

Red Springs

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

1 INT. COOPER HOME, BEDROOM -- NIGHT

1

Open on an OLD FASHIONED RADIO, glowing softly in the corner of a dark room. A SLOW JAZZ TUNE plays at barely perceptible volume. The WIND whistles softly. The MUSIC begins to FADE, replaced by a BUZZING static.

GREG COOPER, in a queen-sized bed, stirs in his sleep. He feels the other side of the bed, finding it empty and cool. His eyes still closed, he mutters

GREG

Karen?

The BUZZING of the radio increases. Greg sits up, rubbing sleep from his eyes. He looks around the dark room.

GREG (CONT'D)

Hun?

The gauzy curtains move in the breeze, the window wide open. A puff from outside, and the curtains part, just long enough for us to glimpse the form of a WOMAN outside.

Greg scoots out of bed, heading for the open window. He moves the curtains, looks out.

BACKYARD - GREG'S POV

KAREN COOPER stands at the edge of deep woods, her dark hair and white nightgown fluttering in the breeze. A beat, and she heads into the trees.

Greg wastes no time, slipping on shoes and pulling on a robe.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT

2

Greg moves quickly through the woods, shining a flashlight ahead.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. CLEARING -- NIGHT

3

Greg steps into a clearing. A creek BUBBLES alongside. Greg shines his flashlight in front of him. The beam moves along the bare earth. Revealed in the light are several large stones. They glisten with black moisture.

Greg moves closer, his eyes on the stones.

They're arranged in a ring, spokes crisscrossing the center.
A wheel. Freshly spilled blood dots the top of the ring.

On Greg, taking this in. A HUMMING VOICE makes him look up.

Karen stands in the shadows of two oaks. Humming a tune.

Greg breathes a sigh of relief.

GREG

Honey? What are you doing out here?

KAREN

(murmur)

Someone was singing to me. The way
dad used to...

Greg slowly approaches her.

GREG

Karen, there's no one out here.

He holds his hand out, inviting.

GREG (CONT'D)

Come back to bed.

She raises her arms to him, stepping into the moonlight.
Blood drips from cuts on her arms. *

GREG (CONT'D)

Oh god.

He rushes for her as she collapses, catching her. Falls to
his knees with his wife unconscious in his arms.

We move from them, stopping at

THE RING OF STONES

A rivulet of Karen's blood flows from the circle, through
the dirt, spilling into the creek.

CREEK

The water runs red.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: "Red Springs"

4 EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS -- DAY

4

Muted autumn colors accent the soft, rolling peaks, back lit
by the golden sun.

An infinity of dark corners in the swaying branches. Birds greet the morning with their song.

5 EXT. HIGHWAY 74 -- DAY 5

A stretch of highway winding through these mountains. An older model CAR coasts past a sign reading "Welcome to Red Springs, Est. 1889 - Enjoy Your Stay!"

6 EXT. RED SPRINGS GENERAL HOSPITAL -- DAY 6

Establish. The older model car from before is parked in the lot.

7 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- DAY 7

ANDY WINTERS- subdued blue suit- walks down the corridor, flowers in hand. Looking at room numbers.

Greg emerges from a room further down. Andy recognizes him, quickens his pace.

SHERIFF GRANT BECK- in uniform- follows behind Greg, shutting the door. The two have been talking, their expressions somber. Andy catches up to them, curious. Greg sees him then.

GREG

Andy. You're here.

ANDY

I came as soon as I could.

Greg looks to Sheriff Beck, who gets the message.

BECK

I'll be in touch.

He nods at Andy in greeting before taking off down the hall. Andy watches him go. Turns to Greg. *

ANDY

Is he investigating what happened? *

GREG

Sheriff Beck just stopped by to check on her. People tend to look out for one another down here. *

Andy ignores the implication, moving to look in the glass partition on the door. A glimpse of Karen in bed. *

ANDY

How is she?

Greg subtly wedges himself between Andy and the room.

GREG
She's stable. I'm looking after
her.

ANDY
Good job so far, chief. Excuse me.

He pushes past Greg, entering

8 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

8

the hospital room.

Karen lies in her bed, asleep. An IV trails from one hand.
Her arms are bandaged.

*

Andy kneels beside her. Tenderly moves a lock of hair away
from her face.

ANDY
(soft)
Hi, sis.

She doesn't stir, still sleeping soundly.

GREG (O.S.)
She's sedated.

Andy's expression sours. He stands, approaches Greg.

ANDY
Then I guess **you'll** need to tell me
what the hell's going on.

GREG
She had an episode. We just switched
medications, sometimes that causes
bad reactions--

ANDY
I've read all the pamphlets and text
books, Greg. I don't buy for a second
that she'd hurt herself--

GREG
And yet here we are!

