

A SINGLE SHOT

SCREENPLAY by Matthew F. Jones

Based on the **NOVEL** by Matthew F. Jones

PRODUCTION DRAFT

2011-03-14

WHITE SCRIPT

2011-03-24

BLUE SCRIPT

2011-04-19

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FADE IN

1 EXT. TRAILER, BACKYARD - PRE-DAWN 1

Several dark, ominous shapes are slowly revealed as foliated trees standing sentry-like behind an unlit house trailer. A bird chirps; now two; a faraway dog bark; a distant cow moo...

2 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM - PRE-DAWN/A FEW SHADES LIGHTER 2

A shimmer of light falls through a screened window onto the back of shirtless JOHN MOON, tugging on work boots from the bed's edge. Taped to the mirror are framed photographs of darkly pretty Moira Moon holding baby Nolan, of John holding his boy.

His back still to us, John stands, pulls on a T-shirt, walks to a gun rack on the far wall. He takes down a shotgun and box of sabot slugs and grabs a handful of shells. Loading the gun, he walks out of the room...

GIRL'S VOICE

...Dear Tools - by now I guess you know I'm gone. I couldn't take it no more - not so much my foster dad's drinking and losing his temper and that ghost he's married to pretending nothing was wrong as me bein afraid I'd end up like them, which is dead inside. Like a pair of corpses...

3 EXT. CATSKILL MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAWN 3

LONG SHOT. Majestic, wooded mountains roll like a vast, unsettled sea to the horizon. The rugged landscape appears untouched by man, then - twin pinpricks of light are seen winding down a mountainside.

3A EXT. TRAILER, DECK - DAWN 3A

Ruggedly handsome, with a spare, unbending build, John, 32, stands at his deck rail intently watching the distant headlights drawing nearer. A pond, garden, woodshed, surround his neat trailer, built onto a concrete foundation in a small clearing three-quarters up a steep, treed ridge. John's mutt, Mutt, sits at his feet.

John watches the lights pass by the Nobie family farm on the Hollow Road below him, then disappear down the Hollow.

He tosses his coffee dregs over the rail, chucks Mutt on the head, and picks up his shotgun. He walks down the deck steps into his yard.

CECIL NOBIE (O.S.)
(A mantra-like chant far
down the hill)
Cow bossie! Cow bossie!

4 EXT. TRAILER, YARD - DAWN 4

John walks away from us into a stand of hardwood trees enshrouded in mist at the yard's rear. In the distance Nobie's herd LOWS walking to his barn.

GIRL'S VOICE
...I wish I could've said goodbye,
Tools, but there weren't no time and
that you'd have got to know Waylon's
good side (well, maybe not too good!).
He's sweet and treats me better than
all them grabass high school boys
(like Donnie LaTrec - the pig!) - and
he's smart but got in trouble from bad
breaks...

5 EXT. RIDGE - EARLY MORNING 5

John hikes deftly up thru the thick, dew-damp foliage bearding the ridge, the air already hot and humid.

6 EXT. TOP OF RIDGE - EARLY MORNING 6

John looks up from Nobie's holstein herd filing like legged dominos into his barn far below, warily to two hawks circling over the hollow's top from where the headlights had descended. He studies the ground, then resumes walking.

7 EXT. CONSERVANCY BORDER - EARLY MORNING 7

A large sign warns: NATURE CONSERVANCY LAND. HUNTING AND FISHING PROHIBITED. PATROLLED BY THE DEVON COUNTY SHERIFF.

John strides past the sign, into a thick pine forest...

GIRL'S VOICE
...Waylon'd kill me if he found out I
told you, Tools - or even that I was
writing you as he made me throw out my
address book - but soon as he gets
back tonight we're heading somewhere
starts with an H where there's ocean,
good weather, lays and coconuts - I
can't say no more, only that it's like
we always talked about - I can't
believe it's been hardly a week since
passing notes in geometry class...!

8 EXT. PINE FOREST - EARLY MORNING

8

The deathly quiet under the canopy of pine boughs is interrupted only by John's CRUNCHING footfalls, as if he's walking on snow. His eyes expertly scan the woods ahead.

Suddenly a crow CAW breaks the silence. John, tensing, slips off the shotgun's safety. A bough bobs several yards ahead.

CLOSE ON John, alert, fully engaged...

*

GIRL'S VOICE

...I'm not sure how it's going to end up, Tools, and sometimes that scares me but it's like Waylon says, better to go out like a Roman Candle than a wet log. All I know is for the first time ever I feel like I'm really living stead of just being here biding time till I die...

A branch SNAPS, then a sound like RUSHING WATER. In one motion John spins toward the sound, shoulders the gun, and aims at a bouncing tree limb.

Just past the limb a tan-white flank vanishes into a thistle patch above which rises a large rack of antlers. John FIRES.

The buck SNORTS. The antlers dip below the bush, then rise up again. As he recocks the shotgun the deer bounds out of the thistles far side, beyond his range, and disappears.

John runs to where the buck came out of the brush and kneels down. Fresh blood mars the ground.

John's face. He's both agitated and uneasy.

He considers - then takes off after the wounded animal.

9 EXT. WOODS - DAY

9

He follows blood drops and snapped branches down the mountain's bramble-infested east side.

He tracks the buck along a narrow ridge parallel to the road snaking through the hollow far below. He hears hooves CLATTERING on the rocks past a dense thicket in front of him.

He plunges into the thicket, covering his eyes with his free hand, pushing away the branches with the shotgun.

10 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAY

10

LONG SHOT. The mountains tranquilly majestic, perfectly still under the unclouded sun.

- 11 EXT. CREEK BED - DAY 11
- John bursts out of a snarl of branches into a creek bed. Blood stains the rock bed where the deer has crossed it to head up the ridge again. The sun is full-up now and John sweats heavily. He wipes at his brow and heads up the hill.
- 12 EXT. FALLOW PASTURE - DAY 12
- John catches his breath next to a thorn-apple tree streaked with the deer's blood. He sees at the pasture's far edge the high grass swaying.
- 13 EXT. QUARRY ROAD - DAY 13
- Suddenly the deer stumbles out of the grass onto an overgrown dirt road. It just stands there looking dazed. John aims his shotgun toward it but can't get a clear shot through the trees. The buck SNORTS and moves haltingly off down the road.
- John reaches the road and follows a blood trail along it toward the abandoned stone quarry at its end.
- Flying up, SQUAWKING, from the quarry, a blue jay flock startles him. John licks his parched lips. Unnerved, exhausted, sweat-drenched, he grips his shotgun tighter.
- Past an uprooted, rusted sign that says 'PROPERTY OF IRA HOLLENBACH, NO TRESPASSING', he enters the bowl-shaped, overgrown quarry enclosed by fifty foot granite walls.
- 14 EXT. QUARRY - DAY 14
- He darts his eyes about. Among briars, pine bushes and crawling vines he sees half-a-dozen slag heaps, a junked truck chassis, a gutted generator, a plastic-covered lean-to.
- Off to his right a water hole sits in front of a four foot high cavern in the rock-wall next to which leans a rusted shovel and pick. Blood drops wet the ground near his feet.
- Suddenly he hears a GRUNT and branches CRACKING. He wheels to his left, aims, then FIRES at a moving patch of brown-and-white behind a briar thicket. It drops out of sight.
- Levering out the cartridge, he starts walking at the thicket. Suddenly a loud SNORT sounds directly behind him. Surprised, he spins around to see the enraged buck, its antlers lowered, nearly on top of him.
- John two-handedly grabs the shotgun by its barrel and swings it hard upward. With a loud CRACK its butt connects with the deer's snout, the antlers pierce John's left shoulder. The buck falls in a heap next to John.

John shakily stands, rolling his gored shoulder, checking the motion in it. Suddenly the buck kicks out its legs.

John looks down with overwhelming sadness at the buck. Its jaw is dislodged, its hindquarters a mass of blood-and-thistle-matted fur, its eyes terror-stricken. John aims his shotgun at it, then, after glancing warily around, re-grips the gun in both hands like a post-hole digger and ends the buck's misery with a crushing downward blow to its skull.

He takes off his shirt, tears the shirt in two, and tightly wraps the pieces around and above his oozing wound.

He looks at the deer again, then, in uneasy bewilderment, over at the briars. He lets out a deep breath. He slowly walks to the thicket. With his gun barrel he moves aside the branches, but they're too thick to see through.

He walks around the thicket. He sees on the ground in front of him the worn bottoms of two sneakers, blue-jeans-covered legs, a slim, t-shirt-clad torso, and a dirty-blond clump of hair beneath a floppy brown hat.

John is hit by a wave of nausea. He drops the gun, runs up to the body, lying face-down, with its arms thrown out toward a blue satchel in front of it, kneels, and places a hand on its neck for a pulse.

JOHN

No.

He rolls the body over. It's a girl with her eyes wide-open, a gaping hole in the left-center of her chest. She blinks one last time, starring at John before her eyes go blank and last tiny breath passes her lips.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Please, God! No!

John raises his fists to the sides of his head and closes his eyes.

He opens them.

CLOSE ON THE GIRL'S FACE, maybe seventeen, with crystal-blue eyes and a blonde hair clumped in a ponytail.

DISSOLVE TO:

15

EXT. QUARRY - SERIES OF ANGLES

15

The sun stares like a luminescent eye into the quarry. Swallows weave rhythmically through the air. A fox wanders into the canyon, sniffs at the deer carcass, and runs out again. The dead girl, from overhead, looks like a rag doll tossed aside. John sits unmoving on a large rock, the sun beating on his naked back.

CLOSE ON The dead girl's face, sun-chapped lips, parted as if to speak, bent nose, a tiny anchor-shaped birthmark on her right cheek. A bumblebee sucks honey from a flower. TIME SLOWS...

HEAR a small airplane's DRONE.

16

EXT. QUARRY - AFTERNOON

16

John gazes up at a single engine plane passing high overhead. Seeing it seems to reawaken him to his circumstances.

He disconsolately stands, walks back to the dead girl and kneels over her. He studies her face, as if she might tell him who she is and what she was doing here. He leans forward and brushes several hair strands from her face. Then he gently closes her eyes with his index fingers.

He picks up a napsack a foot or so from the body and spreads its contents on the ground: pink briefs, a pair of socks adorned with galloping horses, a 'Ride the Wild Snake' t-shirt, half a sandwich, a water bottle, two joints, a pack of Kools, a jackknife, a wallet.

He opens the wallet to a photograph of the dead girl sitting with two girls about her age on a boulder, each smiling and holding up three fingers of one hand. On its back is scrawled, "All for one, one for all - Man, Tools, and Germ."

Behind it is a photo of a middleaged couple with a resemblance to the dead girl; then one of the dead girl arm-in-arm with a burly man twice her age, with slick black hair, dark eyes, a tight-lipped smile.

John searches the rest of the wallet and finds only fifty-two dollars, two wrapped condoms, a book of stamps.

He drops the wallet and walks several fast, tight circles around the rock. He hurries back to the dead girl and again gazes down at her. He bends forward and thrusts his hand into her pocket.

His hand comes thru a hole in the jeans over her naked thigh.

JOHN
Son of a bitch!

He pulls back his hand and shakes it. He frowns sheepishly to the dead girl.

Gritting his teeth, he reaches into her other pocket. He pulls from it several coins, a pencil stub, a folded paper. John opens the paper to see an unaddressed, half-written letter, starting DEAR TOOLS. He reads it silently...

INSERT:

"...I got to stop for awhile, Tools - you won't believe what

just come hobbling in here with me, poor, dear thing, looks shot or something..."

John glumly folds the letter and puts it in his rear pocket.

He seizes the dead girl under her arms and half lifts her. The body LOUDLY EXHALES. John grimly starts dragging it through the woods. *

A RUSTLING sound in the brush behind him. John drops the dead girl and wheels around. *

John walks back to the dead girl and is shocked to find her staring straight at him. CLOSE ON the dead girl's face, eyes wide open.

John for a moment looks as if he will speak to the girl, then with a resolute expression he pushes her eyes shut again, drags her to the cavern and lays her to one side of it.

The weeds before the cavern are matted down and two cigarette butts lay in them. John dubiously picks up one of the butts and sniffs it. Then he looks closer at the rusted shovel and pick leaning near the cavern. The tips of both are shiny and chipped.

John drops to all fours and crawls half into the dark cavern.

He finds a stick of ironwood and wraps a handkerchief from his pocket around an end of it. He glances around for something to light the homemade flare with and his eyes fall on the lean-to. He runs across the quarry to it, pulls up the plastic strip at its front, and plunges inside.

17 INT. LEAN-TO - DAY

17

On the dirt floor lay a few articles of clothing, another pack of Kools, a lighter, a People, and a zipped sleeping bag from which a head protrudes. John starts. Then he sees it is a giant stuffed lion's head. This endearingly human sight stops John in his tracks.

Overcome he slumps down despondently on the sleeping bag, holding his head in his hands.

CUT TO:

18 EXT. QUARRY - DAY - WIDE

18

The light has changed in the quarry, darkening as clouds pass under the sun.

19 INT. LEAN-TO - DAY

19

Close on John's face.

He decisively grabs the lighter and flare and starts to leave. Suddenly he stops and looks down tenderly at the lion.

He leans over and pulls it from the sleeping bag.

The bag falls open, revealing a flashlight, a box of 9 millimeter shells, a Luger pistol.

John picks up the pistol and hefts it in his hand. Then he drops it, hears a METALLIC THUD.

He looks down. The gun has landed on a bulkily misshapen pillow near the bag's top. He reaches down, taps his knuckles against the pillow. It makes a SOFTER THUD. He takes hold of the pillowcase's closed end and tugs until he's holding just the case and gazing down at a dented, dirt-stained, metal container latched with a rusted hasp.

John squats, then opens the container. He looks inside and sees piles and piles of stacked bills in various denominations.

John's face. For the second time since entering the quarry he's reached a crossroads in his life.

20 INT. CAVERN - DAY

20

Holding the lit flare in a half-crouch, he sees in the floor near the rear wall a rectangular hole slightly larger than the money box. Next to the hole lays a flat, earth-stained rock the same shape as the box and a mound of fresh dirt.

21 INT. CAVERN - DAY

21

John drags the dead girl by her shoulders into the cavern and lays her on her side. He folds her hands beneath her cheek and gently tucks her knees in at the waist.

John studies her with a grievous look, as if she is a sick child and he is doing his best to make her comfortable.

He reaches down and wrestles the dead girl and the lion gently into the sleeping bag, then zips it up. Only their faces laying cheek to cheek, stick out of it. He places the satchel and its contents in a neat pile near the bag's top.

He kneels over the dead girl and bows his head.

22 EXT. QUARRY - AFTERNOON

22

He exits the cavern into the sun's glare looking like some half-naked monster bathed in the blood of its victims.

A crow perched on the far ridge takes flight CAWING, WINGS-POUNDING.

The vultures are on the deer again. John strides resolutely at them, waving his arms mechanically to chase them off.

PRE-LAP the sound of a bone snapping as we...

CUT TO:

23

EXT. QUARRY - LATER

23

CLOSE ON John's face, blood-streaked, grimacing, eyes glazed over. PULL BACK to see his arm and shoulder muscles steadily flexing. PULL BACK farther to see him on his knees by the water hole, sawing with his serrated hunting knife through the gristly flesh just behind the dead buck's front legs.

John pulls the deer's severed upper half away from the lower.

He pulls out the loose entrails from the body and tosses them in the water. He works several stones into the upper half.

He takes off his boots, pants and underwear.

He wades in with the weighted half-cadaver out into the dark water, steam rising from him until he submerges with the carcass.

He surfaces several seconds later, gasping, empty-handed.

Naked on shore he watches the ripples where the deer disappeared with a faraway, disengaged look.

CUT TO:

24

EXT. WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON

24

John trudges through the thick trees. His shotgun is tied around his waist, the buck's hindquarters draped over his shoulders, the bulky pillowcase dangling from one hand.

CUT TO:

25

EXT. WOODSHED - NIGHT

25

John exits the woodshed in a bloodied apron, his arms full of wrapped deer steaks.

26

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

26

Two pinpricks of light climb the road on which he'd seen headlights descending that morning.

John walks on resignedly, not waiting for the lights to disappear.

27 INT. TRAILER, STOREROOM - NIGHT 27 *

John descends down a short set of old wooden stairs into a low storeroom. *

He walks over to old horizontal chest freezer. He puts the steaks in and shuts it with a resounding THUD.

CUT TO:

28 INT. TRAILER, SHOWER - NIGHT 28

He steels himself against a coarse blast of freezing water. He watches absently blood washed from his body swirl down the drain.

29 INT. TRAILER, BATHROOM - NIGHT 29

Gritting his teeth he cleans his shoulder wound with peroxide, then bandages it.

30 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM - NIGHT 30

He sits in boxer shorts on the bed, staring reflectively at the picture of his wife and son and at his own indistinct image in the mirror beyond it.

FADE OUT:

31 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM - NIGHT 31

A phone RINGS.

CLOSE ON John's eyes opening.

PULL BACK to see him supine on his bed in a pale moonbeam. The glowing bedside clock says 11:05. John hesitantly picks up the phone.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
See a lawyer, John.

John pulls the phone from his face.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
This won't go away by you ignoring it.
You need to deal with it, to see it
for what it is.

John tentatively moves the phone back to his ear.

JOHN
Simon?

