

RESTRICTED TERRITORY

Act VII Morning After

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Act VII

[Morning After]

Act VII, Scene 1

[Startling Introductions]

Scene: Outside the cabin. It is snowing heavily in the early morning. Due to the snow storm and early hour, outside is dim, gray and cold. The camera ghosts backward into the cabin's kitchen. The gray glow can be seen through the gaps in the closed shutters. The cabin is very quiet - a slight pop or crackle can be heard occasionally from the stoves, as well as some buffeting of the breeze against the cabin.

Camera in the darkish kitchen: The cooking stove has a deep red glow to it that can barely be seen. The camera moves to the main room where the heating stove is also glowing a deep red. The glow goes up the stack and stops at the flue damper. It is silent, except for the occasional tinkling of the coals in the hot stoves.

The camera continues into Sam's room. Sam has two lamps lit, but turned down. There are clothes (worn by Victoria and Austin the night before) and towels hanging in the room, drying. Sam is sitting on a chair next to one of the two beds that showed up yesterday morning. Victoria and Austin are in the bed. They are both on their left side. Austin is in front of Victoria. They are both covered completely except their right hands are out. Austin's head is still wrapped in a small towel.

Sam Checks Austin's radial pulse, watches his breathing and then checks his temperature by feeling his forehead. Sam checks Austin's capillary refill on his finger by pressing on the fingernail, then quickly releasing, watching the return of color. Sam nods indicating a good response.

Sam then checks Victoria's radial pulse. Victoria opens her eyes slowly. Then she quickly realizes that she is in a strange place, doesn't feel good and there is a strange man holding her wrist.

Victoria: (Camera, behind Victoria looking at Sam. Victoria sits up in a start.) What the hell!?! Who are you?

Sam sits back and holds up his hands as if he were being robbed. Austin doesn't move.

Sam: (Trying to clam her down. In a concerned and careful tone, while trying to not wake Austin or invoke any more agitation to Victoria.) Whoa, whoa, whoa. Easy now. I'm just trying to help.

Victoria: (Realizing she is wearing no clothes, pulls the blanket up for cover.) What are you trying to do? Get away! (She sees Austin lying next to her with cuts across his back..) What did you do to Austin?

Sam quickly gets out of the chair while stepping back and keeping his hands up indicating that he is not going to touch them.

Sam: (Still in a calm tone.) Hold on Victoria. (Victoria is surprised that he called her by name.) I'm not going to hurt you. You need to be careful of your brother. I'll stay away so you can calm down. I'm not going to pretend to know everything that's going on, but I'll do my best to explain what I know.

Victoria: (Looking around to gain some idea of their whereabouts and identifying any possible escape routes.) Where are my clothes? Stay back.

Sam: I'm not getting any closer. Your clothes are right here, drying. (Sam points to the hanging clothes. Victoria sees the clothes and recognizes them as her's.) You have to trust me on this. Please be careful. Your brother needs his rest. (Sensing a stale mate of the conversation, Sam finds a way to change the dynamics and give Victoria a less vulnerable perspective.) I'll tell you what. I'm going to go out to the front room and wait for you there. There's another set of clothes like these (Gesturing the clothes he is wearing.) right over there. (Pointing to a stack of folded clothes on the other bed.) They may not fit real well, but at least they're dry. You get dressed and meet me in the front room. Okay? We can talk there. Please take your time and be careful. You both had a rough night.

Victoria doesn't say anything. Sam keeps his hands up and makes a wide circle around the bed to the door. Victoria never takes her eyes off Sam as he makes his way around the room.

Sam: (Stopping by the door, Sam offers some additional information to offset the mistrust, fear and anger that Victoria must be feeling.) By the way, my name is Sam. Sam Reynolds. I'm just here because we got a letter from a hospital in Ohio that said they wanted me check this place out. I'll see you in the front room.

Sam exits through the door closing it behind him.

Victoria looks down at her little brother. He has two large wounds from the belt. She touches his shoulder, then softly runs her fingers across his cheek. Austin does not respond.

Act VII, Scene 2

[Crazy Man Recounts Events]

Camera: In the front room. The lamp is lit, not brightly, but trimmed to a soft glow. The shutters on the windows are closed. Behind Sam, in the kitchen stands the hot stove. The stove has a big pot, a coffee pot, a kettle and a skillet on one side. There are two buckets by the back door. There are two cups of coffee on the big table where Sam is seated. Sam is seated behind one of the cups. He takes a sip from the cup and sets it back down as Victoria opens the bedroom door and steps out, instinctively leaving it open, heating the room. She moves slowly, as if she has a hang over. Also, because she is 'trapped' by her circumstance, she is wary of Sam, looking for possible hazards and ways to escape, if necessary.

