

A SINGLE SHOT

DIRECTED BY DAVID JACOBSON

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HanWay
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A SINGLE SHOT

Out hunting deer in the woods, poacher John Moon makes a fatal mistake that leaves him with a guilty conscience and a suitcase full of blood money.

When a band of vengeful criminals come looking for their money, it's John's turn to be hunted. With no one to trust and nowhere to hide, John enters into the fight of his life to protect his family.

This character-driven thriller is a stunning showcase for break out star Michael Fassbender. Director David Jacobson (*Down In The Valley, Dahmer*) surrounds him with a prestigious cast including William H Macy, Thomas Hayden Church and Vera Farmiga.

A SINGLE SHOT



MICHAEL FASSBENDER
as JOHN MOON

CREDITS INCLUDE:
JONAH HEX
INGLORIOUS BASTERDS
FISH TANK
HUNGER
300



VERA FARMIGA
as MOIRA MOON

CREDITS INCLUDE:
UP IN THE AIR
ORPHAN
THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PIJAMAS
THE DEPARTED



WILLIAM H. MACY
as DAGGARD PITT

CREDITS INCLUDE:
WILD HOGS
SAHARA
MAGNOLIA
BOOGIE NIGHTS
FARGO - Academy Award Nominee® Best Actor in a Supporting Role



THOMAS HADEN CHURCH
as WAYLON

CREDITS INCLUDE:
ALL ABOUT STEVET
IMAGINE THAT
CHARLOTTE'S WEB
SPIDERMAN 3
SIDEWAYS - Academy Award Nominee® Best Actor in a Supporting Role

A SINGLE SHOT

by
Matthew F. Jones

Based on the Novel by
Matthew F. Jones

Unanimous Pictures

This Draft
August 31, 2009

EXT. TRAILER/BACKYARD - PRE-DAWN

Dark, ominous shapes are slowly revealed as trees standing behind an unlit house trailer. A bird chirps; two; a dog bark; a distant cow moo...

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

First light thru a screened window lands on the back of shirtless JOHN MOON, 32, tugging on work boots from the bed's edge.

ANGLE on John's back as he stands, pulls on a T-shirt, walks to a gun rack and takes down a shotgun and three 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 foster Bane's drinkin and goin off and ghost-lady acting like nothing's wrong as me bein afraid I'd end up like them...

NB: This paragraph of voiceover and those that follow over next several pages, will be more continuously integrated with the visual sequence.

EXT. CATSKILL MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAWN

LONG SHOT. Majestic, wooded mountains rolling to the horizon appear untouched by man, then - twin pinpricks of light are seen winding down a mountainside.

EXT. TRAILER/DECK - DAWN

Ruggedly handsome, with a spare build, John stands at the rail intently watching the headlights drawing nearer. A pond, garden, woodshed, surround his neat trailer, built onto a 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 farm on the Hollow Road below him, then disappear down the Hollow.

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

CECIL NOBIE (O.S.)
 (A far-off chant)
 Cow bossie! Cow bossie!

EXT. TRAILER/YARD

John walks away from us into the trees 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,
 that you'd have got to know Waylon. I
 know his bein older is freaky, but I'm
 over that. He's just a person like anyone
 else, and good one. He treats me good.
 Makes me feel special. First guy who ever
 has...

EXT. RIDGE - DAWN

John hikes deftly up the thickly foliated ridge, the air already hot and humid.

EXT. TOP OF RIDGE - DAWN

John stops and looks warily toward a hawk circling over the hollow's top. He studies the ground, then resumes walking.

EXT. CONSERVANCY BORDER - DAWN

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 - but soon as he gets back
 tonight we're headin all the way down to
 Mexico - not the scungy part, but to one
 of those beaches down towards the bottom.
 Remember we used to talk about goin
 there? Now, I'm goin. Hard to believe...

EXT. PINE FOREST - EARLY MORNING

The deathly quiet is interrupted only by John's CRUNCHING footfalls. 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's face, alert, fully engaged...

GIRL'S VOICE

...I'm not sure how it's going to end up, Tools, and sometimes I get scared, but it's like Waylon says, if you don't face your fears, then they'll end up scarin' you to death. He said that's just what happened to my foster parents, or the "livin' dead" as he calls them...

Suddenly a branch SNAPS, then a sound like RUSHING WATER. John spins toward the sound, shoulders the shotgun, and aims at a bouncing tree limb.

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

The buck SNORTS. The antlers dip below the bush, then rise up again. As he re-cocks the shotgun the deer bounds out of the thistles far side 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.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

He follows blood drops and snapped branches down a bramble-infested slope.

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.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAY

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

EXT. DRY CREEK BED - DAY

John bursts out of a snarl of branches into a dry 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.

EXT. GONE TO SEED PASTURE - DAY

John catches his breath next to a tree streaked with blood. He sees at the pasture's far edge the high grass swaying.

EXT. QUARRY ROAD - DAY

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 an abandoned stone quarry. A blue jay flock flies up SQUAWKING from the quarry.

John, unnerved, exhausted, sweat-drenched, grips his gun 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.

EXT. QUARRY - DAY

He darts his eyes about at briars, pine bushes, crawling vines, slag heaps, a water hole, plastic-covered lean-to, a small cavern in the rock wall next to which leans a rusted shovel. Blood drops wet the ground near his feet.

Suddenly he hears a GRUNT and branches CRACKING. He wheels 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. A loud SNORT sounds directly behind him. Surprised, he spins around to see the enraged buck nearly on top of him.

John in two hands grabs the shotgun's barrel and swings its butt hard upward. It CRACKS the deer's snout as its antlers gore John's shoulder. The buck falls in a heap next to John.

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

John looks down with deep sadness at the buck. Its jaw is dislodged, its hindquarters a bloody mess, its eyes terror-stricken. He aims his shotgun at it, then, after glancing warily around, grips the gun like a post hole digger and ends the buck's misery with a downward blow to its skull.

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

He looks at the deer again, then uneasily over at the briars. He lets out a deep breath.

He walks slowly to the thicket and with his gun moves aside the branches but they're too thick to see through.

He walks around the thicket. He sees on the ground before him the worn bottoms of two sneakers, blue-jeans-covered legs, a slim, t-shirt-clad torso, and a dirty-blonde 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
(Anguished)
Come on!

He rolls the body over. It's a girl with her eyes wide-open, a gaping hole in the left-center of her chest.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Please, God! No!

John raises his fists to his head and closes his eyes.

He opens them.

CLOSE ON THE GIRL'S FACE, maybe sixteen, with crystal-blue eyes, a length of straw she'd been chewing on between her teeth. The blonde hair clump is a ponytail.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. QUARRY - SERIES OF ANGLES

The sun stares like a luminescent eye into the quarry. Crows blacken a dead tree's branches on the bowl's far ridge. Swallows weave rhythmically through the air.

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 hog snake slithers over the dead girl's feet.

The MONTAGE ends with a shot of the sun, an hour higher in the sky than in the first shot, shining on John sitting exactly as he was before.

WIPE TO:

EXT. QUARRY - AFTERNOON

We hear a small airplane's DRONE. John gazes up at a single engine plane passing high overhead. Seeing it seems to reawaken him to his circumstances.

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

He carries the satchel to the rock and spreads its contents on the ground: pink briefs, socks adorned with galloping horses, a 'Ride the 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 smiling and holding up three fingers of one hand with two other girls about her age. On its back is scrawled, "All for one, one for all - Man, Tools, and Germ."

Behind it is a photo of the dead girl arm-in-arm with a man twice her age, black hair, dark eyes, a tight-lipped smile.

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

He drops the wallet and walks in frustrated circles around the rock, then walks back to the dead girl. He bends over her, hesitates, then thrusts his hand into her pocket.

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

JOHN

Son of a bitch!

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

JOHN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

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.

GIRL'S VOICE

...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. Then grimly drags her toward the cavern in the far wall.

Two THUMPS and a HISS sound behind him. John drops the dead girl and wheels around. Two huge vultures perch on the deer carcass. Waving his arms and SIBILATING, John runs at them. The birds fly off.

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

Before the cavern the grass is matted down and two cigarette butts lay in it. John dubiously picks up one up and sniffs it. He looks closer at the rusted shovel leaning near the cavern. Its tip is shiny and chipped.

John drops to his knees and crawls half into the dark cavern.

JOHN (O.S.)
(Startled)
Jesus!

He backs out and straightens up, holding by its tail a four-foot timber rattler, as thick as his fist, with most of its head blown off. He looks at the dead girl.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What the hell have you all been up to?

He disgustedly tosses the snake away from the opening.

He finds a stick and wraps a piece of his torn shirt around an end of it. He glances around for something to light his flare with and his eyes fall on the lean-to. He runs to it, pulls up the plastic strip at its front, and plunges inside.

INT. LEAN-TO - DAY

On the floor lay strewn clothes, a pack of Kools, a lighter, a People, a sleeping bag from which a head protrudes. John starts. Then he sees it is a giant stuffed lion's head. This endearingly human sight hits John like a punch.

He sits down despondently on the sleeping bag, holding his head in his hands, overcome by the enormity of his act.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LEAN-TO - DAY

John's face. He's decided what he must do.

He grabs the lighter and his flare and starts to leave then 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 misshapen pillow at the bag's top. He reaches down, taps the pillow. A THUD. He grips the pillowcase by its closed end and tugs until he is holding just the case and gazing down at a dirt-stained, metal container latched with a rusted hasp.

John squats, opens the container and sees inside 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.

INT. CAVERN - DAY

John drags the dead girl into the cavern and lays her on her side. Shining the flashlight around, 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.

He puts his attention back on the girl. He folds her hands beneath her cheek and gently tucks her knees in at the waist.

He studies on her with a grieved look, then gently wrestles her and the lion into the sleeping bag and zips it up so 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 her and bows his head.

JOHN

As you seen, God, her dyin' was an accident. Maybe I shot too quick and now I gotta live with it. I ain't figured it all out yet. Even 'bout the money, which I and mine could dearly use. Anyway, here she is for You to watch over till I figure out what else to do with her. Thank you. Amen.

EXT. QUARRY - AFTERNOON

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 kneeling by the water hole, sawing with his serrated hunting knife through the gristly flesh just behind the buck's front legs.

We hear a bone SNAP.

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.

Stripped down naked, he swims with the weighted half-cadaver out into the dark water and submerges with it.

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

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

EXT. WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON

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.

INT./EXT. WOODSHED - NIGHT

John exits the woodshed in a bloodied apron carrying several wrapped deer steaks.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

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

John looking away from the lights walks on resignedly.

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

He packs the steaks in a stand-up freezer.

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

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

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

He sits in boxer shorts on the bed, staring reflectively at the framed photos that stand on the bureau. His eyes get stuck on a photo that shows him in his late-teens standing with his father on the steps of a farm house. This image seems to transport John to some far-off place.

FADE OUT:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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, aghast.

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 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.)
Moirira.

John's face. In his guilt-ridden state the answer is
incomprehensible to him.

JOHN
Moirira?

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, John. 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. He's emotionally pained thinking of his
absent wife and son.

SIMON (CONT'D)
 (quieter)
 You know what the end of the world is,
 Johnno?

John, not answering, hears music and laughter behind
 Simon.

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

John's face. He's thinking of the girl's life he ended.

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

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

JOHN
 When you worked for him?

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

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.)
 (more suspicious)
 What the fuck, Johnno - that was six
 years ago! I been knowin' you since you
 ain't had hair on your pecker, so what
 the fuck's on your mind?

John turns on the 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) Thanks, Simon, you know -
 for calling, for worrying.

SIMON (O.S.)
 (forcefully)
 See my lawyer, Daggard Pitt, tomorrow,
 Johnno.

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

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

EXT. TOWN - MORNING

In the distance a bucolic-appearing village nestled
 between lush mountains and divided by a winding river.

As we move closer we see a town less than it appeared
 from a bird's eye view, one halted in its tracks fifty
 odd years ago and economically depressed.

EXT. UNDERTAKER'S DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Shirtless in the hot 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
 You get one so hot she bit ya?