SIMON (O.S.)

What a you been mule-kicked in the head! Who the fuck you think it is?

JOHN

(confused)

Thought you was out, out west - on a bridge job.

SIMON (O.S.)

The fucking bridge is built, Johnno. I'm sitting right here at Bender's.

John sits up and presses his fingers to his eyes--tries to concentrate.

JOHN

Who, who you been talking to?

SIMON (O.S.)

What?

John stares guardedly into the room's shadowy recesses.

JOHN

Made you think I need a lawyer?

SIMON (O.S.)

Moira.

In his guilt-ridden state the answer is incomprehensible to him. John gets up and walks to the kitchen.

JOHN

Moira?

SIMON (O.S.)

She waited on me at Puffy's earlier. (beat) Said she'd moved with Nolan into town and hit you with divorce papers and you won't go to a lawyer.

JOHN

(relief and pain at once)

That's old news.

SIMON

Not to me it ain't. I been hoisting steel in Montana last three months remember. (beat) Says she's gone back to school - to be a teacher?

John's face.

SIMON (CONT'D)

(quieter)

(beat) You know what the end of the world is, Johnno?

John, not answering, hears music and laughter behind Simon. He opens the fridge and crabs a beer.

SIMON (CONT'D)
It's when your heart stops beating,
partner. (beat) Anything short a
that's just a setback.

John freezes with the beer in his hand.

JOHN
(hesitantly)
How good you'd get to know Ira
Hollenbach?

SIMON (O.S.)
(beat) How good *what*?

JOHN
When you worked for him?

SIMON (O.S.)
Hell, I was only on with him a year
so. (beat) I knew him for a decent
boss.

John opens the beer and takes a long pull.

JOHN
You think maybe he wasn't bullshitting
- way everybody figured he was - about
having a big stash in his safe before
him and Molly was cut up how they was?

SIMON (O.S.)
(suspicious)
What the *fuck*, Johnno - that was six
years ago! I known' you since you
ain't had hair on your pecker... what
the fuck's on your mind?

John turns on a light, blinking, his face a pale mask.

JOHN
(dismissively)
I was up near their old place today's
all (beat) and got thinking about it.
It's nothing. (beat) Anyway, thanks
for calling.

SIMON (O.S.)
See that lawyer, Johnno. Daggard Pitt.

JOHN
I don't want a divorce, man. I want my
family back.

SIMON
(emphatically)
See him anyway. He'll take good care
of you.

32 EXT. TOWN - EARLY MORNING

32

A SERIES of shots of the town nestled between lush mountains and divided by a winding river.

As we move closer we see a town halted in its tracks fifty odd years ago. Main Street is four-blocks of pre-World War Two wood and brick-faced storefronts, a third of them boarded up. Rambling houses in various states of disrepair line pot-holed streets. A large creamery spews smoke at one end of town.

33 EXT. UNDERTAKER'S DRIVEWAY - MORNING

33

Shirtless in the warm sun John and Levi Dean rake into a driveway bed gravel sliding slowly from the back of a raised dump truck emblazoned COLE HOWARD PAVING. Obscene against tanned, muscular John, porcine, sun-pink Dean nods at John's bandaged shoulder he's wincing in pain from.

DEAN
Who bit ya?

JOHN
Ax head broke off.

DEAN
So what?

JOHN
Jumped up and jabbed me.

DEAN
Jumped up from where?

JOHN
What are you a goddamned cop?

DEAN
I'm just asking.

John SLAPS the truck's side to signal the load's out.

DEAN (CONT'D)
This fucking undertaker's got an
airstrip for a driveway. Must be he
flies in the corpses.

John wipes his brow.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Who the fuck needs a driveway this long?

John gazes off at the mountains, uninterested in Dean's prattle.

DEAN (CONT'D)

You get laid this weekend?

John goes back to raking. Howard lowers the truck's hydraulic back onto its bed.

DEAN (CONT'D)

I did. I never seen one do what she done. She got down on her hands and knees and backed my prick into her then had me pick up her ass and legs and wheel her around the room like that till she got off. Then she put a rubber choker on my prick made it big as a baseball bat and blew me.

HOWARD

(yelling disgustedly out the driver window)

Ask him how much it cost him.

DEAN

Yeah. Go over to Cole's house and ask his wife how much.

HOWARD

Two men together couldn't hold up my wife's ass.

John walks over to Howard in the cab, Rake in hand.

JOHN
I think this is gonna be my last day.

HOWARD
What?!

Howard runs a hand over his mouth, frowning.

JOHN
I ain't sure yet. I'll let ya know.

HOWARD
Let me know?

JOHN
I'm pretty sure it will be.

HOWARD
Yeah, right. Three months. I heard
that's all you were good for.

John nods and walks back toward Dean.

JOHN
I appreciate the coupla weeks you gave
me, Cole.

John walks back to the bed and resumes raking. *

POV shot, FROM A CAR, of John raking. He looks up nervously
as someone drives by, their head turning back to the road. *
*

Dean takes up loudly talking where he'd left off.

DEAN
She wanted me to slap her ass too and
yell giddyup. I told her she'd have
to get Cole to do that.

HOWARD
Was that before or after you found out
she had a dick, Dean?

34 EXT. ALLEY - DAY

34

John walks from his truck to an enclosed stairway in the back
of the creaky, Main Street building. He carries a wrinkled
envelope. Painted letters in a second floor window say,
DAGGARD PITT, ATTORNEY AT LAW.

35 INT. PITT'S RECEPTION AREA - DAY

35

He enters an unoccupied room comprised of four vinyl chairs, two dying floor plants, and a metal desk displaying an 'Out To Lunch' sign. CLUMPING FOOTFALLS from behind the only door in the room stop him on his way out of the office.

The door is opened by an elfin man with a claw hand and a shriveled leg dragging behind him like a tail. He smiles slyly.

PITT

Thought you'd get away did you, John?

JOHN

(nonplussed)

You know me?

Pitt extends at him his claw-hand.

PITT

It's a small town, John.

John shakes the hand clumsily.

JOHN

Simon Breedlove said you'd be a good
one for me to talk to.

John holds the envelope out at Pitt.

JOHN (CONT'D)

About this.

Pitt places the envelope to his forehead and makes a comical
show of trying to divulge its contents.

John stares inexpressively at him. Pitt clears his throat.

PITT

Come on in, John. Let's see what
you've got.

36 INT. PITT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

36

It's as spartan as the first room. A 'Thank You For Not
Smoking' plaque sits on the desk next to an ashtray. Pitt's
Law Degree and a posed snapshot of him on a commercial tour
boat are the only wall hangings.

Scanning through John's papers Pitt rubs his shrunken leg and
makes disapproving grunts and groans.

John watches him with a dismayed look. Pitt frowns.

*

PITT

These were served on you over forty
days ago. The law doesn't allow but
twenty to answer them.

JOHN

They got under something.

Pitt looks up from the papers.

PITT

The problem, thankfully, isn't fatal.

John shifts restlessly in his chair.

JOHN

I ain't interested in a divorce. Moira
and me don't see eye to eye on that.

Pitt slumps dejectedly.

PITT

I'm awfully sorry.

JOHN
(uncomfortably)
She's got this idea about the boy.

PITT
Your son?

JOHN
Nolan. After he - she started to see things different.

PITT
Different?

JOHN
Suddenly she wanted more - not that I ain't always provided - she can't say I don't provide.

PITT
Says here you've had trouble keeping a job ever since your father lost the farm.

JOHN
I've had plenty of 'em, just not for long.

Pitt smiles encouragingly.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I was raised to farm, it's all I know - I've taken work though wherever I can get it since we've been married - even took a creamery job when it was hiring to give her a few more things, though cooped up inside that way damn near killed me, then I lose that and she...

John frowns hopelessly.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(heartfelt)
She mentioned counselin' once - I'll go now, if it'll bring her home. Tell her lawyer that.

PITT
I was acquainted with your parents.

John stares blankly at Pitt. Pitt sighs reflectively.

PITT (CONT'D)
I represented the bank when it foreclosed on and sold their farm to Cecil Nobie. I felt awful about it - we all did.

(MORE)

PITT (CONT'D)

The bank did what it could to keep
your father afloat - but the economy
at that time, and his having
overextended himself, then, of course,
him taking sick...

John stands and walks to the window. A dark-haired stocky man
with a ball cap pulled low over his eyes walks down the
alley.

PITT (CONT'D)

I thought I ought to tell you in case
you want to rethink hiring me - though
I would like nothing better, John,
than to represent you to the absolute
best of my lawyerly abilities.

John watches the two men turn down an alley and disappear.
He keeps eyeing the alley with a quizzical look.

PITT (CONT'D)

John?

John blinks. He turns back to Pitt, appearing dazed.

PITT (CONT'D)

The question is will you be
comfortable?

John walks back to and sits in his chair.

JOHN

(distractedly)

My father was a good farmer and a shit
businessman for believing the bank
gave a damn if he kept his home.

Pitt watches him curiously.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Simon says you're cheaper than the
rest of 'em in town. That mean you
ain't as good?

Pitt claws his frozen hand over his head.

PITT

Compensation takes many forms, John.

JOHN

(suspiciously)

Name one 'sides money.

PITT

I have no wife, John. No family.
Only my clients and their often sticky
and heartfelt situations. I've known
our friend Simon, for example, through
thick and thin.

John, fidgeting, studies Pitt.

JOHN
(hesitantly)
How serious a scrapes have you gotten
him out of?

PITT
That's between him and me, John. Just
as anything you tell me as your lawyer
will be between you and me.

Pitt with both hands reaches down and squeezes his bum thigh.

PITT (CONT'D)
You're not wondering about my criminal
defense expertise as a result of more
trouble you've had up in the
Conservancy are you?

John warily watches Pitt.

Pitt, grimacing, starts rubbing the thigh.

PITT (CONT'D)
Your poaching arrests - is it three
now? - have all made the paper, John.
I'm afraid another one might cause you
more serious problems than a couple of
weekends in jail. There isn't
something of that nature that might
get in the way of your custody or
visitation rights is there?

John, relieved, shakes his head. Then he abruptly stands and
pulls from his pocket five one-hundred dollar bills, lays
them on Pitt's desk. Pitt eyes the money curiously.

JOHN
Just delay matters's long ya can while
I work on gettin' her to see how much
better things can be for us now.

Pitt peers up from the money, bemusedly at John.

PITT
I'll draft an answer to her complaint -
a general denial - for your signature.
We'll get it to her attorney, then go
from there.

*

37 EXT. ALLEY - AFTERNOON

37 *

John sits in his pickup. He puts on sunglasses and eats
several aspirin from a bottle in the glove box. He leans his
head back against the seat and kneads his temples.

*

A brunette teenager in shorts and halter top, appearing almost phantasmagorical in the shimmering heat, walks past. John watches her with a faraway look disappear in his rearview mirror.

As he gets out of the truck and crosses Main Street toward Puffy's, he SEES the deputy sheriff drive by looking at him.

37A INT/EXT. - JOHN'S TRUCK - DAY

37A

Through a rain streaked window, we pass the front of small cafe diner. We can barely make out the dim figures within.

John's eyes search the scene.

38 EXT/INT. PUFFY'S - DAY

38

Loud, smoky, busy at the lunch hour. Signed celebrity photos line one wall.

From the register, obese, chain-smoker Puffy nods to John and eyes him as he enters.

John's spirits are raised and lowered at once as he sees Moira talking to one of the four men who sit at the counter sipping coffee. She acknowledges John with a flick of her eyes.

As John makes his way to the far end of the counter, he can JUST MAKE OUT THE CONVERSATION OVER THE DIN. The man remains unidentifiable from behind.

WAYLON

Waste of time.

MOIRA

Why is goin' back to school a waste of time?

WAYLON

Because you're paying someone to tell you what books to read. Anybody could do that.

MOIRA

Well aren't you the expert.

John sits several places down and peers over his shoulder to get a glimpse of the man. He recognizes him as the dark haired one from INGRID'S PHOTO and the alleyway. John turns his head down and away, looking at a menu, but continues to watch out of the corner of his eye.

WAYLON

I've read my share of books.

MOIRA *
Yeah? *

WAYLON *
Had some time on my hands. Didn't let *
it go to waste. *

MOIRA *
You must've never had kids, then. *

WAYLON *
Not really. *

This hangs in the air. Moira averts her gaze, catching John *
spying. He quickly returns to his menu. *

WAYLON (CONT'D) *
So... you sure ain't seen a skinny guy- *
- tatted up-- wanderin in here? *

MOIRA *
No, afraid not. Not that I've seen. *

Waylon stands and leaves a ten dollar bill for his coffee. *

WAYLON *
Bye bye sweetness. Don't work too *
hard. *

He stands and makes his way out the door. *

John watches him go out of the corner of his eye. When he's *
gone, John turns back toward Moira and tracks her while still *
pretending to read the menu. She and the other two waitresses *
service the tables behind him. *

Moira approaches him. *

MOIRA *
Hi. You want to order? *

JOHN *
Cheeseburger plate. Coffee. *

MOIRA *
What kind of cheese? *

JOHN *
You know what kind. (beat) I hired a *
lawyer like you wanted. (beat) I told *
him to tell your guy I'm ready to go *
to one them counselors. *

MOIRA *
Well. I think you ought to. *

JOHN *
I mean together. *

Moira, sighing, gives him a distant look.

MOIRA

Oh, John.

JOHN

Was you who suggested it.

MOIRA

That was before we separated.

JOHN

We didn't separate. You moved out -
with our son - a day after I lost my
job.

Moira blows hair out of her eyes.

MOIRA

I know my timing was bad, John, but -

JOHN

I got some things at home for the two
of you. I'll drop them by later.

*

MOIRA

What things?

*

JOHN

Food things. And money.

MOIRA

Can't you give them to me now? I've
got a class until eight.

JOHN

I'll come by after then.

MOIRA

I'd rather you wouldn't tonight, John.

JOHN

Why not?

MOIRA

I can't talk about this now, John.

JOHN

(exasperated)

And you can't talk about it later.
When can you talk about it?

John accidentally nudges the toothless man. His spoon falls
out of his hand, splashing soup onto his lap.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

TOOTHLESS MAN

The hell you say.

Moira picks up the spoon, hands it to the man. Puffy eyes
them like a hawk.

TOOTHLESS MAN (CONT'D)

(peeved)

Chris' 'mighty.

JOHN
I'll come by and see Nolan then.
He'll be there right?

Moira frowns guardedly, fidgets more with her hair.

MOIRA
It's not a good time, John. I wished
you'd called ahead.

JOHN
(insistent)
I need to see him. And you.

John puts a hand to his mouth.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(whispering emotionally)
I got somethin' important to tell you.
About our future.

MOIRA
(depleted)
John, I....

John's heart sinks.

TOOTHLESS MAN
Lookit what you done my pants.

John glares at him. The man's pants are scarcely damp and
are weatherbeaten enough to disintegrate.

JOHN
What about your Goddamn pants?

TOOTHLESS MAN
They looked pissed in.

John whips out a ten-spot and slaps it on the counter, as
Moira disappears into the kitchen.

JOHN
There. Go get 'em cleaned!

Puffy half rises from his stool. John waves him off.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't trouble yourself, Puffy. We're
good over here.

He pats the toothless man on the back in controlled anger.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Ain't we good over here?

The toothless man pockets the ten.

TOOTHLESS MAN

We got her straightened out, Puffy.

John stands and puts on his sunglasses, feeling every eye in the place on him. He heads for the exit as Moira's head appears above the swinging doors.

JOHN

Cancel my order, Puffy!

39 OMITTED

39 *

40 EXT. SHAD'S CROSSROADS GROCERY - DAY

40

It's a rural Mom and Pop, a couple cars in the lot. John's truck pulls up. John gets out, enters a phone booth out front. He looks grimly down at the dead girl's letter in his hand. He picks up the phone, hesitates, then dials.

JOHN

Has someone reported a girl runoff recent?

John ruefully runs a hand through his hair.

JOHN (CONT'D)

One 'bout sixteen? Blonde ponytail? Blue eyes?

Close on John's face.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Her friends might call her Germ. Or maybe Man. I ain't sure. I don't know her real name. That's why I'm calling you...

(beat)

What? No, she ain't a friend of mine. I don't know her-- I just found a note.

Just then a sheriff's squad car pulls up to the light across the street.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(agitated)
I don't know... to a friend of hers I
guess-- I'd just like to, to find out
who she--to know her name, so...

The phone starts shaking in John's hand. John hangs up.

41 EXT. TRAILER, BACKYARD - AFTERNOON 41

John tirelessly splits pieces of a huge fallen oak into firewood, his corded muscles glistening in the sun. The chopping ECHOES out into the valley.

42 EXT. TRAILER, BACKYARD - DUSK 42 *

He adds an empty beer can to a tower of them near his feet and opens another. He sits shirtless on the grass before a high stack of firewood. He's filthy and sweat-stained, his shoulder wound raw. Nobie's house lights filter up through the trees.

A loud RUSTLING intrudes on the cicadas buzzing. He stares warily into the woods toward it until - Mutt emerges. John wrestles playfully with him, then tosses him the remains of a sandwich from a bag next to him.

JOHN
Hope you've had a better time of it
than me since I saw you last, Mutt.

He waveringly stands and walks mostly drunk into the trailer.

43 INT. TRAILER, BATHROOM - DUSK 43 *

He peers naked into the mirror as if trying to recognize himself. Shower steam slowly obliterates his reflection.

