Sheriff Thatcher grabs his rifle and climbs out of the jeep. There are a few zombies still moving on the ground, and he kills them all.

EXT. POTTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The zombies are pounding on the windows and doors. More zombies are emerging from the woods, drawn by the noise.

Two zombies climb over the bodies of a group at the front door. They grab hold of the overhang, pulling themselves up on the roof.

INT. POTTER HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The zombies throw themselves at the upstairs window. Melissa screams and scrambles to the other side of the room.

The window shatters, and the zombies tumble into the room.

Melissa fires, knocking one to the ground. The second zombie takes a blast to the face and splatters the wall.

Melissa fumbles with the shotgun shells in her pocket, but the zombie on the ground grabs her legs. She gives up reloading and smashes its head to a pulp on the floor.

INT. WILLIAM'S BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

The Bronco slows to a stop, the Potter house visible in the distance.

WILLIAM

Well, someone's definitely inside the house.

William reaches between the seats and pulls out a handgun. He hands it back to Cole.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Any ideas?

COLE

Yeah.

EXT. POTTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Bronco tears through the clearing, heading straight for the house.

Screaming into the yard, the Bronco does a donut, kicking up snow and dirt as it spins in circles.

EXT. POTTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Most of the zombies abandon the house and charge the Bronco. A few stragglers hang back, and two more zombies have made it onto the roof.

The Bronco stops, idling like a beast, spewing smoke, then speeds away, zombies in tow.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Cole runs out of the tree line, straight for the house.

INT. POTTER HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Melissa has heard the Bronco and rushes to the window. She slips on the zombie gore coating the floor and falls.

The two zombies on the roof rush the window. On her back, she grabs the shotgun and fires, hitting one in the chest. Her second shot takes off its head.

She crawls back into the corner to reload. The second zombie appears in the window, unleashes a terrifying scream, then just as quickly disappears.

Melisa approaches the window slowly, shotgun ready. A blood-splattered hand grabs at the windowsill. She levels the weapon, finger caressing the trigger-

COLE (O.C.)

Mel?

MELISSA

Cole!

Cole climbs through the window. Melissa runs into his arms.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
I thought I was fucking dead.

COLE  
Mel, we need to move.

Melissa backs up and sinks to the floor.

MELISSA  
They got Annie... I couldn't help  
her.

The tears start to fall.

COLE  
I know, Mel. There'll be time to  
mourn later. Right now we have to  
go.

Cole puts his hand out to Melissa. She hesitates.

COLE (CONT'D)  
Mel, Jarred, and his father are out  
there. We have to go.

Melissa takes his hand and gets to her feet.

MELISSA  
Jarred's okay?

COLE  
He is. Your uncle went to get  
Pauly; now let's go.

Melissa wipes the tears from her eyes and follows him out the window.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The surrounding woods are littered with broken zombie bodies, gore painting the snow.

The Bronco has a zombie smashed up against a tree, still alive. The back tire is stuck in the mud and slush. Smoke is pouring from under the hood.

INT. BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

William has his foot on the gas, but the Bronco won't budge.

Jarred looks around nervously.

JARRED

Dad, the woods look clear. I'll grab the blankets from the back and put them under the tires.

WILLIAM

Absolutely not.

William puts a hand on his son's shoulder.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I'll do it. You get behind the wheel and don't you get out of this truck for any fucking reason... You understand me?

JARRED

Yes.

WILLIAM

No matter what happens.

JARRED

Dad.

WILLIAM

Promise me.

JARRED

Okay.

William pulls his son into a hug.

WILLIAM

I love you, Son.

William hands his son a sawed-off shotgun and climbs out. He runs to the back of the Bronco and opens the hatch.

The zombie on the hood is frantically trying to pull itself free from between the Bronco and the tree.

The zombie breaks free, ripping half a leg off.

INT. BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

Jarred looks in the rearview mirror. His dad is placing the blankets under the tire.

JARRED

Dad!

The zombie scurries over the hood and onto the roof of the Bronco.

JARRED (CONT'D)

Dad!

EXT. BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

Jarred pushes the door open. He reaches up on the roof and grabs the zombie by its remaining leg and yanks it off the Bronco.

The zombie hits the ground. Jarred aims the shotgun at its head, but his father steps in and smashes its skull with his metal pipe.

WILLIAM

Gotta save the ammo.

Jarred nods. His eyes go wide--

JARRED

Shit!

Four zombies are moving toward them from the woods.

WILLIAM

Get in the truck...

Jarred runs around to the passenger side, and William slides behind the wheel.

INT. BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

William looks to his son.

WILLIAM

Sure hope this works.

William throws the Bronco in reverse and eases into the gas.

The blankets bunch under the wheel, but they provide enough grip to move. They clear the ruts, and William floors it.

