

The Last of Us
Spec Script
"Rats in a Maze"

written by

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PREVIOUSLY ON 'THE LAST OF US':

After Tess' tragic death in ep102, Joel and Ellie continue their journey West to reach the Fireflies in hopes of developing a cure. The disconnect between them is at an all time high; Joel still partially blames Ellie for Tess and can't bring himself to open up to her (even if she is the key to saving humanity after all). But even Ellie is starting to have doubts about herself. It's been a long week of difficult travel without speaking, and they're starting to run out of supplies...

This episode is in place of ep103 where we meet Bill and Frank, stretching past ep105 where we meet Henry and Sam in Kansas City. This episode leads us into ep106 before Joel and Ellie arrive in Jackson, Wyoming where they find Tommy.

The inspiration for this episode comes from a deep love and respect for 'The Last of Us' games and series. To me, no other story explores the blurred line separating good and evil with such complexity. Plenty of morally confusing choices are made and we don't always have the capacity to label them as right or wrong. Most importantly, I admire the story's ability to shine light on how we're all codependent in one way or another. We rely on others for strength, support, and love. Without it, we could never survive.

EXT. ABANDONED OVERGROWN ROAD - DAY

Bare feet shuffle across pavement sporting yellowed nails and cracked skin.

A bite mark pierces the torso, stained with fresh dried blood. Small spindly coils expand outward, wrapping around the body. Consuming it.

The NEWLY INFECTED moans as tears flow from its bloodshot eyes. *There's still a person in there.* This was a recent attack.

Aimlessly wandering, it swivels its head, taking in the world for the last time. It's tragic, but also peaceful. As though they're accepting their fate.

Suddenly it stops. The infected crouches over and vomits. Upon raising its head, fungus tendrils spill out of its mouth.

It thrashes its arms at the air and delivers an earsplitting roar. *It's happening.*

A sharp inhale quickly turns to squelching as the fungus overtakes its brain stem.

Mouth open, the infected looks straight up to the sky, pupils dilated three times in size.

And just like that, it's done.

Its head hangs in the air for a second before --

A clanging noise grabs its attention, and the Infected bolts off into an alleyway. Hungry. Enraged. *Gone forever.*

We rise up through the wreckage of this small town and pull back through --

INT. CRUMBLING BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A crack in the wall, where ELLIE was watching. She gasps and pulls herself back. That was horrifying.

She rolls up her sleeve to examine the bite mark on her forearm. Shudders at the thought of what could've been.

Her switchblade is clutched tightly in her fist.

She looks up at JOEL, cleaning his rifle in the corner of the room, unfazed. He's seen enough of this landscape to recognize the sounds of infected.

JOEL
Hungry?

ELLIE
Not really.

JOEL
Suit yourself.

Joel puts down the rifle to shuffle through his backpack. He starts taking things out to rummage for food.

A water canteen, first aid supplies, match box...

Ellie stands up to stretch.

They're in a dilapidated building where they took shelter for the night. Could have been an office building, apartment, who knows? Now it's just rubble, as is the rest of the town.

ELLIE
That guy, he looked like he *just* turned.

Joel hounds a spoonful of canned beans.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Like today.

JOEL
(mouthful)
So?

ELLIE
So, maybe there's people around.

JOEL
All we know for sure is there's infected.

ELLIE
That guy probably had friends.

JOEL
We don't wanna meet them.

ELLIE
But if there's infected--

JOEL
People are worse.

ELLIE
How could they be worse?

Joel puts down his food. Ponders how to answer this.

JOEL
Infected are bad. But at least
they're predictable. People? Not so
much.

Ellie sits with this for a second, not sure how to feel.

JOEL (CONT'D)
We should get moving. There's a lot
of ground to cover and we don't
wanna be stranded out here at
night.

Joel zips up his bag and swings it over his shoulder swiping
over the camera.

BLACK.

CHARLOTTE (PRE-LAP)
RUUUUUUUN!

EXT. ABANDONED OVERGROWN ROAD - ALLEYWAY - EVENING
(FLASHBACK)

CHYRON: 8 Months Ago

CHARLOTTE (32), a real-life Lara Croft, sprints for her life.
Bright turquoise eyes as big as her skull illuminate her
face. She's drenched in sweat. Her short hair bobbing wildly
on the run.

PAUL (40s), straggles behind, sporadically shooting
backwards.

CHARLOTTE
STAAAAAN!

Upon reaching STANLEY (34) - a scrawny, dirty man looking
like he just climbed out of a coal mine - Charlotte grabs his
arm and drags him along.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Baby we gotta go! C'mon!

STANLEY
Huh? What's--

A ravenous horde of infected scaling the corner answers his
question before it forms. RUNNERS, CLICKERS, the whole
shebang. Gaining on them.

Stanley pulls himself together and runs.

CHARLOTTE
(without turning back)
Stan! April is dead, Stan!

PAUL
Go, Charlotte! Just go!

They cut across streets, duck through fences, hurdle cars.

The infected ruthlessly pursue. Some scatter and flee to different sides of buildings. Forming a half circle around the trio.

A Clicker pounces inches from Charlotte's face.

Stanley grabs her and swings her out of the way just in time. He leads them directly into a wall. Dead end.

STANLEY
Shit!

SPLAT!