Greg stifles himself so he won't disturb his wife. He leads
Andy into

9 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- DAY

9

the corridor, closing the door behind them.

GREG

She's been on the brink for months.
I've tried *everything* in my power to
keep things together, but she's
slipping.

(beat)

You haven't dealt with the brunt of
this. I have.

ANDY

Jesus, I've *known* she was... sick.
I've felt it.

GREG

Then where have you been?

Andy opens his mouth to defend himself, but he knows Greg is right. He stops, breathes. Trying to keep his emotions in check.

ANDY

I just want to know if she said
anything last night. Some kind of
clue...

GREG

She says a lot of things when she's
like that.

ANDY

Greg. Please.

GREG

She said that she heard... singing.
Out there in the woods. But there
was no--

ANDY

Did you mention this to the Sheriff?

Greg is uncomfortable with the question. His eyes look anywhere but at Andy.

Without another word, Andy takes off down the hall. Greg calls after him.

GREG

Andy, wait. Where are you going?

(beat)

Andy!

CUT TO:

10 INT. RED SPRINGS SHERIFF'S STATION (LOBBY) -- DAY

10

A sparse office-type environment. Andy stands at the desk of a lone receptionist, LUCILLE, 85 and hard of hearing. She's not quite getting his urgency.

LUCILLE

Uh, is there--

ANDY

I need to talk to him. Sheriff Beck. There's been an attack.

LUCILLE

An attack...

He's getting nowhere. He softens his approach. A touch of regional accent emerges.

ANDY

Sheriff and I need to talk over some things. He said I should just drop in.

LUCILLE

He said... well, I s'ppose...

ANDY

(smiles)
Thank ya, ma'am.

He scoots around her, heads for the door to the Sheriff's office. She remembers something suddenly, calls out.

LUCILLE

Oh, wait, but - he's not in!

But Andy already has his hand on the knob. He helps himself into the darkened inner office.

ANDY

(over his shoulder)
I'll wait for him!

11 INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- DAY

11

All the accouterments of a lifelong outdoorsman are arranged on the walls. A desk covered in papers and one lit lamp. The TICKING of an antique clock. The rest in shadow.

Andy pulls a chair up in front of the desk, takes a seat. Considers waiting patiently.

TIME CUT:

Andy is behind the desk, white latex gloves on his hands. Tenderly shifting the papers, taking care not to disturb the spread too obviously. Finding nothing of interest, he begins opening drawers.

More office-type detritus. A half-empty bottle of scotch in the second drawer on the right. Andy smirks to himself. Closes it. Nothing. He turns to the wall behind him.

An animal head, stuffed and mounted. Below it, an ANTIQUE HUNTING KNIFE mounted on a wooden plaque. Andy eyes this. He takes hold of the knife handle, tenderly removing it from the plaque. Inspects the blade in the direct light of the desk lamp.

THE BLADE IS CLEAN. Andy grimaces.

BECK (O.S.)

Doesn't get much use anymore, I'm afraid.

Andy looks up, busted. Sheriff Beck is framed in the doorway, daylight back-lighting him from the lobby.

BECK (CONT'D)

Not allowed to hunt these old woods nowadays. Wildlife population's been on the de-cline last couple years.

He flips on the overhead fluorescent. Approaches as he talks. Andy eyes him, mind racing. Sets down the knife.

BECK (CONT'D)

Strangest thing.

Beck smiles, eyes hard and glittering.

ANDY

Sheriff, I know this doesn't look very good--

BECK

Nah.

(beat)

But I get it. Big city cop, comes down here 'cause he's worried about his sister.

Beck is close, only the desk separating him from Andy.

BECK (CONT'D)

You've got a reputation. I got none. So your mind gets to investigating.

Andy shrugs.

ANDY
Far as I can tell, you're clean.

Beck holds his slightly mischievous smile.

BECK
Not a speck a' blood on me.

Andy locks eyes with him. Suspicions not totally gone.

ANDY
Not one.

Behind him, the wooden plaque where the knife was held. Etched into the wood: a small circle, spokes crisscrossing the center. A WHEEL.

The clock CHIMES 5 o'clock.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. COOPER HOME -- DAY

12

Greg's gray sedan pulls in front of the house, as the sky grows dusky. He emerges from the driver's seat, circles around to the other side and opens the door.

Karen is unsteady but awake as he gently helps her out of the car. She puts her bandaged arm around his waist, and he supports her weight, leading her to the front porch. She gives him a reassuring smile, touched by his efforts.

As they reach the porch, Greg casts a furtive glance toward the woods.

JUST WIND MOVING THROUGH THE BRANCHES.

ANDY (O.S.)
So, how did you three become
acquainted?