The Bronco smashes into two of the zombies. He throws the truck into drive and tears out of there.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Thought I told you to stay in the truck, no matter what?

JARRED  
You're welcome.

Williams shakes his head.

WILLIAM  
You don't listen, just like your  
mother... thank God.

Jarred gives his father a sad smile.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Cole and Melissa run through the woods. They come upon a dirt road.

COLE  
Let's stay in the road. It'll be  
easier for William or the Sheriff  
to find us.

MELISSA  
And see what's coming.

She stops. Up ahead, four zombies are moving towards them.

Cole and Melissa look behind them to find three more zombies coming up from behind.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
What do we do?

COLE  
We go forward.

Cole lifts his gun and fires. The bullet rips through one of the zombie's eyes and blows a hole in the back of its head.

The zombies behind them start to run at them.

MELISSA  
We gotta move.

COLE  
I'll hold them off. You cut through  
the woods and pick up the road  
farther down the hill.

MELISSA  
I'm not leaving you here!

COLE  
Mel, go!

Melissa turns and fires at the zombies gaining ground from behind, taking one out. Cole fires at the Zombies coming at them from the front.

An engine roars, and the Bronco plows through the brush. It flies onto the road in front of Cole and takes out the three advancing zombies, sending body parts flying.

Cole and Melissa turn and gun down the remaining two zombies.

William and Jarred jump out of the Bronco. Melissa runs into Jarred's arms.

A zombie smashes into William. They both tumble to the ground and separate.

The zombie recovers and lunges. William shoves his metal pipe in its mouth, taking it to the ground.

The zombie struggles, clawing at him. William jerks the pipe out of the monster's mouth and slams it into its forehead. Its head explodes in a blast of black brains.

William wipes the gore from his face.

WILLIAM

Fuck, it's in my mouth. I swallowed some.

They all stop and stare.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Shit... is that bad?

COLE

I don't know?

William tries to stand but drops back down.

WILLIAM

Shit.

William doubles over and vomits blood. Jarred runs to him.

JARRED

Dad! Dad, what's happening?

Cole steps to them and puts a hand on Jarred's shoulder.

COLE

Son... step back.

JARRED

No... No!

William gently pushes his son away.

WILLIAM  
Do as he says, Son.

JARRED  
Dad, no...

William's face drains of color, purple veins appearing across his skin. He looks to Cole and holds out his hand.

Cole hands him his gun.

JARRED (CONT'D)  
Dad, no!

William looks to his son, then back to Cole.

Cole takes Jarred by the arm and pulls him back.

WILLIAM  
I love you, Son. I'll give your  
Mamma a hug.

William puts the gun to his head and pulls the trigger. Jarred collapses. Melissa drops her shotgun and runs to him.

There's a guttural scream from behind the Bronco, and two zombies come racing towards them.

Two shots ring out, and the two zombies crash to the ground, their heads blown open.

Sheriff Thatcher steps out of the tree line. Cole gives him a nod to let him know he's okay.

The Sheriff heads to Melissa and Jarred. They stand, and he embraces them both.

SHERIFF THATCHER  
I'm sorry, son.

Cole approaches and lowers his voice.

COLE  
Pauly?

The Sheriff shakes his head - no. Cole takes a deep breath.

A guttural scream pierces the silence. Guns go up, nerves on edge.

Annie, now a zombie, with half her face missing, stands at the tree line. She stares at the group, a low rumbling tone emanating from deep in her chest.

Annie screams. She turns and runs back into the woods.

Cole looks to Sheriff Thatcher. They lower their weapons.

SHERIFF THATCHER

Leave her. We've seen enough of our  
loved ones die today.

Cole watches her disappear into the trees.

COLE

Agreed.

EXT. CLARKSTOWN - NIGHT

Snow is falling, giving the appearance of a peaceful small town.

The Bronco slowly rumbles down Main Street, spewing smoke from its front end, listing to one side, gore splattered across the hood.

INT. BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

Cole drives with Sheriff Thatcher in the passenger seat. Melissa and Jarred huddle together in the back seat. Everyone is lost in their own grief.

Sheriff Thatcher looks to Cole and motions to the glove compartment.

Cole opens it and a slight smile creeps across his weary face. he turns to Jarred in the back.

COLE

I know you're probably feeling lost  
right now, son... but maybe this will  
help in some small way.

Cole hands Jarred a Clarkstown Deputy Sheriff's badge. Jarred stares at it in silence.

SHERIFF THATCHER

No pressure, son, but we'd be proud  
to have you.

Jarred closes his fist around the gold badge.

JARRED

Yes, Sir... I wanna kill every last  
one of those fucking things.

COLE

That's the kind of energy we're  
looking for.

Cole turns back to the front, and the truck returns to pained  
silence.

EXT. CLARKSTOWN - CONTINUOUS

The Bronco rumbles down the road.

THE END.