A bullet whizzes past his temple and pops the Clicker's head. The body drops at Stanley's feet.

Charlotte keeps firing at the horde. Stanley unclips a shotgun from his back.

All three unload everything they've got.

Several infected go down, but more approach from every direction. They're pissed. Rabid.

As they blast their way through, Charlotte spots an opening.

CHARLOTTE
There! We can cut through!

Just as they break free, a glob of mycotoxin smashes the ground and explodes next to them, discharging a cloud of spores into the air.

A humungous blob of rotting flesh swathed in fungal pores is heading their way.

The BLOATER flings an arm launching another projectile.

It soars through the air and slams directly into the side of Paul's head, knocking him to the ground.

Charlotte stands over him to fend off some of the runners and helps him to his feet. Stanley covers them.

Paul's ear is gushing blood and he can barely walk.

PAUL
I can't -- I'm --

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Paul, please! We're almost there.

He collapses. Charlotte barely has time to turn around and hoist him back up before an infected leaps at her, sending her flying.

She falls with the infected on top, feverishly chomping its teeth at the tip of her nose.

Charlotte brings up her knife and --

SFFWPP!

Infected goes down.

Charlotte pulls herself up to grab Paul but it's too late. Two infected are already sprawled over his body like insects having a field day.

The horde pushes on. Swallowing him.

Stanley heaves her forward. They run, tears flooding Charlotte's vision.

They pass a street sign: **St. Ivory's Children's Medical Center 0.5mi**

The echo of more gunshots become clear as they approach.

The hospital comes into view.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK)

A small group of SMUGGLERS are battling infected inside.

Charlotte and Stanley burst through the entrance straight into the ambush.

SMUGGLER
It's Charlotte and Stan!

STANLEY
Behind you!

The Smuggler gets her throat ripped out. Smuggler 2 blasts the infected.

CHARLOTTE
There's more coming. Lots more. We
need to move!

SMUGGLER 2
The others?

Charlotte mournfully shakes her head.

SMUGGLER 2 (CONT'D)
Paul? April?

CHARLOTTE
(not now)
Come on!

Charlotte helps some of her crew to their feet.

Outside the doors more and more of the horde are gathering
and pounding on the walls. *Trying to get in.*

A window shatters and several claw their way inside.

The crew scrambles into--

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

The hallways split apart like a maze. The crew separates.

Screams and gunshots bounce off the walls as chaos pursues.

Charlotte, Stanley and Smuggler 2 run together. They bolt
into a patient room and sit with their backs to the door.

They catch their breath for a second before Smuggler 2
unclips a detonator from his belt.

STANLEY
What are you doing?

SMUGGLER 2
The lobby is primed with C4. I'm
stopping more from getting in.

CHARLOTTE
But you'll trap us in here!

SMUGGLER 2
We're already trapped.

Click.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

The building trembles as several explosions pop like dominoes.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Parts of the ceiling tumble and debris floods the hallways, crushing dozens of infected.

A cloud of dust falls over the hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

The infected that are still alive begin to retreat. Some of them swivel around to a new side of the building.

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK)

After a moment everything is still and quiet.

Charlotte puts her face to the foot of the door. She can't see anything underneath.

CHARLOTTE

I don't hear anyone.

SMUGGLER 2

I'm going out there.

CHARLOTTE

Are you fucking stupid?

SMUGGLER 2

There's more of us out there with those things.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah cause you trapped us here.

STANLEY

He's right. We gotta help them.

CHARLOTTE

Stan, please. I don't want to go out there.

STANLEY

I know. Stay here and I'll come back for you.

CHARLOTTE

Fuck you. I'm not staying here by myself.

SMUGGLER 2

We don't have time for this.
Charlotte, one of us needs to stay here just in case.

CHARLOTTE

In case what?

Nobody wants to say it. *In case they don't come back.*

STANLEY

We'll be fine. Promise. Don't open the door for anyone else.

He takes her face in his hands and gives her a long kiss.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

They slip out before Charlotte even has time to argue.

She's left dumbstruck. Shaken and gripping her pistol tight, she waits.

EXT. ABANDONED OVERGROWN ROAD - DAY (PRESENT)

Joel and Ellie patrol the street. Joel keeps both hands on his rifle as they walk, ready for anything.

Dead vines and mold litter the street.

Ellie kicks a rock down the road. It stops at the foot of a dry patch of rotting cordyceps. A cocktail of dead infected and whatever else unified together in one giant fungal strand.

ELLIE

Is this eventually what they all turn into?

JOEL

Eventually, yes.

ELLIE

Why spread then? What's even the point?

JOEL

The fungus still grows. It's called fruiting.

ELLIE

It's still growing in there?

JOEL

It's biology. It's how it protects itself. It spreads. Evolves. Feeds.

He glances into the morning sun for a split second. A flash of *TESS* revealing her fresh bite mark (ep 102). The infected swarming to finish her off. The "kiss." The explosion...

He snaps out of it as --

ELLIE

Joel?

JOEL

What?

ELLIE

I said how long does it usually take? For fruiting or whatever?

JOEL

Well I suppose it's different for everyone. Depending on body type, geography and proximity to water. And maybe where they were bitten.

They continue down the backroad.

ELLIE

So how long after they're infected do they start growing mushrooms out of their eyeballs?