JOHN
 Ax head jumped up and jabbed me.

DEAN
 Jumped up how?

JOHN
 (vexed)
 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.

Howard waves John up to the cab. Rake in hand, John walks back to him.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

The jail give my boy Cole Junior work release starting tomorrow, John. (beat) He needs a job to go to and I can't afford three men.

Howard runs a hand over his mouth, frowning regretfully.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

We'll have this bed in by lunch time - go 'head kick off then and I'll pay ya for the full day.

John looks almost relieved. Howard leans in at him, half-whispering.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I'd shit can Levi's fat ass in a second to keep you on, John, if my two nephews support payments didn't come out his paycheck and no one else in their right minds around gon hire him.

John nods.

JOHN

I appreciate the coupla weeks you gave me, Cole.

John walks back to the bed and resumes raking. 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 she French fucked your double-D tits, Dean?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEWBERRY'S - DAY

John walks from his truck behind J.J. Newberry's 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.

INT. PITT'S RECEPTION AREA - DAY

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

How'd you know my name?

Pitt extends at him his claw-hand.

PITT

I was acquainted with your parents.

John shakes the hand clumsily.

PITT (CONT'D)

Don't remember me?

JOHN

Seen you 'round before.

Pitt seems pleased he's been noticed.

PITT

So what brings you here to my doorstep?

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.

INT. PITT'S OFFICE

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 in a chair left of the window out which the Main Street traffic light systematically changes colors. Pitt frowns ruefully.

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.

John stares blankly at Pitt. Pitt sighs reflectively.

PITT

I represented the bank when it foreclosed on and sold their farm to Cecil Nobie. I felt awful about it - we all did. 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 blond gangly man and a dark-haired stocky one with a ball cap pulled low over his eyes step out of Puffy's Diner. John stares intently at the second man, as the two head up the sidewalk, away from him.

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
shit 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 the

(MORE)

PITT (CONT'D)
trouble you've had up in the Conservancy
are you?

John, shocked, gapes at 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.

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
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.

EXT. NEWBERRY'S REAR PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

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 beneath a gun rack holding a .308 scoped rifle.

A blonde 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.

He gets out of the truck and crosses Main Street to Puffy's.

INT. PUFFY'S - AFTERNOON

Loud, smoky, busy at the lunch hour.

From the register, obese, chain-smoker Puffy nods to John and eyes him as he sits at the counter next to a toothless man eating soup. Signed celebrity photos line one wall.

Moira bursts through the swinging doors with a full food tray. She acknowledges John with a flick of her eyes.

John's spirits are raised and lowered at once. He pretends to peruse a menu as she and the other two waitresses service the tables behind him.

He presses his fingers to his aching head. He downs two more aspirin. Moira approaches him. From a quick look they exchange its clear Moira stills cares for and respects John whatever else. She asks what he'd like.

JOHN

The cheeseburger plate. Medium rare.
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
 (tenderly)
 I got some things home for the two of
 you. I'll drop them by later.

MOIRA
 (curiously)
 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 accidently 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)
 (peevd)
 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!

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

John heads down main street a couple of blocks in his truck. He rolls into a service station and parks by a phone booth off to the side.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

John drops some change into the phone. He hesitates, then dials. He nervously waits for someone to answer.

JOHN

Has someone reported a girl runoff recent?

John holds a snapshot he found with the dead girl. It shows her arm-in-arm with the man named Waylon.

JOHN (CONT'D)

One 'bout sixteen? Blonde ponytail? Blue eyes?...Her friends might call her Germ. Or maybe Man. I ain't sure. That's why I'm calling you....What? No. She ain't a friend of mine - I just said I don't know her name...I found a note, and...

John is growing agitated.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(growing agitated)

I don't know who it was written to. I'd just like to find out who she - to know her name...

John catches sight of the 2 men he saw from Pitt's office. They walk to a Black Chevy Blazer parked across the street and climb in.

He glances briefly down at the snapshot and then stares hard at the dark-haired passenger who he now sees more clearly - thick, muscular, piercing black eyes. It's definitely him. Waylon.

John looks haunted and pursued. He quickly hangs up the phone.

EXT. TRAILER/BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

John tirelessly splits pieces of a huge fallen oak into firewood, his corded muscles glistening in the hot sun. His CHOPPING ECHOES out over the valley.

TRAILER/BACKYARD - EVENING

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.

INT. TRAILER/BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. TRAILER/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

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.

INT. TRAILER/CELLAR - NIGHT

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

EXT. WOODSHED - NIGHT

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

EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's a three-story weatherbeaten building on a run down town street. John pulls up next to Moira's Escort in the dirt driveway.

EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT/LANDING - NIGHT

John makes his way up the creaky wooden stairs. A dog starts BARKING when he passes by the second floor apartment. A voice tells it to shut up, but it doesn't stop.

When he arrives at the landing to Moira's apartment, he hears a man and woman in the heat of passion. Standing at the door, he listens heartsick to their MOANS and GRUNTS and sees a light flickering deeper in the darkened apartment. He punches a fist through the door screen and bodily opens the door.

INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT KITCHEN/LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

He runs across the kitchen into the livingroom. An oil-slick, skinny, redheaded woman with a bald crotch sits naked before a TV people are fucking on. There's booze bottles everywhere. John hears a gun CLICK behind him.

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

JOHN
(utterly 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.

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.

A baby 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?

INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT/NURSERY - NIGHT

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.

NOLAN
Ma-ma!

John leans in at him, whispering.

JOHN
I didn't know you could talk, Nolan! 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)
Did I hurt you? Did someone else? Can you show me where?

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

JOHN (CONT'D)
Please stop, 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.

INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT/LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

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.

Smiling, he holds up John's bag.

OBADIAH

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!

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.

INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

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.

EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT/DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

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 a brown Taurus with Avis plates 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 tries to hide his shock at seeing him. He steadily meets his gaze.

WAYLON

I know you?

JOHN

I don't think so.

WAYLON

Then 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.

EXT. TRAILER/DECK - MORNING

The dead girl walks naked out of the fog blanketing the yard, at John sitting on the deck. Her hands are around her breasts, alluringly pushing them together.

DEAD GIRL

Do you like me this way, John? (beat) Or this way?

She smilingly drops her hands and her breasts fall away from a gaping bullet hole between them.

INT. TRAILER/BEDROOM - MORNING

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

EXT. TRAILER/DECK - MORNING

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.

INT. TRAILER/KITCHEN - MORNING

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.

EXT. NOBIE'S PASTURE - MORNING

Wiry, bandy-legged Cecil is in fishing waders. Holding
John's extended hand he wanders out and throws a lasso at
a cow stomach deep in a mud quag until he loops its
torso. Spectating cows surround them like apparitions in
the fog.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NOBIE'S PASTURE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The John Deere is backed up to the quag, the rope's free
end tied to its back. John sits 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 takes on a reflective look.

EXT. NOBIE'S BACKYARD - LATER

John and Cecil stand in the backyard, filthy from their task. The last of the fog lifts around them.

CECIL
Got ye any work, John?

JOHN
Plenty. Not much the paying kind though.

Nodding, Cecil strips off his waders. He leans in his skivvies against the porch railing, scratching himself.

CECIL
Eban's off to college come fall - got hisself some smarts from his mother I guess. Wants to do something with computers - make 'em think or something.

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, John, but he ain't never took to farming any more than that one has.

He nods toward the woods above the field where Abbie Nobie, is just emerging on horseback. He puts away his dick.

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 farming.

A vehicle is heard heading into the steep hill out front leading to the hollow's top.

CECIL (CONT'D)

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

In the field facing John, Abbie leads her horse into the barn.

CECIL (CONT'D)

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

Insulted and grateful at once, John throws his coffee dregs into the yard.

JOHN

You run this farm better'n my Dad ever did is the truth of it, Cecil. Him losing it is no fault a yours. And I thank you for the offer only -

CECIL

Ain't that a persistent sumbitch?

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

CECIL (CONT'D)

Twice in 24 hours its gone by toward Hollenbachs. (beat) 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 eyes glaze over. He shrugs.

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.

Cecil strips off his skivvies.

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 how Ira and
Molly come to such a brutal end in it.

He nods naked to the garden hose.

CECIL (CONT'D)
Want to hose off, John?

JOHN
(distracted)
I'll just go up, dive in the pond.

Cecil tosses his skivvies on the porch. John watches him
with a thoughtful look.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You remember a foster kid worked for Ira
a couple summers 'fore they was killed -
all arms and legs? I only seen him a few
times - but remember hearing Ira sent him
back the state for stabbing one of his
best milkers to death with a pitchfork.

Nodding gravely, Cecil turns on the spigot.

CECIL
In them days I bought a lot of stone from
Ira and that psycho kid - they called him
the turkey or the hen, some kinda Goddamn
fowl - and your friend, Simon Breedlove,
would help me load it.

John's face registers surprise.

JOHN
Simon and him worked for Ira at the same
time?

Cecil, nodding more, aims the spray at his feet.

CECIL
Got shitcanned by Ira around the same
time too. I know he's like a big brother
(MORE)

CECIL (CONT'D)
 to you, John, 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, with a dazed look, starts walking toward his truck.

CECIL (CONT'D)
 Maybe you'll think about it, huh, John?
 'Bout the job.

John waves without looking back.

EXT. TRAILER - AFTERNOON

As John pulls up to the trailer in his truck, Mutt gives him an energetic greeting.

JOHN
 Hey, Mutt. Look at you.

John gets out and gives Mutt a good rubbing down that ends with a slap on his side.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 (flat and clipped)
 Someone still happy ta see me.

As he straightens up, he catches sight of the black Blazer, slowly descending Hollow Road. Then the phone RINGS. John hustles into the trailer to answer it.

INT. TRAILER/KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

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

JOHN
 Hello?

MOIRA (O.S.)
 (harshly)
 I'm close to having my lawyer ask for a
 restraining order, John. From now on
 you're to stay away from the house.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Moira paces tensely from room to room in her apartment.

MOIRA

You can't just go around breaking through doors and leaving rancid meat in people's car - John?

JOHN

Yes?

The Blazer disappears below the tree line.

MOIRA

(softer)

Are you in trouble?

JOHN

What?

MOIRA

(a concerned near whisper)

Did you - John, for God's sake, where did all that money come from?

John, frowning, runs a hand over his face.

JOHN

It's for you and Nolan.

MOIRA

There's over four thousand dollars!

JOHN

I didn't trouble countin' it.

MOIRA

You didn't trouble counting it? What does that mean?

JOHN

(emotionally)

We can buy a new home if we want, Moira. Maybe our own little farm.

MOIRA

What's going on, John? Are you all right?

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

JOHN

(angrily)

That Ichabod Crane son of a bitch fucking Nolan's babysitter about had me calling social services on you.

MOIRA

Carla will never sit for Nolan again,
John, believe me. I had no idea she'd
invited that Cornish character here.

JOHN

(sternly)

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

MOIRA

(defensive)

He's Carla's friend. I only met him a few
days ago.

JOHN

What do you know about the guy came there
after him?

MOIRA

Who?

JOHN

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

MOIRA

I don't know anything about him. Only
Carla was there when I got home. (beat) I
don't know what you've done, John, but I
can't spend this...

JOHN

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

MOIRA

What have you done, John? Just tell me...

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

JOHN

Jesus...

Shocked, John drops the phone.

EXT. TRAILER/DECK - AFTERNOON

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.

EXT. TRAILER/FRONT YARD - AFTERNOON

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

JOHN
 (his voice breaking)
 Shit!

John immediately tears off towards the woods from where it seems the shot at Mutt was taken, but sees no one there.

He runs off at an angle towards the Hollow Road, but finds nothing there either. No Blazer, no nothing.

CUT TO:

John falls to his knees by Mutt's side. In anguish he picks him up, cradles him in his arms.

EXT. TRAILER/DECK - NIGHT

John sits at the kitchen table playing solitaire. The table is cluttered with empty beer cans, the remains of a frozen dinner and John's loaded .45.