Sam: (In a soft and caring manner.) How do you feel? (Victoria is about to answer. Just before she speaks.) Wait, don't answer that. I'll tell you how you feel. Weak, a little dizzy, tired and achy. Like a hangover, right?

Victoria: (Caught off guard by the correct assessment. Defiantly.) I don't know. Never had one. (Gathering her confidence .) You left out confused and angry.

Sam: (In a matter-of-fact tone.) That's common for someone who suffered hypothermia, except the angry part. (Victoria is looking him over to size-up her situation. Lacking any response from Victoria, Sam continues his monologue.) Hypothermia, that's low body temperature.

Victoria: (Angry because she feels like she is being talked down to and defensive because she feels vulnerable.) I know very well what hypothermia is. I'm a nurse. (Victoria slowly starts walking toward Sam, now on the offensive, raising her voice as gets closer.) What I don't know is why you are in our cabin, why you are wearing my dad's old clothes, (Sam stands up with his hands up in a stop gesture.) why Colin sent you, why you have me and Austin naked, in the same bed no less, and what it is that you did to him. . . us.

Sam: (Defensively, but calmly with confidence.) Relax a little and I'll tell you everything I know about last night. (Sam puts his hands down.) But first you need to know that I only did what was medically necessary to save you. Since you're a nurse and know how to treat hypothermia, we should have no reason to discuss why you and Austin were naked in the same bed. I did nothing unethical to you or Austin. Have a seat and let's talk about it.

Sam gestures to the chairs. He sits first. Victoria pulls the chair a little farther from Sam and sits down.

Sam: ([Gesturing toward the second cup.](#)) I poured you some coffee in case you might like some. If you don't like coffee, I can see if there is anything else, but the pantry is rather bare.

Victoria: No. Coffee is fine. ([She picks up the coffee cup, smells it and takes a sip. She takes a little while to determine if the coffee is safe. She nods to herself that the sample is safe.](#)) Now tell me what's going on.

Sam: This is what I know about from last night. . .

Camera: [Dissolves into events of last night as seen by Sam.](#)

Last evening, as the night was nearing, Sam feels a slight chill in the air. He goes to the heating stove, opens the flue, opens the damper and then the door. He looks in to see a very low bed of coals. He loads up the stove and closes the door. He then glances at the pile of firewood that is nearly gone.

Sam: Better stock up before this storm gets too bad. I may be here awhile. ([He walks to the kitchen and puts the pot in the hot area of the stove to heat up some soup he found in one of the cans in the pantry. On his way he takes particular interest of the large tub in the ante room.](#)) Internal voice: [I'll get in a good hot soak after bringing in the wood.](#)

Sam goes to the barn and finds two metal buckets that he brings into the house, fills with water and places on the stove. He then goes out the back door to the stack of wood that is under the tarp. He loads himself up with as much wood as he can carry and begins to stock up the house supply. The stack of wood at each stove becomes quite impressive.

Once he figures he has enough wood for a couple of days, he bolts the back door, takes off his coat, hangs it by the back door, and washes his hands at the pump. He puts some of the soup that he's been heating into a bowl. The rest of the soup is placed on a trivet on the counter. Sam sits down to eat the soup, but it is too hot, so he goes back to the stove to check the buckets of water. They have little bubbles indicating that they are about to boil. Using towels as hot pads, he dumps the water into the tub. He then re-fills the buckets to repeat the process. He then sits down to finish his soup.

Camera: New angle to show the passage of time. Sam is getting coffee and heads to the front room.

Act VII, Scene 3

[Things Get Heated]

Scene: Black screen. Sound of book drop. Camera: Fade up. Due to the sound of the book falling, Sam wakes in a start. As he picks up the book, he hears a sound that might be two gun shots. He leaves the book and unbolts and goes out the front door. Sam looks down hill, in the direction of the gunfire. He stands there for a little while and doesn't hear anything except the wind through the trees. Sam looks down and sees some foot prints in the snow. They come from the hitching post where there are horse prints as well. The prints show that a single rider came to the cabin and left again.

Sam: (Calling out) Hey! Anybody there? Hello . . . (Sam figures he missed his someone stopping by.) Damn, I must have been out back. Hope they come back tomorrow.

He stands there for another minute, listening, then goes back into the house to clean the kitchen.