44 INT. TRAILER, CORRIDOR - DUSK 44 *

A bath towel around his waist he stares from the doorway into Nolan's room. It's like a child's mausoleum, the crib, toys, stuffed animals in perfect order. He shuts the door.

CUT TO: *

44A INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - DUSK 44A *

CLOSE of a deer steak landing on a hot iron skillet. John, still in his bath towel, takes a long draw from a beer and looks down at the steak searing on the hot pan. *

CUT TO: *

45 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM - DUSK

45 *

He plaintively takes from the closet a dress Moira has left behind. He lays back on the bed with the dress to his face.

He slips a hand down the bath towel's front, starts masturbating

JOHN
(whispering longingly)
Moira.

He GROANS as he comes. LOUD BEEPING of the fire alarm rings out into the trailer. He casts the dress off his face and glances around as if afraid someone has been watching him.

*
*

45A INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

45A

*

John hurries into the smoke filled kitchen.

*

JOHN
Shit.

*
*

He turns off the stove, takes the iron skillet and runs it under the tap. STEAM hisses out around him.

*
*

He dumps it in the half full sink.

*

46 INT. TRAILER, STOREROOM - DUSK

46

*

Dressed to go out, he pulls several deer steaks from the freezer and puts them in a paper bag.

47 EXT. WOODSHED - DUSK

47

*

He slides out from under the woodshed, dragging the bulky pillowcase. He takes from it two stacks of bills, counts them, drops them in the bag with the steaks.

*
*

48 EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

48

It's a three-story weatherbeaten building on a run down town street. A kid is getting out of a Papa John's car out front as John pulls up. Moira's Escort is in the dirt driveway.

John watches the kid carry an extra large pizza box and two sodas up the darkened outside stairs.

49 EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT, STAIRWAY - NIGHT

49

He meets the kid, smirking, shaking his head, at the bottom of the stairs.

John gives the kid an askance look then pushes past him up the stairs. A dog starts BARKING on the second floor. A voice tells it to shut up. The dog pays it no mind.

50 EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT, LANDING - NIGHT 50

Through the screen door John hears amorous MOANS and GRUNTS and sees a light flickering deeper in the darkened apartment. He listens, heartsick, then shoulders through the door. *

51 INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT KITCHEN, LIVINGROOM - NIGHT 51

The door opens into the livingroom. An oil-slick, skinny, redheaded woman sits naked before a TV people are fucking on. There's beer and liquor bottles everywhere. John hears a gun CLICK behind him. *

OBADIAH (O.S.)
Drop the Goddamn bag.

JOHN
(confused)
Is this 1201 Belmont?

The woman giggles.

OBADIAH (O.S.)
I'm not shitting you, man.

John drops the bag.

JOHN
I think I got the wrong house.

John turns his head slightly toward the figure behind him.
Carla puts on her underwear.

*
*

OBADIAH (O.S.)
Most fucking likely.

CARLA
No. He don't.

She tosses a pizza slice she's holding into the box.

CARLA (CONT'D)
That's John.

OBADIAH (O.S.)
John?

CARLA
The husband.

An infant CRIES in back. The woman frowns sheepishly to John.

CARLA (CONT'D)
I'm Moira's friend, Carla. From
Puffy's?

She gathers her hair up in a bun the way she had it waiting tables at Puffy's when John was there earlier.

JOHN
That don't answer me much.

CARLA
I'm babysitting.

She wraps a blanket around herself and stands.

JOHN
Babysitting? Shit. (beat) Where's
Moira?

CARLA
I didn't ask.

JOHN

Christ. You're watching porno movies.

OBADIAH (O.S.)
We got a Constitutional right.

JOHN
You got a fucking gun on me?

OBADIAH (O.S.)
I put it away.

JOHN
And fucking in front of my kid!

CARLA
He was sleeping.

OBADIAH (O.S.)
Till you woke him, John.

John looks down at the TV. Three men in wolves masks are screwing Little Red Riding Hood. He switches it off and walks without looking behind him toward the crying.

JOHN
You best be gone or dressed when I get back. I don't want to see your sorry ass naked in my wife and kid's house! Christ, what's the matter with Moira?

52 INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT, NOLAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

52

Nolan SQUALLS in his crib beneath John, at once overcome with love and a feeling of incompetence.

JOHN
Okay. Okay, easy now. (beat) Daddy's here. Look!

He starts a mobile over the crib spinning. Nolan CRIES LOUDER. John tries to stop the mobile and knocks it into the crib. Nolan SCREAMS.

John leans in at him, whispering.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Can you say Daddy? Da-da?

Nolan looks mortified. John gingerly picks him up. Nolan goes dead-still before he erupts in all out WAILING.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What's a matter son?

He lays him against his shoulder and the WAILING intensifies. Tears of frustration and fear come to John's eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Come on now, Nolan... You're scaring, Daddy.

CARLA (O.S.)
(calmly)
Better let me have him, John. He ain't
used to seeing you.

John glares at Carla striding forward from the doorway in jeans and a black jersey. Her hair is back in its bun.

JOHN
What's the matter with him? What did
you people do to him! Carla gently
takes Nolan from him.

CARLA
He's just a little scared's all. And
hungry. Poor little man.

She deftly cradles Nolan in her arms and gives him a bottle. He stops crying to make satisfied SUCKLING noises. Carla rocks him softly and COOS to him. John watches in awe.

He touches tentatively one of Nolan's feet. Then the other. He counts his toes. More tears come to John's eyes. He places a hand on Nolan's scalp.

CARLA (CONT'D)
He looks like you.

John grimaces at her.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Yeah. You know, round the eyes.

John moves a finger lovingly over the boy's downy hair.

JOHN
I'm gonna tell Moira what I found
here.

Carla shrugs.

CARLA
Got Moira's long legs though (beat)
and gentle temperament.

John walks past her, into the livingroom.

53 INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT, LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

53

He stops cold.

The lanky blond man he saw leaving Puffy's with Waylon stands in the room's center holding John's paper bag. Tattooed arms, steel-toed boots. A pistol in his belt.

OBADIAH
Look on your face makes me think you
remember me, John?

John glowers at him.

JOHN

I'm wondering why you can't fuck in
your own place is all.

OBADIAH

You know how it is, John -- my dick's
a basset hound. I'm just the poor
sumbitch holding its chain.

JOHN

I can't figure out why you're still
here neither.

OBADIAH

Nobody lives here's asked me to leave.

JOHN

Most guys make assholes of themselves
don't wait to be.

OBADIAH

Hell, John, that was nothing. You
shoulda come a few minutes earlier--
got the show the pizza man did.

Smiling, he holds up John's bag.

OBADIAH (CONT'D)

You want me to put this in the
'fridge? It feels like maybe it needs
it.

John snatches the bag and shoves it under his arm. The man
leans back against the door frame.

OBADIAH (CONT'D)

You mad at me for some reason, John?

JOHN

I don't like guns being pulled on me.

OBADIAH

A fucking madman breaks into the
place, what would you do?

JOHN

I don't like 'em around my kid.

OBADIAH

A lifelong hunter like you, John? I
can't believe that! (beat) Truth is,
John, I'm like you - a person who
makes good use of what he kills
shouldn't have to worry what time a
year it is or whose fucking land he's
on.

(MORE)

OBADIAH (CONT'D)

Christ, can you imagine if our ancestors who discovered this fine country could only hunt when the government told 'em to? Jesus, wouldn't none of us be here!

JOHN

Moira know you're here?

OBADIAH

Why don't you ask her?

JOHN

I might.

OBADIAH

Do that, John. When you give Moira her bag of goodies, ask her if she knows Obie - that's short for Obadiah - Cornish - that's like the hen!

He extends a hand to John. John doesn't take it.

OBADIAH (CONT'D)

No shit, John, we might actually be acquainted, seeing's how a number a years back old Obie Cornish spent many a day busting his ass for peanuts around and about that old mountain you're on.

He pulls back his hand and places it on his pistol butt.

OBADIAH (CONT'D)

Yup. Back in town after a lot of years, only to find not much has changed, 'cept I understand you and yours had a string of bad luck. Money must be pretty tight these days, huh, John?

JOHN

I don't recognise you from a clump of cow shit.

Obadiah laughs. John walks past him. Behind him he hears Carla softly singing to Nolan.

54

INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

54

Obie stands in the doorway as John disappears down the stairs.

*
*

OBADIAH (O.S.)

What about the bag, John. Ain't you gonna leave the bag?

John walks wordlessly across the kitchen and out the door.

55 EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT, STREET - NIGHT 55 *

Thin clouds blow across the moon. The same dog is barking. John looks in the bag and sees the meat and cash still in it.

He unlocks the Escort, wedges the bag beneath the gas pedal, and locks the car. As he starts across the street to his truck the Chevy Blazer pulls up behind it. *

A powerfully built man gets out and walks at John. Gradually we make him out under the dim street lights as Waylon, too well-groomed for this neighborhood, darkly dangerous looking.

He stops a few feet from John. John, still walking, tries to hide his shock at seeing him. He steadily meets his gaze. *

WAYLON
I know you?

JOHN
I don't think so.

WAYLON
So what are you looking at?

JOHN
A face I ain't seen here before.

Waylon smiles coolly.

WAYLON
This street don't look upscale enough to have a rent-a-cop. You just a concerned citizen?

JOHN
(guarded)
I know people live on it's all.

Waylon nods evenly.

WAYLON
I wonder if we know the same ones. Where do the ones you know live at?

JOHN
They ain't home.

Waylon drops the cigarette he's smoking and toes it out.

WAYLON
We don't know the same ones then.

Waylon walks past John and up the darkened stairs of Moira's building. John in a few seconds hears KNOCKING, then a door opening and shutting.

John stands looking up at the house with an uncertain, concerned look. Then he drives off.

CUT TO:

56 EXT. TRAILER, DECK - MORNING 56

The dead girl walks out of the fog blanketing the yard. She wears a sheer white dress and walks toward camera.

*
*

DEAD GIRL
John. (beat) John...

*

As she smiles a small spot of blood appears in the center of her chest. As she walks toward us the spot grows and becomes more crimson.

*
*
*

57 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM - MORNING 57

John's eyes snap open. He's breathing hard and sweating after his dream. He's still in his clothes from last night.

58 EXT. TRAILER, DECK - MORNING 58

John drinks coffee facing a thick fog below the trailer exactly as in his dream.

Suddenly something moves beneath the fog. John nervously stands and peers into it until... the house phone RINGS.

*

59 INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - MORNING 59

John holds the phone to his ear.

CECIL (O.S.)
I got a cow sinking to China down here, John. Ran right through the electric fence into the muck.

Through the window John watches Mutt bound out of the fog.

CECIL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I wouldn't trouble ya if Anne and Eban wasn't both to her sister's and Abbie off riding.

Mutt runs up onto the deck and pushes through the screen door into the kitchen.

JOHN
Keep her from thrashing much as ya can, Cecil. I'm on my way.

John hangs up, gets a steak from the refrigerator and tosses it to Mutt. Then he leaves by the back door.

60 EXT. NOBIE'S PASTURE - MORNING 60

Wiry, bandy-legged Cecil is in fishing waders. Holding John's extended hand he wanders out and throws a line over the cow's back. Then, stomach deep in a mud, Cecil reaches in to the quag under the torso to make the loop. *

Spectating cows surround them like apparitions in the fog.

John and Cecil tug on the rope from shore but don't budge the sinking and panicked cow.

CECIL
I better run get the John Deere.

JOHN
I wouldn't spend much time talking about it.

Cecil runs off. John squats and talks soothingly to the cow.

61 EXT. NOBIE'S PASTURE - MOMENTS LATER 61 *

The John Deere is backed up to the quag, the rope's free end tied to its back. John pulls on the rope to make it taut. *

JOHN
Steady she goes, Cecil!

Cecil eases the tractor ahead and the cow lifts up some, then falls BELLOWING on one side in the muck and is pulled free.

John looses the cow from the loop. As he watches it scabble up and run off his face suddenly takes on a reflective look.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. NOBIE'S BACKYARD - MORNING 62

John and Cecil stand in the backyard, filthy from their task. There's a big heap of junk piled along the side of the house. Most of it looks destined for a trip to the dump.

CECIL
Got ye any work, John?

JOHN
Plenty. Just not much the paying kind.

As Cecil strips off his waders John fiddles idly with a piece of rusted barbwire that sticks out of the junk pile.

CECIL
Eban's off to college come fall - got hisself some smarts from his mother I guess.

(MORE)

CECIL (CONT'D)

Wants to do something with computers -
make 'em think or something.

Cecil leans in his skivvies against the porch rail, scratching himself.

JOHN
Good for him.

CECIL
He thinks they're the best thing since sliced bread. Says I ought to have one for the farm. Keep all my records on it.

JOHN
Maybe ya ought to.

CECIL
Got me an old shoe box works plenty good enough.

Cecil gets out his dick and pisses into the yard.

CECIL (CONT'D)
I'm proud as can be a that boy, but he ain't never took to farming any more than that one has.

John looks up to see Cecil's daughter, Abbie (21), riding a horse through the far field.

CECIL (CONT'D)
Guess I don't blame 'em. World out there's pretty exciting these days and for sure there's no money in dairying.

He puts away his dick. John, meanwhile has taken an interest in an old wooden rocking horse stranded in the middle of the junk pile and is only half-listening.

CECIL (CONT'D)
We never had need of a full time man before, but when Eban goes it ain't right his mother should take up the slack.

John starts lifting away the junk to free the horse. Cecil continues.

CECIL (CONT'D)
If you could see your way around to working for me on your old home-- I'm offering you a job come fall. A good job. (Beat) Long term.

Insulted and grateful at once, John turns his attention from the horse and for the first time looks directly at Cecil.

JOHN
You run this farm better'n my Dad ever did is the truth of it, Cecil.
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Him losing it is no fault a yours.
And I thank you for the offer only -

John breaks off. He'd like to turn the offer down with finality but can't quite get the words out. He goes back to tugging at the horse. A Beat.

CECIL

You got an interest in that piece a
junk fore it goes to the dump?

JOHN

I know somebody who might.

CECIL

I'll help you put it in your truck
then.

CUT TO:

63

EXT. NOBIE FRONT YARD - LATER

63

John and Cecil have lifted the old hobby horse into the bed of John's truck. One eye has been gouged out and its missing its right runner.

John tosses the end of a rope over the truck bed to Cecil, but he isn't looking. His eyes are on something else.

CECIL

One car after another.

*

John follows Cecil's gaze a few hundred yards up the road to -
a silver Buick just coming out of the trees.

*

CECIL (CONT'D)

(gesturing)

The Hollenbach place. Maybe after six
years somebody's finally looking to
buy the place. Got to be from out the
area though. Wouldn't ya say, John?

*

*

*

*

John's face. Watching the Buick he struggles to mask his
nervousness to Cecil.

*

CECIL (CONT'D)

Hell yes! Nobody local's gon' move
into that place knowing its history.
Be like walkin' on Ira and Molly's
graves. You believe in ghosts, John?

JOHN

As much as I don't.

CECIL

Sure. Me too.

John brings his eyes back to Cecil.

CECIL (CONT'D)

As nice a piece a land as it sits on,
I wouldn't live in that house for all
the gold in the world... knowing what
happened to Ira and Molly.

Cecil picks up the rope John's thrown him and loops it thru a
hook in the rim of the bed. John watches him distractedly.

JOHN

You remember a foster kid worked for
Ira a couple summers 'fore they was
killed - all arms and legs? Word was
Ira sent him back the state for
stabbing to death one of Ira's best
milkers with a pitchfork for kicking a
pail a milk over on him.

Nodding gravely, Cecil tosses the rope back to John.

CECIL

Bought a lot of stone from Ira back
then. I remember the kid - they called
him the turkey or some kinda Goddamn
bird name-- he and your friend Simon
'd help me load it.

John's face registers surprise. He picks up the rope end.

JOHN

Simon and him worked for Ira at the
same time?

CECIL

Got shitcanned by Ira around the same
time too.

John loops the rope around the horse, pulls it tight.

CECIL (CONT'D)

I know that one's like a big brother
to you--and he can work the tits off a
mule when he's sober-- but he goes on
one of his drinking jags, he's a
different man altogether.

John ties the rope off thru a hook on his side of the bed.
He slams shut the bed gate.

CECIL (CONT'D)

Wanna hose off fore ya go?

JOHN

I'll just go up, dive in the pond.

Cecil smiles at the horse.

CECIL

Hope the somebody you got in mind for
it 'll get some good use out of it.

JOHN

It'll need some work first.

CECIL

Then the right man salvaged it.

John starts walking for the truck cab.

CECIL (CONT'D)

Maybe you'll get back to me about it
huh, John? 'Bout the job?

John getting in his truck waves without looking back.

CUT TO:

64 INT. TRAILER, LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

64 *

John stares with a pained look at a magazine photo of a young
brunette vaguely resembling the dead girl. He turns the
pages to another girl. Then another. Women's magazines and
empty beer cans clutter the table. John throws down the
magazine and walks to the window.

*
*
*
*

A light reflects high up on the Hollow Road. He peers
intently at it until he sees the black Blazer, slowly
descending.

He pops a fresh beer. Mutt frolics in the yard.

The phone RINGS. John starts, dropping his beer.