JOEL

Like I said, everyone's different. But typically, it's like this. The recent infected are runners for a couple of weeks. They're fast. Alert. And they tend to attack in hordes. Which is why we don't go looking for friends of infected.

ELLIE

Okay, I get it. What happens next?

JOEL

Well, typically somewhere within a month to a year of infection the fungus will continue to grow and the person becomes a stalker.

ELLIE

A stalker?

JOEL

Yeah. Underdeveloped clickers. They hide in the dark to stalk prey and attack when convenient.

ELLIE

You fought one?

JOEL

No, but I know someone that did. Said he ran into a nest of them one time back in the early days of the pandemic. Some of them latch onto the walls for the cordyceps to fester. Once something comes by, they jump out. They're smart.

ELLIE

Jesus. If I hadn't seen worse I don't know if I'd believe you.

JOEL

Yeah, clickers. Infected for at least a year. By then the fungus has spread all over their bodies so they're completely blind.

ELLIE

Which is why they use echolocation.

JOEL

Right. They're extra strong and pretty lethal up close.

ELLIE

Is there anything after that?

JOEL

Sure.

ELLIE

I don't know why I even asked.

JOEL

As long as the host stays alive, it will keep growing. Inside and outside.

ELLIE

So what, there's just giant balls of fungus walking around?

JOEL

Not many, but yeah. I've heard them called *Bloaters*. You probably wouldn't find any out here. Not anymore at least. Bloaters are infected several years. So they're real slow but they're vigorous. The outside fungus acts like armor.

ELLIE

Have you--

JOEL

No, I've never fought one. If you cross paths with one of those things, forget it. That's it. They won't infect you, they'll just rip you apart.

A beat as they continue walking.

Suddenly Joel stops to feel his pockets.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Shit.

He kneels down to dig around in his bag.

ELLIE

What is it?

Joel comes out empty-handed.

JOEL

I think I left some stuff back in that building.

ELLIE

How much stuff?

JOEL

Some first aid and spare ammo.

ELLIE

Well fuck. Should we go back?

She looks back the way they came.

JOEL

No, sunlight's half gone. I'm not
wasting a day retracing our steps.
We'll make up for it along the way.

ELLIE

Make up for it how?

JOEL

(thinking)

There's a hospital a few miles
North. Used to be a checkpoint for
smugglers to trade between QZs.
Should be clear so we'll camp there
for the night. There'll be tons of
leftover supplies. It's not too far
out of the way.

ELLIE

What makes you think it'll be
empty?

JOEL

No one's gotten a signal on their
channel in over a year. Figure
FEDRA must've pushed them back into
hiding. Either that or...

(nevermind)

Anyway, FEDRA wouldn't stick
around, but honestly I don't know
if it's empty.

ELLIE

(realizing what this
means)

I thought we don't take risks?

JOEL

Like I said. People are worse.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A hush has fallen over the building. Barely any moonlight
seeps through the windows.

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte hasn't moved an inch. Her pistol is still clutched
tightly in her fist.

It's unclear how long she's been stuck here. Hours, maybe even days.

There's movement under the door.

A mouse pokes its head through. It scurries inside.

Another mouse squeezes through.

Charlotte cocks her head to look at the mice. She's glad to have any sort of company.

She extends her foot towards the mice almost as a greeting. Let them explore her. Show she's friendly.

It's sweet.

BANG!

Something outside rams into the door. A shriek reverberates through the halls.

Infected.

The mice scurry away as the infected continues barreling into door. Clawing at the wood. *It knows there's something alive in there.*

The door begins to give. Charlotte readies herself.

The door flings off its hinges and the runner collapses on the floor.

Charlotte quickly pumps several shots into the infected and runs.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

From behind, we hear several infected following the noise. Snarling and barking their way through the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL - LANDING - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte reaches a landing where several hallways and staircases connect. The heart of the hospital.

Supply crates and duffel bags lay about. This is where the Smugglers kept their stockpile.

Charlotte looks for something useful. Anything.

Alcohol, rags, water bottles...

The sounds of infected grow closer. She keeps shuffling through the loot.

Batteries, flares, pills...

CHARLOTTE
Fuck! Come on!

Clothes, cigarettes...

Explosives.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Yes!

The infected reach the landing and Charlotte ducks out of sight just in time. She hides under a table, still armed only with her pistol.

The infected scatter around the room. Sniffing the air, feeling the atmosphere. *Searching for Charlotte.*

She pokes her head out. At least five infected in the room. Two clickers.

Again, Charlotte waits. She watches the infected separate around the room.

She sees an opportunity and seizes it.

As delicately and quietly as possible, Charlotte creeps out from under the desk and approaches the duffel bags full of C4.

Next to it lays a shotgun. She grabs it and quietly checks the barrel.

A Clicker jerks towards the sound.

Charlotte freezes. Then slowly reloads.

As she packs the barrel with shells, her trembling hands slip and she drops one.

Clink!

That gets the attention of a Runner. It lunges at her across the room.

Charlotte frantically bends down to pick up the shell and stuffs it in.

She leaps backwards as the Runner pounces.

Pump. *Blast!*

She hits it point blank in the chest and they both fly backwards to the ground.

Charlotte has only a second to get up before the others swarm in her direction.

A few quick shots and the rest go down.