He hears another shot. He puts the can he was cleaning on the counter as he grabs his coat and goes out the back door, crossing toward the barn to have a better view of the valley as he looks for the source. He stands there a little longer than before. Through the gaps in the trees, Sam can see down to the meadow that he and Wac ih a' crossed two days earlier. The light from the moon is broken by the clouds that move quickly across the sky. As he stares out into the valley covered in snow, he catches a glimpse of the kids running across the meadow.

Sam: What the hell?

Sam instinctively reaches for his pistol that is not there. He takes a quick look around and doesn't see anything of interest. He runs into the barn looking for anything useful. He hears two more shots. The shots compound the urgency of the situation. Seeing nothing else better, Sam grabs a hoe.

Sam rushes down the hill to find the people running across the meadow. He is dragging the hoe behind him (Holding the head, dragging the handle in the snow) to make a line to follow back to the cabin. Because the track he is on is lined with trees and the moonlight is patchy, the darkness makes visibility difficult.

When he gets about 150 yards down the slope, in the distance, through the trees, he sees the Bill Creighton ranch house. Sam stops to see what's happening. There are two people, backlit, in the window. One has a revolver. Sam takes cover behind a tree. He hears a shriek (Victoria, when Austin fell in the creek) a little farther down the hill. Maintaining his cover, he continues down the hill.

Camera: Dissolves back to Sam and Victoria at the table. Victoria has tears streaming down her face.

Sam: (Finishing his story in real time.) That's when I found you two. So I brought you up here, warned you up and put you to bed to recover. I wasn't sure Austin, that's that's your brother, right?, (Victoria nods her head.) I didn't know if he was going to make it. (Sam pauses for a sip of coffee.) That's what I know. I haven't been able to call the police and I couldn't leave you two here unattended, especially with all the gunfire.

Sam takes a break from his story and drinks a couple sips of coffee.

Sam: (Turning the questioning around.) I have some questions of my own. (Victoria is surprised that this trespassing stranger would be so bold to ask questions of her.) Like what happened and why were you out there in the snow in the first place? And who were those men in the ranch house? There's a dozen more questions beyond those, but more importantly, now that you are awake, how are we going to get Austin to a hospital? My cell phone is missing and there's no landline that I can find. You and Austin didn't have cell phones when I found you. Is there a neighbor close by that can help?

Victoria: (Standing up and moving between Sam and the bedroom. Sternly.) You're not taking my brother anywhere in his condition, especially in this storm! (It's Sam's turn to be surprised. Sam wonders if Victoria really is a nurse and if so, why doesn't she know how much Austin needs medical care.) It's three days to the hospital and he's in no condition to ride.

Sam: (Trying to calmly inform Victoria of the need of advanced medical care.) We just need to get to a phone and call 911. They'll send someone to get him. We can get the police to come at the same time. (Sam stands in anticipation of leaving.) Just tell me where the nearest phone is, and I'll make the call. You stay here and take care of Austin.

Victoria: (Completely confused.) Phone?

Sam: Like I said, I don't have mine with me anymore, someone stole it. I didn't have service here anyway. A landline would be best.

Victoria: (In both a defensive manner and with authority.) Mister. You aren't making any sense. . . (Looking for a way to get the mad man to leave without upsetting him. No telling what a crazy person might do, and she's at a disadvantage with a sick brother while not feeling well herself. She speaks as calmly as she can to the

lunatic.) We thank you for your help, but I think you should go back where you came from. You're starting to scare me.

Sam: (Trying his best to stay calm. Frustrated that she doesn't seem to see the urgency of the situation.) I can't go back, it's too far, especially in this storm. My ATV is stolen too. Where's the nearest road? Maybe I can flag someone down.

Victoria: The road's right out front. Maybe you should just pack up your horse and leave.

Sam: (Getting a little agitated at having to keep explaining the same thing over and over, yet trying to be composed and not upset Victoria any more.) That's what I'm trying to tell you; . . . I don't have a horse. I came here on an ATV. There were some horses here a couple days ago, but they're gone now. We need to find a way to get your brother to an emergency room.

Victoria: (Just as agitated about the inability to communicate.) Mister. I have no idea what an ATV or phone is, why you think yelling out some numbers is going to magically get somebody here or why you want to put Austin back in the cold. You aren't making any sense. (Victoria is becoming increasingly flustered.) I just can't deal with you right now. (She is quite upset now. The stress of the situation is beginning to exceed her capacity to cope. Her mental breaking point is quickly approaching.) I have no idea what this phone is you keep talkin' about, but since I've never heard of one, we don't have one. (Victoria is starting to lose control. She is starting to cry and yell at Sam.) My little brother is lying in there, (Pointing into the bedroom.) nearly dead. And now I have a crazy man living in our old cabin that I can't kick out because he lost his, his . . . whatever!