65 INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

65

He puts the phone to his ear, peering out the window.

MOIRA (O.S.)

(harshly)

I want you to stay away from the
house. (beat) You can't just go around
bustin through doors and leaving
rancid meat in people's cars.

*
*
*

The Blazer disappears below the tree line.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

John?

JOHN

Yeah?

*

MOIRA (O.S.)

(softer)

What's goin on with you?

*

JOHN
What?

MOIRA (O.S.)
Are you in trouble? Did you-- John,
for God's sakes, where'd you get that
money?

*
*
*
*

John, frowning, runs a hand over his face.

JOHN
Cecil made gave me an advance on an
offer.

MOIRA (O.S.)
For four thousand dollars?

JOHN
Exactly. (beat) And there's more where
that come from. He wants me to work
the farm with him. (beat) Just go and
put it in the bank for you and Nolan.

*

MOIRA (O.S.)
Come on, John. I know when your lying.
What's going on?

*
*

JOHN
I ain't lying. I just cashed the
check, and gave it straight to you.

*

John watches Mutt make a blind rush at a woodchuck. The
woodchuck escapes into its hole.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(angrily)
Hey, that Ichabod Crane son of a bitch
fucking Nolan's babysitter about had
me calling social services on you.

MOIRA (O.S.)
Carla won't sit for Nolan again.
Believe me. I had no idea she'd
invited that dirtbag over here.

*
*

JOHN
That's one dangerous looney-tunes
character you had around our son,
Moira. You know that?

MOIRA (O.S.)
He's Carla's friend, okay.

*

JOHN
And what do you know about the guy
came there after him?

MOIRA (O.S.)
What guy?

*

JOHN
Stocky guy, dark - he and Cornish came
out of Puffy's together earlier.

MOIRA (O.S.)
I don't know anything about him. Only
Carla was there when I got home.
(beat) I don't know where you got all
this money, but I can't keep this...

*

JOHN
If you don't want it, put it away for
Nolan, for college--

MOIRA (O.S.)
Will you just tell me how you got it?

John hears a GUN SHOT and sees Mutt fall over and lie still.

JOHN
Jesus...

Shocked, John drops the phone.

66 EXT. TRAILER, DECK - AFTERNOON

66

John rushes in a half-crouch out of the kitchen door. He
warily scans left, right, down the hill. Then he runs down
the deck stairs, into the yard.

67 EXT. TRAILER, FRONT YARD - AFTERNOON

67

Mutt lies on his side, dead, his chest ripped open.

John, looking around, in anguish picks him up, cradles him in
his arms.

JOHN
(his voice breaking)
Goddamnit!

PRELAP AUDIO...

68 EXT. HILL, ABOVE NOBIE'S BARN - LATE AFTERNOON

68

The distant whir of milking machines reflects up the
hillside. John squats in a crouch, his .308 in the crook of
his arm, as he scans the farm and the road coming up the
valley. But the valley is still...

CUT TO:

69 EXT. TRAILER, BACKYARD - DUSK 69

John stands, head bowed, over a fresh grave marked by wild flowers and a handmade wood cross with 'MUTT' carved into it. He fights back tears.

FADE TO:

70 INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - NIGHT 70

John sits at the table carefully gluing a new runner onto the hobby horse. Its cleaned up, its missing eye replaced. Wood chips, a jackknife, a hand planer, beer cans on the table. Country music over the radio. SFX: Bugs BATTER the screens holding back the dark night.

John stands the horse on its new runners on the table. Puts a finger on it, moves it gently back and forth. Watches it rock with an at once satisfied and distant look.

He picks up the horse and carries it outside thru the front door.

71 INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER 71

Walking back inside, empty-handed, he hears the phone RING. He watches it RING. Finally he walks to it and picks it up.

JOHN

Hello.

Silence.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Who is this?

We hear the faint sound of breathing.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Who the fuck are you?!

MAN (O.S.)

If what you took ain't back where you took it from by tomorrow morning, it won't be no dog shows up dead next.

The phone clicks dead.

72 EXT. TRAILER, DECK - NIGHT 72

At a table cluttered with empty beer cans John eyes a set of headlights winding up through the hollow. They turn onto his hill. He picks up his .45 from under his chair, flicks off the safety. The lights climb toward him.

A dilapidated Cadillac turns into the yard and lurches dead. Raucous LAUGHTER. The doors swing open.

Simon, a rugged, dark complected, fortyish man tumbles out into the moonlight with Colette, a buxom redhead, and Mincy, a taut-bodied brunette, both scantily clad.

SIMON

Pool open, Johno?

Simon smiles broadly at the sight of John and grabs him in a bear hug.

The women run LAUGHING for the pond.

73

EXT. POND'S BANK - LATER

73

John and Simon drink gin in front of a small bonfire. Colette and Mincy frolic in the water below them. John is distant.

SIMON

I know you remember Colette.

JOHN

She ain't familiar.

SIMON

Colette Gans! Married to Ralph Gans, got that scrap metal yard in Blenham we hauled a couple demo wrecks to three-four years ago? Had that half-ear?

JOHN

Don't know him either.

SIMON

Sure you do! We tied one on with him in his backyard after and Colette sashays out 'round midnight in this little-bitty night shirt could see right through and says, 'Raaaa-lph, these boys gotta go home now! Colette needs tendin' to!' Christ, we 'bout died - who even knew the man was married. Funny thing is come to find out that's how she really talks - takes her about an hour to get a sentence out.

JOHN

I don't remember.

SIMON

You're bullshitting me.

JOHN

Nuh uh.

SIMON

The hell you say!

John shrugs.

SIMON (CONT'D)

The other one's her cousin, Mincy.
Has a lion tattoo over half her ass.
You be doing me a favor you make it
roar for her, Johnno. Shape I'm in,
one cousin'll be all I can handle.

Simon hands John the gin bottle.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You in a tussle, Johnno?

John glances guardedly at Simon. Simon eyes inscrutably
John's bandaged shoulder.

JOHN

Buck gored me.

SIMON

Shit. (beat) Gotta be a story there.

JOHN

Thought it was dead's all. It weren't.

SIMON

(casually)

You worried it's gon' come lookin' for
ya for shootin' it?

John stares hard at Simon.

SIMON (CONT'D)

It's the middle of the night, Johnno.

JOHN

Yeah.

Simon takes back the bottle, purses his lips pensively.

SIMON

You're sitting here shit-faced, loaded
for bear.

John plucks a piece of grass.

JOHN

And now you're sitting next to me.

John pointedly sticks the grass in his mouth.

JOHN (CONT'D)

A guy you know pulled a piece on me
last night--at Moira's, after I walked
in on him balling the baby sitter.

Simon, eyes averted from John, swigs gin.

SIMON

A guy I know? What guy?

JOHN

Obadiah Cornish?

Simon, scowling, gazes off toward the pond.

SIMON

Last I heard that maniac was up at Attica.

John spits out the grass.

JOHN

Well, he ain't now. (beat) Strange thing is he acted to have a real good memory a me, though I didn't lay eyes on him but a coupla times them months he was up to Hollenbachs' and only put a face to him later from recalling the story of him running Ira's top milker through with a pitchfork.

Simon shrugs. He runs a hand through his hair.

SIMON

He was one them the cops talked to - same as me - after old Ira and Molly got sliced up. (beat) Got himself the same lawyer I did too - and now you too, Johnno - little Daggard Pitt.

John looks suspiciously at Simon. Simon, slyly looking around, pulls his boots off.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Where's that three-colored mutt a your'n, Johnno?

John keeps looking at Simon. Simon doesn't seem to notice. He starts wriggling out of his pants.

SIMON (CONT'D)

He's usually slobbering all over me I show up.

John looks at Simon. He grabs the bottle and takes a pull from it, then caps it and drops it in the grass.

JOHN

Was shot dead. A few hours 'fore you got here.

Simon raises his eyes.

SIMON

What the fuck John? By who?

JOHN

By somebody I didn't see.

SIMON

Might somebody had a reason?

JOHN

I'd guess not.

SIMON

Well, shit. Musta been a reason.
(beat) Nothing you can think of?

JOHN

I loved that dog.

Simon stands, pulling off his shirt.

SIMON

Yeah, well, I know... but the thing to
remember is--he was just a dog--not a
human being, ya know?

MINCY

We're getting awfully lonely in here,
boys!

From atop Colette's shoulders Mincy gyrates her lion tattoo
at them. Simon grins at John, then rushes into the water.

74

EXT. POND'S BANK - LATER

74

Mincy, naked, and John, hands clasped behind his head, lay on
a blanket. Simon and Colette RAUCOUSLY fuck in the darkness
of the far shore.

MINCY

Simon said you might take some
convincing... and convincing's half
the fun.

JOHN

He tell you I got a wife?

MINCY

He said she left you and that you
needed to get your mind off it.

Mincy lays a hand on John's crotch.

MINCY (CONT'D)

Feels to me like you already have.

John gives her a disinterested stare.

Mincy turns close to him, inches from his face. She smiles coyly at him and puts her hand on his chest.

She moves in to kiss John. He closes his eyes and gives in momentarily. When he opens his eyes, Ingrid, the dead girl, is staring back at him, smiling.

DEAD GIRL

Do me like this 'kay, John?

He scrambles back in horror.

He stands, grabs the gin bottle and stumbles down to the pond, heaving.

FADE TO:

75

EXT. POND'S BANK - DAWN

75

We hear a DELUGE, THUNDER. Then we hear Mincy shrieking.

MINCY (O.S.)

Where's my foot!

JOHN

What's the matter with you?

MINCY

You cocksucker, where's my goddamned foot?

In the half-light, rain pelts the pond. Track back from the water to Mincy nakedly rifling through the grass on all fours. John grasps her elbow.

JOHN

Let's get to the trailer.

She pushes him off, crying inconsolably, continues searching.

MINCY

The rain'll ruin it! Help me find it!

John looks at the trailer. Several lights are on. A lightning flash delineates a man's shape in the master bedroom window. John tries to stand and slips in the slick grass. Mincy yanks desperately at his arm. She looks deranged.

MINCY (CONT'D)

Help me find it, please! The worst Goddamn luck in the world is losing it! I had it since I was five!

John gives up and searches with her. Soon he finds an orange rabbit's foot. He hands it to her. She SHRIEKS with joy.

They start for the trailer. The bedroom light goes out.

76 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM - DAWN 76

John walks drenched into it and peers suspiciously around. The closet door is ajar. BANGING pots, VOICES sound from the kitchen.

77 INT. TRAILER, BATHROOM - DAWN 77

He finds the storage cabinet ajar. John's face. He trusts no one, not even Simon now. He gets in the shower.

78 INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - MORNING 78

The four of them sit hungover and subdued around the table. Rain POUNDS the tin roof, silverware CLICKS. Mincy laps doggishly at her coffee. Colette gulps hers.

The phone near Simon RINGS. He answers it before John can. He listens for a few beats, then hangs up.

SIMON

Nobody, Johnno. (beat) Wrong number.

COLETTE

Don't ya hate that shit.

MINCY

'Specially when you're just settin' there wantin it to ring so's you can talk somebody - anybody - 'fore you go out your fuckin' mind, then brrring! - the asshole slams down on ya!

COLETTE

Had me this breathuh one time, so I breathed right back to 'im - started huffin' like I was bouht gon blow my nut. Mister puhdpuller gets so scared he hangs upon me.

MINCY

Cops'll trace that shit ya ask 'em.

COLETTE

I w'udn't ask 'em.

MINCY

Was in the *The Star* 'bout a prevert had 'em walk right in with the phone in one hand and his little red pencil in t'other. Was talkin' to Madonna.

SIMON

I wish you girls'd shut up. I got a headache.

COLETTE

That ain't the tone you used last night, Si-mun!

SIMON

Last night I was so drunk I could hardly see.

John walks to the gun rack and gets down his .12 gauge.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Still huntin' with them deer slugs, Johnno?

John nods.

SIMON (CONT'D)

They don't leave much question,, do they?

John eyes Simon warily. He removes the gun's bolt. He starts cleaning the barrel with a rod and solvent.

Mincy lays her head on the table. She looks asleep. Simon pours a fresh coffee. The PELTING rain, the rod SCRAPING.

COLETTE

Ain't this fuhn.

SIMON

Shut up.

COLETTE

You ask me nihce.

SIMON

Please don't open your big fat mouth again until we're back to town and you're dropped off somewhere I ain't got to listen to it.

He finishes his coffee and stands. He claps John on the back.

SIMON (CONT'D)

One day it just hits ya, Johnno. I'm too old for this shit. (beat) Too damn old.

He leaves the trailer. The two females follow him. Mincy walks into the door frame. She doesn't seem to feel it. Smiling over her shoulder she wiggles her fingertips to John.

John watches through the rain-streaked window the Cadillac wind down the hill.

79 EXT. WOODS - MORNING 79

John hikes in a drizzle through the drenched woods, carrying his .12 gauge, wearing a knapsack over his rain poncho.

He moves ghost-like through a pine forest holding a mist so thick he can't see his feet. *

79A He jumps from rock to rock over a swollen stream. 79A

79B Across it he ascends a hill to a spiny ridge above the quarry. 79B

80 EXT. QUARRY RIDGE - DAY 80

He lies between two bushes, eyeing through binoculars the mist-filled quarry. We pan from the plastic-enclosed lean-to, bowing under a load of rain water, to the water hole, roily after the storm, to the cave opening choked with thick fog.

He walks to the ridge's far side. He peers down onto the old Hollenbach farm and a dirt road leaving its backside. We track the road from John's POV to where it disappears into the woods heading up the mountain toward the quarry.

John hikes the remaining length of the spine. He makes a short drop down onto the road near the quarry entrance.

He kneels and examines the road's rocky surface. Then he enters the quarry.

81 EXT. QUARRY - DAY 81

CAWING commences from a pine tree shimmying under the weight of hundreds of crows.

John glances nervously around at the walls ECHOING with the CAWING. Then he walks directly to the cave. He picks up the shovel and pick and leans them on the wall next to his gun. Wielding his flashlight, he duckwalks into the cave.

He directs the beam onto the sleeping bag. He does a double-take; nothing protrudes from its top.

He waddles anxiously back to the bag and yanks it open. The lion grins up at him. The girl is gone.

John rears back in shock, hitting his head on the ceiling.

82 EXT. RIDGE - LATE AFTERNOON 82

John sits, dripping water, under drooping foliage high on the ridge.

In his binoculars he eyes his trailer, periodically masked and unmasked by the fog moving over the hillside below him. Flying birds appear like rocks tossed into the mist.

Nobie's COW-BOSSY CALL floats eerily up the ridge. John watches the cows spectral movements across the pasture. They slowly disappear completely into the fog concealing the barn.

He eats a sandwich from his pack. He looks in his binoculars again. We pan from the trailer, to the yard, to the woodshed, to John's truck. All look as they did when he left.

He carves up an apple and eats it. He aimlessly throws his knife over and over into the grass between his feet. He returns to watching the trailer.

DISSOLVE TO:

83

EXT. RIDGE - DUSK

83

We hear the clomp-suck of FOOTFALLS on the wet ground.

John's drooping head pops up from between his knees. He grabs his shotgun and dives behind a bush.

He flicks off the safety and eyes the thick fog left of him. The heavy FOOTFALLS draw closer.

From the fog emerges a horse's head, then its muscular torso atop which elegantly rides... the dead girl.

John drops his gun, startled.

The horse shies, then rears. Her face now obscured by fog, the girl reins it in.

GIRL
Steadee, girl! Steadee!

She slowly turns to John.

GIRL (CONT'D)
John!

John's whole body slumps.

GIRL (CONT'D)
You near scared us to death.

Chagrined and relieved at once, John picks up his gun.

JOHN
Took you for somebody else.

The horse comes forward and now we see the rider as ABBIE NOBIE. She is precociously pretty and self-assured.

ABBIE

Since when are you so jumpy?

JOHN

I thought I saw something.

ABBIE

Jesus, John.

John haltingly steps up to the horse, kisses its nose.

JOHN

Sorry Abbie. Must a dozed off.

ABBIE

In the rain - with Mr. 12-gauge?

JOHN

Thought I might see a pheasant.

ABBIE

Or a deer?

John shifts his eyes slightly. Abbie smiles.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

I'd never tell on you for it. Daddy says you put to good use everything you take and that that's more than can be said for most of the world. (beat) You gonna take the job he offered you?

JOHN

Ain't had time to think on it.

ABBIE

You ought to. (beat) Not everybody gets a chance to do what they love and get paid for it.

JOHN

(frowning ironically)
Shovelin' shit and milking cows?

ABBIE

Uh huh. And I'm daughter to one just like you. Daddy had to work in a factory he'd die.

Diablo shakes his head and blows. John steadies him.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

In my summer school economics course we're studying on profit sharing. You know what that is?

JOHN

Nope.

ABBIE

It's when employees own a piece of the companies they work at. The bosses figure they'll get more for their money from employees who share in the profits and workers work harder 'cause they got a stake in things.

Diablo dances backward. John takes hold of his rein.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

Cool your jets, Diablo. (beat) Was me, I'd suggest something like that to Daddy.

John strokes Diablo's neck.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

I'd tell him I'd take the job if part of my pay could go toward buying a piece of his farm.

John smiles.

