

FADE IN:

EXT. VALLEY - DAY

Neon sunset. Stark, solemn countryside. A lone figure.

CLEO CALLAHAN, seventeen with stern beauty and a face that has a hard time breaking into smiles, crouches over the mauled corpse of a lamb.

A hunting rifle rests in the crook of her arm.

She paws at the lamb's pooled blood, runs it between her fingers. It is wet, fresh.

She rises, swipes her hand across her stained jeans, pushes her hair back with the same hand, squints into the horizon.

A fox pads in the far distance, silhouetted against the sun.

Cleo raises the rifle with the easy swing of a practiced marksman. Rests her right eye on the scope.

Her forefinger coils the trigger.

The fox stops. Turns its head. Locks yellow eyes with Cleo from across the valley.

Cleo hesitates. Lowers the rifle an inch, frowns.

She stares and the fox stares back.

Silence. Stillness.

Cleo readjusts her eye to the scope.

EXT. TRAIN TRACK - DAY

ROBIN O'RILEY, seventeen with a dangerous cunning sometimes caught in glances, lies motionless across train tracks.

Clenched in her hand, a switchblade knife, open.

CRACK of the distant rifle shot. Robin opens her eyes, raises her head. Pushes herself up.

EXT. COUNTRY ROADSIDE - DAY

Last light of the sun, a haze of orange.

Cleo sits, rifle cradled between her arms. She holds a packet of cigarettes and some crumpled money notes.

Six feet from Cleo, a GIRL lounges, propped on her elbows. Mid-twenties with a frayed impression of beauty that was probably once complete.

She doesn't look at Cleo, stares at something on the horizon.

The girl rises, dusts herself off. Cleo glances at her. The girl looks at Cleo, turns to leave. Cleo looks back down at the cigarettes in her hand.

The girl suddenly reappears behind Cleo and throws her arms around her, taking Cleo by surprise.

She holds the embrace. Startled by the sudden affection, Cleo doesn't move.

The girl slides her hands from Cleo and walks away. Cleo glances over her shoulder. The girl walks into the sunset, kicking up the dust. Doesn't look back.

INT. CLEO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Not a typical teenager's bedroom. Stark. Few pairs of worn boots, rifle bullets on the dresser.

Cleo pulls open a drawer. Full of packets of cigarettes, as well as a small stack of battered money.

She places the new packet in the drawer, smooths the money out, folds that in too. Snaps the drawer shut.

INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - NIGHT

A dented hand dryer.

Freshly bruised knuckles. The fist clenches, unclenches.

The girl that hugged Cleo stares into a mirror.

She turns on the tap. Soaks her hand.

CREAK - the door opens. The girl turns her head.

Robin sidles around the frame. Stops as they lock eyes.

Flicker of recognition. Robin half smiles. The girl curls her lip, spits into the sink.

Robin breaks the stare, pads across the room. The girl watches her.

Robin enters a stall. Closes the door behind her, presses her back to it.

The girl snorts, turns back to the mirror.

Robin listens briefly. Slides her switchblade out of her jacket.

The girl twists off the tap - a second later, Robin flicks out the knife blade.

SNICKT.

Sharp in the sudden silence - Robin's face flashes in irritation.

The girl glances over her shoulder. Looks down at Robin's boots, visible under the door, turned inwards.

The girl frowns.

Robin turns the knife in her hand, blade pointing down.

The girl turns from the mirror.

Robin tenses her grip.

The girl raises her foot behind her. Reaches down, pulls out her own knife from the shaft of her boot.

Dead silence now.

Robin notices, lifts her head.

The girl delicately drags out the curved blade of her knife between her fingers.

Steps forward carefully, keeps her eyes on Robin's feet -

CRASH -

- the stall door flings open, Robin lunges out.

The girl recoils in shock. Robin jerks forward -

- the girl ducks messily to the side. Robin's knife flies past her head.

She raises her own knife, slashes at Robin, misses. Robin knocks her hand aside, in one fumbled motion -

- SLITS the knife across the girl's exposed neck.

Blood trickles then cascades, a flash flood.

Robin flinches, steps back, looks on with wide eyes.

The girl's knife clatters off the tiles. Her hand clasps the wound. The other flies back, slides off the side of the sink. She staggers, sinks to the floor.

Robin steps back, snaps the dripping switchblade shut. Her breaths come in jutters. She reaches down, picks up the girl's knife. Closes it, shoves it in a pocket.

The girl stares up at Robin with screaming eyes, the silent terror of a delicate bird mauled by some great animal.

Robin looks back. Tilts her head slightly, as if mildly interested in a fallen horse or half crushed cat.

She moves for the door, avoiding the pooling blood. The door CREAKS and Robin is gone.

The girl lies trembling, face pressed to the floor, body arched at a strange angle, breathing in short stabs.