Charlotte drops to her knees for a huge sigh of relief.

She goes back to the stash and begins to grab what she needs.

A roar from somewhere within the building rings throughout the halls and into the streets, still swarming with what's left of the horde.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Charlotte gets to work. A determined look on her face. She's not dying here.

INT. CRUMBLING BUILDING - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte grabs all the weapons she needs.

SEVERAL packs of C4.

She looks like a character from the video game.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - LATER (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte sweeps the halls, looking for any sign of movement.

A runner bursts through a door sprinting full speed down the hall toward Charlotte.

She flips it over her shoulder and pins it to the ground under her foot. One pump with the pistol and she moves on.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

In the demolished lobby, Charlotte mounts the rubble and sets traps. Some with explosives.

EXT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

The Bloater from earlier walks aimlessly amongst the horde still hauled up just outside the walls. *Waiting.*

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte watches the horde, just out of sight. Her eyes fall to the Bloater.

INT. HOSPITAL - BACK ENTRANCE - LATER (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte sets a trap involving an old refrigerator and some rope.

EXT. HOSPITAL - LATER (FLASHBACK)

A couple infected sneak inside through a small crevice of wall that has caved.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - LATER (FLASHBACK)

An infected feeds on another dead infected. We stay here a few seconds too long for comfort.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - LATER (FLASHBACK)

In another part of the hallway, Charlotte quietly takes out a wandering Clicker.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte eats in silence. The room is filled with food rations and medical supplies. This is where she's made camp.

EXT. HOSPITAL - LATER (FLASHBACK)

The thinning horde is bathed in a glow of evening sunlight. Several bodies have wandered away. Others have dried out and died.

Much time has passed.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NEST (FLASHBACK)

A Stalker is fruiting into the wall. Hibernating. Letting the cordyceps take over.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte boards up a broken window.

INT. HOSPITAL - LANDING - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The stash is well picked-through. Most of the supplies are gone.

From somewhere else within the hospital we hear the echo of Charlotte's gunfire and infected shrieking.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte tosses in her sleep.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM (FLASHBACK)

Dust settles over surgical equipment. The lack of any presence is eerie.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

More stalkers join the dormant infected and begin to nest.

EXT. HOSPITAL - LATER (FLASHBACK)

One of the C4 traps detonates and blows up a section of the wall. Infected come pouring in.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte hears the commotion from her makeshift bed. Her barrier breaks and she begins to cry.

END MONTAGE

EXT. ABANDONED OVERGROWN ROAD - AFTERNOON (PRESENT)

Joel and Ellie pass the sign for **St. Ivory's**.

JOEL

Almost there.

ELLIE

Are we sure this is a good idea?

JOEL

Nothing about this past week has been a good idea. But we need supplies don't we?

ELLIE

I guess so.

The sun hides behind a cloud blanketing the town in shade.
Ellie glances up and notices--

THE HOSPITAL, ominously sitting just down the road.
Completely destroyed. From where they're standing it doesn't
even look like there's a way inside.

JOEL

I'd say it looks pretty empty.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

They reach what once was the entrance to the Lobby. As
predicted, there's no way in.

ELLIE

What now?

JOEL

There's gotta be another door or a
window or something. Let's walk
around.

They trace the perimeter. It's like walking through a
warzone.

Dead vines decorate the walls extending inside.

Wood and brick are singed from fire.

JOEL (CONT'D)

What the hell?

They continue scaling the building to find a door with a
glass panel.

Joel cups his hands to his face and tries to look through.

He tries the door handle. It's unlocked!

JOEL (CONT'D)

Oh shit, look at that.

ELLIE

You don't think that's a bad sign?
That the door's unlocked?

JOEL

Ellie, look at this place. Nobody's
been here forever.

He pushes the door open a quarter of the way. It's stuck.

ELLIE

Guess it's locked after all.

JOEL

No, look. The door's just caught at the bottom. Gimme a hand.

They heave the door a couple times with their shoulders. On the fourth try it swings open.

Joel clicks on his flashlight and they head inside.

INT. HOSPITAL - BACK ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Joel heaves the door shut behind them.

ELLIE

Ugh. It smells horrible.

Joel's flashlight sweeps the room. It's cluttered with junk.

JOEL

Be on the lookout for--

He feels a jerk on his leg and shines his flashlight down.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Oh shit!

His ankle is caught in a rope. His light follows the rope all the way to a refrigerator hanging from the ceiling.

The fridge freefalls sending Joel flying!

ELLIE

Joel!

Joel hangs upside down swaying back and forth. Ellie tries to grab his hands.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Here, I got you! What just happened?

JOEL

Dammit. Someone must have set a snare trap. There, that fridge. It looks like that's the counterweight. Cut that rope and it'll bring me down.

ELLIE

Okay.

Ellie starts trying to climb on top of the fridge when a familiar screech fills the air.

Ellie darts a look at Joel, who brings a finger to his lips.

Ellie nods. *Silence.*

But she continues trying to climb the fridge.

The CLICKER'S misshapen body staggers into the room.

As slowly as possible Ellie reaches over and picks up a chair. Joel waves his arms, trying to get her attention. She ignores him and places the chair at the base of the fridge.

The Clicker snaps to attention and approaches the fridge.

Ellie scrambles quickly on top just barely out of reach.