Bugs swarm around the front porch light. When a big Gypsy moth bangs into the screen door John stirs. He's had six beers, but he is still jumpy.

When his phone then rings he almost jumps out of his chair. He hustles to the phone, mounted on the kitchen wall. Yet once there, he doesn't answer. He's not sure.

It rings two more times before he finally decides to pick it up.

MAN (V.O.)
 (muffled, as if speaking thru
 a cloth)
 The dog got in the way.

JOHN
 Who is this?

MAN (V.O.)
 You know, right?

JOHN
 What?

MAN (V.O.)
 How things get in the way.

JOHN

What things?

MAN (V.O.)

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. John slowly hangs the phone up. He stands there a moment, and then, his mind anxiously spinning, he walks slowly from the kitchen, past the table where he was sitting, and into the living room.

Standing in the middle of living room, he looks out past the front window into the darkness. More than anything, he just seems to be thinking, but then a pair of headlights appear on the hollow road, moving in his direction.

John runs for his .45, and just as he returns, the car swerves full speed onto his drive, its horn blaring madly. With its headlights shining directly in his eyes, John can't identify the vehicle.

It looks as though it might crash right into the trailer through the front door, but at just about the last second it angles off, revealing the dilapidated Cadillac of SIMON BREEDLOVE.

The onetime luxury vehicle rolls right up onto the lawn and lurches dead. A loud FART, raucous LAUGHTER. The doors swing open.

Simon, a big, bear-like man, tumbles out into the moonlight with Colette, a buxom redhead, and Mincy, a taut-bodied brunette, both naked.

Though Simon is black, he spent most of his youth the foster child of an old Native American couple. He took on their name and even the sketchy remains of their shattered cultural patrimony -- an odd and random-seeming collection of Indian customs and beliefs.

SIMON

Pool open, John?

John drunkenly extends the .45 skyward and FIRES it.

COLETTE

Je-suz! He's worse than you Sim-un!

MINCY

This trailer's really got a swimmin' pool?

SIMON

Um,hmm. Got a divin' board, an' a slide.

MINCY

Yer shittin' me.

SIMON

Go see for yourself. It's right on back there.

COLETTE

C'mon Mince.

The women run LAUGHING for the pond. Simon steps up to John and gives him a big bear hug.

EXT. POND'S BANK - NIGHT

John and Simon drink gin on the grassy bank. Colette and Mincy frolic in the water below them. John is distant.

SIMON

Where's that three-colored mutt a your'n, Johnno? He's usually slobbering all over me I show up.

JOHN

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

Simon raises his eyes.

SIMON

Shot! By who?

JOHN

By somebody I didn't see.

SIMON

Might somebody had a reason?

JOHN

I'd guess not.

John pours back some gin.

SIMON

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

John gives a shake of his head as he lowers the gin bottle to the grass. Simon takes it up.

JOHN
I loved that dog, Simon.

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

JOHN
Don't matter.

COLETTE (O.S.)
(yelling from pond)
Hey, Sih, get yourself in here.

SIMON
I'm comin', baby. Just let me finish
sayin' hello to John.

COLETTE
Hello? You already said that soon's we
got outta the car.

Mincy suddenly ambushes Colette from behind. Colette
shrieks as the two tumble down under the water.

JOHN
Who's your new girlfriend?

SIMON
You don't remember Colette?

John shakes his head.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Big Colette? Husband has that scrap metal
yard we hauled to three-four years ago in
Blehham. Has that half-ear.

JOHN
Don't know him either.

SIMON
You're bullshitting me.

JOHN
Nuh uh.

SIMON
You gotta be!

John breaks out in a grin, still shaking his head. Simon
grins back, shaking his.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Man, you been sittin' up here sniffin' glue?

JOHN

You're the only one I know still sniffs glue. Rest a us kicked that habit back in Jr. High.

MINCY (O.S.)

C'mon boys! We're gettin' lonely in here.

From atop Colette's shoulders Mincy gyrates the lion tattoo covering her ass.

JOHN

And her? Who's she?

SIMON

Colette's cousin. Mincy.

JOHN

I s'posed to know her too.

SIMON

No, but you'd be doing me a favor you make that lion on her ass roar for me. Shape I'm in, one cousin'll be all I can handle.

Simon starts to wriggle himself out of his pants. John picks at the grass by his side. Pulls a long blade out and puts it between his teeth.

JOHN

Old co-worker a yours pulled a gun on me at Moira's last night, after I walked in on him balling the baby sitter.

SIMON

Old co-worker a mine?

JOHN

Obadiah Cornish?

Simon, scowling, gazes off toward the pond.

SIMON

Last I heard that maniac was locked up in prison.

Simon stands up and steps out of his pants. Starts to pull his t-shirt off over his head.

JOHN

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'.

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.

COLETTE

Si-mun you don't get your fat ass in this water in 5 seconds, you're gonna have yourself one cold and lonely night!

Simon looks to John.

SIMON

Not comin'?

John shakes his head.

JOHN

Later on, mebbe.

COLETTE

Siiii-muuuunnnnn!

SIMON

You hear that? (imitating her) Siiihhh-muunnn!!!!

He breaks up laughing and then charges off into the water, screaming all the way.

EXT. POND'S BANK - NIGHT

John lies on the grass, looking sleepy-eyed up at the night sky. 8 or 9 empty beer bottles lie in the grass to his right. Mincy, wearing nothing but an orange rabbit's foot on a wrist chain, to his left.

Simon and Colette RAUCOUSLY fuck in the far shore darkness.

MINCY

You in a tussle?

John glances guardedly at Mincy. Then realizes what she is referring to.

JOHN

Buck gored me.

MINCY

How'd that happen?

JOHN

Huntin'. Thought it was dead. When I come up on it, found out it weren't.

MINCY

Musta hurt.

John shrugs "no big deal". He turns slowly back towards the sky, and lets his eyes close shut.

JOHN

Just makes me tireder than normal.

Mincy sighs, looking ready to give up.

MINCY

Simon said you might take some convincing, John, and convincing's half the fun of it for me.

JOHN

He tell you I got a wife I respect how she does me?

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, but this doesn't deter her. Smiling coyly she slides down to John's crotch, and behind her big mane of dark brown hair, goes to work on him.

John looks uneasy about it, but soon gives in to the pleasure.

Staring up into the black night sky, his eyes slowly close again and he drifts off.

CUT TO:

EXT. POND'S BANK - DAWN

John is awakened by a loud THUNDER clap and a DOWNPOUR. He then hears Mincy shrieking about something she's lost. as she nakedly rifles through the grass along the edge of the pond.

MINCY

Where's my foot! Who took my Goddamned foot!

She makes her way up to where John is, still on the hunt. John grasps her elbow.

JOHN

Come on! Let's run for the trailer!

She pushes him off, crying inconsolably, continues searching.

MINCY

The rain'll ruin it! Turn it to shit!

John looks at the trailer. Several lights are on. A lightning flash delineates a man's shape in the master bedroom window. He 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.

INT. TRAILER/LIVINGROOM - DAWN

When John and Mincy get into the trailer, both dripping wet, they find Simon and Colette already dressed.

Simon stands by the gun rack with John's .12 gauge in his hands. Colette sits on the couch brushing her hair.

MINCY

I found it, Colette! Act'lly John did. Can you believe it?

COLETTE

That's great, Mince.

SIMON
Still huntin' deer with them .12 gauge
slugs, Johnno?

John nods.

SIMON (CONT'D)
One thing about 'em, they don't leave
much question.

John eyes Simon warily.

JOHN
I'm gonna go get dried off.

He exits the living room and heads down the hallway to
the bedroom

INT. TRAILER/BEDROOM - DAWN

John peers suspiciously around. The closet door and
bureau drawers are ajar, his boots knocked over.

INT. TRAILER/BATHROOM - DAWN

In the bathroom, he finds the storage cabinet ajar, an
Ajax can on its side, the towels disarranged.

EXT. TRAILER/FRONT YARD - A BIT LATER

Simon, Colette and Mincy are in the Cadillac about to
leave. Simon starts the engine and looks out the open
window at John. They both look uncomfortable.

SIMON
You take it easy, Johnno. (beat) Watch
your back for that crazed buck, old
friend.

John nods. Colette and Mincy, oblivious to the weird
tension happening between the men, warmly shout goodbye
to John, and Simon pulls away.

John watches the Cadillac head down the drive. Now he
trusts no one; not even Simon.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

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.

He jumps from rock to rock over a swollen stream. Across it he ascends a hill to a spiny ridge.

EXT. QUARRY RIDGE - DAY

From there, 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 then walks across to the ridge's far side and nestles himself in between two bushes.

Eyeing through binoculars, he scans 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.

EXT. QUARRY - DAY

As John walks into the quarry basin, 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.

EXT. RIDGE - LATE AFTERNOON

John sits, dripping water, under drooping foliage high on the ridge. In his binoculars he eyes his trailer, slowly masked and unmasked by the fog moving over the hillside below him. Flying birds appear like rocks tossed into the mist.

He puts the binoculars down and carves up an apple. While he eats it, he gazes down at Cecil's pasture. He watches the cows spectral movements as they slowly disappear into the fog concealing the barn.

Apple finished, he looks in his binoculars again. He slowly pans from the trailer, to the yard, to the woodshed, to his truck, and then slowly back.

Staring through the magnifying lenses of the binoculars, it is like John is transported to a distant location. It is hard to connect the sounds of the forest that surround him with the distorted, almost 2-dimensional world his eyes see.

Because of this, it seems to take John an unbearably long time to hear the clomp-suck of FOOTFALLS on the wet ground, moving towards him from behind.

When he finally does tune into the sound, it feels so close, he doesn't even take the time to turn and look. He just grabs his shotgun and dives behind a bush.

From there he looks out to see a mysterious and ghostly form emerge slowly from the thick fog and reveal itself as a horse's head, then its muscular torso, and finally, riding elegantly atop it - the dead girl.

John SCREAMS, dropping his gun.

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

GIRL
Steedee, Diablo! Steedee!

She slowly turns to John.

GIRL (CONT'D)
John Moon.

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, self-assured.

ABBIE

Who'd make you scream that way?

JOHN

A ghost.

ABBIE

Jesus, John Moon.

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

JOHN

Sorry for it. Must a dozed off.

ABBIE

In the rain - with Mr. 12-gauge?

JOHN

Thought I might see a rabbit.

ABBIE

Or a deer?

John shifts his eyes slightly. Abbie smiles.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

I'd never tell on you for it, John Moon. 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, John Moon. 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, John, 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 laughs.

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 you mean?

Abbie pushes her hair out of her eyes.

ABBIE

John Moon. If 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 have faith in you, John Moon. 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?

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, John Moon. I'm an
experienced horsewoman.

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

EXT. TRAILER/BACKYARD - DUSK

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.

INT. TRAILER/KITCHEN/LIVINGROOM - EVENING

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

John picks up some photos scattered across the floor, some of Nolan as a newborn and one of Moira sunbathing nude on the shore of a lake. John's face. He feels violated.

INT. TRAILER/CORRIDOR - EVENING

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

INT. TRAILER/BEDROOM - EVENING

Wrapped from head-to-toe in a plastic painter's tarp, like a discount mummy, embalmed at K-mart, the dead girl's corpse has been deposited on John's bed.

A paper sheet taped to her chest declares in large black letters, 'JOHN MOON MURDERED ME!'

John falls to his knees. He puts his hands to his face and BLATHERS poignantly.

He stands and walks dazed to the bed. He kneels down near the girl's head. He gazes down. Through the translucent, though foggy plastic, she seems to stare up at him with open eyes. Though no longer brilliant and blue as they

were when he first came across her, they still seem to give off a dim glow of life. John looks away for a moment. When he turns back, he looks sad, remorseful.

JOHN
 (anguished)
 I'll do my best to find out who you are
 and (beat) see you get a proper buria..

A faint light starts dancing thru the room's front window.

In a panic he jumps up and runs to the window; a set of headlights climb the road toward the trailer.