EXT. VALLEY - NIGHT

A shadowed fox treads across the crest of a hill, form defined by shreds of moonlight.

It raises its head and screams. Others join from the dark.

INT. CLEO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cleo curls on her bed, wide awake, listening to the foxes scream. The sound is almost human.

She rolls over, restless. Something not leaving her alone. She jerks out of bed, yanks jeans up her bare legs.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Door opens, light bends in, Cleo slips through.

Seems to head for the rifle leaning against the wall - but passes it, goes to the fridge, its humming loud in otherwise dead silence.

Cleo opens the door and grabs a slab of red meat. Weighs it in her hand, reconsiders - reaches for a second.

She pads across the floorboards, slides into her boots, opens the back door and disappears into the night.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A solitary bus trundles along country roads. Old, loud, losing a war with rust.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Clots of school kids yelp and giggle, some standing, some facing backwards, not a seat belt in sight.

Cleo and Robin sit at the back, removed from the other children by an empty row of seats. Not dressed in full uniform - grubby jumpers thrown on halfway to straight.

Cleo stares out of the window. Robin has her eyes closed. The bus shudders and jolts.

Robin's head slides down onto Cleo's shoulder.

Doesn't bother Cleo.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Secluded corner shaded by trees and crumbling stone walls.

Robin sits on the ground. Cleo leans against a wall, staring pointedly at a GIRL, on edge, standing a few feet away - some kind of face off.

The girl reaches into her pocket, reluctantly drags out a packet of cigarettes. Throws it to Cleo.

Cleo catches it with one hand. Flips the top up, picks out two cigarettes. Hands them down to Robin.

She catches the girl's eye, lifts her arm to throw the packet back. The girl readies her hands. Cleo swings her arm, throws the cigarettes back behind her.

Robin snorts with laughter. The girl drops her hands.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Silence, besides the erratic scratching of pencils.

Cleo and Robin sit at the back of class. Robin sprawled out, flicking a pencil, Cleo gazing out of the window.

Robin glances at Cleo. Reaches across, pokes her in the side with the pencil. Cleo jolts, turns to Robin in surprise. Robin smirks.

A moment. Then Robin pokes her again, but Cleo grabs her wrist before she can pull her arm back. Robin YELPS, drops the pencil. Cleo snorts with laughter.

The stone-faced MR. KENNEDY whips his head up with a frown. A few kids glance over their shoulders.

Robin catches Kennedy's glaring eye.

She leans down, scrapes up the pencil. Pokes Cleo sharp in the foot. Cleo winces, jerks forward. Robin sniggers.

Cleo watches Robin straighten up with playful eyes. Robin ignores her. Cleo pounces on her.

A muffled cry from Robin - the chair teeters - then CRASH.

The two girls hit the floor locked in their play fight. Cleo drags Robin under her. Robin, grinning, tries to grapple back.

Kennedy sighs in frustration, SCRAPES back his chair.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Cleo and Robin lounge on plastic chairs in some kind of detention area.

Cleo stares at the short, ancient RECEPTIONIST. She stares back, slightly perturbed.

The silence slowly breaks - sirens SHRIEK in the distance, coming closer. Heads rise and turn in curiosity.

A Garda (Irish Police) car SCREAMS past the window. Then another, then an ambulance. Dust rises in their wake. Cleo, Robin and the receptionist turn and look out of the window.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The whole class stares, momentarily hypnotised. Then ripples of excited whispers. That many sirens obviously a big deal in this kind of place.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Robin stares after the convoy, eyes suddenly alight.

Glances at Cleo, motions with her head. Cleo shrugs. The girls get up. Cleo shoots a warning look at the receptionist, daring her to protest. She doesn't.

EXT. PUBLIC BATHROOM/CRIME SCENE - DAY

Two vacant squad cars, messily parked, doors still open. Ambulance behind.

Their radios crackle with static, distorted voices.

Two Gardaí stretch blue police tape across the bathroom entrance. A lace of blood trickles out of the darkened interior and pools in the gutter.

A small crowd has gathered, craning their necks, talking rapidly in hushed tones.

DAMIEN CONWAY, a forty-year-old Guard, stands a few feet beyond the tape, uncertain. His hand covers his mouth.

EOIN DELANEY, mid-thirties, Guard, emerges from the bathroom. Ducks under the tape.

Catches Damien's eye, shakes his head, face severe.

BEYOND THE CRIME SCENE

Robin slows to a stop a few metres from the scene, Cleo pads behind. Robin surveys the crowd - the Guards - frowns in frustration.

Tugs at Cleo's jacket, slinks off. Cleo doesn't move.

Robin glances back, keeps walking. Cleo flicks an eyebrow in amusement. Robin stops.

ROBIN

Don't you wanna see what's in there?

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Robin picks her way through a narrow, overgrown alley. Cleo trudges behind, smacking greenery out of her way.