Joel lets out a gasp as his rifle drops to the floor.

The Clicker turns toward Joel and slithers in his direction, stopping just underneath where he's suspended in air. Their heads are centimeters apart.

The Clicker lets out another roar. *It senses Joel.*

The rope is slowly rotating, squeaking under Joel's weight.

He locks eyes with Ellie, who's starting to panic.

Joel unclips his knife from his belt. He points to himself and motions slow stabs toward the Clicker.

JOEL

(mouthing)

CUT ME DOWN.

Ellie slices at the rope with her switchblade.

Joel readies himself, reaching his arms out to tackle the infected.

Ellie cuts through halfway, dropping Joel an inch.

He has to force himself to stay silent.

Ellie glances at Joel again to make sure this is still a good idea. He holds up his fingers.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(MOUTHING)
THREE... TWO--

The rope snaps under the tension and Joel falls on the Clicker. It screams violently.

Joel scrambles to his knife to silence the Clicker but it smacks the knife out of his hand.

The Clicker savagely thrashes it's arms towards Joel, backing him into a corner.

It's about to strike. Joel brings his hands up to shield his face when--

The Clicker falls to the ground, missing a leg. It squeals as it uses all its strength to crawl toward Joel, still pursuing him.

Another shot hits it in the back and the Clicker dies in a pool of its own blood.

Across the room, Ellie's scrawny arms can barely lift Joel's rifle.

ELLIE
Did I get it?

JOEL
Give me that.

He swipes the gun from her.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Could've blown my damn head off.

ELLIE
You're welcome by the way.

JOEL
We're lucky there weren't any others. All that noise could've attracted a whole pack of them.

She stares at the body. Her first kill.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Come on. Biology lesson is over.
We're here for supplies.

Ellie joins him as they exit the room. We stay with the body.

An exposed spore from it's damaged leg squirms into the light. Stretching. *Reaching for something.*

EXT. OVERGROWN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Following a string of dead vines into the street, we notice threads of cordyceps running through them.

Veiny spools of fungus sever apart in different directions, blanketing the streets of the town in a single massive strand of cordyceps.

A hand twitches from under a pile of rubble.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - LATER

Joel and Ellie trek further into the hospital. They pass remnants of earlier fights: activated traps, scattered bullet shells, scratch marks on the walls.

INT. HOSPITAL LANDING - CONTINUOUS

They reach the landing to find the emptied pile of supplies.

Joel starts to search through empty duffel bags and ammo boxes. No luck.

He finds a small lighter and tucks it in his back pocket.

JOEL

These guys must have put up some kind of final stand.

ELLIE

Against who?

Joel doesn't answer.

Ellie joins him rummaging through the used supplies. She sees something sitting on top of a table.

It's a note.

She studies it for a second before picking it up. She has to wipe off some of the dust to read it.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Hey Joel, I found something.

JOEL
(without looking up)
What is it?

ELLIE
I think it's a letter.

Joel perks up.

JOEL
A letter? Like a note? From who?

Ellie scans the paper.

ELLIE
Some woman named Charlotte.

Joel thinks for a second. The name doesn't register.

JOEL
What's it say?

ELLIE
The whole thing?

JOEL
Yes.

ELLIE
(reading)
I don't know if anyone will ever find this, but I haven't talked to another human in months so I need to get my thoughts out somehow. I'm a smuggler. Or, I was one. My friends and I built camp at Ivory's Hospital a few years ago as a way to trade and traverse cross-country under FEDRA's radar.

Joel's hand grazes over a dusty radio sitting on the table.
Broken.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Turns out, this whole fucking town was festering a huge fungal death trap over the years. The same strand runs miles in every direction. They're all connected. My boyfriend and I were on a hunt when we woke a pack of them downtown. We managed to escape, but by the time we made it back here, the infected had our friends.

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)

We tried to fight them off but there were too many. My boyfriend left me, trying to be a hero and got himself killed. I was the only survivor but I'm trapped here. There are so many monsters waiting outside these walls. I'm never getting out of here. I'm rationing my food and weapon supply but I reckon it'll only last me until the end of the month. Then that'll be it. I'll go join my friends. If you find this, it's probably too late for you too. Sorry I couldn't leave anything behind. Although, hopefully you blew this building to kingdom fucking come and weren't dumb enough to actually come inside. Good luck assholes.
Charlotte Read.

JOEL

Jesus.

ELLIE

Do you think she's right?

JOEL

About what?

ELLIE

About the infected? She said the whole town is a death trap.

JOEL

Maybe. This note could be over a year old though.

ELLIE

You were just telling me cordyceps can live for years inside of a host.

JOEL

If there were infected around I think we would've seen them. We ran into one and it was trapped in here. For all we know it could've been that Charlotte girl.

Ellie's face falls.

She bolts up a flight of stairs to look out a large window.

Most of the town is visible from this vantage point. We see the road they traveled.

Ellie's eyes land on the rotting clump of cordyceps from earlier, although it's significantly smaller now. A huge chunk is missing. Like it's been split open.

ELLIE

Joel?

Joel isn't listening. He's turning over the whole room. Searching for anything at all.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Jooooooooeeel!

JOEL

(annoyed)

What?

A loud thumping sound shakes the building.

ELLIE

I think we woke them up.