John anxiously runs back to the dead girl. He looks down at her, considers. Then he hurriedly lifts her up and, staggering under her weight, carries her out of the bedroom and down the hallway.

INT. TRAILER/CELLAR STAIRS/CELLAR - EVENING

We hear the stairs CREAKING. Then, starting at his feet and moving slowly up, we see John grimly carrying the girl down them into the cellar. He manages to flip on the light switch.

After looking around briefly, he puts the corpse down in front of his workbench and slides it into the shadowy recess below.

INT./EXT. TRAILER/FRONT DOOR/FRONT YARD - EVENING

Moira bangs on the front door of the trailer. She calls out for John.

MOIRA
 John, you there!

She starts to dig around in her purse for her key, when John, his breath noticeably short, opens the door.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
 Oh, you are there.

JOHN
 Yeah.

John struggles to compose himself.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 I was out in back. Sorry.

MOIRA

That's okay.

John steps outside. He tries to smile casually. Moira still finds his behavior odd.

JOHN

You here to talk?

He moves towards the deck, hoping she'll follow.

MOIRA

Actually, I just came to pick up a few things.

JOHN

(hesitantly)

What things?

MOIRA

The rest of my good clothes hanging in my closet. (smiles uncertainly) I can't wear the same outfit to school everyday how I could out here.

John frowns slightly.

JOHN

Okay, I'll get them for you.

MOIRA

That's alright. I can do it.

John moves back between Moira and the door and steps inside.

JOHN

No. I mean it's better if you don't see how the place has gone to hell since you left.

Moira tries to get look over John's shoulder thru the open door.

MOIRA

What's goin' on, John?

JOHN

Nothin'. Just wait out here. It'll be better.

John quickly walks back inside and shuts the door behind him as Moira watches him in befuddlement.

EXT. TRAILER/FRONTYARD - EVENING

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, John - 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

(earnestly)

Cecil Nobie offered me a full time job the other day. (beat) Soon's Eban goes off to school.

Moira's patient smile says she knows John like a book.

MOIRA

And you'll be too proud to take it.

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

JOHN

I'm thinking to see if he'll agree to let part my wages go toward buying a few his heifers to start my own herd with. (beat) It's called profit sharing. (smiles hopefully) What do you think?

Moira is moved.

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.

FADE TO:

EXT. RIDGE - LATE NIGHT

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

We hear glass SHATTERING.

FADE IN:

INT. TRAILER/LIVINGROOM - DAWN

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.

INT. TRAILER/LIVINGROOM - MORNING

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 cellar stairs.

JOHN

(sternly)

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 you'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.

It almost immediately RINGS. John hesitantly picks it up.

PITT(O.S.)

How's John Moon getting on?

John's face. He tries to fit Daggard Pitt's calling him now together with what's just happened.

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

I have those papers ready for you to sign, John.

John stares puzzled into the dense fog, down the hillside.

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

You're not agreeing to anything, remember? We're just protecting your rights? (beat) Is it convenient for you to stop in this afternoon, John?

JOHN (O.S.)

It ain't.

PITT (O.)

Are you sure?

JOHN

I can't make it.

PITT (O.S.)

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

JOHN

What?

PITT (O.S.)
Other than the divorce I mean.

JOHN
What matter?

PITT (O.S.)
I hope I'm not stepping over the line,
John. It's just that I know lately you've
been under a lot of pressure and, well -
I hear things.

Pitt PANTS breathily.

PITT (O.S.) (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 (O.S.)
There's the boy to think of. Nolan.

JOHN
He ain't in this!

PITT (O.S.)
Of course he's in it, John. He's your
son.

JOHN
You leave my family out of it!

PITT (O.S.)
I'm sorry I've angered you, John, but,
for me, your family has always been very
much in it. Very much so.

Pitt COUGHS weakly. The phone trembles in John's hand.

PITT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Most problems aren't as big as they first
seem, John. The thing is to deal with
them before people get backed into
corners.

JOHN
What people?

Pitt exhales doggishly.

PITT

There's 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

What do I have to do to get my wife and son back, Pitt!

PITT

I wish so badly I could help you in that, John - but I'm just a lawyer.

JOHN

Tell whoever you're whoring for now if they put even a scratch on them they'll never get what they want!

John slams down the phone. He shoves his .45 in his belt and walks out the back door.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

John's truck moves ghost-like through the fog-shrouded town. It seems alone in an amorphous white world. 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.

EXT. MOIRA'S APARTMENT/STAIRS - DAY

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

INT. PUFFY'S DINER - DAY

John enters and takes a stool at the mostly-empty counter. Puffy sits by the register 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.

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

Carla's purse is stashed on a shelf beneath the register. Puffy glances down at the plastic tab of a motel key poking out of a side pocket.

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

Then what've you been doin' over the Oaks?

CARLA

The Oaks? I never been there in my life.

PUFFY

Not what Hardy Conner told me at our poker game last night?

CARLA

Who the fuck is Hardy Conner?

PUFFY

(drily)
Manager.

Carla turns red, knowing she's been had.

JOHN

He there?

CARLA

(scowling)
Yeah, last I saw him, anyway. Now can you lemme go. You're hurtin'.

John loosens his grip and Carla yanks away. She storms off towards the kitchen, passing Puffy along the way.

CARLA (CONT'D)

(to Puffy)
Asswipe.

After she exits, Puffy calls John over. When John gets there, he slyly passes him the room key from Carla's purse. John picks it up.

PUFFY

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

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - SOON AFTER

Speeding down the highway towards the Oaks, Simon and the Hen, driving in Simon's Cadillac, shoot by in the opposite direction.

Engaged in a heated discussion, they don't appear to recognize John or his truck as he passes. John watches the Cadillac in his rear view mirror, as it recedes into the distance.

EXT. THE OAKS - DAY

John pulls up across from THE OAKS, a down-at-heels motel, 2-stories high, 5 decades old, a 1/2 mile out of town.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK

He gives the place a brief once-over, locating the reception office, a passageway to the back parking lot, a stairway to the second floor.

He shoves the .45 behind his back, climbs out of the truck and heads across the highway.

EXT. THE OAKS

He climbs the stairs to the 2nd floor and makes his way down the exposed walkway. Hyper-alert, he takes in every detail, the empty pool

After putting an ear to the door, and making sure he is not being watched, he pulls out his .45, and then as silently as possible inserts the key into the door lock and turns.

INT. ROOM 207 - CONTINUOUS

John peeks in through the doorway. There is no one in the main room, but he can hear a tap running in the bathroom. After a brief hesitation, he steps warily inside and quietly shuts the door behind him.

He moves slowly towards the bathroom, following behind the loaded .45. The door is slightly ajar. He nudges it open to get more of a view inside.

If anyone is there, they have to be lying down in the tub, still hidden behind the door. John takes the bold approach, bangs open the door ready to fire.

No one is there, just 3 medium-sized trout darting around in a tub full of brackish water. With the drain partially stopped up, the running tap keeps the water fresh and the trout alive. There is river sand and mud in the tub and everywhere around it. It is a mess.

Back in the main room, John finds a list of names and numbers next to the room phone. Scribbled along the margin of a Chinese take-out menu, are Simon's, Pitt's, Moira's and his own.

John looks up when he hears the voices of two men coming up the stairway to the second floor walk. Peeking out the window from behind the curtains, he first sees the Hen. Instead of Simon though, he is now accompanied by Waylon.

John hustles to the bathroom in search of an escape, but the window is so small, a child couldn't make it through.

As he steps back into the middle of the main room, he hears the Hen and Waylon passing right out front, and coming to a stop outside the door. John's eyes widen in fear.

WAYLON (O.S.)

If you don't got it, then why'm I here?

OBADIAH (O.S.)

I'm bout to get it.

Looking for somewhere to hide, he fixes on the closet in the back corner, opposite the bathroom. He runs to it.

WAYLON (O.S.)

You been 'bout to get it for 3 days. So shut that trap and open up the door.

John steps inside the closet and just barely shuts himself in, as the door swings open and the Hen and Waylon come in.

The closet has two slatted doors, but the slats are angled downward. John can look out, but the angle and the range of his view is very limited. Unless he gets on his toes, he can barely see over a standing man's waist.

OBADIAH

Can ya wait just a second, while I check on my trout?

WAYLON

Fuck your trout and tell me who it is got the money.

OBADIAH

Like I told you, if you can wait just another couple of hours, you won't need to know who's got it, 'cause I'm gonna collect it for ya.

WAYLON

Don't think you understand me. You ain't gonna be around in another couple of hours. (beat) C'mere.

John can see the legs of the Hen approaching the closet and his hand reaching up for the door handles, but he is suddenly stopped short by Waylon. From the back of the closet, he sees the feet of the Hen rise up off the ground, and the guttural noises of a man who is choking.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Who has my money.

OBADIAH

(Choking out his words)

I...I...ll tell ya - I...

John sees Obadiah's feet fall back to the floor, and then the rest of his body. He sits there, gasping for breath.

Waylon slaps his head.

WAYLON

Who!

OBADIAH

John Moon.

WAYLON

Haybale livin' up in that trailer?

OBADIAH

Ummhmmmm.

Waylon paces away silently, then suddenly re-appears. Kneeling down, he gets the Hen in a headlock and starts to choke him again.

WAYLON

Now, when you gonna stop lyin to me?

Looking through the slats, the Hen's face is just a foot away. He sees his eyes start to bulge and his face get red, as he struggles for air.

OBADIAH

(choking)

I'm not...he shot...your girl...
friend...took money...I'm...yer....

The Hen looks like he is about to lose consciousness. Waylon finally lets him fall to the floor. He chokes for air, coughs, spits, and occasionally yelps.

WAYLON

If it's him's got it, why the fuck is
takin' you so long to get it back.

(MORE)

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Whyn't you just go get it? You 'fraid that woodchuck?

OBADIAH

I'm bout to get it. We got his wife and baby son tied up. He's all ready to cough it up.

The Hen looks up when Waylon paces away into the room again.

OBADIAH (CONT'D)

I'm tellin' you tha truth. You don't believe me, we can go together, get it right now.

Waylon turns on the TV.

WAYLON

We ain't doin' jack together.

He slowly increases its volume until it is blaring-loud. Waylon returns and drags the Hen away from the closet.

Though he doesn't have the best angle, John can see Waylon strapping the Hen's wrists and ankles to the deskchair.

He then sees blood start to drip down onto the Hen's lap. When he sees a chunk of flesh fall on the floor, and recognizes it as the Hen's nose, John almost lets out a scream.

He sinks down in a corner of the closet to the floor, reeling in horror. Though he would rather close his eyes and try to forget what is happening, he can't afford to.

Flashes of carnage flicker across the screen as he periodically glances out through the slats. Chunks of flesh falling to the floor. The pool of blood spreading out around the chair.

Though he still holds his gun out, aimed at the ready, John's head eventually sinks down between his arms. He sits like this until a brilliant streak of sunlight cuts through the slats in the closet doors. He jerks his head up in alarm.

Leaning carefully, he can make out slivers of Waylon's body standing at the room's front window with the curtain peeled back.

The sunlight suddenly disappears. John blinks his eyes trying to re-adjust to the darkness. When he gets his

view lined up again with the sliver of space between the slats, he sees Waylon sit down on the bed right in front of the closet. He bends over towards the floor.

From another slat, John sees that he is wiping blood off of his boots. He occasionally sits up. When he does, it appears that he is looking right into the closet, right into John's eyes.

John presses himself to the back wall and waits tensely for the closet doors to swing open. Finally after what seems like forever, Waylon stands up and walks away. A moment later, the bright sunlight streaks again into the closet.

John lines up his eyes with the slats. Waylon stands in the half-open doorway looking in. He gives the room a final once-over. Then, pulling shut the door, he disappears.

John lets out a sigh of relief. Then slowly pushes open the closet doors.

When he turns, his eyes move first to the bright screen of the TV and then down to the floor, where they find the desk chair tipped over on its side, and strapped to it, a shirtless and half-decapitated Obadiah Cornish.

