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**SCREENPLAY BEAT SHEET /TREATMENT**

**PAGES:** 82

**TITLE:** Denial      **BY:** Robert C. Powers

**GENRE:** Thriller

**CHARACTERS:** 2 Lead, 6 Other    (female protagonist, young adult)    **LOCATIONS:** 1 Primary, 2 Other

**COVERAGE:** A harrowing and taut thriller. Grabs our attention right away with a tense scenario. The situation that unfolds is a dire one with obvious dramatic stakes. Most of the story is built around a two-person dialogue in a single location. A good job establishing tension and toying with our expectations. The script continues to keep us off-balance right until the end with a series of clever twists.

**LOGLINE:** A young woman is held captive in a remote cabin by a deranged man who tries to make her admit she killed his son; she uses all her wiles to escape before he kills her.

**THE HOOK:** Will he abuse her before he finds his son; or, can she escape?

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## ACT 1

### Opening Image

**Clara**, a beautiful young woman, lies unconscious in a filthy cabin cellar, comes to and is terrified by her dark, confining surroundings in which she is denied the luxury life she has led.

### Theme:

Don't go out with strangers or you may suffer the consequences.

### Set-Up

Alone and terrified, Clara remembers; she went out with **Freddy**, a handsome stranger. He took her to an isolated cabin in the forest and tried to take advantage of her. She refused. Freddy beat her up. She got away, ran into the forest, evaded Freddy and passed out. **Blade**, a rough storekeeper and hunter who is Freddy's father, finds her, unconscious, brings her to his hunting cabin, locks her in the cellar.

### Inciting Incident/Plot Point

She hears a truck arrive outside the cabin. Blade shows up, lets her out of the cellar—but not out of the cabin. Blade can't find Freddy and accuses Clara of killing him. He threatens her with a gnarled tip cane.

### Debate

Blade tells Clara that **Silas**, a mad man, is trying to kill him and Freddy because they told **Sheriff Billy** that Silas killed **Susie**, a girl who works for Blade. Sheriff Billy put Silas in jail, but a hot-shot lawyer gets him out and he's on the loose. Clara doesn't know where Freddie is and must decide how to survive and provide a clue as to her location to bring help.

## ACT 2A

### B Story

Blade keeps Clara in the cellar until he thinks she's willing to tell him where Freddy is. She nurtures her relationship with Blade to stave off whatever evil intentions he may have. He gives her crackers and cheese and some water bottles.

She's bitten by a spider; her arm swells and she's sick. Blade gives her a pain killer and bandages her wound. She recovers and feels she's making progress with Blade.

### **Fun & Games**

Clara tries every trick in the book to communicate where she is to her father, **Frank**, and older brother, **Randy**. She's losing her cool when she sees a **Bird** through a small vent, pecks at leaves. She befriends Bird, feeds him crackers, talks to him. He keeps her from losing her mind.

### **Mid-Point**

Clara opens a tool shed in the cellar and the body of Susie, encased in a game bag, falls out. Clara takes the pearls around Susie's neck and puts a ring her father gave her on the string. Blade is getting rough with her. Unseen by Blade, she sticks the pearls in his back pocket.

## **ACT 2B**

### **Bad Guys Close In**

Blade's treatment of Clara becomes abusive. He claims "he ain't no Freddy", but his lust for her begins to show. He's in a state of denial. He beats her, his lust showing more every hour.

### **All Is Lost**

Clara despairs that no one will ever find her. She talks to Bird to retain her sanity. Bird cheeps, eats crackers. A big black snake strikes and swallows Bird. Slithers away. Clara bursts into tears. She's lost her only friend. A great depression settles on her. Blade continues to abuse her. Frank and Randy search everywhere for Clara., At Blade's store, they see the pearls and ring in Blade's back pocket.

### **Dark Night**

Silas finds the cabin, attacks and kills Blade in a gruesome way. He finds Clara in the cellar. Horrified, Clara has to face the wrath of Silas who says he is trying to find Freddy and Susie. Silas tells her that he loves Susie and would never hurt her. He hates Freddy because Freddy took Susie from him. Clara denies any knowledge of Susie or Freddy. She tries to escape, but Silas puts her back in the cellar.

## **ACT 3**

### **Finale**

Frank, Randy and Sheriff Billy find the cabin, break in. A big fight. They subdue Silas. Clara shows Silas the body bag that contains Susie's remains. A bloody head appears above the edge of the trap door. It's Freddy! Face twisted in pain, ragged from rat bites. A round wound on the side of his head -- just like the one that killed Susie -- oozes gore. Blade's cane! Clara's scream would wake the dead, but doesn't.

### **Final Image**

It all comes clear to Clara, flashes through her mind; Freddy takes advantage of Susie. Blade finds them together. In a rage, he hits Susie with the gnarled tip of his cane, kills her. They tell Sheriff Billy that Silas. The village "weird guy", did it. Freddy and Blade argue, fight. Freddy attacks his father for killing Susie. Blade hits him with his cane, knocks him out, maybe kills him. Blade puts Freddy and Susie in game bags and hides them in the cabin cellar. He becomes psychotic, denies a truth too difficult to accept. He has to believe someone else committed his horrible crimes. He finds Clara in the forest, unconscious. She has to be the one...

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