*

ABBIE (CONT'D)

I wouldn't ask for too much at first, maybe just that Daddy let you buy some heifers from him and raise them up in the barn, then - you know, after that - a piece of the land, and Daddy would listen too, John, because he's real worried that after Eban and I go off to college he and my mom won't be able to keep up with the work.

JOHN

Buy back a piece of my own farm?

*

Abbie pushes her hair out of her eyes.

ABBIE

You keep looking back, you'll never get ahead! And our professor says workers with leverage ought to use it to empower themselves.

JOHN

(smiling wryly)

Maybe you ought to worry 'bout losing your inheritance.

ABBIE

I won't need one because I'm going to be a millionaire before I'm thirty. I got a thousand ideas how to do it - like making you my Daddy's partner.

JOHN

Huh?

Abbie smiles coquettishly.

ABBIE

I got faith in you, John. You'll only make my inheritance bigger.

JOHN

Your Daddy know what they're learning you in school?

ABBIE

No - and I'd appreciate you not discussing it with him when you go to him with my ownership proposal - you will think about it won't you?

John nods seriously. He lets go of Diablo.

JOHN

Be careful back in them woods. It's slippery underfoot.

ABBIE

Don't worry about me. I'm an experienced horsewoman.

John watches Abbie slowly ride off, then walks off into the fog down the hill.

84 EXT. TRAILER, BACKYARD - DUSK

84

At the yard's edge John stops abruptly and stares into the misty darkness ahead of him.

We hear GOBBLING and see in the yard a dark form. Slowly it takes the shape of a wild turkey.

John drops to one knee and aims his gun at the turkey.

His eye twitches. His hands shake. He can't pull the trigger.

John's face. He fears what he's become. He lowers the gun, panting. He watches the turkey disappear into the night.

He stands and walks with his gun into the trailer.

85 INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN/LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

85

It's in total disarray. Dishes, books, papers everywhere, stuffing torn out of furniture, everything rifled through.

John picks up some photos of Nolan as a newborn and of Moira in a bathing suit by a lake torn from their album. John's face.

86 INT. TRAILER, CORRIDOR - NIGHT 86

He walks in shock down it and looks in the bathroom. The toilet is smashed, the medicine cabinet trashed, the cabinets emptied. He glances in Nolan's room. It too is vandalized.

He sniffs at the air, then walks faster to his bedroom. He rushes into it through its half-open door and stops dead.

87 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM - NIGHT 87

Wrapped in clear plastic below her neck the dead girl lies face up on the bed. A paper sheet taped to her chest declares in large black letters, 'JOHN MOON MURDERED ME!'

He walks dazed to the bed. He sits down near the girl's head. Her stench can be read on his face. He gazes down. CLOSE ON the dead girl's face, dirty, eyes shut.

With his index fingers John gently pushes at the girl's eyelids. With some effort he gets them to pop open. Her eyes are crystal-blue. They look alive. John's face. He has stopped noticing her smell or appearance. He sees a beautiful young girl.

John sets about carefully and gently unwrapping her from the plastic. He pulls an old wool blanket out from under the bed and lays it out under her. He wraps the wool around her wounded body and pauses to smooth her hair. He then wraps twine around her to secure the blanket. *

He stands gazing at her before covering her face... *

John looks toward a faint LIGHT dancing thru the room's front window.

In a panic he moves quickly to the window; a set of headlights climb the ridge road toward the trailer. *

John anxiously runs back to the dead girl. He looks down at her, considers. Then he hurriedly lifts her up under her knees and chest and, staggering under her weight, walks away from us with her toward the bedroom door.

88 INT. TRAILER, STOREROOM - NIGHT 88 *

We hear the stairs CREAKING. Then, starting at his feet and moving slowly up, we see John grimly carrying the girl down them toward the freezer. The freezer door is open, its melting contents on the floor.

John sets the girl down gentle into the freezer. It's a bit too short for her but he's just able to push her in. He stops for a beat and looks at Ingrid's face. He tears the plastic open and brushes the hair and dirt off her face. He stares a bit longer, then begins stacking the steaks in and around her feet but a LOUD KNOCKING startles him.

89 INT/EXT. TRAILER, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

89

Wielding his 12-gauge John apprehensively opens the door...
MOIRA stands before him. John is anxious.

MOIRA
(concerned)
John?

John struggles to compose himself. He steps outside. Moira looks at the 12-gauge. John frowns sheepishly.

JOHN
I was bird-hunting. *

MOIRA
(incredulous)
In the trailer?

John nods up the hill.

JOHN
Just got back.

Moirra tries to look thru the open door. John shuts the door. He tries to smile casually. Moira is perplexed, worried.

MOIRA
I came to pick up a few things.

JOHN
(hesitantly)
What things?

MOIRA
The rest of my good clothes hanging in
my closet.

Moirra smiles, unsure of John.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
I can't wear the same outfit to school
everyday. *

JOHN
I'll get them for you-- (beat) so you
ain't got to see how the place has
gone to hell since you left.

John quickly walks back inside and shuts the door behind him as Moira watches him, befuddled.

CUT TO:

90 EXT. TRAILER, FRONTYARD - NIGHT

90

John backs out of the rear of Moira's Escort after hanging her clothes in it. He turns to Moira who's studying him with a concerned look.

MOIRA

Whatever mess you've gotten yourself into-- just promise me (beat) you won't let anything bad happen to our son's father.

In the uncomfortable way they face each other it's clear there's still a strong bond between them. John shifts his eyes to the trailer, then looks slowly back to Moira.

JOHN

I told you, Cecil offered me a deal the other day. Full time work.

*

Moira smiles, still unsure.

John opens her door but gently stops her with his arm from getting into the car. Moira looks up curiously at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm thinking to see if he'll agree to advance some more wages for a few of his heifers... to start my own herd. (beat) Profit sharing. (hopeful) What do you think?

*

MOIRA

(warmly)

I think Cecil'd be getting a hell of a bargain for whatever it cost him.

She unthinkingly kisses John on the lips. They look at each other as if they both are weighing saying something more, before Moira abruptly breaks the spell and gets into her car. John watches her drive off with a faraway look. Then he turns grimly back to the trailer.

91 EXT. RIDGE - LATER - NIGHT

91

LONG SHOT: Only John's lighted trailer is visible on the dark hillside. As we move closer we see in a window John's silhouette steadily picking up items from the floor of his trashed home.

FADE TO BLACK:

HEAR glass SHATTERING...

92 INT. TRAILER, LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

92

CLOSE ON John's face in semi-darkness. His eyes snap open. They dart left, right. We hear only a clock TICKING.

Suddenly an engine ROARS to life and lights fill the room.

John rolls off the couch and grabs from beneath it his .45. The engine ROARS louder. The lights get brighter, as if the accelerating vehicle will ram the trailer's backside.

John runs for the deck door. He CRIES OUT and falls to the floor. The vehicle speeds past the trailer, down the hill.

John watches through the window its taillights recede.

He reaches up and turns on the light. A pane of the deck door is in pieces around him. The bottom of his foot bleeds.

CUT TO:

93 INT. TRAILER, LIVINGROOM - MORNING

93

On the couch John pulls a glass chunk from his foot with tweezers. Holding it up, he looks at it, pained and angry. He looks toward the storeroom door.

*

JOHN

You should never a run off with a guy
twice your age in the first place,
then you wouldn't a been in the quarry
and 'd still be alive and I wouldn't
be responsible for you!

He cleans and bandages the cut, puts on his boots.

He starts to broom up the glass. Among the fragments under the table is a fist-sized rock with a folded paper taped to it. John picks up the rock.

He removes the paper, smooths it out on the table, and sees scrawled on it, 'Yer wife, yer kid. Hand over the money. Or Bang! Bang! Why don't ya call the law? Ha! Ha!'

CLOSE ON John's face, displaying shock and fear.

He looks up Moira's number, then dials it. He sits at the table, listening to her phone RING. Four times, five. His legs hop up and down. Nine. Ten.

He slams down the phone.

CUT TO:

94 EXT. TOWN - DAY

94

John's truck moves ghost-like through the fog-shrouded town. It seems alone in an amorphous white world. In its bed is the hobby horse John put there after repairing it two nights ago.

Headlights pierce the empty mist right of John, stopped at the Main Street red light. An SUV obscured by fog emerges and turns left in front of him. John looks over and starts. Waylon is driving. Waylon doesn't look John's way.

In his rearview mirror John watches with an uncertain look the SUV's taillights disappear.

95 EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT - DAY 95

John in relief sees Moira's Escort in the drive. He gets out, gets the hobby horse out of the bed and walks up toward the apartment with it. *

CUT TO: *

96 EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT - DAY 96 *

John emerges empty handed out of the mist at the stairs bottom. He stares with a concerned look back up at the apartment, then again at Moira's Escort in the drive. A dog BARKS once. John gets in his truck and leaves.

97 INT. PUFFY'S DINER - DAY 97

John enters and takes a stool at the mostly-empty counter. Puffy sits exactly as he did before. Carla tries to hand John a menu. John lets it drop.

JOHN
Where's my family at?

CARLA
I don't know nothing about it.

JOHN
You don't know nothing about what?

CARLA
I don't know nothing about nothing.
And especially not about where Moira
and Nolan's at.

John grabs her arm.

JOHN
You better get smarter in a hurry.

CARLA
Mitts off, John. She don't talk to me
no more thanks to you.

JOHN
You know your boyfriend's a psycho
kills cows and dogs for fun?

CARLA

He ain't my boyfriend. I hear from him when he feels like it's all.

JOHN

You know where I can find him though don't you?

CARLA

I know he don't like surprises - and that if he's wanting to see somebody he'll find them.

John squeezes her arm. Carla CRIES out. A man abruptly veers away from the stool he was headed for, into a booth.

PUFFY

(firmly quiet)

Why not give the man an answer, Carla.

CARLA

I ain't got the one he's wanting.

PUFFY

Try harder. We're all counting on you.

CARLA

'Bliged to ya for the support, fat man. You're a real prince.

Puffy lights a fresh cigarette from the nub he's smoking. He stubs out the nub. He does everything slowly.

PUFFY

Pretty young thing was in the other day looking to waitress. Had tits the size of canteloupes and a real pleasant manner. I told her leave her number.

CARLA

(disgusted)

Bet she's just holding her breath.

Carla scowls at John.

CARLA (CONT'D)

He was at The Oaks last I knew.

John lets go her arm, stands, and walks for the door.

PUFFY

Best you don't come back in for awhile, John.

Just as John opens the door the deputy sheriff appears. He nods at John as he passes him and makes his way to the counter. Somewhat rattled, John disappears quickly.

98 EXT. PUFFY'S DINER - CONTINUOUS

98

As John exits the diner, he runs into Daggard Pitt.

PITT

John! Just the man I've been looking for.

With the daily newspaper clamped in his claw hand, Pitt limps his way up to John.

PITT (CONT'D)

If you could step over to my office, I have those papers ready for you to sign.

JOHN

Can't do that now.

John proceeds down the sidewalk to his truck. Pitt follows lamely behind.

PITT

Remember John, you're not agreeing to anything. We're just protecting your rights.

JOHN

I'll stop in soon's I get a chance.

PITT

How about this afternoon? Would that be convenient?

JOHN

Can't say.

John climbs into the truck.

As John pulls the truck door shut, Pitt hooks him with a loaded sounding question.

PITT

Maybe you've got another matter you want to discuss.

John rolls down the window.

JOHN

What was that?

PITT

I asked if there might be another matter you wanted to discuss. Other than the divorce, I mean.

JOHN

What other matter?

PITT

I hope I'm not stepping over the line here, John, but Moira came to see me yesterday evening. She said you might be in some kind of trouble.

John looks hard at Pitt.

JOHN

What were you talkin' to Moira for? I thought you were my lawyer?

PITT

I am your lawyer, but she appeared to be sincerely worried about you. I'm not always sure lawyers best serve their clients by strictly adhering to every rule of conduct.

John puts the key in the ignition.

PITT (CONT'D)

Let me get straight to the point. I know you've been under a lot of pressure lately and, well - I hear things.

Pitt pants breathily.

PITT (CONT'D)

I'd hate to see your whole life get ruined because of a mistake or two. (beat) And it wouldn't be just your life, John.

JOHN

What?

PITT

There's the boy to think of. Nolan--

JOHN

He ain't in this.

PITT

Of course he's in it, John. He's your son.

*

PITT (CONT'D)

I've angered you. I'm sorry John.

Pitt COUGHS weakly.

PITT (CONT'D)

Most problems aren't as big as they first seem, John.

(MORE)

PITT (CONT'D)

The thing is to deal with them before
people get backed into corners.

JOHN

What people?

Pitt exhales doggishly.

PITT

There are so many overlapping
interests in this. I suppose that's a
small town lawyer's cross to bear -
then too there's the law.

John shakes his head, at this point completely unsure about
what it is Pitt is actually talking about. He starts the
truck and revs its engine.

JOHN

Look, Pitt, just tell me that you're
doing everything you can to make sure
I don't lose Moira and Nolan.

PITT

(excited)

Of course I will. I mean I've been-
That's exactly why I'm here talking to
you!

JOHN

Good. Then keep at it.

98A INT/EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

98A *

John puts the truck in gear and pulls away, lost in thought
as he drives out of town.

*
*

99 INT/EXT. JOHN'S TRUCK - DAY

99

Speeding down the highway, John pulls up across from THE
OAKS, a run-down, L-shaped motel that sits on a hill, above
the fog.

He gives the place a brief once-over, then rolls a few
hundred yards down the highway, where he finds a place to
park his truck out of view.

He climbs out, shoves the .45 behind his back, and walks back
to the motel.

100 INT. THE OAKS, FRONT OFFICE - DAY

100

Bird-bodied, ancient SKINNY LEAK is watching the Montel Show
in a beat-up recliner behind the desk.

John turns around the register and starts leafing through it.

SKINNY

What ta hell happened your brothers?

John doesn't look up from the register.

JOHN
Never had none.

SKINNY
Your old man works to the mill.

JOHN
My old man was a farmer. And he's
dead.

SKINNY
Fer Christ sake. Who the hell am I
thinkin' you is then?

JOHN
Somebody I ain't. A guy named Cornish
staying here?

SKINNY
No hens signed into this house.
What's he look like?

JOHN
Gangly, tattooed son of a bitch.

SKINNY
Got him an alias. (beat) Guess he
don't want to be found.

John looks up at Skinny.

JOHN
What room he in?

Skinny jerks his thumb out the window behind him.

SKINNY
Two-two-niner. (beat) I'll call, tell
him you're on yer way?

John lays on the desk a hundred dollar bill.

JOHN
I'll just go on down let myself in.

Skinny picks up the hundred, warily peers at it to be sure
it's real then folds it into his shirt pocket. He slips a
key from one of the boxes on the wall and slides it to John.

101 EXT. THE OAKS, CORRIDOR - DAY

101

John walks quietly along an open cement corridor, to door
229. A 'Do Not Disturb' sign hangs from its knob.

He puts an ear to the door for several beats then after looking up and down the empty corridor takes out his .45. He quietly slips the key in the lock and turns the knob.

102 EXT/INT. THE OAKS, ROOM 229 - CONTINUOUS 102 *

Peering in from the doorway, it looks like no one is there. He enters slowly the semi-dark room, shuts the door quietly behind him.

He glances around - bed unmade, clothes, empty beer cans, crushed cigarette packs, over-flowing ashtray on the bedside table. A glass pipe. *

He walks to the bathroom, sticks his head inside, glances around. He walks to the closet, opens it, sees only a pair of boots and a copy of Hustler on the floor. *

He walks to the night table and from amongst a handful of change picks up a balled-up scrap of paper. Laying his .45 on the bed he smooths out the paper and sees scrawled on it:

J. Moon 296-4120, M. Moon 296-8160.

A black duffle bag sits next to the table. John bends down and opens it: bricks of yellow heroin fill the bag. *

He looks up, deep in thought, and around the room again. His gaze lands on a gymbag pushed under the desk on the far wall. He walks to the desk, pulls out the gymbag, searches thru it and finds clothes, a box of 9 millimeter shells and, in a side pocket, a folded sheet of paper torn from a legal pad.

He switches on the desk light, unfolds the paper on the desk and sees on it a crudely drawn map of the hollow. Circled on it in various places are 'Moon', 'Hollenbak place', 'Quarry' And scribbled at its bottom, 'Breedlove - 296-9100.'

John HEARS FOOTSTEPS outside. Freezes. Switches off the light. *

The key is in the lock. John moves to the closet. Opens the accordion doors. He fumbles the door closed from the inside. Crouches. Looks through the closet's slatted doors. Angled downward, they allow him to see only a few feet off the ground. Front door opening. Light pours into the room. John sees his .45 still resting on the bed. Gasps. *

Obadiah enters. He walks over to the bedside table and picks up his pipe. He sits down on the bed, nearing where the gun lies. He doesn't see it. He loads the pipe and lights up, taking a long pull. *

He grabs the black duffle bag from beside the table. He unzips it and checks the contents. It's all there. *

He goes over the desk and opens a bottle--pours himself a drink. *

Then... The sound of more footsteps. Silence. A knock. *

OBADIAH *

Hang on. *

Obie goes to the door. Opens it. Waylon. *

OBADIAH (CONT'D) *

Hey hey. Come on in. *

Waylon strides in past Obbie. He lights a cigarette, looks around, shakes his head. *

Obadiah starts picking up junk and clothes that litter the place. *

OBADIAH (CONT'D) *

Its a kind of a dump but we ain't gonna be here much longer. *

WAYLON *

That right? *

Obie goes to a styrofoam cooler and pulls out a beer, opens it.