His nose and a handful of other excised chunks of his face lay on the blood-soaked rug. Blood drops PLINK onto the wet rug.

John staggers and tries to catch his breath. Numbly he sits on the bed, presses his fists to his eyes. Then the room phone rings, startling him.

John shakily stands. He walks around the cadaver to the phone. It sits on the desktop. Next to it, on top of the now blood-spattered Chinese take-out menu lies an ear and an eye, and a section of Obadiah's skin that was tattooed with a smiling, cartoon hen.

The margin of the menu, where the list of phone numbers had been scrawled, has been torn away. A cigarette burns in the ashtray.

The phone rings 2 more times as John takes in this bizarre and sickening tableau. He then uncertainly picks the phone up.

PITT (O.S.)

Your terrorizing tactics have put me in a very delicate situation.

John's face blanches.

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

John pulls back the phone and looks at it as if it's diseased. He hears Pitt HANG UP. Then John does and leaves the room.

EXT. NEWBERRY'S - DAY

John walks up the stairs, lugging the money sack.

INT. DAGGARD PITT'S OFFICE - DAY

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)
They're 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's legs are trembling. He 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
Moirra 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.

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)

(disgusted)

How much they promising you?

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?

His expression blank, John withdraws his .45. Pitt blinks nervously.

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
Call who's got them.

PITT
Got them?

JOHN
Do it now. Then I'll leave.

John points the .45 between Pitt's eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Only don't call Obadiah Cornish again. He
ain't able to answer the phone.

Pitt's face goes pale white. He gulps at the Beam.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Call Simon.

PITT
John?

JOHN
Tell him you got the money!

PITT
What's happened?

JOHN
Hen's been slaughtered, Pitt.

Pitt, looking miserable and terrified, shakes his head.

PITT
Obie, slaughtered, poor unloved, child,
he - They nev - no...

John presses the .45's barrel to Pitt's forehead.

JOHN
Where's Moira and Nolan, lawyer!

PITT
John...I...you...can't...

JOHN
Tell me, Pitt.

John clicks off the safety on the .45.

JOHN (CONT'D)
NOW!

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

PITT
A lake...at a lake.

JOHN
What lake?

PITT
What lake? Um...

Pitt starts frantically diggin through a chaotic pile of papers on his desk, making John look anxious.

PITT (CONT'D)
I have it here, somewhere.

He finally pulls a postcard out of the mess extends it towards John in his quavering hand. John snatches it from him. It shows a quaint cottage at the side of a lake.

Turning it over, John finds the name, address, and phone number of the establishment. Someone has circled the phone number and written: COTTAGE # 8.

John lowers the gun, grabs the sack of money and heads out.

PITT (CONT'D)
But, John, please don't -

Pitt is cut off by the slamming door.

PITT (CONT'D)
- go there.

Pitt stares at the closed door, his lip quivering, his face twisted in anguish.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - AFTERNOON

John's truck flies over the top of a pass. As the road descends downward, he looks out on a small mountain lake. The late afternoon sun reflecting orange off its surface, makes it look like it's burning.

EXT. LAKESIDE COTTAGE RENTALS

The truck veers off the road and under the cottage rentals' old, faded sign.

The cottages are small, one bedroom shacks. Basically the Oaks Motel on a lake shore.

EXT. LAKESIDE COTTAGE RENTALS

John heads down a dirt path that runs behind the rental cottages and connects them to the office and main parking lot.

Cottage number 8 is a bit removed, separated from the others by a small stand of pines. As John nears the cottage, he hears the voices of a man and a woman.

Though he can't make out their words, it sounds like they're in some kind of heated argument. It is just starting to get loud enough for John to understand what they're saying to each other, when they suddenly go quiet. But then a moment or two later, the woman lets out a loud shriek that sounds to John like she has been hurt. Hearing this, he pulls out his gun and takes off running.

There is no door in the back, so John has to circle around to the lake side. On his way, he hears the distressed voice of Moira.

MOIRA (O.S.)

Oh God, please!...

And then, rounding the front corner, he hears the male voice, a voice he doesn't recognize, cussing violently, and Moira in turn, shrieking again in pain. This time it sounds to John louder and more anguished than ever.

Feeling the horror and the urgency of the moment, John charges the cottage door without a moment of hesitation. As he smashes through it, there is a loud crack from the thin, brittle wood, a crash of glass from a window pane, and a blood-curdling scream from Moira.

Then there is utter silence.

Inside, John stands statue still with an expression of utter shock on his face. Standing buck naked before him is his sometime employer Cole Howard, and cowering behind a bedsheet, with her back against the headboard, his sometime wife, Moira Moon.

They all stand there, not knowing what to say or do, until Moira snaps out of her state of shock.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

John, what in the fuck are you doing here!?!

John is too stunned to respond. Completely shaken, all he can do for the moment is turn and run out.

After bouncing down the three front steps, he stumbles several feet across the rocky shore and falls at the water's edge.

Watching him through the splintered doorway, seeing him anguished, Moira breaks into tears. And when John gets back on his feet and disappears down the shoreline, she goes after him.

On her way out the door, she steps on a piece of glass, but she continues after him, yelping in pain.

She calls to him, but John is already a ways down the shore, and doesn't turn back. With her foot in great pain, and her body uncovered, she pulls up forlornly at the water's edge.

Standing behind her at the cottage door, still overwhelmed by what has just transpired, Cole Howard looks on, not having the slightest idea what to do.

EXT. RIVER ROAD - DUSK

John slowly drives a back-country road, tracking a river. He abruptly swerves off the road into an overgrown pasture. He parks near the river, hyperventilating.

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

EXT. BACK COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

John heads down a 2-lane road. Though his expression is still solemn, there seems to be a renewed sense of determination in his eyes.

He turns off the highway in front of a motley row of private mailboxes, and disappears down an unpaved road.

EXT. SIMON'S CABIN - NIGHT

John rolls slowly down a dirt drive towards Simon's cabin. When he gets close, he cuts his lights and rolls another 10 yards before pulling to a stop.

A bright, security light shines from the barn-like garage to the side and behind the cabin itself. Simon's Cadillac is parked beneath it, catercorner to the cabin's back door.

John gets out of the truck and heads for the back door. He passes the Cadillac on the way. Its driver door is open, its dome light on, keys in the ignition. Some low-hanging tree branches SQUEAKILY caress its roof.

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 right in John's direction, but just before it reaches him, veers off, piggishly SQUEALING, into the distance.

John, heart pounding, looks back to the cabin and sees a second huge pig burst out through the wide-open door.

He takes out his .45, and stalks the door, ready for whatever might come next.

INT. SIMON'S CABIN/KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

He rolls out from under four muscular legs, then yanks himself to his feet by a tail. 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-smearred 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.

INT. SIMON'S CABIN/HALLWAY

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 mishmash of clucks and feathers, a large chicken. John GASPS and the bird prances past him up the hall.

INT. SIMON'S CABIN/LIVINGROOM

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, Johnno?

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!

JOHN

I am. Only way I can be sure you won't try to go behind my back and take my money.

Simon runs a hand slowly over his mouth.

SIMON

Well, you wanna be straight about things, then I'm gonna say that money's more mine than it ever was yours.

JOHN

How's that?

SIMON

It was me who took the risk to steal it in the first place.

John looks surprised and then upset to hear this.

JOHN

Don't tell me it was you who sliced up the Hollenbach's Simon.

Simon shakes his head.

SIMON

Not me, I mean not personally. But I was there that night. It was me and the Hen.

JOHN

Goddamn it - you worked for Ira! He treated you decent!

SIMON

Most times.

JOHN

Decent as my own Daddy did when you worked for him and I looked up to you like you was my older brother.

Simon sits down heavily on the couch, facing John. He sighs. Then presses the tip of his trigger finger between his eyes.

SIMON

Be doing me a favor you put my lights out for it, Johnno. Been workin' up to doin' it myself near six years.

Overcome with emotion, John puts his free hand on the chair's back to keep from falling.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Ira and Molly was s'posed to be to a fireman's dance that night. (beat) What I notice 'bout myself, Johnno, is the drunker I get, the more reasonable the most un-fucking-reasonable things seem.

Simon waves his hand at a chicken pecking near his foot, sending it cackling off.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Some mess ain't it, John?

JOHN
Tell me what happened, Simon.

Simon looks up at John and into his eyes.

SIMON
You sure you wanna know?

John nods.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Then I'll tell you what really went down,
Johnno. It started when I run into
Obadiah over in Raburn, this was three-
four years after Ira shitcanned him for
skewerin' that cow and fired me for not
showing up a coupla mornin's or three in
a row. Hen said he'd been holdin' Ira's
safe combination all these years - all
we'd have to do is walk in and open it.

John sits on the recliner's edge. Simon's eyes and voice
go distant, reliving a nightmare.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Obadiah and Simon, each looking 6 years younger, tromp
through the woods, drinking, bantering, arguing,
laughing. Sound stays under.

SIMON (V.O.)
We hike the woods trail over from the
back side the Conservancy, gettin'
drunker as we go -

EXT. HOLLENBACH FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

As Obadiah and Simon casually walk up to the front door,
the former finishes off a 40 oz. bottle of Old Milwaukee
and tosses it on the lawn.

SIMON (V.O.)
Sure, I may a been pissed at Ira for
firin' me, but far as I saw it, it was
just a Goddamn lark.

Though he is twice as drunk as Obadiah, Simon knows enough to pick the bottle up and not leave behind too many fingerprints.

SIMON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I figured there's a safe at all, most I'll get is the 2 weeks pay Ira stiffed me on.

INT. HOLLENBACH FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The two thieves act a little more stealthy inside, but they soon drop all pretence and make themselves at home.

SIMON (V.O.)
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 some Goddamn numbers he's got writ down, with me giving him the raspberry 'cause I don't really give a shit. Hen gives up 'fore long.

Obadiah angrily spins the safe wheel and heads for the stairs.

OBADIAH
Aw, fuck it.

SIMON (V.O.)
He goes upstairs to grab some of Molly's jewels, make the trip worthwhile. (beat) Though I ain't happy with him ransacking the place, I pop a beer and turn on Jay Leno.

We see Simon grab a beer from the fridge. Then he's settled in on the Hollenbach's couch, grinning at something he hears on Leno. In front of him are 2 empty beers, and in his hand is what is left of a third.

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

Simon hears Obadiah returning. He cranes his neck from his spot on the couch. When he sees him covered in blood, his eyes widen a bit, which for Simon, under the influence, is an expression of extreme shock.

OBADIAH

Guess what? Ol' Ira was home all the time. Straightened me out on those numbers.

As Obadiah heads back to the safe, Simon climbs the stairs to see what damage has been done.

SIMON (V.O.)

I run upstairs and -

Simon heads down the 2nd floor hallway towards the Hollenbach's bedroom. At the open doorway, he stops cold.

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

Molly's dead, thank God, but Ira's got breath in him yet and he's oglin' me out the one eye he's got left with a look that'll follow me into the ground and a damn sight deeper.

Under this last piece of narration, the camera slowly pushes in from a shot of both Molly and Ira, butchered on the bed, to an extra close up of Ira's remaining eye.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. SIMON'S CABIN/LIVINGROOM - PRESENT

Simon lies there, looking like this all went down earlier that day. John looks equally chilled. After what seems like a long beat, John breaks the silence.

JOHN

You just leave him like that?

Simon shakes his head.

SIMON

Took out my hunting knife and did for him how I would a wounded animal.

JOHN

What about the money?

SIMON

By the time I made it back downstairs, the safe was empty and the Hen had disappeared. I tried to track him down, but just a week or so later, I hear he's penned up with a six-pack for a string of burglaries he'd committed over in Raburn.

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

At that point, I figured I'd never see him or the money again. Then two days ago I'm up to The Oaks 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 sportin' a convict's tan and hellish surprised to see me. 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

He say it was me who 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 studying on tattooed lions to see you'd searched the place?

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. I sure as hell weren't gon' shoot my one true friend in the world for it, though.