CUT TO:

13 INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

13

Andy, sans gloves, sitting in the visitor's chair in front of the desk. Legs crossed, *faux* casual. Beck is seated behind his desk. The knife lies in front of him.

BECK
Oh, he... came to me for help. A
little business he wanted taken care
of.

*
*

ANDY
 (strained joke)
 Speeding ticket?

*

BECK
 (laughs)
 Naw, nothing like that. Y'see, I'm
 not *just* an officer of the law.

*

*

Andy, his eyes narrowing. His tone slightly on edge.

ANDY
 Is that right?

Beck, that twinkle in his eye. Grin on his lips.

BECK
 Yessir.
 (beat)
 I'm also a human being.

CUT TO:

14 INT. COOPER HOME (LIVING ROOM) -- DAY

14

Karen is settled on the couch, still a bit dazed. Behind her, Greg moves about the kitchen.

GREG
 I'll get us some dinner started in a
 sec. Help you forget about hospital
 food, huh?

KAREN
 Yeah. Sounds good.
 (beat)
 But you know... you should make enough
 for three. Andy's coming.

Greg stops what he's doing, crosses to her at the couch.

GREG
 Surprised you remember him. Coming
 to see you, I mean.

Karen nods, studying his face. He holds out his hand to her, and she laces her fingers with his.

GREG (CONT'D)
 The more the merrier. I'll give him
 a call.

He's less than thrilled, but his commitment to her shines through. She knows the sacrifice he's making.

KAREN

Thank you.

They kiss. Then break, foreheads touching. Their eyes tethered to each other. Speaking softly.

GREG

Stay right here?

KAREN

Yes.

GREG

Good.

They smile, faces colored by the recent pain. A silent BEAT, and Greg moves for the bedroom, removing yesterday's shirt.

Karen lounges back, dreamy. Listens to her husband WHISTLING. Feels faint recognition at the tune. Nods her head, remembering. Begins to SING softly along.

KAREN

(faint singing)

..."Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing
Matilda. You'll come a-Waltzing
Matilda, with me. And his ghost may
be heard as you pass by that
billabong..."

The whistling stops. A low BUZZING begins to build. Karen rubs her arms, feeling a chill. She sits up.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Greg?

The bedroom door is pulled shut. No light visible underneath.

Karen eyes the shadowed area, apprehensive.

SMOKE SEEPS OUT FROM BENEATH THE DOOR.

Karen shuts her eyes, trying to will the vision away. The BUZZING, insectile and maddening, is INCREASING in volume. She opens them again.

The bedroom door is open. The room beyond is pitch black. From the depths,

VOICE (O.S.)

(singing)

..."And you'll come a-Waltzing
Matilda..."

Greg emerges from the bedroom. Skin gray and slick. Dead and walking. He smiles blackened teeth.

GREG
(inhuman)
With me.

Karen SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. RED SPRINGS SHERIFF'S STATION -- EVENING 15

Andy heads toward his car at a brisk pace. Looking at his tires, he slows.

The front tire is completely deflated. Slashed.

ANDY
Shit.

His cell RINGS. He answers it.

ANDY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Winters.

GREG
(filter)
Andy. She's gone. She ran out of the house!

Andy's eyes squeeze shut. Fearing the worse.

ANDY
You're at home? Stay where you are.
I'll be... right over.

He flips the phone shut and looks around, desperate for a ride. He looks back at the station. Weighs the idea.

A RUMBLE, like thunder, rolls through the air.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. COOPER HOME -- EVENING 16

The light is draining from the sky as the Sheriff's cruiser pulls up in the Coopers' driveway. Andy and Beck get out of the car. The front door of the house is wide open.

ANDY
Wait here.

Beck nods. Andy heads up the porch steps.

17 INT. COOPER HOME -- MOMENTS LATER

17

Inside, Greg is pressing a towel to his temple. There is some blood seeping through the cloth. Andy takes this in.

ANDY

What happened here, Greg?

GREG

I-I don't know, we were talking in the living room and sh-she...

ANDY

She did this to you?

GREG

I-I was trying to calm her down, but she wouldn't, she just kept *screaming*...

Andy looks at the blood on Greg's fingers. His, or...? Andy's expression hardens. His tone is icy.

ANDY

So you tried to shut her up.

GREG

What? No...

ANDY

You son of a bitch.

He grabs Greg by his shirt, fuming. Greg pushes back, letting the towel fall. A nasty cut on his temple.

GREG

Cut the macho jealousy bullshit, Andy! We've got to find her!

Andy, coming to his senses, backs off.

GREG (CONT'D)

Please. Let me help you.

Andy looks hard at him. Trying to figure out if he believes him.

ANDY

I'll find her. You're going to stay here with the Sheriff.