OBADIAH *

Fuck no. *

OBADIAH (CONT'D) *

I got plans, and living in a motel ain't part of 'em. *

Obie offers Waylon a wet beer. *

OBADIAH (CONT'D) *

Beer? *

WAYLON *

No thanks. *

Obie takes dirty underwear and magazines off the chair and goes to the bathroom. *

OBADIAH *

Take a load off. I gotta piss. *

Waylon sits in the chair facing the closet. John shifts his weight. The tiniest sound. John freezes. Waylon looks directly at the closet. *

John's POV : through the slats. Sees Waylon's face, looking at him. He doesn't move. *

WAYLON *

(calling to Obie in the bathroom.) *

Hey Hen - show me that chicken walk. *

OBIE (O.S.)
Nah man - I'm too tired.

WAYLON
Come on Hen - do your little chicken
walk. Cheers me up.

OBIE
(back in the room. Zipping
his fly up.)
No, I only do it when I'm celebratin'.

WAYLON
Well let's pretend.

OBIE
No, man.

WAYLON
Do it or I'll slit your throat.

Silence. Waylon smiles. Obie laughs awkwardly.

OBIE
The way you do that-- half the time I
can't tell when you're jokin'.
(beat)
All right - if you're so desperate.

Obie looks at the floor a second, preparing. Suddenly, he
takes on a birdlike stance, walking with knees bent, arms
tight to his side and folded in like wings, cocking his head
and moving it sharply from one direction to another. He
clucks like a chicken. "Buck buck buck, b'Cock!"

Waylon bursts out laughing.

Obie as the chicken pretends to look for food - under the
bed, near the .45, behind doors... In the closet, John sees
him approach. Waylon laughing. Obie's head cocking back and
forth, looking right at the doors. About to peer inside.
Waylon laughing. Then - he drops the bird pose and pours
another drink.

WAYLON
(still laughing)
Hah! That's good Hen. Where the hell
you learn to do that?

OBIE
(catching his breath)
Playground. Kids callin' me Hen.

The laughter fades.

WAYLON
Boys upstate got a real kick out of
that. Could be in the circus with
that shit.

Waylon keeps looking straight at John in the closet. Obadiah sits on the edge of the bed, John's .45 only a foot behind him in the folds of the bed spread.

OBIE

Serious-- I never liked the name. But when you locked up with a bunch of red necks--

Waylon takes a long drag.

WAYLON

Why don't you come straight.

OBIE

What?

Waylon says nothing. Looks at Obie.

OBIE (CONT'D)

The fuck are you talking about.

WAYLON

(beat)

You know what we got in common? We both got a hard time telling the truth.

OBIE

I ain't lied to you once.

WAYLON

All those fuckin little lies we tell, all day long. Gets confusing. I done it. I told little lies. Lots of em. To lots a people. Even to my girl.

OBADIAH

(softly)

Look, I ain't found the box yet.

WAYLON

I handed you a suitcase full of horse. What do I got?

OBADIAH

I'm on the scent man. I know who's got it-- just ain't pried his fingers off it yet.

WAYLON

(beat)

What'd you do with her?

OBADIAH

Nothing.

WAYLON

Where's Germ?

OBADIAH

Man, I told you. I went back up there,
there weren't no trace of her.

Waylon stares at Obie. Obie, unnerved, goes over to pour
himself another drink.

Waylon stands.

WAYLON

Maybe I will have a drink.

OBIE

Hell yes.

Waylon strides slowly across the room and in an almost
balletic explosion of movements, grabs Obie's gun from his
waist, tosses it on the bed, and drives him across the room
by the neck.

In a flash, Waylon has a knife up against his eye--
millimeters from going in...

WAYLON

You fuck her?

OBIE

(choking)

Whoa whoa whoa. What? No.

WAYLON

Is she dead?

Long beat.

OBIE

I didn't kill her. John Moon did it.
I swear to you. John Moon did it.

Waylon pauses, letting go of his neck, then with quick
noiseless precision, slits Obadiah's throat.

Inside the closet: through the slats John sees blood begin to
hit the floor by the two men's feet. The sound of Obadiah's
gurgling and thrashing limbs which keep striking the closet
door until Waylon smashes him through one side of the
louvered doors.

Obadiah's body drops to the floor, his eyes now looking up at
John as the life dies out of him.

Sound of Waylon walking to the front door, opening it, leaving. Lights out as he closes the door behind him.

*

John sits in the dark with Obadiah's corpse. Silence. He exhales.

Then - THE PHONE RINGS. Tentatively, John moves out from behind the ironing board and pushes on the closet door, but Obadiah's foot prevents it from opening. He moves the foot, slithers out of the closet, stepping over blood on his way to the phone. Keeps ringing. He stands over the phone for a beat before lifting the receiver to his ear.

John tentatively picks up the telephone handset and holds it to his head.

PITT (O.S.)
Your terrorizing tactics have put me
in a very delicate situation.

John blanches.

PITT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I thought we'd agreed I'd handle John
Moon. (beat) Hello?

John pulls back the handset and looks at it as if it's diseased. He hears Pitt HANG UP. John keeps staring at the phone as he HEARS Obadiah's blood faintly dripping on the carpet.

Then he looks up, panicked. He makes a lame try on his shirt to wipe his fingerprints from the phone, hangs it up then starts for the door. Halfway to it he stops, turns to the bed, then runs to it and grabs his .45. Still sticking it in his pants he pushes the door open into -

103 EXT. THE OAKS, CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

103

FLORENCE, a fortish blonde in pink sweats and with a dead left eye, walking past the room.

Florence. GASPING, drops a Tiparillo from her mouth.

John slams the door, puts a finger to his lips and points the .45 at her. Florence looks at him in shock.

FLORENCE
I gotta go breakfast. I ain't even had
coffee yet - !

John, as shocked as her, grabs from her hand the key she's holding - 227. He points his .45 at the next room and forces her back to it and inside. He follows her in, shuts the door.

104 INT. FLORENCE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

104

From an open suitcase on the rug he picks up stockings and a pair of underpants and walks slowly at Florence. Florence MOANS and backs away from him. John wears a faraway look.

JOHN

What happened your eye?

FLORENCE

When I was a dancer - in a bar - in
Enid -

Florence inhales deeply. She's having trouble breathing.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

- Oklahoma - I'm from there -

JOHN

What sort of dancer?

FLORENCE

What? Oh shit - you're scaring me,
mister -

JOHN

I know it. Me too. (beat) With your
clothes off? That sort?

John moves closer to her. Florence's knees collide with the bed. She MOANS again.

FLORENCE

Nobody'd pay me to do it otherwise.
And this man he, with a beer bottle
and - oh, Jesus, God -

She collapses sitting onto the bed. John wads up the underpants. Florence cries hysterically. John fits the underpants into her mouth, SSSHING her. Her wig falls off from her scalp of nubby red hair.

John points at the wall.

JOHN

'Sides me you see anybody this morning
goin' in or out that room?

Florence shakes her head. John carefully replaces the wig on her scalp. He looks down at the stockings in his hand then back up at Florence. Her eyes widen in terror.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(gently)

What's your name?

Florence mumbles. John, realizing she's still gagged, removes the underpants from her mouth. She gasps.

FLORENCE

Florence!

John almost unthinking puts the underpants back in her mouth.

JOHN

Fella has something to do with
stealin' my wife and kid sits past
that wall with his throat slashed and
even if I was you or the cops,
Florence - I'd think I'd slashed it.

Florence's good eye gyrates. Her fingers dig into her
sweats. John's heart races. His legs hop up and down. He
tries to meet Florence's gaze.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's the bind we're both in,
Florence - I can't just let you go.

Florence lifts a tentative hand at her gag. John blankly
watches her. Then he takes the underpants from her mouth and
drops them on the floor.

FLORENCE

(frantically)

You want to smoke a joint with me,
Mister?

John doesn't answer, but doesn't stop her getting from her
pocket a fat joint and lighter. She fires up the joint.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

(anxiously)

I won't tell what I seen, Mister - ?

John eyes her cautiously. Then he half-shakes his head,
shrugs resignedly.

JOHN

John.

FLORENCE

I promise I won't, John.

JOHN

Cops'll learn I was here anyway.

Florence inhales deeply on the joint.

FLORENCE

What's it matter then?

JOHN

I need time before they do.

FLORENCE

To do what?

John despondently sits down on the bed next to her.

JOHN
To get back my wife and kid.

FLORENCE
From who?

John frowns dejectedly.

JOHN
I ain't sure.

Florence puts the joint between John's lips. He hits on it. They share it until it's about gone and both are a little stoned. John watches Florence exhale smoke at the ceiling.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Say you had bus fare to go anywhere,
Florence, where would it be?

FLORENCE
Home to Enid. I only come east at all
thinking to hunt up my half-sister in
Albany, then somebody there told me
she's been dead three years.

John pensively rubs a hand over his mouth.

JOHN
Would a couple C notes get you there?

Florence wets a thumb and forefinger, then blunts the roach. She looks slyly at John.

FLORENCE
Three'd be better - with food and all.

JOHN
Would ya forget what happened here?

FLORENCE
Forget what? I had runny eggs and
coffee in the diner, then checked out.

John, smiling bemusedly, nods to Florence. Florence shakily stands. She pockets the roach.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)
I'll need five minutes to shower and
change. I think I pissed myself.

CUT TO:

105 INT. THE OAKS, FRONT OFFICE - DAY 105

Skinny angles his eyes from the TV at John as John enters. Thru the doorway Florence looks almost pretty in shades and makeup standing outside the office door. John lays a folded hundred on the desk. *

JOHN
I wasn't here.

Skinny picks up the bill, peers at it, then pockets it.

SKINNY
You's one the Fitch boys, ain't ya?

106 EXT. BUS STATION - DAY 106

John's truck pulls up out front. He and Florence step out. John gets out her bag. They walk for the cracked glass doors.

107 INT. BUS STATION - DAY 107

Florence, holding a ticket, and John walk from the counter to the waiting area. They sit on a plastic bench between the bathrooms, facing a wall of wanted and missing posters. Florence fires up a Tiparillo.

FLORENCE
(peevishly)
A five hour layover in Buffalo, New York is a hardship I hadn't counted on. I ain't sure the change left from the cost of my ticket will get me from it to Enid fed and in good spirits.

JOHN
How much do you think will?

FLORENCE
Another one-fifty? Two to be safe?

John takes four fifties from a wad in his wallet. He hands them to Florence as casually as if he's distributing free leaflets. Florence exhales smoke out her nose.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)
You're a strange one. (beat) I don't believe you killed no one.

JOHN
I didn't mean to. Was an accident.

FLORENCE
Slitting a fella's throat was?

JOHN
I didn't kill that dirtbag at all.

Florence gives him a weird look. John looks back to the wall of posters. Then he leans forward, peering intently at it.

FLORENCE

You should go to the cops.

John turns back to Florence. He blinks, appearing dazed.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

About your wife and son I mean - if whatever you done was an accident.

JOHN

I - there's more to it than that.

He stands and strides directly to a poster of the dead girl. She is INGRID BANES, 5'6", 118 pounds, from Rock Gap, PA. She likes riding motorcycles and outdoor sports. The words 'IF YOU'VE SEEN THIS GIRL?' are followed by 'Call The Rock Gap County Department of Social Services at 717 492-8010.'

FLORENCE

Sad isn't it?

John wheels around. Florence is looking over his shoulder.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

So many people missing. And so many people missing them.

John gapes at her. Florence casually takes hold of his hand.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I get vibes sometimes - I'm not just talking bullshit now - like life forces - positive or negative. In your case I'm definitely sensing positive. You're going to do the right thing (beat) I know.

She lets go of his hand, blinks. Then drops her cigar and toes it out.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I gotta go to the can.

John watches her walk to the bathroom. Then he takes down the poster and puts it folded in his pocket.

108 EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

108

Standing near a bus door John and Florence start to speak at once, then both stop. Florence adjusts her wig, then boards the bus. She sits in back. John waves to her as the bus leaves. Florence, staring straight ahead, doesn't see him.

CUT TO:

109 EXT. ALLEY - DAY 109

John walks up the stairs, lugging the money sack.

110 INT. PITT'S OFFICE - DAY 110 *

John enters the empty reception area. The 'Out To Lunch' sign is on the desk. John walks to Pitt's ajar door and pushes it open.

Pitt sits at his desk in his coffee-stained, leisure suit, eating a donut. A box of them and a Jim Beam bottle sit on the desk. He doesn't act surprised to see John or the sack.

PITT

I wonder if John Moon's a donut eater?

John wordlessly walks to the desk. Pitt finds some papers on the messy desktop and hands them to him. His claw hand won't let go as John pulls at the papers. Pitt laughs.

PITT (CONT'D)

(in singsong)

I don't want her, you can have her -

John not even smiling tugs the papers from Pitt. Pitt clears his throat.

PITT (CONT'D)

Just sign them on back there, John, so
I can get them to her lawyer.

John tosses the papers on the desk. Pitt lays down his donut.

PITT (CONT'D)

There no good unsigned, John.

John drops the sack on the desk. It lands on Pitt's donut. Pitt jerks his head back and looks peevishly at it.

PITT (CONT'D)

That was my last cruller.

John can't find the words he wants. Pitt picks up and bites a fresh donut. Jelly squirts out the sides of his mouth. He catches it in a napkin. He gives John an admonishing look, then nods at the sack.

PITT (CONT'D)

I'm awfully glad you decided to nip
this thing in the bud, John.

JOHN

Huh?

PITT

Moira came to see me yesterday. I told her as your attorney I was prohibited from talking privately with her, but she insisted and you know, John, I'm not sure we lawyers always best serve our clients by strictly adhering to the rules -

Pitt pours Beam into his coffee cup. He gazes in after it. He seems to lose his train of thought. He's clearly drunk.

PITT (CONT'D)

Your father wanted me to bend the rules, John - he wasn't in a hole so deep the bank couldn't have worked with him - but I wouldn't do it, wouldn't go to bat for him, because - in those days - I didn't want to make waves -

JOHN

This ain't about how you helped steal my family's farm, Pitt.

Pitt drinks from the cup. Beam dribbles down his chin.

PITT

She asked me to talk to you. She said she'd tried and couldn't make sense of your answers about all that money you acted as if had fallen out of the sky into your lap. She was scared, John. She didn't know what terrible thing you might have done and what repercussions it might have on you, on her, and especially on Nolan.

John stares at him, his anger boiling, trying to put it all together in his head. Pitt wipes jerkily at his mouth.

PITT (CONT'D)

We're such a small town, John. (beat) An attorney with any size clientele at all can't help but find himself in these conflicting situations where one client's interests overlap with another's.

JOHN

I already know you represent the son's a bitches wanting what's in this sack, Pitt.

Pitt, easing back in his seat, appears surprised.

JOHN (CONT'D)

How'd they come by it?

PITT

I didn't ask, for the same reason I won't ask you exactly what it is or how you came by it. If, let's say, it's ill-gotten gains of which I'm made aware I'd be legally obliged to turn it over to the law. (beat) That, I think, is something all parties would like to avoid, yes?

JOHN

(disgusted)

How much they promising you, Pitt?

PITT

I don't know what you mean, John. I'm just a lawyer with too many clients I have long histories with. My memory of your father has maybe led me to become too personally involved in this matter -

JOHN

You didn't give a shit for my father - or my family!

PITT

Not when it counted, I grant you, but my guilt over ignoring his heartfelt pleas to me all came back to me when you walked in my office, John, and told me of your current plight. How could I not feel partly to blame for it, and want to do everything I could to keep you from making your situation even worse?

John leaning over the desk seizes Pitt by the shirtfront and yanks him out of his chair. Pitt blinks anxiously.

PITT (CONT'D)

So, then, John, shall I turn this sack over to my other client with an interest in it and instruct him, then, to consider the matter ended?

JOHN

What about my wife and son?

PITT

That's the whole point of my involvement, John - to see that they're in no way harmed -

John throws Pitt onto the desk atop the cruller. Pitt's whiskey bottle, glass and papers go flying.

JOHN

Call who's got them.

PITT

Got them?

JOHN

Do it now!

John with one hand pins Pitt by his throat hard to the desk.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Only don't call Obadiah Cornish again.
He ain't able to answer the phone.

Pitt's face goes pale white. John backhands him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Call Waylon.

PITT

Jaaahn!?

JOHN

Cornish's partner! Tell him you got
the money!

PITT

His, his *partner*? - Obie, poor
unloved, child, he - they - nev -

John backhands him again.

JOHN

What?

PITT

I, I don't know who you - I've never
heard of a Waylon, John - such an, an
odd name - I would remem-

*

John's face, suddenly devastated. He draws his .45, presses
its barrel between Pitt's eyes.

*

JOHN

(despairingly)

Simon's in this. Now's Obi the one
slicing people up over this blood
money!

*

Pitt, gasping, makes frantic, Joe Cocker like finger
movements at the sides of his face.

PITT

Si - and, and Obie - ? Oh, God! - I never knew or wanted to know back then the extent of either of their involvements - I can only say, John, that our dear, good friend, Simon, carries a tortured soul -

John ready in his anger and confusion to kill Pitt CLICKS off the .45's safety.