John looks at Simon, not appearing totally convinced.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You really think I'd hurt you for some money?

JOHN

What'd he tell you about Waylon?

Simon tilts his head curiously at John.

SIMON

Waylon?

JOHN

Stocky, dark-haired guy? Was boyfriend to the girl.

SIMON

What girl?

John rubs his chin, perplexed.

JOHN
Cornish didn't mention her? Or about
having a partner?

SIMON
Don't know anything about them. Looks
like you do though.

John shrugs, but Simon can see there's something
bothering him.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Want to tell me about them, Johnno?

John doesn't answer.

JOHN
Who done all this to your home?

SIMON
Colette's ol' man. Tiny, wittled-down son
of a bitch. Didn't take too well to me
screwin' his wife.

JOHN
You surprised.

SIMON
Only by how much. You got to admire the
man though can still feel the monster a
love this bad, don't ya?

Simon kicks off his shoes, frowns gravely to John.

SIMON (CONT'D)
What you gon' do with the money, Johnno?

JOHN
Ain't figured it out yet.

SIMON
I'd burn it's what. (beat) Stick a match
to it, 'less you want to end up in that
fiery place ol' Ira has me sentenced.

John picks up his .45. He stands, shoving it in his belt.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Guess you ain't gonna do me that favor I
asked of ya, Johnno?

He nods over to the 12-gauge.

JOHN

Not tonight. (beat) Not ever.

SIMON

Can you bring it over here then - and that pint of Beefeater's - put 'em down next the couch 'fore ya leave.

John brings over the bottle of gin.

SIMON (CONT'D)

What about the gun?

JOHN

You'll have to get that yourself.

John turns and heads silently for the front door. As he is about to exit, Simon calls out to him. He pauses to listen.

SIMON

Hey, Johnno. Your old man'd be proud of ya 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.

John looks like he might say something, but doesn't. Without turning, he makes his exit.

SIMON (CONT'D)

(to himself)

'night, Johnno.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Looking spent, almost stuporous, John drives along a dark rural road. He almost nods off, but shakes himself awake.

EXT. HOLLOW ROAD

The truck turns onto the Hollow Road and starts up it.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK

Headed down the last stretch to home, John is on auto-pilot. He is already half-asleep.

As he rounds a bend, his heavy eyelids fall shut once more. It is only an instant before John blinks his eyes

back open, but enough time for an animal to spring up out of nowhere in the middle of the road.

Hitting the brakes and veering sharply left, he plunges the truck into a shallow, vine-infested ditch.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK

John has a small cut and a welt on his forehead. He sits there a bit stunned. It all happened so fast he couldn't even identify exactly what it was he saw in the road. It could have been a person for all he knows.

After a couple of attempts to back himself out of the ditch, John turns off the ignition and just sits there, like he has decided to finally surrender to his troubled fate.

EXT. HOLLOW ROAD - SUNRISE

The pink and gold sky is speckled with a field of small luminescent cloud puffs. The camera tilts down, to find John's truck still stranded at the side of the road in the ditch.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK

Slumped over on the truck seat, his head resting on the sack of money, John is awakened by the morning light.

He slowly raises himself back up into a sitting position.

The skewed view out his windshield helps remind him where he is and why he's there.

EXT. HOLLOW ROAD - CONTINUOUS

He climbs out of the cab and looks down at the truck's flat left front tire and bent rim.

He stares up and down the empty road.

He pulls down his .308 from the gun rack and grabs his .45 and a box of rifle shells from the glove box.

With the .308 and the money sack slung over either shoulder, he walks into the woods.

EXT. BURNED FOREST - MORNING

John is a ghostly figure walking through the black, skeletal trees bearding the hillside. His footfalls CRUNCH on the charred earth.

EXT. OAK GLADE - DAY

John emerges out of the woods in an oak glade. He crosses the small clearing to the foot of a massive boulder. He drops the sack of money and climbs up the back of it.

EXT. BOULDER TOP - DAY

From the top of the boulder, John can look down on his trailer, just several hundred yards down a wooded hill.

Looking through the .308's scope he zooms in on a partially open window in the near wall as if trying to remember if he'd left it that way. Looks though like the coast is clear.

EXT. OAK GLADE - DAY

John climbs back down off the boulder. After a quick scan around, he spots an old fallen oak tree on the far side of the clearing.

After stashing the sack of money and his rifle deep inside the oak's big hollowed-out trunk, he heads down the wooded hill towards his trailer below.

EXT. TRAILER/YARD - DAY

John runs in a half-crouch out of the woods, at the trailer.

INT. TRAILER/CELLAR

He steps warily down the stairs into the darkened cellar. When he reaches the light switch, he stretches forward and quickly flicks it on, as if he is expecting to be greeted by Waylon, or maybe Ingrid's ghost.

He only finds the plastic-wrapped corpse of Ingrid Banes. After sliding her out from under the workbench, he gently lifts her onto an old wooden toboggan. He then binds her securely to the sled, with a heavy-duty garden shovel.

JOHN
(distraught)
Sumbitch weren't even gon take you to
Hawaii. That's who you died for!

EXT. TRAILER/FRONT YARD

John peeks around the corner of the trailer, takes a look around. Then breaks for the woods as fast as he can, tugging the heavy burden of the dead girl on the sled behind him.

EXT. RIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Laboring much harder now, John drags the sled uphill towards the ridge. He is headed up to the big boulder, where he left his rifle and the sack of money.

He soon hits the steepest part of hill. The rocky terrain doesn't make it any easier. After falling a couple of times to his knees, he loops the sled's lead rope around his waist. With both hands free, he scratches and crawls his to the top.

EXT. THE BIG BOULDER

Sweating and gasping, John finally makes it back up to the boulder. Just behind it, is a small clearing, with a ring of trees above and soft soil below.

Lowering himself to the ground, John takes a moment to catch his breath. He looks a bit more relaxed; at least he has gotten Ingrid's corpse out of his home. He gazes calmly towards Ingrid, still bound to the sled.

JOHN
You'll be real happy here, Ingrid. You'll have privacy, shade, a stream yonder, animals wandering by, birds singing - not like some public cemetery where you as well could end up next to folks you wouldn't have given the time of day to.

The flock of black birds that have been dogging him, start SQUAWKING down at John as if to mock the words of re-assurance he has just spoken to Ingrid.

LATER:

EXT. THE BIG BOULDER

John sets to work with his spade. In a series of shots, we see John sink lower and lower into the ground, as he digs the grave for Ingrid deeper and deeper.

It is hard work and John is working as fast as he can. He only stops digging to make the occasional scan of the surrounding woods and ensure he is all alone.

After he has dug down almost five feet, John is startled by the crack of a tree branch in the nearby woods.

With only his head and shoulders peeking up above the forest floor, he listens intently, like an animal getting wind of a predator. He now hears nothing but a very slight breeze. All is still and quiet.

Though it may have been nothing, John decides the hole is deep enough. Sweaty, grimy, and tired, he climbs out of the grave, and steps over to Ingrid's corpse.

JOHN

This is gon' have to do, Ingrid. Won't
nothing dig you up this deep! I promise!

He lifts her up and carries her to the edge of the hole. He pauses there for a moment before putting her down. Gazing at her face for the last time, with the dark gaping pit at his feet, waiting to swallow her up for eternity, he is hit for the first time by the gravity of the moment.

His reverie is cut short, when he hears a not-too-distant human voice. As he sets Ingrid's corpse down at the edge of the grave, he hears the voice again. This time it is close enough to recognize. It is Abbie and she is coming his way.

ABBIE

Whoa, Diablo! Whoa, boy.

John's heart starts to pound like a bass drum. He freezes for a moment, and then hustles to head her off. By the time he makes it to the edge of the clearing, he can see her through the trees, and she can see him.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

That you, John Moon?

JOHN

It's me.

Pulling his shirttail over the .45 he has tucked behind him in his belt, John moves towards Abbie as quickly and casually as he can manage. Nevertheless, the two meet only 5 or 10 yards from the clearing.

ABBIE

I was just on my way to see you. Brought you a homemade apple pie and fixings for a few meals. I'm going to make you the first one myself.

Abbie, her budding beauty showed off in jeans, riding boots, a sleeveless jersey, smiles at John playfully.

JOHN

What?

ABBIE

Italian Hoagies. My speciality.

Abbie looks over his shoulder towards the oak glade.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

What are you doin' up here on the ridge?

From John's position on the ground, the view of the oak glade mostly obscured by the woods, but he can only anxiously wonder what Abbie can see, perched up high on the horse.

JOHN

Just got thru bushwhacking home. I put my truck in a ditch down by the highway early this morning.

ABBIE

Then you must be double happy to see me. I can give you a ride from here on Diablo.

John looks unsure what to do.

JOHN

I don't know, Abbie. Might be a tight fit.

ABBIE

Don't be a fool, John. I've given rides to guys a lot bigger than you. So, mount up.

John still resists.

ABBIE (CONT'D)
 C'mon, either you get up here, or I'm
 gonna get down and walk with you. So,
 let's at least give it a try.

After a brief glance back towards the clearing, John
 finally gives in.

CUT TO:

Abbie steers Diablo down the dirt road that leads off the
 ridge down to John's trailer.

ABBIE (CONT'D)
 You can hold on tighter if you want.
 Don't bother me none.

JOHN
 I'm fine.

ABBIE
 Momma's worried - and me too, John -
 you're startin' to fade away to nothing.

JOHN
 I'm fine, Abbie. Just a little tired.

ABBIE
 You havin' trouble sleeping?

JOHN
 Little bit.

They ride through the last stretch of woods and into the
 clearing around John's trailer.

ABBIE
 I've read that insomnia is getting more
 and more common. Some experts say it's
 already an epidemic.

John looks uneasily up the hill. Through the trees he
 can see the big boulder, perched like it might tumble
 down at any moment and crush him.

ABBIE (CONT'D)
 Did you know you can die from lack of
 sleep?

JOHN
 (distracted)
 Didn't know that.

ABBIE

It's true. Well, here we are.

Abbie reins Diablo to a stop in front of the trailer and John dismounts.

INT. TRAILER/KITCHEN - DAY

Abbie is almost done constructing the sandwiches. John stands at the front door screen, trying to look casual as he keeps a lookout.

ABBIE

Where's the salt and pepper.

JOHN

I think I left 'em out on the deck. I'll get 'em. You keep on those sandwiches.

John exits, but is back in a flash with the salt and pepper.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Here they are.

ABBIE

People don't realize that salt and pepper are the key ingredient to a hoagie. Can't take 'em for granted.

John hands Abbie the salt and pepper.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Your hands are shaking, John Moon.

JOHN

Guess I haven't been feelin' myself lately.

John watches Abbie finishing the hoagies.

ABBIE

I'm sorry about Moira walkin' out on you.

John slowly meets her eyes with a pained expression.

JOHN

Nothin' to be sorry 'bout.

ABBIE

I bet if you took that job with Daddy she'd see you've got a regular income and a bright future and come back.

Abbie cuts the hoagies.

JOHN

All done?

ABBIE

Except for the toothpicks.

JOHN

Don't need no toothpicks. Got our hands to hold 'em together. Let's go.

John picks up the plates and heads for the door.

ABBIE

Alright. Least you seem to have gotten back your appetite.

EXT. TRAILER/DECK - DAY

John and Abbie eat the hoagies in lawn chairs facing the ridge. A hummingbird buzzes in the honeysuckle near the deck.

ABBIE

Was on the news this morning about a murder in town yesterday - up at the Oaks. You hear about it.

JOHN

(suspiciously)

Didn't. They know who done it?

ABBIE

No, but they say there's a suspect or two.

JOHN

They always say that. Calms people down. Makes whoever did do it nervous.

Abbie looks up at the sky, which has clouded over.

ABBIE

Shoot. Looks like it's gonna rain.

John looks up with her.

JOHN

Better get these Hoagies down for it ruins the picnic.

NEIGHING loudly, Diablo trots around the trailer's corner, skittishly tossing his head.

ABBIE

(surprised)

What's troubling you, Diablo? There's plenty of grass out there. Go on!

