

**BROOD**

By

Sandra Lee Slotboom

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A primitive log cabin hidden amongst dense oak. Sooty windows glowing dimly in the blackness.

From within, bestial, guttural grunting. Then, a resounding slap followed by an infant's shrill wail.

A moment later, the door opens as a bearded, middle-aged man dressed in nineteenth-century garb emerges with a candle lantern. Blood up to his elbows, cradling a baby swaddled in a grey, military blanket.

                                YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)  
                                (screaming)  
                                No, Papa, no! Come back! Please!  
                                Not our baby!

He stoically carries the crying newborn down a deeply rutted path into a grove of trees.

When he reaches a clearing, lays the squirming bundle on the ground. Picks up a nearby spade to dig a small hole.

Gently placing his son into the pit, shovels dirt over him. With every mound of earth, the squalling becomes more muted. Then, ceases.

As he raises the lantern above his head -- illuminates a vast cemetery littered with hundreds of unmarked graves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OZARK FOREST - DAY

A photogenic YOUNG COUPLE hikes a woodland trail through stands of flowering dogwood and blooming redbud.

SUPER: "HIGHLAND TRAIL, OZARK NATIONAL FOREST"

Toting matching backpacks, clasping hands. Looking like they walked straight out of a Ralph Lauren ad.

A scrappy, little terrier-mix weaves between their limbs.

                                LISA  
                                Mr. Kovachavich?

                                AARON  
                                Yes, Mrs. Kovachavich?

LISA  
I have to pee.

AARON  
God, I love it when you talk dirty!

As AARON grabs her passionately, LISA pushes him away.

LISA  
(laughing)  
Cut it out, my bladder's gonna  
explode.

Clutching a wad of Kleenex, she disappears into the brush.  
The little pooch hot on her heels.

AARON  
Lisa! Stay close!

SEVERAL YARDS AWAY

Lisa squats behind a shrub. Holds out her left hand to admire  
the platinum, diamond wedding band glinting off her finger.

A twig snaps, stopping her mid stream.

LISA  
Aaron?

The dog growls, steely eyes fixed on the trees behind her.

INT. UPSCALE KITCHEN - DAY

Cherry cabinets, black granite, stainless steel appliances.

SLOANE ROBERTSON leans over the sink. Matted hair pulled back  
in a half-hearted ponytail, wearing a dowdy bathrobe. She's  
twenty-eight, tall, lithe. Could be a knock-out if she gave a  
damn.

Humming softly, she appears to be doing dishes. She isn't.

SLOANE  
(cooing)  
Mommy loves Christopher very, very  
much. Yes, yes she does.

She's gently bathing an infant.

Turning on the hot faucet, Sloane opens the tap all the way.

A torrent of scalding water rapidly overflows the sink. Cascades onto the travertine floor as steam shrouds the kitchen like a sauna.

Sweat running down her temples, Sloane resumes humming.

Calmly holds her baby's face underwater until he stops struggling. Till he's pink. Still.

She releases him and withdraws her arms, raw and blistered from second degree burns. Closes the tap.

Eyes like black marbles, Christopher stares blankly up at his doting mother, and she, lovingly down at him.

Then, his tiny arms float up, reaching. *To be picked up?*

SLOANE

Christopher?

As she leans in, a pair of hands shoots out of the water -- grabbing Sloane around the throat.

INT. SLOANE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sloane jolts awake with a gasp. To an infant's shrill cry. Her husband, MICHAEL, rolls over, turns on the light.

MICHAEL

Sloane?

She sits up, rigid, listening. Praying for the baby down the hall to fall back to sleep. It doesn't. Instead, the crying from the nursery turns into full blown screeching.

Sloane doesn't move, looks at her husband helplessly.

MICHAEL

I'll take care of it, darling. Go back to sleep.

She pulls the comforter over her head, rolling onto her side away from him.

Michael stands at the doorway a moment tenderly regarding his wife buried beneath the covers.

MICHAEL

You can do anything, Sloane, you always have. It's who you are.

Tears spill out of Sloane's eyes as she squeezes them shut.