Joel perks up to realize what's happening. He joins Ellie at the window.

Several infected are making their way toward the hospital. The horde has thinned tremendously overtime, but there are still more than enough to cause Joel to panic.

JOEL

Oh Christ.

He reaches in his pocket and pulls out more bullet casings. Starts to load his rifle.

ELLIE

You found ammo?

JOEL

I- yeah. Found some.

Ellie studies Joe. She's not convinced.

Joel's eyes follow a dead vine lining the edge of the building, spooling into the cordyceps clump on the street. He clocks the giant missing piece and starts connecting the dots.

Ellie dashes up another flight of stairs to a roof exit door.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Ellie! Dammit.

He chases her.

EXT. HOSPITAL - COLLAPSED ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Joel reaches what's left of the roof. Most of it has caved.

Empty bottles and a few lawn chairs litter the ground. A collection of vodka handles sits on one of the chairs.

JOEL
Get back here now.

He finds Ellie peering over the sea of infected riling up through the street.

He carefully makes his way to her at the edge.

They stand together for a moment, lost in the moans of a hundred infected.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Okay, let's move.

INT. HOSPITAL - BACK ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

They reach the snare trap room and Joel creeps up to the door. He peeks outside through the slit in the door.

ELLIE
What do you see?

Joel shushes her and backs up.

JOEL
There's already too many out the back. We'll find another way.

ELLIE
You lead us into a swarm.

JOEL
No I didn't. Just follow me and stay quiet.

Joel leads them back into the maze of hallways.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE

Why did you tell me you were out of bullets if you weren't?

JOEL

Ellie, that's not important right now.

Ellie glares hard at Joel, watching his confident demeanor being washed away by fear.

She opens her mouth to say something but stops herself.

Joel leads them down the hall, listening for infected.

They pass a bubbling cocoon latched onto the wall.

The cocoon slowly rises and falls like it's breathing. It emits a squelching sound.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

They reach the Lobby. It matches the outside. Completely caved.

JOEL

Dammit. There's gotta be another exit.

ELLIE

Joel, why did you lie?

JOEL

What? No, Ellie. I just made a mistake. Okay?

Joel peeks out a hole in the building's structure.

The Bloater swipes across his field of vision.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Fuck me.

ELLIE

How many?

JOEL

Too many.

ELLIE
So now what?

The walls are closing in on Joel. He can't contain the dreadful feeling he's royally fucked up.

JOEL
Back to the supplies. Maybe we missed something.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

They race back to the landing, passing the cocoon once more, now slit wide open.

A mold casing of rotting flesh forms the shape of the creature that emerged from it.

INT. HOSPITAL - LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

Joel begins foraging the emptied stash again. Angrily tossing duffel bags, wearing himself out.

ELLIE
(to herself)
We're gonna die in here.

A hundred yards away, something watches them from the end of the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The CREATURE snarls deeply, gnashing its tongue roughly against its teeth.

It doesn't advance. It creeps low to the ground, gazing hungrily at its prey.

INT. HOSPITAL - LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Ellie feels eyes on her.

Her head whips to the darkened hallway where the creature resides. Except--

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Creature dips out of view just in time.

Joel and Ellie have a STALKER.

The Stalker wriggles against the wall back into the shadows.

INT. HOSPITAL - LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Joel gives up on looting the stash. It's been picked clean.

He looks at Ellie, sees the panic building deep inside her.
He makes a decision.

Joel reaches behind and unclips his pistol from his belt.
Carefully hands it to Ellie.

ELLIE

You're giving me a gun?

JOEL

For *emergencies*. You need to be
able to protect yourself.

ELLIE

You're not leaving me are you?

JOEL

Of course not. We need to have each
other's backs. That's all.

Ellie takes the gun in her hands to admire it.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Only turn the safety off when--

ELLIE

I know how to use it.
(off Joel's look)
FEDRA school.

JOEL

Right. Just be careful.

Joel scans the room to see what's at their disposal.

Tables, bookshelves, and more overturned furniture.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Let's at least board the doors.

INT. HOSPITAL - BACK ENTRANCE - LATER

Joel and Ellie heave half a sofa against door they came through. Joel taps it a few times with his foot to wedge it in place.

JOEL
There, now the others.

ELLIE
What if we need to get out?

JOEL
(pointing through the door
window)
Be my guest.

ELLIE
But Joel, we can't stay here. What
about food? What about the
Fireflies?
(scared)
I don't want to end up like
Charlotte.

JOEL
You won't. We won't. We're safe in
here.

ELLIE
But *why* are we here, Joel?

JOEL
(raising his voice)
Ellie, enough!

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Joel's voice echoes through the building.

The Stalker swipes quickly across the frame.

INT. HOSPITAL - BACK ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

JOEL
I'm sorry. I just need you to trust
me. Okay?

Ellie nods, close to tears.

JOEL (CONT'D)

That girl. Charlotte. She survived in here by making traps and hoarding the doors. Think you can help with that?

ELLIE

What other choice do I have?

INT. HOSPITAL - LANDING - NIGHT

Joel boards a door with debris and furniture.

Ellie sprinkles broken glass by all the entrances to the hallway as a makeshift alarm system.

Again, Ellie senses something in the shadows.

She slows her breathing to focus her listening.

