

TITLE: Skull Rock

AUTHOR: Laura Rauh

LOGLINE:

After the death of their father, Joan returns to the Land to settle with her siblings over fracking developments forcing them to confront the power rooted in Skull Rock.

PITCH:

Skull Rock is an Eco-thriller that is contained, female driven, and based on an actual location. Hidden in the Southern Ohio hills Skull Rock has remained unseen, etching itself into formation by the slow waters of time. The 30-foot monolith is an unmistakable omen of death.

Skull Rock is a story of a woman who lives a seemingly successful detached life, that is suddenly thrust back to the wilderness and her dysfunctional sibling dynamics. It forces her to reexamine what is essential in relationships to others and the earth itself. A journey to overcome selfish motivations, it explores love, grief, beliefs, and sacrifice; rendering her and everyone involved transformed.

The tone is a unique blend of nature documentary effects and grounded realism in emotional connections; it plays at the pace of a psychological thriller with the heart of a family drama. With an undercurrent of supernatural and historical components, it promises a breathtaking and believable cinematic experience. Skull Rock is *Haunting of Hill House* meets *Annihilation*.

PLOT:

Joan, a rising coastal land developer in Florida in her 40s, is focused on growing her success with streamlined control and a solitary lifestyle. An anchoring connection remains to her father, Abe, who reaches out as a fracking survey team arrives, and unknowingly has Joan authorize a worker to chop down the tree at the base of Skull Rock; having remained hidden, it now sends a ripple of echoes into the dark valley in which it lies.

Joan is suddenly disrupted when contacted by the local sheriff who has found her father's body. Absorbing the loss, she must meet with her estranged siblings at their remote Ohio property to negotiate the terms of a pending fracking contract. The tensions rise as disagreements mount over proceedings and Abe's cause of death. Still, none of them know about Skull Rock.

That night, Keva, the free-spirited younger sister, casts doubt on the fracking, pushing to stop operations. Peter, the long-time family friend and property caretaker as a teen, secretly involved with Keva, remains neutral despite his claim to the earnings. Sam, the vulnerable older brother, is more interested in the locals' superstitious stories about their place. Joan, determined that there is foul play involved, suggests they hire someone to investigate. By early morning Keva is found submerged in the river, her body tangled into the roots of a towering sycamore – she cannot be revived.

Heartbroken, Joan vows to remain until the culprit is unearthed, single-mindedly searching for someone to blame. Peter runs from his grief and hides away from the Land, abandoning his responsibilities to the family. Sam pushes deeper into the legend of Skull Rock, spiraling into alcoholism and conspiracy theories. Descending into Winter, the presence of a dark unbalance emanates from the hidden valley of Skull Rock, as it slowly takes its toll on them all.

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Joan digs through every possibility from the locals to the gas company members, even uncovering the body of a missing survey worker. At odds with her brother and the sheriff, Joan's clues don't amount to a viable suspect. With nowhere left to turn Joan is forced to look to the land, at the history of Ohio frontiersmen and natives, the fracking, the biology of the earth – hunting until the ground slips from her feet, careening her into Skull Rock.

Before she can tell Sam, he's given over to the distortions and is pulled into the forgotten well on their property. Joan works to rescue him, bringing him to the hospital, his fate now tied in her mind to the effects of Skull Rock. Coming down to visit Sam in the hospital, Peter returns to the land. His arrival reveals his involvement in her father's death to Joan, who presses him to confess. Abandoning reason Joan knocks him out and drags him to the ledge of Skull Rock for a final reckoning.

Fates hanging in the precipice- Joan and Peter wrestle on the edge with their last chance to end the cycle of darkness that is permeating from Skull Rock to the roots of them and their land... before it spreads beyond their borders.

PRODUCTION:

The 300-acre location is owned by the screenwriter and, although uninhabited, has full amenities. A large white farmhouse and clean empty barns are set on the property, completely accessible, including multiple ATVs and kayaks. The screenplay is devised for efficiency and ease of production based on the property details, with gripping action and suspenseful twists.

Stunning B-roll nature footage is being collected that is critical to the story. The use of natural effects from weather phenomena and Ohio's seasonal changes are devices employed to create the influence of Skull Rock, rendering an eerie dynamic between the land and its inhabitants.

The budget is low to moderate. The modest funding already in place, along with the secured locations and wide audience interest, makes this a very attractive investment. The screenplay is in the competition circuit this year, already winning as best screenplay at the Toronto Film & Script Awards, as well as various other accolades.

Skull Rock is a unique take on the successful framework of "A Monster in the House", highlighting a rural demographic that brings a fresh view and sound to audiences. Including the Ohio history of the location with the science of nature, it becomes a haunting look at how we are connected.

I am passionate about this story now because we face the power of nature with only each other to rely on, as brothers and sisters. I am a strong collaborator, dedicated artist with over 20 years of experience, stout environmentalist, and Ohio native. I am eager for partnerships and to bring this film to life.

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

Thank you for considering Skull Rock.