

TITLE: Skull Rock
Writer: Laura Rauh

Skull Rock is an ECO-THRILLER that is contained, female driven, and an actual location. Hidden in the Southern Ohio hills, looming over a dark ravine there is an eroded formation of a Skull looking out from a 30-foot cliff face. This lurking omen of death inspired the story of Skull Rock.

LOGLINE:

Following the death of her father, Joan returns to their land to settle with her siblings over fracking developments; but when her sister is mysteriously found dead, they are forced to confront the power rooted in Skull Rock.

STORY:

It's a story of an elite detached woman thrust back to the wilderness and her dysfunctional sibling dynamics. Skull Rock is a searing look at how humans and the land interact. A journey to overcome selfish motivations, with themes of love, grief, and sacrifice- rendering her and the land transformed.

TONE:

Comps are *Haunting of Hill House* meets *Winter's Bone*. It plays at the pace of a psychological thriller with the heart of a family drama. The supernatural forces manifest through documentary style effects of the foliage, weather, and time that manipulate the characters environment and perceptions. It is enriched with the undercurrent of historical occurrences on that site.

PLOT:

Joan, a rising coastal developer in Florida in her 40s, is pulled from her streamlined life when her father is found dead alone on a hillside trail of their remote Ohio land. His body left exposed to the elements, untouched by scavengers, had thorn branches grown around his neck and limbs. These strange circumstances are written off by authorities; Joan is suspicious of foul-play. But none of them know about Skull Rock, and the natural darkness it unleashed when disturbed by fracking operations.

Joan returns to the Land to negotiate the terms of a pending fracking contract and meet with her estranged siblings. Keva, the free-spirited younger sister, casts doubt on the fracking operations. Peter, the long-time family friend, and land caretaker, remains neutral despite his claim to the earnings. Sam, the vulnerable older brother, is more interested in the locals' superstitious stories about their place. And Joan, determined and aloof, suggests they hire someone to investigate. That night tensions mount and by early morning Keva is found submerged in the river- she cannot be revived.

Heartbroken, Joan vows to remain until the culprit is unearthed, desperately trying to manage everything on her own. Peter runs from his grief and hides away from the Land, abandoning his family ties. Sam pushes deeper into the legend of Skull Rock, spiraling into alcoholism and conspiracies. Descending into Winter, seclusion and grief takes its toll while the land begins to pulse, emanating from Skull Rock, manipulating the weather and time to unbalance the family - exposing rot at their cores.

At odds with her brother and the local sheriff, Joan single-mindedly searches for someone to blame, from the locals to gas workers. She makes connections, but the details don't add up and her stability erodes. Joan is forced to look to the land, uncovering the history of Ohio settlers, natives, and landscape ecology- reveals deeper influences. Determined, she hunts until she comes face to face with Skull Rock.

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She flees to enlist Sam's help but finds him pulled into their forgotten well. She struggles to rescue him, and he dangles in critical condition. She is now convinced their fate is tied to the effects of Skull Rock. Peter, returning to visit Sam and attempting to placate Joan, gets caught in a lie about the fracking. Joan brutally forces him to reveal that he killed her father but desperately claims he had no control. Abandoning reason Joan knocks him out and drags him to the ledge of Skull Rock for a final reckoning.

Joan and Peter wrestle on the edge with their last chance to end the cycle of darkness that permeates from Skull Rock before it slips beyond their borders. At gunpoint, Peter pleads for forgiveness. Joan, enveloped by the insidious pull to take Peter's life, teeters between rage and guilt over her disbelief in Sam's theory that only selflessness would end it all. She chooses to turn the gun on herself, but in a final act of retribution, Peter reaches her in time to level the gun on himself and pull the trigger, his lifeblood flows over the face of Skull Rock.

This sacrifice, the greatest act of love, quenches the cold dark within. Spring life blooms swallowing Skull Rock. Joan seals off the property and donates it to the National Forest. She returns to her life in Florida with a new sense of connection, bringing her mending brother Sam, each left transformed.

PRODUCTION:

The tight screenplay is devised for efficiency and producibility based on the details of the location. As personal owner of the uninhabited 300-acre property, the filming ability is secured, along with the use of the large farmhouse, clean barns, ATVs, and kayaks. Stunning B-roll nature footage is already being collected that is critical to the story.

It can be produced as Ultra-Low Budget in a Non-Production City, all locations secured and there is some modest funding already in place. The screenplay was workshopped with a creative executive of Whitewater Films, winning as best screenplay at the Toronto Film & Script Awards.

MESSAGE:

I am passionate about this story because we face the power of nature with only each other to rely on, as brothers and sisters. Using the thriller framework and supernatural elements, it can reach a wide audience, impact social understanding, and deliver a beautiful and haunting experience. I am a strong collaborator, dedicated artist with over 20 years of experience - including original screenwriting, book adaptation, acting and nature documentary work, as well as an environmentalist and Ohio native.

Thank you very much for considering Skull Rock. I am eager for your partnership and to bring this film to life.

Please view the location videos and pitch deck at www.RiverlandFilms.com