There's a low panting coming from the shaded corridor splayed in front of her.

We can just barely make out a silhouette of the Stalker.

ELLIE

(hardly a whisper)

Joel.

(louder)

Joel!

He turns to see her frozen. Petrified.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

We're not alone.

He grips his rifle and creeps over to take a look. Upon reaching the entrance to the hallway, the Stalker leaps forward, sprinting into a room halfway down the hall.

JOEL

Shit! Stalker. Go, quickly!

Ellie hops to her feet and reaches for her gun.

JOEL (CONT'D)

No. I got this. Go to the room at the end of the hall in the East Wing. I saw blankets and clothes. I'll meet you.

ELLIE

But, Joel--

JOEL
Ellie, please run! Now!

She takes off. Scared out of her mind.

We follow Ellie through the Landing. Into--

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Hallway, where she passes old fungus cocoons fruiting into dust. Only now does she notice them.

The horror of the situation crashes down on her as she bursts through the door at the end of the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ellie shuts the door behind her and wraps herself in a bundle of blankets.

She looks like a child hiding from a monster in the closet.

Tears flood her eyes waiting for Joel, gun in hand. She resembles Charlotte waiting for Stanley.

Quaking under the covers, she waits and listens.

Footsteps quickly approach. Ellie braces herself.

The door swings open and Joel barges in, quickly shutting the door behind him.

Ellie is so relieved she cries a bit.

JOEL
You okay?

She nods.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Fucker almost got me.

ELLIE
Is it dead?

JOEL
No. I don't know where it went.
It's pissed.

He meets Ellie's eyes, steady with tears.

JOEL (CONT'D)
But we're safe in here.

Ellie finds something crumpled in the corner of the room. She unfolds it revealing another note.

She reads it to herself and the fear rushes back.

JOEL (CONT'D)
What? Let me see.

He swipes the note.

We briefly graze over Charlotte's handwriting once again. It's been scribbled in an agitated flurry. Some parts are hard to decipher.

CHARLOTTE (WRITING)
WHOEVER TURNS UP I DON'T CARE WHO
THEY ARE... IF THEY'RE WOLVES OR
SERAPHITES OR WHATEVER THE FUCK...
SAVE ME PLEASE... WHATEVER YOU WANT
I'LL CUT MY FACE I'LL SHOOT UP SOME
FEDRA SHITS WHO GIVES A FUCK...
CAN'T DIE HERE I DON'T WANNA DIE
HERE... PLEASE HELP THEY'RE GONNA
FIND ME... THEY'LL RIP ME APART...

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

The Stalker writhes past the closed door to Charlotte's room. A shimmer of moonlight exposes the side of its face. Behind the fungal mask, a sliver of humanity confirms our worst fear. *It's Charlotte.*

Her broad turquoise eyes beginning to yellow and fade.

INT. HOSPITAL - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - LATER

Ellie lays on her side, pretending to sleep.

Joel watches her stomach rise and fall. A hint of sympathy, that quickly turns to sadness.

He closes his eyes.

JOEL
(quietly)
I'm sorry, Tess.

ELLIE (O.S.)
You said you wouldn't leave me.

Joel opens his eyes, startled that she's awake.

JOEL
I gave you a gun.

ELLIE
Yeah and then you told me to run. I thought we had each other's backs?

JOEL
We do. You saved my ass earlier. I'm sorry I didn't thank you properly.

ELLIE
For fucks sake, Joel. Why did we come here? Don't you dare lie to me again.

He sighs.

JOEL
Okay. You're right. You don't deserve that.
(beat)
I didn't leave anything yesterday morning. I've been planning on coming here over a week. Since...

ELLIE
Tess?

Joel puts up a hand: "easy now."

JOEL
Anyway, her and I had been radioing another group out west for a while.

ELLIE
These guys?

JOEL
Right. They went dark last year. I didn't realize at first, but it was like losing family. Then Tess was the only family I had left. When I lost her I just felt like I had to come here. See for myself if I had anyone left. And now I know for sure.

ELLIE
Did you know Charlotte?

JOEL

Not personally, although it kind of feels like I did. I've lost a lot of family. I don't even know if my brother is still out there.

ELLIE

I've lost family too, Joel.

JOEL

I know. I'm not asking you to forgive me. I shouldn't have lied to you or brought you here. And I'm sorry my selfishness put you at risk.

Joel's can't meet Ellie's eyes, but his vulnerability puts her at ease.

ELLIE

I understand. And I forgive you.

Joel nods, *thank you*.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

But, Joel?

He looks at her with glass eyes.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

No more lies?

JOEL

No more.

Ellie smiles softly. They're a team.

ELLIE

Are people really worse than infected?

JOEL

No, they just do bad shit when they're scared. At the end of the day, we're all just trying to survive.

ELLIE

(mocking Joel)
It's biology.

Joel chuckles.

JOEL
I suppose we're more alike than one
would care to admit.

Ellie inspects her bite wound again.

ELLIE
Sometimes I wonder if this is real.
Or if it's just delayed. Maybe one
day I won't wake up as myself.

Joel's silence only verifies this has crossed his mind too.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
But what terrifies me is losing
myself before I figure out who I
am.

Beat.

JOEL
(vulnerable)
You're all I have.

He reaches in his back pocket and pulls out the lighter.