Robin emerges into a widened dead end, enclosed by bare grey walls. The far one is the back of a building. Robin looks up. Smiles.

Eight feet up on the far wall is a grubby window.

She turns her head, motions to Cleo.

EXT. PUBLIC BATHROOM/CRIME SCENE - DAY

DONNACHA MALONE, fifty, gruff and prematurely grey, cuts his way through the gathered crowd with authority.

Strides to Damien and Eoin, beckons them to follow. They walk, moving away from the crowd.

DAMIEN
Eoin, Detective Donnacha Malone.

Donnacha nods at him.

DONNACHA
Homicide, we're sure?

Damien nods. Donnacha exhales, glances at the blood trickling from the entrance.

DONNACHA
Jesus, I thought they were having
me on.

Damien shakes his head.

EOIN
Nah. It's a real mess in there.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Cleo hooks her hands under Robin's boot.

Robin nods. Cleo lifts her with a grunt. Robin hops, grabs the window ledge, cranes her neck - drops back down with a THUD. Turns to Cleo, eyes wide.

ROBIN
Blood everywhere.

Cleo glances up at the window.

EXT. PUBLIC BATHROOM/CRIME SCENE - DAY

Donnacha rounds on Eoin.

DONNACHA
In there? You touch anything?

Eoin looks at the ground.

EOIN
Maybe, yeah. Slipped on some of
the blood. Floor's covered in -

DONNACHA
Jesus Christ. You wait for
forensics.

EOIN
Sorry boss. Never seen a real
murder before.

DONNACHA
There a weapon?

EOIN
Couldn't see one.

Donnacha sighs, frustrated.

DAMIEN
There were lads in before we got
here too.
(nods at the crowd)
Most of them. Kathy Sayers found
her, went roaring mad around half
the town before we got any word.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Cleo clambers on a rusty barrel upright under the window.
Robin waits below her, gnawing a thumb.

Cleo rises carefully, face level with window. Pushes up
onto her toes. Smears a jumper sleeve across the grime.

EXT. PUBLIC BATHROOM/CRIME SCENE - DAY

Donnacha, hands on his hips, paces slowly.

DONNACHA
Local kid is it? You know her?

Damien exhales.

DAMIEN
Yeah. It's Aisling Callahan.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Cleo squints through the window. Robin looks up at her.
Cleo cranes her neck - then stops dead.

ROBIN (O.S.)
Cleo, d'ya see -

CLEO
That's my sister.

ROBIN
Ashy?

SMASH. Cleo rams her elbow through the window.

Robin yelps, covers her head from the shower of glass.

EXT. PUBLIC BATHROOM/CRIME SCENE - DAY

Damien, Donnacha and Eoin spin their heads round at the sound of the crash. The crowd falls silent.

INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY

SMACK.

Cleo's feet land on the bathroom floor. She runs forward, pushes through the stall door.

Robin clambers through the window, face of concern. Her eyes fall on the body of AISLING CALLAHAN.

Robin slides down the wall, crumples into the corner.

Cleo is still. At her feet her sister - cut string puppet, bled to pale.

Cleo crouches down. Presses her hand slowly in the blood that pools the floor.

Turns her palm, stares at the red stain. A trail of it slides down her arm. She grabs her wrist, stops it.

The bathroom door SMASHES open.

Donnacha stops in the frame. Takes in Aisling's body, the shattered window, sobbing Robin, stagnant Cleo.

DONNACHA
What are ya doing, you can't be
in here -

ROBIN
That's her sister!

DONNACHA
Her what?

Donnacha looks at Cleo - can't find words for a moment - then composes himself.

DONNACHA

Jesus. Okay. You gotta come with me, both of you, c'mon. Come on.

He takes a step forward, extends a hand to Cleo.

EXT. PUBLIC BATHROOM/CRIME SCENE - DAY

Donnacha leads Cleo and Robin out of the bathroom.

The gathered crowd surges forward in a flurry of movement. More screaming SIRENS, approaching in the distance.

Cleo stares at the crowd in a haze, her eyes flicking from one face to the next, as if seeing them in a new light.

INT. GARDA CAR - DAY

Donnacha bustles Cleo and Robin into a waiting cop car. Robin shifts along the back seat, Cleo ducks in behind.

DONNACHA

Just wait here until we get a grip on this thing.

(pause)

I'm sorry about your sister.

Donnacha SLAMS the door.

DONNACHA (O.S.)

Get a camera, start taking pictures! Get them back, this is a crime scene -

Robin looks sideways at her friend. Cleo cradles her bloodstained hand in her lap.

INT. KELLY HOUSE - DAY

Donnacha leads Robin and Cleo through the door.

HANNAH KELLY, mid-fifties and gentle, stands in the kitchen doorway, her face dismay. SHANE KELLY, late fifties, strong, mild, clumps in behind.

HANNAH

Ah God, what's she done now?

Cleo tosses her head, clenches a fist.