JOHN

Where's Moira and Nolan, lawyer! Give me an address or I'll splatter you all over this desk!

Pitt, totally unhinged, wags his head desperately. His piss TRICKLES onto the floor.

PITT

- 802 Oxbow Lake - weekend place - he, he's a client too - they, she didn't want you to know - you don't want to do this - !

CUT TO:

111 EXT. ALLEY, PARKING LOT - DAY 111

Ignoring the gazes of several pedestrians John tosses the money sack on the front seat and jumps in next to it.

He starts the truck and roars off, SQUEALING the tires.

112 EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY 112

John's truck flies over the top of a pass. As the road gradually descends, he looks out on a small mountain lake.

113 EXT. OXBOW LAKE ROAD - DAY 113

John's truck veers onto a dirt road lined on its passenger side by woods running a hundred odd yards down to a lake seen shimmering thru them.

John drives slowly up the road peering out the passenger window. He passes a few cars parked in pull-offs in the woods next to wooden signs marked with numbers. Thru the trees he can just make out the backs of a few cabins down by the lake.

Nailed to a tree ahead of him is a sign emblazoned '#802'. Just past the sign a Blue Olds 98 sits at the head of a narrow dirt trail running down toward the water.

John parks in the woods several yards past the Olds. He hops out - his .45 tucked in his belt - and walks into the woods.

114 EXT. LAKESIDE WOODS - DAY

114

In the darkening trees he moves stealthily toward the back of a neat secluded cabin bordering a small dirt yard. On the water past it a sunfish is tied to a floating dock.

He hears slow blues music playing.

He moves closer and sees in a chaise lounge in the yard the back of a man facing the water in a dark jersey and baseball cap. The music comes from a transistor radio next to a beer bottle on a small table left of him.

John draws his .45 and walks more cautiously ahead.

He abruptly stops walking when he sees a feminine looking hand holding a beer bottle reach out of the man's lap and long black hair spill out from a side of the chaise lounge.

In the next second a woman who had been reclining unseen to John in the man's lap lays the beer bottle she's holding on the table and turns to the man. John, seventy-five feet to the man's rear, takes cover behind a wall of bushes.

He carefully peers out thru the bushes and sees facing him in the man's lap, her arms around the man's neck, passionately kissing him with her eyes closed - Moira.

John feels gut shot. Every ounce of air goes out of him.

Nolan is sleeping in a stroller next to them.

Moira and the man disengage but not hurriedly so and stand up laughing. John watches with a look of utter devastation as Moira's bookish-looking boyfriend picks up and holds him gently.

CUT TO: *

115 EXT. RIVER ROAD - DUSK

115

John slowly drives a back-country road, tracking a river. He unfolds Ingrid Banes's poster onto the steering wheel. He stares at her and at the words IF YOU'VE SEEN THIS GIRL.

He drops the poster and swerves off the road into an overgrown pasture. He parks near the river, hyperventilating.

He gets out and nearly collapses from frayed nerves, exhaustion and heartbreak. He sits against an abandoned bridge stanchion, staring into the blood-red setting sun past the river.

FLASHBACK:

116 EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY 116

John walks along a riverbank holding Moira. *

John gently pulls her toward him and kisses her. Moira smiles, radiant with love, at him. *

FADE TO:

117 EXT. RIVER BANK - DUSK 117

The river flows under a starlit sky. A cacophony of PEEPS, CROAKS, BUZZES. John stands and with a grimly determined look walks from the stanchion to his truck. He drives off, back up through the field.

118 EXT. BACK COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT 118

John pulls off the road and takes his .45 from the glove box. He shoves it in his belt and gets out.

He starts walking up a desolate dirt drive. He hears a RUSTLING sound. He wheels toward it and sees four sets of eyes. A second later they're gone. Raccoons.

119 EXT. SIMON'S CABIN - NIGHT 119

John stealthily approaches a dark cabin. Its window sashes rustle in the breeze. CLUCKS and GROANS come from a small, ramshackle barn near the house.

A low-hanging tree's branches SQUEAKILY caress the roof of Simon's Cadillac parked catercorner to the back door. Its driver door is open, its dome light on, keys in the ignition. John sees on its seats beer cans, fast food containers, hand tools, and - a half-unsheathed, shiny-bladed hunting knife.

Suddenly something bursts out of the cabin door. It charges invisibly through the high grass of the dark yard and mere feet before it will slam into John veers off, piggishly SQUEALING, into the high grass right of him.

John, heart pounding, looks back to the cabin and sees a second huge pig burst out through the wide-open door. John takes out his .45. He stalks the door as two goats emerge and disappear like bearded specters into the mist left of it.

120 INT. SIMON'S CABIN, KITCHEN - NIGHT 120

He steps into the kitchen. He hears BREATHING.

He haltingly begins walking. Suddenly he starts to slide. His feet go from under him and he careens on his backside across the floor, into a large, dark shape that MOOS.

He sits up and looks at the large cow a couple of feet from him. The animal shifts, bringing a door open and a light on to show a steer chained by its neck to the door handle of a refrigerator riddled with shotgun blasts. More blasts riddle the stove and cabinets. John is covered in the manure and molasses coating the floor.

*
*

Taped to the steer's flank is a snapshot. John removes it. The molasses-smeared photo is of a child sitting on a couch between a small man and a larger woman. Befuddled, John tapes the picture back to the cow. He picks up his .45.

121 INT. SIMON'S CABIN, HALLWAY

121

John tiptoes over CREAKING floorboards, holding his .45 at the ready, toward a lighted room at the hallway's end.

He's a step from the room when out of it rushes, in a mish-mash of clucks and feathers, a large chicken. John GASPS and flattens himself on the wall. The bird prances up the hall.

122 INT. SIMON'S CABIN, LIVINGROOM

122

John peers around the doorjamb, into the room.

The back of a human head rests in a recliner facing a muted TV playing an off-air signal.

Two more chickens peck at corn kernels on the floor. Open beer cans and gin bottles are scattered about.

John tiptoes at the chair. A MOAN comes from it. The head lolls. John rushes forward and puts the .45's barrel to it. The head rolls back the other way. John pushes on the recliner's back, dumping its occupant to the floor.

Unshaven and in the same clothes he left John's trailer in two nights earlier, Simon scrambles groggily to his knees.

SIMON

Jesus, Johnno! What the hell? Put the gun away! The bad guy's gone.

He lashes out at a chicken. It rises up, SQUAWKING.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Bastard moved 'bout my whole stock in here. (beat) If this ain't love making a damn monster out of a man-- reckon my homeowner's'll cover it?

*

John keeps the .45 on Simon. Simon pushes himself to his feet, dizzily shakes his head.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Son of a *bitch*, Johnno! You're holding a *gun* on me!

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

And that's after you broke in my house. Think I'll go back to sleep. Try wakin' up a whole 'nother way.

JOHN

I don't think you got any idea who you're in bed with.

SIMON

Already heard that one from Gans.

JOHN

You gonna wind up like the Hen.

Simon runs a hand slowly over his mouth.

SIMON

I ain't no killer.

John's gun, still on Simon. Simon backs stealthily at the TV. Then abruptly slaps it off. The room goes dark. We hear a rapid movement and see John's silhouette trying to follow it with the gun.

SIMON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Boo!

A table light comes on behind John. He wheels around. Simon, shaking his head, is aiming a shotgun at him.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Shit, Johnno, din' you learn nothin' about sound-tracking on all them huntin' trips I took you on?

John drops the .45.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Ira and Molly was s'posed to be to a fireman's dance that night.

John looks at Simon, confused.

JOHN

What are you saying?

SIMON

I'd run into Obadiah at the Pink Lily over in Raburn, this was three-four years after Ira'd shitcanned him for skewerin that cow and fired me for not showing up two mornings in a row, then wouldn't pay my back wages. Hen said he'd been holdin' Ira's safe combination all these years - all we gotta do is walk in and open it.

*
*

Simon sits down heavily on the couch, facing John. He sighs.

*

He flicks the gun barrel at a chicken pecking near his foot.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Some mess ain't it, John?

He stares at Simon, not sure who he's seeing or how scared of him he should be.

*

SIMON (CONT'D)

We hike the woods trail over from the back side the Conservancy, gettin' drunker as we go - I ain't even carrying a gun, cause to me it's a Goddamn lark-- I figure there's a safe at all, most'll be in its the coupla weeks wages Ira shorted me.

*
*
*

Simon's eyes and voice go distant. He grabs in one hand an open beer off the floor and guzzles it.

*

SIMON (CONT'D)

We walk thru the front door whistlin', and into the den and Hen takes down a wall picture hiding the safe and then can't crack it with the numbers he's got writ-- with me giving him the raspberry'cause I don't really give a shit. Finally Hen says fuck it he'll go upstairs grab some of Molly's jewels to make the trip worthwhile. (beat) Though I ain't happy with him ransacking the place, I pop a beer and turn on Jay Leno.

*
*
*

Simon stares into his empty beer can. He crushes it.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Weren't fifteen minutes Obadiah comes
back down covered in blood... totin'
Ira's World War Two bayonet and
wearing the same look he was when he
stabbed that cow dead.

*

Simon fixates on a spot in the ceiling over John's head.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Says old Ira'd straightened him out on
them numbers. I run upstairs and--

*

His voice is a tortured whisper, a doomed man's prayer.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Molly's dead-- thank God. But Ira's
got breath in him yet and oglin' me
out the one eye he's got left with a
look that'll follow me into the
ground. (beat) I mumble to him I'm
sorry for it, then take out my hunting
knife and do for him how I would a
wounded deer.

*

*

Simon tosses his rifle on the cushion next to him. John eyes
it, as dust rises from the couch. Simon rubs his temples.

SIMON (CONT'D)
'Bout made it worse learning Ira
weren't shitting all them years about
being a rich man. Hen says we'd best
split up, with him taking the cash
back through the Conservancy to his
car and me winding down thru the
hollow to where mine was at. Said
we'd meet after things cooled down,
divy it up. A week later I hear he's
been sentenced to a six-pack for a
string of burglaries over in Raburn he
was bonded out on. I guess he'd
planned all along to stash whatever we
took somewhere till he got out.

*

*

JOHN
(a pained whisper)
Goddamn it-- Ira treated you decent!

*

*

Simon eyes John meaningfully.

*

SIMON
You know what a big pile a cash does
to a poor man... don't you, Johnno.

*

*

*

JOHN
Makes him greedy.

*

*

SIMON

Shit, John. Thought a' that money got
like a cancer in my gut. I couldn't
cut it out and couldn't live with it.
(beat) I sure as hell weren't gon'
shoot my one true friend in the world
for it.

JOHN

That's a comfort.

SIMON

I was up to The Oaks couple days ago--
where big Colette Gans is hiding out
from her old man--and son of a bitch
if I don't run smack dab into Hen-shit-
for-brains, still with his convict's
tan and hellish surprised to see my
face. Gives me the song and dance
'bout lookin' me up soon's he had his
hands on the cash, only he swears
somebody'd snatched it after it got
dug up from where he'd buried it.

JOHN

Said it was me took it.

SIMON

Said he had a hunch. Then I drive up
there, find you loaded for bear.

JOHN

Figured I'd be too busy with tattooed
lions to see you'd searched the place?

Simon distractedly picks up the shotgun.

SIMON

I kep' goin' over what the Hen might
do to you or your'n for it though and
made up my mind finally I'd put a sick
chicken out its misery.

JOHN

Your partner beat you to it.

Simon looks up at him, surprised.

SIMON

Hen's dead?

John eyes him steadily and nods.

*

SIMON (CONT'D)
You done it?

*

JOHN
(shaking his head)
Your partner done it. (beat) The
stocky, dark-haired one.

*

*

*

SIMON
I don't know who you're talking bout.

John rubs his chin, perplexed.

JOHN
Hen didn't mention a girl? Or nothing
about a partner?

*

*

Simon tosses the gun at John. John catches it in both hands.

SIMON
Want to tell me what you been up to
last coupla days, Johnno?

John absently leans the gun on the wall next to him.

JOHN
Found some money, that's all.

SIMON
What you gon' do with it?

JOHN
Ain't figured it out yet.

SIMON
I'd burn it's what. (beat) 'Less you
want to end up in that fiery place old
Ira already sentenced me and Obie to.
Stick a match to her, John.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I guess Moira ain't come back yet?

John looks off dejectedly, not wanting to think about it. *

Simon waves a hand around the room.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You gotta admire the man though can
still feel the monster a love this
bad? *

JOHN *

The husband? *

SIMON

Left his calling card on my steer's
ass - didn't ya see it? Son of a
bitch din' know how bad the monster
had him till big Colette walked out on
him. *

JOHN

I'd say you had it comin.
(MORE) *

Simon grins. He puts his feet up on the couch, lays back.

SIMON
I do feel kinda bad 'bout it truth be
told, Johnno.

*
*

John picks up his .45. He stands, shoving it in his belt.

Simon nods at the 12 gauge.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Guess you ain't gonna do me that favor
I asked of ya, Johnno?

JOHN
Not tonight. (beat) Not ever.

SIMON
Bring it over here then - and that
pint of Beefeater's - put 'em down
next the couch 'fore ya leave.

John hesitates, then carries the gun and gin over and lays
them on the floor near Simon's head.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Your old man'd be proud of ya, Johnno,
for carryin' on how you have with him
leavin' you squat to do it on. (beat)
And I am for you growing up to be the
good man you are after spending's much
time around me's you done.

Simon switches off the light.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Goodnight, Johnno.

John's silhouette moves across the room, then down the
corridor...

123 EXT. SIMON'S CABIN - NIGHT

123

John walks away from us and the cabin.

FADE TO:

124 INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - DAY 124

John, filthy still, wakes up at the wheel, flinching against the bright sun. The truck's parked behind a large boulder in an oak glade. The money sack is on the seat, his .308 in the cab gun rack.

125 EXT. RIDGE - DAY 125

John stumbles out of the truck.

He climbs up the boulder. He intently gazes several hundred yards down the hillside onto his trailer.

He gets his .45 from the truck glove box, puts it in his belt, then plunges into the woods down the ridge.

126 EXT. TRAILER, YARD - DAY 126

John runs in a half-crouch out of the woods, at the trailer. At the sound of rapid HOOFBEATS he tensely freezes and reaches toward the .45 in his belt.

Into the yard gallops Abbie Nobie on Diablo.

ABBIE

John Moon.

John yanks his shirttail over the .45 and waves to Abbie, her budding beauty showed off in jeans, riding boots, a sleeveless jersey. She reins in Diablo, smiling playfully.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

Brought you a some homemade bread and fixings for a few meals. I'm going to make you the first one myself.

JOHN

What?

ABBIE

Italian Hoagies. My speciality.

She dismounts, takes a saddlebag from the girth.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

Momma's worried - and me too, John - you're up here fading away to nothing.

One eye warily on the trailer, John takes the bag from her.

JOHN

I'm all right.

ABBIE

You don't look exactly all right.

Abbie wrinkles her nose.

ABBIE (CONT'D)
You don't smell exactly that way
either.

JOHN
Was chopping wood up the hill. (beat)
Bushwacked down to get some clean
plugs for my truck after it died.

ABBIE
Go jump in the shower, John Moon,
while I make you a nice lunch.

Abbie confidently walks by John toward the trailer, leaving
Diablo grazing on the lawn.

127 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM/KITCHEN - DAY 127

John combs his hair in the bureau mirror after his shower,
Abbie's off camera WHISTLING audible. *

He stares at his reflection, befuddled, as he hears a door
OPEN and the WHISTLING fade out. He runs out to the kitchen.

He looks, panicked, from the empty kitchen to the open cellar
stairway door. He rushes down the stairs.

128 INT. TRAILER, STOREROOM - DAY 128 *

Abbie wheels, startled, away from the freezer door she's
tugging at. She holds a plastic bag of sausage.

ABBIE
This needs to be froze.

John snatches the bag from her.

JOHN
I'll do it.

Abbie gives him a peeved look. John is chagrined.

JOHN (CONT'D)
It's a mess in there.

Startled, John drops the bag. They squat at once to pick it
up, their hands colliding.

ABBIE
(concerned)
Your hands are shaking, John Moon.

JOHN
I ain't been myself lately.

Abbie tenderly touches his shoulder, gives him a compassionate look. John meets her eyes. For a moment it looks as if he'll open up to her and tell her everything.

A soft BANGING outside. John looks warily toward it. Abbie frowns, a little disappointed the moment's been broken.

ABBIE

The wind, John. Against the shutters.

John smiles to her, then abruptly stands holding the bag. He gives Abbie a hand up, watches her walk upstairs. Then he opens the freezer a crack, slides the sausage into it, and slams it shut.

129

EXT. TRAILER, DECK - DAY

129

John and Abbie eat hoagies in lawn chairs facing the valley.

ABBIE

Was on the news this morning about a murder in town yesterday - up at the Oaks. Police aren't saying who, only that it's a fella with a long record and roots in the area.

JOHN

(suspiciously)

They looking for anybody for it?

ABBIE

A woman who was staying in the room two down from the dead guy - and a man a maid saw with her not long before the body was discovered. They think maybe they're with the victim's truck because it can't be found and neither can they.

NEIGHING loudly, Diablo trots around the trailer's corner, skittishly tossing his head.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

(surprised)

What's troubling you, Diablo? There's plenty of grass out there. Go on!

She smiles to John.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

Jealous, must be.