JOEL (CONT'D)
And we're getting out of here.
Tonight.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - LATER

The door to Charlotte's Room slowly creeps open. An eye from
Joel and Ellie peek outside.

The tip of Joel's rifle swings the door open the rest of the
way and they slip out.

Joel creeps low to the ground, Ellie right on his tail with
both hands clutched on her pistol.

They inch forward at a snail's pace through the darkness.
Moving in silence makes it feel like a thousand eyes are on
them.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Every corner they turn is uncertain. Joel braces himself each
time to push through the shadows, unsure of what might be
waiting on the other side.

INT. HOSPITAL - LANDING - DAWN

They reach the landing. Still no sign of the Stalker.

The early morning light is beginning to seep through the fractured ceiling.

Instead of heading toward the exit, they make their way up the stairs and out to--

EXT. HOSPITAL - COLLAPSED ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The roof, exactly as they left it.

They stare at the infected below, still gathered in a deranged hysteria.

ELLIE

You sure this will work?

JOEL

Absolutely not. Ready?

They each pick up a bottle and launch them as far as they can away from the hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL - FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

A Clicker hears the glass shatter in the distance and dashes in that direction.

Several infected follow suit.

EXT. HOSPITAL - COLLAPSED ROOF - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE

They're going! Look!

They chuck more bottles into the road.

EXT. HOSPITAL - FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

In the midst of the commotion, the Bloater stomps its way over to the shattering glass, mowing down several bodies in its way.

Upon reaching the new assembly of infected a bottle smashes into its back.

EXT. HOSPITAL - COLLAPSED ROOF - CONTINUOUS

ELLIE

Haha yeah! Eat glass shithead!

She gleefully hurls more bottles.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Fuck you assholes!

JOEL

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Ellie --

C'mon, Joel! It's fun!

Joel eyes a Clicker below on the street.

INSERT: *Tess reappears in his mind. She smiles at him.*

He raises the bottle and fires it at the Clicker. Bullseye.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Fuck you!

ELLIE

Yeah! You nailed him!

We stay in this moment for a minute, watching their fear and vexation wash away after a long night.

EXT. ABANDONED OVERGROWN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Bottle after bottle smashes at the feet of dozens of infected. Most of the horde have made their way down the street now.

EXT. HOSPITAL - COLLAPSED ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Joel stops, out of breath. He snatches a handle of vodka from the lawn chair.

He rips a piece of cloth from his undershirt and drenches it in alcohol before stuffing it in the bottle with a long thread hanging out.

He pulls the lighter from his pocket. Before lighting the fuse he stops, and hands it to Ellie.

JOEL

You wanna?

Hell yeah she does. She takes it in her hands like a kid about to sip their first beer. She lights the end and launches it.

EXT. ABANDONED OVERGROWN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The molotov erupts in the center of the crowd, sending a wave of fire in every direction.

Horrible, inhuman screaming fills the air as the infected scatter through the streets in a mad frenzy.

A burning Clicker attacks a Runner out of fear and confusion.

Scorched bodies drop one by one, littering the area.

The horde is gone. What remains wanders aimlessly through the town.

EXT. HOSPITAL - COLLAPSED ROOF - CONTINUOUS

JOEL
Now's our chance.

INT. HOSPITAL - LANDING - DAWN

Joel and Ellie resume their long crawl to the exit.

The light from the new day reveals fresh claw marks decorating the walls and floor.

Somewhere in the building a door slams shut followed by rapid footsteps.

Joel and Ellie pick up their pace.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They slip through the hall gaining speed as the noises draw closer and closer.

Ellie turns around expecting to see the Stalker right on their tail, but it's nowhere to be seen.

We can unmistakably hear it though. Gruff breathing and panting so close it feels like it's in their ears.

They break into a mad dash for the exit.

The Stalker lets out an delighted squeal. *It's like a game.*

INT. HOSPITAL - BACK ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

They reach the door and quickly shove the half sofa out of the way.

Joel struggles with the door, caught at the bottom again. Ellie helps him pull.

The Stalker's shadow dances on the walls. They're cornered.

They finally get the door open as the Stalker rears its head.

They bolt outside. Ellie trips on her way out, landing on her back.

The Stalker pounces. Joel slams the door shut using all his strength.

The Stalker smacks into the door, peering wickedly through the glass at Ellie.

Charlotte has lost all traits of humanity. Not a flicker of recognition left.

But Ellie knows. We see it in her eyes. *This could have been her fate.*

It almost was.

Joel gives her a hand.

JOEL
You alright?

ELLIE
I think so.

She brushes herself off and approaches the door. Her face stops an inch from Charlotte's. The glass is the only thing keeping her from tearing Ellie to pieces.

Careful- JOEL ELLIE (CONT'D)
It's okay.

Ellie strokes her bite with her thumb. The texture is similar to the skin protruding Charlotte's forehead.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
(to Charlotte)
I'm sorry. I'm going to save everyone. I promise.

Ellie turns and makes her way down the road, purpose in her stride.

Joel stands with his thoughts for a second. He glances at Charlotte. She stares back with empty eyes.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You coming?

Joel catches up to her and they continue their journey for the day.

Charlotte watches them go. Hungry. Enraged. *Gone forever*. The hospital her tomb.

END OF EPISODE