JOHN

Maybe, he don't like rain.

ABBIE

Not Diablo. He loves it.

She smiles to John.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

Jealous, must be.

Diablo obediently walks back around front. John warily watches him go.

Abbie swigs from her Root Beer, smiles coyly to John.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

Hope you used protection with whoever she was kept you out so late before you put your truck in a ditch, John Moon.

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

When I give up my virginity, John Moon, it's going to be to a guy as sweet as you.

John scowls, embarrassed. Abbie playfully flicks at her hair.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

Handsome - gentle, but strong, with a good sense of humor? Uh huh. I think so! All you need to be a woman's perfect catch is a secure job, John Moon.

We hear low-volume MUSIC. John abruptly stands.

ABBIE (CONT'D)
 (tensely)
 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, okay?

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!

INT. TRAILER/CORRIDOR - DAY

His .45 in one hand John walks cautiously toward the music. He stops before his bedroom door. He presses an ear to it. He pushes the door open.

INT. TRAILER/BEDROOM - DAY

His radio plays on the bureau. The window screen lays on the floor. The closet door is ajar.

He walks warily to the closet, yanks it open. He runs a hand over the hanging contents, looks on the floor. Then he backs out and walks to the bureau. He switches off the radio.

A sharp WHISTLE sounds outside. Then another. John walks to the window and sticks his head out. Behind Abbie on the deck stands Waylon, one hand gripping her hair, the other holding a knife to her throat. Abbie's eyes are shut, her body slack. Waylon's in burr-marred Chino's and new hiking boots. His rapid, staccato-like speech is close to manic.

WAYLON

I give you three seconds before I make her look like the Hen, John. Have you seen the Hen lately? (beat) Offers me buried treasure for drugs! I go along as a favor to him - even dig the shit up for him because he's afraid of snakes or some damn thing, then I give him his merchandise and when I come back for my money, not only is it gone, but my girl is too, and when I see the Hen about it, he can't understand how it's his problem and I tell him he'll understand if I don't get back the cash or the drugs in 72 hours. Three days later he tells me the drugs are sold, he hasn't got the money, my girl's been shot by a haybale and basically, 'fuck you, Waylon', and that's what I get for trusting a guy I met in prison!

JOHN

(panicked)

Why ain't Abbie's eyes open?

WAYLON

Choker hold'll do that, John. (beat)
She'll wake up I start carving on her.

JOHN

I'll give you the money.

WAYLON

Of course you'll give me the money, you stupid cow-donged son of a bitch. Now drop the piece and get your woodchuck ass out here!

EXT. TRAILER/DECK - DAY

Abbie lays unconscious on the chaise lounge. Waylon leans on the rail behind her, his knife in a hip sheath. He holds a .9 millimeter on John, standing just outside the doorway.

WAYLON

At first I didn't believe Obadiah when he swore a woodchuck had stole my money and murdered my Ingrid - figured he had or they were in on it together. Time I'd sliced off his nose though, he'd convinced me.

JOHN

Was an accident.

WAYLON

Which? Stealing my money or shooting my girl?

JOHN

I took her for a deer.

WAYLON

A deer? She didn't look anything like a deer. (beat) That full-tilt bozo lunatic really dump her in your bed?

John nods.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Where is she now?

JOHN

I buried her - up in the woods. I can take you there.

WAYLON

I don't like corpses. They give me the creeps. I'm just wondering though, John - did you fuck her?

JOHN

Did I what?

WAYLON

If you didn't you really missed out on something - that girl was three rolled into one. Was 'bout all I could do to hold on to her once she took to bucking.

JOHN
(angrily)
She wrote in a letter how she loved you.
Said you was going to take her to Hawaii.

Waylon's eyes narrow.

WAYLON
You read my Ingrid's mail, John?

JOHN
Was tryin' to put a name to her. Was you gonna?

WAYLON
What?

JOHN
Take her down to Mexico, ta the beach?

Waylon scowls.

WAYLON
You know how talk of sand and water gets a woman hot, John. Now let me ask you - did you fuck her before or after you shot her? Or d'ya try her both ways?

John angrily charges at Waylon. Waylon thrusts his pistol straight out. John abruptly stops. Waylon points the gun at the rail next to him.

WAYLON (CONT'D)
Put your hand there, John, fingers apart.

JOHN
What for?

WAYLON
If you don't, I'm going to shoot the girl in both knees.

JOHN
Ain't we gonna go get the money?

WAYLON
No. You're going to go get the money. I'm going to stay here with the girl - what's her name?

JOHN
Abbie.

WAYLON

She and I are going to stay here for the two minutes you're gone.

JOHN

It'll take more than that.

WAYLON

I'll give you ten, then I'll cut off one of her kneecaps. Another five, another kneecap. A joint to joint thing get it. Now - where is it?

John nods into the woods above the trailer.

JOHN

It's under a rock. Halfway up.

WAYLON

And your truck, John? I'm told you have a truck.

JOHN

I put it in a ditch near the highway missing a deer this morning. I hiked back here through the woods.

Waylon eyes John doubtfully.

WAYLON

Last man thought he was smarter than me, John, bled to death through what used to be his face - remember?

John doesn't answer. Waylon takes his knife from its sheath, nods at John's hand.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

On the rail, John, like I asked. Unless you prefer I take an eye. Would you rather I take an eye?

John glances at Abbie, who looks to be pleasantly sleeping. Ducks float placidly on the pond below her.

JOHN

How I know you won't hurt her once you've got the money.

Waylon's smile is not very reassuring.

WAYLON

Cutting people up for fun was the Hen's trip, John. I'm just a businessman. Like
(MORE)

WAYLON (CONT'D)

every other employed slob I got people to answer to. I need my money back or I'm the next one gets put in the ground. You think what I sold to the Hen was a gift to me? No. The ones who fronted me it are now after me for the money they was due a week ago. Life is a big wheel - somebody fucks with a cog like you did, John, and the whole wheel is shot. So, I've got to fix the wheel, okay? How am I going to do that? First, you need to know that the girl will look like a totem pole if you're not back with the money in ten minutes. Second, I need to know that should you get to feeling like Davey Crockett and scrounge up a musket and lead ball up there in the outback the ball won't end up in my brainpan. So, what's it going to be, John? I take one of ten fingers leaving you nine? Or one of two eyes leaving you a cyclops? I know what I'd do.

John grudgingly lays his left hand on the rail. Waylon shakes his head reprovngly.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

John - I saw you holding your pistol.

JOHN

What?

Waylon moves his trigger finger off his gun and wiggles it.

WAYLON

(smiling grimly)

Right hand, John - that's the one needs altering.

John, with a steely frown, puts his right hand on the rail. Waylon takes a handkerchief from his hip pocket and fastidiously places it near it. Then he deftly slices off John's index finger at the lowest joint.

John, holding his breath against a scream, grabs the handkerchief and wraps it around his gushing stub. He bends his knees, his breathing shallow and fast. His severed finger THUMPS onto the deck, then rolls off it, into the yard. Waylon wipes his knife on a napkin.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Now go in get a Band-aid, whatever,
before Abbie wakes up and sees my face
and all bets are off.

INT. TRAILER/BATHROOM - DAY

Sweating profusely and gritting his teeth John stanches the wound with peroxide-soaked cotton then wraps it in gauze.

He gulps down several aspirin. Staring into the mirror, he slaps his cheek.

JOHN

(quietly)

Think, son of a bitch! Think!

EXT. TRAILER/DECK - DAY

Waylon sits facing the ridge in the chaise lounge as John walks back onto the deck thru the kitchen door. Gagged and blindfolded with handkerchiefs Abbie reclines unconscious between his legs. Waylon's knife is against her throat.

WAYLON

Drop your pants, John.

JOHN

What?

WAYLON

Get 'em down.

John one-handedly undoes his jeans, lowers them to his knees.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Turn around.

John turns a slow circle.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Okay, get 'em up.

John clumsily pulls up and buckles his pants. Waylon with his knife saws the air before Abbie's left knee.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Nine minutes fifty seconds, woodchuck.

EXT. TRAILER/BACKYARD - DAY

Diablo bolts across the road as John, holding his throbbing hand tight to his belly, runs toward the woods.

EXT. WOODED HILL - DAY

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, HOWLING in pain.

WAYLON (O.S.)

Seven minutes, John, before I start playing mumblety-peg!

EXT. OAK GLADE

John claws through a thicket of thorny bushes that surround the base of the big boulder, and stumbles into the clearing.

With barely a glance at the corpse of Ingrid, which still lay at the edge of the grave, he hustles to the hollowed out oak trunk, where the sack of money is.

He reaches inside with his good hand, but, at first, feels nothing there. He eventually gets his hand on the butt of his rifle and pulls it out.

Assuming the money bag got pushed further back in, he pushes his head and shoulders into the opening and reaches as far as he can.

There is nothing there. John emerges from the hollow trunk with an expression of utter shock and panic.

Then he hears Waylon's voice floating up to him from the trailer deck below.

WAYLON

John! I'm nervous not knowing where you're at, John! Give me a holler, something!

John cups his left hand around his mouth.

JOHN

I'm right here!

WAYLON

You got the money?

JOHN

Gotta dig it out first! Take me a few minutes!

He scrambles on three limbs up the slippery face of the boulder. From the top, he gazes down through the trees at two tiny intertwined figures on the deck.

From JOHN'S POV the two figures stand as one.

WAYLON

If you make like a hero, John - try circling back on me, whatever - I'll fillet her like a brook trout!

John's face. Past his fear, exhaustion, and physical pain he's enraged. His exhale comes out as a HISS.

JOHN

I'm comin's fast I can!

WAYLON

You got five minutes get my Goddamn money and get your ass down that hill.

John plummets on his butt down the boulder's face, leaping outward halfway down. He lands hard, pitching off-balance onto the ground.

Grabbing his rifle, he fumblingly loads 4 rounds into the clip and then the clip into the gun.

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

Three minutes, John, till I have a slice!

Clambering frenziedly back up the boulder, the .308 slung over his shoulder, 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 stub is grotesquely swollen and dripping blood.

He lies down on the rock, and puts the gun to his right shoulder, hoping to use one of his four remaining fingers to fire it, 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.) (CONT'D)

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)

I don't see you walking out the woods
lugging a sack in sixty seconds, John,
I'm cutting off everything sticks out on
her from her knees up!

John rests the .308's barrel in the Y. He returns the butt to his shoulder and sites on the deck again.

Looking through the scope, 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. Waylon's eyes and tongue dart maniacally. He looks on the verge of cracking.

He wipes moisture from his eye. 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.

Looking through the scope again, only the upper half of Waylon's face shows above Abbie's head. Her blindfold dangles from one ear, her eyes are shut, her gag pulsating. John lays the crosshairs on Waylon's brow.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

You're two minutes past the deadline, you
Goddamn raccoon-balled son of a bitch.
Where hell you at?

On top of the boulder, 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.

Through the scope, John sees 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.

John collapses face-down on his arm, unable to look. A few beats of utter silence ensue; but it feels like an eternity.

The stillness is shattered when Abbie lets out a terrible scream.

John snaps the scope back to his eye. He sees Abbie cowering on her haunches, her blouse half-torn off and splattered with blood. She stares down at the monstrous sight of Waylon, laid out on his back, with the lower part of his face blown away.

EXT. TRAILER/YARD - DAY

His face blanched and his bandaged-hand dripping blood, John runs weakly into the yard and onto the deck. The rain has begun to fall, though not yet hard.

Abbie is in a terrified crouch near the wall. She punches out hysterically at John.

JOHN
Easy, Abbie! It's over.

Abbie collapses, trembling, incoherent. Tears stream out of her eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Everything's going to be all right. You hear me?

Without looking towards him, Abbie nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Can you stay here while I go inside, call for an ambulance?

She nods again.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'll just be gone a second, okay?

Wiping at her tears, Abbie nods again, but when she finally looks over to him, to reassure him she's okay, her face suddenly contorts into an expression of terror.