Diablo obediently walks back around front. John warily watches him go.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

That black Blazer went up toward Hollenbachs' again this morning.

John intently moves his eyes back to Abbie.

JOHN
When did it?

ABBIE
About an hour before you got home.

Abbie swigs from her root beer, smiles coyly to John.

ABBIE (CONT'D)
I sleep light as a deer, John Moon. A
car doesn't go by I don't hear. (beat)
Hope you used protection with whoever
she was kept you out so late.

JOHN
Weren't nobody but me kept me out.

Abbie laughs uninhibitedly. Suddenly John cocks an ear at the trailer. He looks at Abbie, who seems not to have heard whatever he heard or thinks he heard.

ABBIE
Handsome - gentle, but strong, with a
good sense of humor?

John scowls, embarrassed. Abbie playfully flicks at her hair.

ABBIE (CONT'D)
All you need to be a woman's perfect
catch, John Moon, is a secure job.

We hear low-volume MUSIC. John abruptly stands. Abbie gives him a look at once curious and tense.

ABBIE (CONT'D)
You leave a radio on inside, John?

John nervously flicks his eyes at his open bedroom window forty feet left of the deck.

JOHN
Must have. I'll go turn it off.
(beat) You go on home.

ABBIE
What? Why?

JOHN
Your folks'll be wondering.

ABBIE
My folks aren't home, John Moon. No
one is. And I'm not done eating!

JOHN
Please, Abbie.

ABBIE

I'm not going, John - till I know if
Willie Nelson is in your bedroom.

JOHN

(firmly)

Don't move then. I'll be right back.

John starts for the kitchen door. Abbie laughs too loudly.

ABBIE

Give a holler if Willie's in there,
John - I want his autograph!

130 EXT. TRAILER, YARD - DAY

130

We HEAR something get knocked over from the other side of the trailer. His .45 in one hand , John carefully makes his way around to the back of the trailer. Nothing. *

Then he HEARS a SCREAM and shortly after a screen door open and close.

He moves quickly back to where he left Abbie... She's gone.

CUT TO:

131 INT. TRAILER, BEDROOM - DAY

131

John walks in through the bedroom door in the back. His radio plays on the bureau. His makes his way down the hall...

132 INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

132

John eases open the door separating his bedroom from the kitchen. Waylon sits at the kitchen table. Abbie is curled up in Waylon's lap with her head lying lifeless on his shoulder. She has a bloody scrape on the side of her face. Waylon has one hand around her waist and the other covering a gun which rests on the table.

John stands still. They look at each other for a moment.

JOHN

She breathing?

Waylon gives the smallest nod.

JOHN(CONT'D)

I got your money.

WAYLON

I know you do. Slide the Colt over
here.

John hesitates and then does as told.

*
*

*

JOHN

Want me to go and get it?

WAYLON

Yes I do.

John doesn't move. Not quite sure what to do.

JOHN

Now?

WAYLON

You shot somebody.

JOHN

Was an accident. *

WAYLON

Which? Stealing my money or shootin my girl? (beat) Where is she? *

JOHN

I buried her-- up in the woods. I can take you. *

Waylon looks at him coldly, then grins. *

WAYLON

I can't stop wonderin... Did you fuck her? *

JOHN

Did I what? *

WAYLON

Did you fuck her? Before you shot her-- or maybe after? *

JOHN

No. *

John stares coldly. Waylon's eyes narrow.

WAYLON

Put your hand on the table, fingers apart.

JOHN

Ain't we gonna go get the money?

WAYLON

You're gonna go get the money. She and I are gonna wait here for a few minutes.

JOHN

It'll take more than that.

WAYLON

Where is it?

JOHN

Halfway up the hill. Under a rock.

WAYLON

You got ten minutes. Now go on and put
your right hand down, right here.

*

JOHN

Why? What you gonna do to it?
You don't need to do nothing to my
hand. I'm going to go get it. I
promise.

WAYLON

Put it down.

Waylon puts his hand over Abbie's mouth, and slowly tightens
his grip.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Or don't. I don't mind.

JOHN

Stop it.

John slowly puts his hand down on the kitchen table. Waylon
eases his hand off her mouth and caresses her hair. He puts
the gun to her temple.

WAYLON

Doing what you done probably got you
pretty gnarled up inside, huh? These
last few days I imagine you've been
looking pretty hard in the mirror,
sweating up your bed sheets, wondering
if there's a God-- that kind of thing.
I don't let up.

JOHN

You don't know me.

WAYLON

It's ok. It's natural-- to feel bad if
you killed someone. Whether you mean
to or not. Especially a beautiful
little girl. Shooting her chest right
open with a deer slug. No going back
once you do a thing like that. (beat)
You know why?... Its cos there's bad
in you. You're a bad man John.
(smiles) It's ok. We all got bad in
us. We all got good in us too. But now
you've done that, you've tipped the
scale. And you start thinking of all
the little ways you caused people pain
and all those little black things
you're capable of doing but haven't
even done yet.

JOHN

I'm not like you.

WAYLON

That's all right -- we all got some
bad in us.

He strokes Abbie's hair.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Even this one here.

He removes a large bowie knife from a sheath attached to his
side. John, sweating, closes his eyes.

JOHN

(whispering)

Please...

We stay on his face, holding his breath against a scream as
Waylon severs his thumb and forefinger from his hand which
takes some time. Waylon wipes his knife on the couch. John
immediately covers his hand. Blood pouring from it. He
stumbles to the kitchen counter and wraps his wraps his hand.
He nearly faints from the pain.

*
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*
*

WAYLON

I don't think you'd get clear of that
mountain without bleeding to death.
(beat) Go get it.

133 EXT. TRAILER, BACKYARD - DAY 133

John, holding his throbbing hand tight to his belly, moves
quickly into the woods.

134 EXT. RIDGE - DAY 134

Panting and sweat-drenched John slogs up a densely foliated
slope. He starts at a grouse breaking cover, then runs on.

Grabbing with his good hand at saplings and vines he
scrabbles up a sheer, leaf-slick berm. He stumbles and
catches himself with his hurt hand, grunting in pain.

He claws frantically thru a thorny thicket, to the moss-slick
upper face of the boulder hiding his truck. He scrambles on
three limbs up the slippery face.

From his knees atop the boulder he gazes down through the
trees at two tiny intertwined figures on the deck.

ABBIE (O.S.)

(her voice cracking)

John! He wants you to holler at him!

John cups his left hand around his mouth.

JOHN

I'm here! I'm at the truck!

ABBIE

You got the money?

JOHN

Gotta dig it out first! Take me a few minutes!

From JOHN'S POV the two figures stand as one, then the larger one kneels and does something with the small one's legs.

John's face. Past his fear, exhaustion, and physical pain he's enraged.

*

ABBIE

Five minutes, John!

JOHN

I'm comin's fast I can!

John plummets on his butt down the boulder's face, leaping outward halfway down. He lands standing in the glade, then pitches off-balance into a thicket, scaring up two possum.

He stumbles, gasping, to the truck, crawls into it, and takes down his .308 and from a carton in the glove box four shells. He fumblingly loads them into the clip and the clip into the gun.

He runs back through the glade, the gun slung by its strap over his shoulder. Waylon's voice floats up the ridge.

ABBIE (O.S.)

Three minutes!!

Clambering frenziedly back up the boulder John slips and bangs his hand, cursing. The gun comes off his shoulder. He barely saves it from plunging down the rock into the briars.

Reaching the top he's feverish and out of breath. His bandaged stubs are grotesquely swollen and dripping blood.

He lies down on the rock. Thru the tops of two trees he has a narrow view of the deck. He puts the gun to his right shoulder, hoping to use one of his three remaining fingers to fire it with but they're all too inflamed to work the trigger. He tries using his left hand but the angle's too cumbersome.

WAYLON (O.S.)

Talk to me, John!

John moves the gun to his left shoulder and peers with his left eye thru the scope. The deck jumps in and out of his sites as he can't steady the gun on his trembling right hand.

He lays it down and frantically searches around him until he finds a small branch. He hastily snaps it into a six-inch long Y-shape and inserts its stem into a small crack in front of him.

WAYLON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Talk to me!

John rests the .308's barrel in the Y. He returns the butt to his shoulder and sites on the deck again.

134A SCOPE POV 134A

He sees both figures clearly now. They seem remarkably close.

Abbie's body shields Waylon below the neck. His knife-blade presses to her throat.

Suddenly Abbie's legs kick back at him. The knife blade flicks.

134B EXT. RIDGE - CONTINUOUS 134B

John's face. He knows he'll have only one shot, that he could as easily kill Abbie as Waylon and that if he misses them both Waylon will surely kill Abbie right afterwards. He wipes moisture from his eye.

134C SCOPE POV 134C

Only the upper half of Waylon's face shows above Abbie's head. Her eyes are shut, her gag pulsating. John lays the crosshairs on Waylon's brow. *

WAYLON
You're two minutes past the deadline!
Time's up!!

134D EXT. RIDGE - CONTINUOUS 134D

Suddenly John's hands begin to shake. He shuts his eyes.

JOHN
Please, God.

He takes a deep breath, lets it out slow. He opens his eyes.

134E SCOPE POV 134E

Waylon's and Ingrid Banes's faces confront him. Ingrid's eyes open and she is Abbie again. John raises the crosshairs to the small piece of Waylon's bobbing head showing above hers. He squeezes the trigger.

The two bodies tumble backward onto the deck.

134F EXT. RIDGE - CONTINUOUS 134F

John struggles to his feet, he looks through the scope to see if Abbie is okay but it's unclear. *

JOHN

Abbie!

He runs off to the pickup, fumbling to get the keys out and start it. *

We FOLLOW John as he jerks the truck into gear and peels out down the hill...

The truck SHUDDERS through the low brush until his skids out into the yard...

135 EXT. TRAILER, YARD - CONTINUOUS 135

JOHN

Abbie.

John runs to Abbie who is in a fetal position, turned away from Waylon.

John puts his hand on Abbie's head gently.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Are you hurt?

Still in shock, spattered in blood, Abbie shakes her head. John pulls Abbie close to him, forcing her to sit up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's okay. Everything's gonna be okay.

Abbie grabs John tightly around his waist.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Go home and wait for me up there.
Don't call the police yet. Can you do
that for me?

*
*

CUT TO:

136 EXT. OLD GRAVEL PIT - DAY 136

A pair of boots CRUNCH across a wasteland of crushed stone.

John is a ghostly figure walking across this patch of lifeless earth, the .308 slung over his right shoulder, the money sack over his left.

137 EXT. FOREST - DAY 137

John walks through a dense glade. He is febrile and in pain. He stops and leans against a giant pine tree, sliding down it's trunk into a sitting position.

The forest is quiet and serene. John looks at his hand, the bandage oozing with blood.

John looks out into the forest, standing there watching him is Ingrid.

He squeezes his eyes shut, then opens them. Nothing.

John eyelids begin to fade and then close...

FADE TO BLACK.

139 EXT. RIDGE - LATE AFTERNOON 139 *

John, feverish, glassy eyed, emerges out of the woods into a clearing atop the ridge.

He eyes through the .308's SCOPE TO HIS TRAILER.

John slings the .308 over his shoulder, starts walking down the ridge.

CUT TO:

140 EXT. TRAILER, DECK - LATE AFTERNOON 140 *

Waylon's body lies in the same spot. John enters the trailer through the kitchen door. *

141 INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON 141 *

John starts, seeing the storeroom stairway light on. Laying his .308 on the table he hurries, panicked, down the stairs. *

142 INT. TRAILER, STOREROOM - CONTINUOUS 142 *

He runs to the freezer and opens it.

John pushes away more packages to reveal a hand, an arm, then, the dead girl's face.

John extracts her and sits her on the floor. She's frozen solid.

John takes a toboggan down from the wall and wrestles the dead girl onto it. He grabs a rope and starts securing her to the sled.

JOHN

Sumbitch weren't even gon take you to Hawaii. That's who you died for...

143 INT. TRAILER, STOREROOM - LATER

143 *

John arduously tugs the sled up the final few storeroom stairs and out to the side of the trailer. Panting heavily he drops the sled's lead rope and sits at the table gazing in a feverish funk down at the dead girl. He looks like death warmed over.

JOHN

Slim's it was I reckon you figured that no good, lying son of a bitch as your best chance at a good life.

John crouches next to her. He runs a hand sadly over her hair. His eyes well up.

He grabs the loop at the sled's front and drags it toward the back door.

144 EXT. RIDGE - DUSK

144 *

John pulls the sled with relative ease over the grassy field below the woods, his stump swinging useless at his side.

He arduously drags the cadaver, swaying as it rapidly melts in the humid air, up a path thru the trees. Hundreds of crows fill the woods with a deafening CACOPHONY.

Ascending a sheer incline, he falls every few yards to his knees. Finally, he loops the sled's lead rope around him and, with his three good limbs, scratches and crawls his way up.

GASPING, John reaches the rock hiding the money. He retrieves it and tucks it, next to a shovel we now see, between the dead girl's legs. He folds her torso forward again, over the money, and re-ties the rope around her.

145 EXT. PINE FOREST - DUSK

145 *

John drags the sled thru the pines with the uneasy feeling the birds are following him.

He glances at the thistle patch, then warily up at the birds darkening the air over it. He frowns ruefully back at Ingrid, then trudges on.

146

EXT. PINE GLADE - DUSK

146

*

He stops next to a five foot deep swale.

JOHN

You'll be okay here.

John looks up at the trees, filled with black birds SQUAWKING down at him. He swipes at his brow. His face is blanched, boiling with sweat. He unties and sits Ingrid up.

John looks back to Ingrid and she's alive, beautiful - and smiling up at him.

John closes his eyes then opens them. Ingrid is dead again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry for what I done, Ingrid.
I'd give my life for that second back--
but the world don't work that way.

John carries the shovel down into the swale. He thrusts it one-handed into the soft soil, steps hard on it and starts digging. Using his injured limb's forearm for ballast he shakily lifts each loaded spade and dumps it next to the hole. The work is slow and painful.

The deeper he digs the harder it is to lift out the dirt and he spills more. The birds noise is incessant.

A crow perches on the cadaver, unseen to John, working waist-deep in the grave, his head two feet below the forest floor. He can see only the upper portions of the surrounding trees.

Suddenly a RUSTLING in the woods mutes the birds. CLOSE ON John's face, dirt-streaked, lips parched, feverish eyes warily scanning the tree tops. The birds start in again. John resumes digging.

John with an agonized cry drops the shovel and flops exhausted, pain-wracked, near-delirious with fever, against a side of the hole he's up to his armpits in.

He tries to climb out of the grave and can't. His left arm crumples, his right arm useless. He collapses.

He struggles back to his feet and extends the shovel blade out at the looped sled rope, dangling into the swale. He pulls himself as far as he can up the wall, grips it with his knees and, leaning on his right elbow, inches the blade ahead. Finally, he works it into the loop. He slowly pulls the rope taut, then begins easing the sled down into the swale. Suddenly his right arm gives out and he tumbles backward, still holding the shovel. The sled plummets down the steep embankment and into the grave onto him.

The crows RAUCOUSLY take flight.

CLOSE ON John's face, eyes open, unmoving.

PULL BACK to see him pinned at the chest under the sled's bow. Ingrid lays against him. Her eyes stare into his eyes. Scattered around them are bundles of cash and loose bills.

John's eyes flutter, indicating he is alive, but barely.

CUT TO:

147 EXT/INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT - DAY

147 *

Moira climbs the stairs to her apartment. She is loaded down with a sleeping Nolan, a shoulder bag stuffed with his necessities and play things, her own overnight bag and her purse.

A few steps from the third floor landing she sees the screen door is propped halfway open by an object between it and the main door. Looking a little worried she finishes the climb.

At the landing she puts down her bag and pulls open the screen door to see on the floor between the two doors the hobby horse John has fixed up.

Moira looks at it with a rueful smile then gets her key from her purse, opens the door and carries Nolan and her bags inside.

After putting the bags down on the livingroom floor she gently lays Nolan on the couch and returns to the door for the hobby horse. Picking it up she notices an envelope taped to its side. As she carries it into the livingroom Nolan is just coming awake. Moira places the horse on the floor, removes the envelope and sits down with it.

Nolan's eyes widen seeing the horse thru his fingers. He gets off the couch and toddles excitedly to it as Moira takes from the envelope a black-and-white photograph. She looks down at a dated picture of a little boy nearly the spit-image of Nolan gleefully rocking on the horse. She turns over the picture and scrawled on its back in smudged hand-writing is:

Our big boy John, at 3, riding away on the horse
his Daddy made for him!

Moira looks up with tears in her eyes at Nolan now holding onto the hobby with a wide smile on his face.

CUT TO:

148 EXT. PINE GLADE - DUSK

148

From the bottom of the grave John stares up past the treetops at a beautiful pink sky just after sunset. Only the occasional blinking of his eyes tells us he is alive. The woods are peaceful, still. We hear only birds singing in the trees and then - the faint sound of FOOTFALLS approaching the grave.

After waiting expectantly to see who it might be, at the edge of the grave appears - a large doe. Gently sniffing the air with her wet nose, she stares down at John with her watery black, peaceful eyes.

John's eyes move up at her and his lips slowly come together in a fateful near-smile. Far in the distance we HEAR the sounds of sirens growing louder. Then, as the doe move gracefully off into the woods, John's eyes close.

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The End