Victoria starts hitting Sam while she is crying. Sam grabs her gently in restraint. She struggles and then starts crying on his shoulder. He hugs her, reassuringly.

Sam: (In a consoling tone.) Okay, okay. We'll work through this.

When she finally stops trying to hit him, Sam lets her go. Although the overwhelming feeling of hopelessness exposed her vulnerability, Victoria wants to maintain a chasm between this lunatic stranger and what is left of her family. She takes a couple steps back)

Sam: I'll help out wherever I can. I'm certainly not here to cause problems. Maybe we should sit back down and work through this one step at a time.

Cautiously, Sam slowly sits back in his chair. When Sam is seated, Victoria sits back in her chair. They adjust their chairs to be at the corner of the table, creating a less confrontational atmosphere. Sam and Victoria both stare at their coffee cups. Sam clears his throat.

Sam: *(Quietly and with concern.)* Let's start with your brother. As you can see, he's in pretty bad shape. The sooner he gets to an emergency room the better. There's no medical equipment here, I looked everywhere last night.

Victoria: We can't take him out in this kind of weather. He wouldn't last ten minutes, let alone, a three day trip to Sacramento. . . He would never make it. Besides, they can't do any more there, than we can here.

Sam: *(Totally surprised by her statement, he still responds very calmly, trying to not get into another argument.)* I really am confused. I don't understand how it could be a three day trip.

Victoria: *(Having difficulty maintaining her composure, she explains as if talking to a child.)* In this weather, three days is optimistic. In the summer it would be about fifteen hours on horseback, and well over twenty hours with a cart.

Sam: *(Bewildered, he tries to take in the strange answer. In an effort to not start another argument he decides to temporarily accept the answer.)* You know the roads in this area better than I do. And, since you're a nurse, *(Stated more as a question than a statement. Victoria nods in response.)* I'll leave his treatment in your hands from here on out. I can help you monitor him and I keep an eye out for a break in the weather. When *you* say he's ready, we'll move him. He'll be our top priority.

Victoria: *(Nodding her head.)* Okay. *(She just remembered she was at the cabin and all the transportation is at the ranch.)* But, even if he was able to travel, we have no way out.

Sam: What do you mean?

Victoria: Our horses and buckboard are at the ranch. *(Pausing to think.)* Unless Hank's men stole 'em. *(Victoria was caught up with her brother's condition and the stranger that she forgot about why she ended up there in the first place. She suddenly realizes that she and Austin were supposed to be killed by Hank's men and that his men are probably still looking for them.)* Oh! *(She becomes visibly shaken.)* Oh no! *(She stands up quickly, startling Sam. Victoria crosses to the shuttered window and peeks out. Sam stands up.)*

Sam: (Recognizing the shock on her face.) What's wrong?

Victoria: (Very frightened. Turning back toward Sam.) Did anyone see you last night?

Sam: (Answering casually.) I don't think so.

Victoria: (Sensing the lack of concern Sam had about being seen.) Are you sure?

Sam: (Stated with more conviction.) I'm pretty sure. Why?

Victoria: (Victoria is frightened and nervously animated.) *That's* why we were in the snow. *That's* why we were trying to get here. They're trying to kill us.

Sam: (Shocked at Victoria's revelation. Sam stands to not be caught unaware.) What are you talking about? Who's 'they'?

Victoria: (Victoria is very emotional, trying to hold back tears, her voice breaking.) They're . . . they're the ones that killed Mom and Dad. (Almost under her breath.) They're gonna kill us too.

Sam: Victoria, Who? Who is trying to kill you?

Victoria: (She looks around the room to verify all the windows are shuttered.) Hank Wilson . . . and his men. He's the one trying to steal our land. He sent his men to kill us, but Austin and I got away. If they find us, we're dead. They'll kill you too. None of us are safe. (She puts her head down in her hands. She then looks up, staring at Sam.) You're sure no one saw you.

Sam: (Reassuring.) Yes, I'm sure! I saw two men in the window, but they couldn't see me. I was hidden in the trees. (Victoria still seems unconvinced. Sam gently holds her by both shoulders, arms outstretched, looking into her eyes.) Don't worry. I'm sure they had no idea I was there. They certainly wouldn't be out in this storm looking for you. So, for right now, you and Austin are safe.

Victoria: (Calmly.) I guess you're right about that.

Sam: (Releases her. In a soft, fatherly tone.) You better check on Austin, I'll make you something to eat.

Victoria: Yeah, Okay.

Victoria heads to the bedroom. Sam goes to the kitchen.

End of Act VII

[To Act VI](#)

[To Act VIII](#)