Before she has time to even let out a scream of warning, we see Waylon rising up on his knees behind John and plunging his knife into his back.

The two men fall to the deck in front of Abbie, John with the hunting knife in his back, Waylon at her feet, lamely reaching out towards it.

Though Waylon doesn't appear to have a whole lot of life left in him, Abbie takes no chances. Lunging forward, she pulls the knife out of John's back and then slams it into Waylon.

She looks momentarily stunned by this accomplishment, but soon breaks out of it when she hears John groaning.

ABBIE

John! Are you alright?

John moans something indecipherable. Abbie sees blood oozing out of his stab wound.

ABBIE (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

Abbie gets to her feet and disappears into the trailer, leaving John on the deck, staring blankly off into space.

For a moment it looks like he may be dead, but his eyes flash to life when a huge, scruffy raven walks past, clutching his severed 'trigger' finger in its beak.

John watches the bird take off with his finger and fly away. He follows its flight path until his eyes pass over the big boulder and he suddenly remembers that Ingrid's corpse is still lying unburied in the middle of the oak glade.

Despite his painful injuries, John is once more possessed by the fear his secret will be discovered. Pushing himself up off the deck, he gets to all fours, but no further. Grimacing in pain, heaving for air, he lowers himself back down.

Though it seems it would be impossible for him to finish the burial, John does not look at all ready to give up.

He lies there on the deck, in the now hard-falling rain, gazing up towards the big boulder with a look of total determination.

CUT TO:

EXT. OAK GLADE - POURING RAIN

From above, we see Ingrid's plastic wrapped corpse, lying in the middle of the small clearing. The pounding rain makes a popping sound when it hits the plastic. The camera slowly descends past the corpse and into the open grave where the rain water has begun to puddle.

EXT. WOODS - A BIT LATER

John fights through a densely forested area at the base of the big boulder. John is drenched. The gauze on his hand is long gone and his shirt is soaked as much in blood as it is in rain.

When he hears the faint echo of Abbie's voice calling out his name, he turns and looks down the hill. Through a labyrinth of tree branches, he spots her in front of the trailer, mounted up on Diablo.

The agitated horse circles and rears. Tugging at the reins to keep him from bolting, Abbie calls out a few more times for John. Then, apparently giving up on finding him and going for help, she charges off on her horse and disappears from view.

John's eyes fall on the twisted form of Waylon's lifeless body, still sprawled across the deck. Then he is fighting his way up the hill again.

EXT. OAK GLADE - POURING RAIN

The rain has eroded the pile of dirt from the grave, transforming the clearing into a muddy mess. The grave itself has become a pit of deep, muddy water.

When John finally staggers into the clearing, he finds the dead girl's body stranded in the middle of a deep puddle of brown water. He splashes through the puddle and kneels down next to the plastic-wrapped corpse. Almost immediately, he realizes the plastic is filling up with water and will soon cover Ingrid's mouth and nose.

Looking somehow horrified by this, John tears open a couple of small holes in the plastic and the water begins to slowly drain out. As he watches the water gradually descend around Ingrid's body, John finds a small tear and starts to gently peel away the plastic covering her face.

It seems relieving when he does this, like she has been suffocating all this time and can finally breathe fresh air again. Staring down at her, John looks much more

than relieved. He looks amazed. Cutting to his POV, Ingrid is alive again. She stares up at John with her brilliant blue eyes. Her face has regained its pale, white youthful complexion.

Though the rain makes it impossible discern, John's eyes seem to fill up with tears. He is so overcome with relief and joy, he fails to notice the walls of the grave, over-saturated with rain, are about to give way. Suddenly, he is falling headlong over Ingrid into the grave.

After he plunges into the pit of deep, muddy water, he finds himself crushed beneath the weight of the plastic-wrapped corpse, staring up into the dead, decaying version of Ingrid's face. He struggles desperately to get free, but it's of no use. With the water rising rapidly he will soon go under and drown.

As John lets out a long and final scream for help, the screen fades to black.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

John wakes up from a nightmare, looking feverish, frightened, disoriented.

MOIRA (O.S.)

John? John! Are you all right, John?

He eventually fixes his eyes on Moira sitting at his bedside, and seems to calm a bit. He relaxes his body back to the bed. Looking around, he sees his heavily bandaged hand, and an IV stuck in his arm.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

You must of had a nightmare.

John doesn't respond. He stares at Nolan sitting in Moira's lap. Nolan gazes curiously back with the two glistening, gem-like eyes that stud his round, fleshy face. He greets John with a gurgling sound.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

You alright?

John nods slightly. Moira eyes get a little misty from her emotion.

JOHN

What happened?

MOIRA
You don't remember?

As he recalls some images, a look of worry spreads across his face.

JOHN
Abbie...

MOIRA
She's fine John. She was here with me.
Just left awhile ago.

John fades out for a moment.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
You there?

Without looking towards her, John nods slightly.

JOHN
What I did...I wouldn't hurt a girl like that...

MOIRA
Abbie is fine, John. The only one hurt is you and that creep you killed. I still don't know what you got yourself into John, but you're lucky to be alive. I mean you got tangled up with one uniquely fucked up human being.

John frowns non-responsively and looks down at his injured hand.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
They're pretty sure he's the one who cut up that guy Carla was fucking.

This gets John's attention.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
But apparently that was just an average day's work for him. Carla said he was at my apartment once when she was babysitting. It gives me the shivers.

JOHN
And me.....the police want me, want to see me?

MOIRA
They do, but only so they can stick a medal on you. Tom and Bobby think you're
(MORE)

MOIRA (CONT'D)
some kind of hero for taking out that
dude. Abbie too.

John looks confused.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
For some reason, she's obsessed with you.
I think she's in love with you. Guess you
can have that effect on teenage girls.

John looks unsure.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
Anyway, she keeps tellin' everyone you
save her life, but she saved yours too.
If she hadn't been there and called for
help, you wouldn't be alive.

JOHN
She called?

MOIRA
Ummhmm, and watched over you until the
paramedics got there.

JOHN
You sure...about the police?

Nolan has started to squirm and give Moira a little
trouble.

MOIRA
Yeah, I'm sure. When the State Police
were there this morning one of 'em found
your rifle up by the boulder. They had a
whole vanload of investigators crawlin'
around the Hollow. They couldn't believe
you made the shot from that distance.

Hearing this, John looks more perplexed than ever.

JOHN
Where'd they find it?

MOIRA
Behind the boulder. Isn't that where you
shot from?

John nods subtly, a distant expression on his face.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
They were all goin' on about it being an
amazing shot.

JOHN

They didn't find anything else there...in
the clearing?

Moira shakes her head.

MOIRA

No. They didn't mention finding anything
else. Why? Was there -

Nolan gets a hold of the IV tube.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Nolan, let go of that. Is there something
else they should look for?

John shakes his head, this time pretty adamantly. He then
sinks back on his pillow and staring up towards the
ceiling, he lies there with an expression that seems half
relief and half wonder.

CUT TO:

EXT. OAK GLADE - DAY

In a wide shot of the oak glade, there are no signs of
Ingrid's corpse, or even that John had dug a grave for
her there.

After a beat or two, John enters the frame - as if we had
been looking at his POV - and walks into the clearing.

His hand is still bandaged, though only minimally, and
there is a slight trace of bandaging over his stab wound
beneath his shirt.

When he gets to the place where he remembers having dug
the grave for Ingrid, he stops and scans the ground
around him. There are no signs he had ever been there.
The short grasses form a seamless carpet.

The camera tilts up and finds John's face. He has
regained his color. He hasn't looked so flush and healthy
since the first scenes.

John goes from there to the boulder. He gets a hand hold
and climbs up the side. At the top, he gets to his feet
and looks down at the trailer. Moira sits on the deck
talking to Nolan, who crawls around on the deck. He can
only faintly hear Moira's voice.

Turning, he scans the clearing to see if there is
anything he can detect from this birds-eye-view. At the

opposite side of the clearing, his eyes fix on the hollow oak log where he had hidden the rifle and the money.

John looks curious. He climbs down the boulder and crosses to it.

Like someone returning to the spot from where their car has been towed or stolen, hoping it will have somehow returned, John reaches into the hollow log and feels around for the money. In this case however, John actually finds what he thought was lost.

With a look of amazement he pulls the dirty sack of money out of the log. Inside he not only finds the money, but also a folded up piece of paper.

Unfolding it, he finds a handwritten note inside. When he sees that it starts with DEAR JOHNNO, he instantly knows is from Simon, and as John begins to read it, we hear the note spoken in Simon's voice.

SIMON (V.O.)

Dear Johnno: Thought if I drunk 'nough that Beefeaters, I'd get the courage to snuff it, but the more I drank, the better I started feelin'...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SIMON'S CABIN - NIGHT

We see Simon lying on his couch, as he was when John left him the night before, but now he has the shotgun with him. He is finishing off the bottle of Beefeaters.

SIMON (V.O.)

...and 'fore long, I couldn't remember what I was doin' with that shotgun in my paws...

Holding the shotgun suspended over his body, inches from his face, he appears to consider the deed one last time, but then he slowly rotates the gun barrels towards the ceiling, and pulls the trigger.

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

...and all I could think about was that sack a money I saw you walk away with.

It blasts a gaping hole in the cabin's thin plywood ceiling. Looking up through the hole, Simon grins at the sight of the full moon shining down.

EXT. OAK GLADE - MORNING

He watches John hide the money in the log and disappear down the hill, and then he makes his move.

SIMON (V.O.)
 Money monster got his claws in me and I
 just couldn't shake him loose.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

Simon cruises down a country road in his Cadillac, the sack of money on the seat beside him.

SIMON (V.O.)
 Crazy thing is, once I had it and found
 myself drivin off to fuck knows where,
 all by my lonesome, I started feelin'
 like shit again. Coulda passed under the
 belly of a roach, walkin' upright.

Simon looks down at the sack of money.

SIMON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I figured right then it had to be that
 money and Ira's curse on it. And it
 wasn't too hard to know what I had to do.

We see Simon make a wide U-turn and head back in the opposite direction.

INT. SIMON'S CADILLAC - NIGHT

Simon pulls up at John's trailer and sees the lights out and police tape draped around.

SIMON (V.O.)
 Seein' all the fuss down at the trailer,
 I figured I'd put the money back to where
 I found it.

EXT. OAK GLADE - NIGHT

Simon enters the clearing with the sack of money. Things are wet from the rain, but the storm (never as torrential as in John's nightmare) has passed and the moon now shines bright. He sees the open pit and Ingrid's corpse.

SIMON (V.O.)
 Then I came upon a dead girl all wrapped
 up in plastic. I didn't quite know what
 (MORE)

SIMON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 to make of it, but I figured it was the
 kind of job you wouldn't leave half-done
 on purpose.

We see him shoveling dirt into the grave, and tilting
 down, see Ingrid's corpse just about covered.

SIMON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 So, I finished it. Even said a prayer.
 Hope I did the right thing there.

Simon leans into the hollow tree and pushes the money
 further back, gets up and disappears into the woods.

SIMON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I might be no good, Johnno, but I'm not
 bad neither. Least I don't think so.

EXT. OAK GLADE - DAY

John shoves the sack of money deep into the hollow log,
 puts Simon's letter in his pocket and walks across the
 clearing and into the woods.

SIMON (V.O.)
 For now, I think I'll go south down to
 Mexico, maybe one of them beaches with
 the coconuts and takeelah. Got to get my
 head clear.

EXT. THE RIDGE - SUNDOWN

From up atop the ridge, looking down, we can see Cecil
 Nobie leading his cows across the pasture. It looks like
 it could be John's POV. We've seen him looking down from
 this vantage point before.

SIMON (V.O.)
 If I ever come back around, I hope you'll
 be workin' a farm you bought, and that
 you'll consider hirin' me to do some
 plowin' or some chick feedin'. Until that
 day, yours, Simon.

When Cecil is about to cross out of the frame, we see
 John enter it. Working with Cecil, he is bringing up the
 rear. We watch him herding the rest of the cows across
 the field.

THE END