Greg's face twists in confusion. And fear?

GREG

Beck? He's here?

ANDY

Yeah.

Andy walks toward the open front door.

ANDY (CONT'D)

He's right out f--

SHERIFF'S CRUISER - ANDY'S POV

No Sheriff.

It dawns on Andy with horrible clarity. He turns to Greg, who shares his look.

CUT TO:

18 EXT. WOODS -- MOMENTS LATER 18

Karen sits in the shadow of tall trees, arms wrapped around her knees. Shivering. Frightened as a young child.

A twig SNAPS. Karen starts, moving desperately away from the sound.

19 EXT. CLEARING -- MOMENTS LATER 19

She emerges, backwards, into the clearing. Creeps along the ground. Her palm hits a large stone. She draws it back in pain. Turns to look.

A large circle of stones. Beck is crouched beside it. He smiles at her.

BECK

Ah. Beat ya here.

He viciously grabs her.

20 EXT. WOODS -- MOMENTS LATER 20

Andy pushes his way through the trees, gun drawn. A SCREAM up ahead. Karen. He runs toward the sound.

21 EXT. CLEARING -- NIGHT 21

Karen lies in the center of the circle, her bandages stripped off, blood pooling from her arms. She's not moving. The deep, sickening HUM of dark energy can be heard. *

The sight of her there overrides Andy's cautious instincts.

He runs to her. Beck steps from the shadows, pistol whips him. Andy falls to his knees. Beck presses the barrel against the back of Andy's head.

BECK
Get rid of that.

Grimacing, Andy tosses his gun into the trees.

ANDY
What are you doing, Beck?

Beck chuckles.

BECK
Hate to be the one to tell you this,
son... but you are one *shitty*
detective.

As fast as the mirth was there, it's gone. He nudges Andy with the gun.

BECK (CONT'D)
Go to her.

They move to the stone circle, cast in a sickly light. Andy is kneeling beside his sister. He checks her pulse.

ANDY
She's not dead, Sheriff. You can
still stop this.

Beck ignores him. He extracts a hunting knife from his belt. Quick as lightning, he **slashes** Andy's arm. Andy grits his teeth, holding back a cry of pain. Beck roughly grabs Andy's bleeding arm, holds it over the circle. The HUM increases. Andy can feel it.

ANDY (CONT'D)
What is happening here?

BECK
He's coming, Winters. And when he
gets here, he'll be so *beautiful*.

He brings the knife to Andy's throat.

GREG
Beck!

Beck stops, startled. Greg bursts into the clearing. Beck smirks.

BECK
Welcome to the show.

Greg looks hurt and betrayed.

GREG

End this.

BECK

Gladly.

Beck presses the knife to Andy's throat. Behind him, a dark form rises. He's struck on the head, hard. He goes down.

Karen drops the heavy, blood-covered stone in her hands. Her brother and her husband look at her, shocked. She looks them each in the eye.

KAREN

Let's get the fuck out of here.

DISSOLVE TO:

22 EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS -- MORNING 22

Sun rising over the swaying branches.

DISSOLVE TO:

23 INT. COOPER HOME (LIVING ROOM) -- MORNING 23

Andy kisses his sister on the cheek. They've both been treated for their wounds.

KAREN

Are you sure you won't stay for a little while longer?

ANDY

Do you need me here?

KAREN

(teasing)

I think we both know I can handle myself.

Andy smiles. Turns to Greg, standing beside Karen, and shakes his hand. Looks him in the eye.

ANDY

You take care of each other. Whatever comes...

GREG

We'll weather it.

The men share a nod. Respect and understanding beginning. Another hug between brother and sister, and Andy's off.

24 EXT. COOPER HOME -- MORNING

24

Andy heads for his car. His smile is bittersweet. He opens his door. As if sensing something off, Andy looks toward the house.

FRONT PORCH -- ANDY'S POV

All calm. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Andy shakes off the feeling, gets in his car.

25 INT. COOPER HOME (LIVING ROOM) -- MORNING

25

Karen and Greg lounge on the couch, his arms cocoon her. They watch through the bay window as Andy's car drives off.

GREG

Do you think he knows?

KAREN

It doesn't matter.

GREG

(pained)

I never thought it would happen this way.

She turns her head to look into his eyes.

KAREN

Shh.

She caresses the wound she inflicted at his temple.

KAREN (CONT'D)

You've done *so much* for me. I understand that now. I understand everything.

He kisses her forehead.

GREG

So, how do you feel?

Karen settles back into his arms. Looks in the mirror above the mantelpiece. Smiles.

IN THE MIRROR

Karen, her skin gray and slick, smiling black teeth. A BUZZING rises.

Beautiful. KAREN

FADE TO BLACK.

END