

C I R C L E V I L L E

by
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Inspired by a true story.

Jeff Portnoy
Bellevue Productions

TOGETHER: TWO TE
T HAPPENED: YOU LIW
ED FOR ELIMINATION.
YOU MUST GET RID OF THE
RE SHOTS FOR DRINKI
ANY BOOBY TRAPS A
ONE COULD ADMIT IT FE
THEY CAN NOW: THE S
WILL NOT STOP: MARY
R: ONLY A BUS DRIV
NOT HOW MEDIA UN
HIM: THERE WAS SIGNS
TY RESTAURANTS: THE
BH:

FADE IN ON:

A PEN.

An UNSEEN WRITER scrawls angular BLOCK LETTERS onto RULED PAPER ...

COMPULSIVE CRAZED ETCHING ... WORDS and PHRASES flash --

**PLEASE KNOW:
YOU ARE A PIG:
CALL THE SHERIFF:
THIS IS NO JOKE:
WHORE:**

The WRITER scratches an address into an ENVELOPE, finally --

CIRCLEVILLE, OH

Seals it.

ROLL MAIN TITLES

EXT. ROUTE 3 - DAWN

Flat, open, unforgiving land.

A FARMHOUSE juts from the horizon line. Scattered nearby are:

-- A SINGLE-WIDE TRAILER HOME

-- A '65 INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER TRACTOR with no side panel

-- A '75 red and white CHEVY C-10 CHEYENNE PICK-UP TRUCK

-- A '73 FORD/THOMAS SCHOOL BUS

SUPERIMPOSE -- **1982.**

CUT TO:

A WOMAN'S HAND, FINGERING A BLACK BEAD --

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

MARIANNE HOLLOWAY (32, stoic but faraway) prays the rosary in the driver's seat:

MARIANNE
I'm lost in the world, Lord. If I'm
wrong-headed, just tell me --

KNOCKING -- she jumps --

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)
Look, look!

MARIANNE pockets the rosary, wipes her eyes, opens the
jackknife door --

BETHANY (7, pigtails) stands in the doorway:

BETHANY
Daddy let me tighten the bolt.

She displays her grease-covered hands.

MARIANNE
Clean up. You're late.

Not the reaction she wanted. GARY HOLLOWAY (35, Marianne's
husband, weathered by life) hides his puffy face with a Reds
mesh hat ... limps into frame with a wrench:

GARY
She just wanted to be like her
mama, is all --

MARIANNE shakes her head and hops down the steps, into

THE DRIVEWAY,

past him, pulls BETHANY back toward their farmhouse.

MARIANNE
Where the hell's her lunch?

GARY sighs ...

CUT TO:

A SPINNING, CIRCULAR TIE RACK --

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

SAM KOWALSKI (35, sunken eyes, Rust Belt white collar, a
simmering volcano), half-dressed, searches for the right tie,
scratches the back of his neck ...

SAM
You're worried about the cost. No.
(a breath, then)
Let me guess, you're worried --

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
No, hon.

His wife, KATHY KOWALSKI (32, red Angora sweater, Mary Kay and Jazzercise) sits on the bed ... breast-feeds their baby, MARK (8 months):

KATHY
Not worried.

SAM
Fine. You're concerned --

KATHY
(shaking her head)
Let's get it all out in the open.

SAM
Jesus H. I know how to speak.

SAM spins the tie rack ... grabs up a red-and-black tartan tie and a baby blue paisley tie ... scratches his neck ...

KATHY
I really hate that.

SAM stops scratching, picks the red-and-black tartan tie ... holds it up to his shirt ...

KATHY (CONT'D)
Y'know, I forgot that I have a
Tupperware party tonight. Can you
ask your sister to watch Mark?

SAM
(annoyed)
Sure, I guess.

KATHY
(re: the ties)
Do you have something else?

SAM throws the red tie on the ground and puts on the baby blue ... picks up MARK ...

SAM
Let's get it all out in the open.

MARK SPITS UP all over his tie ...

CUT TO:

RIPPLES ON A POND ... THE HINT OF A FISHING LINE --

EXT. HARGUS LAKE - DAY

SHERIFF ED MADDUX (45, crisp brown uniform, Appalachian English) sits in his rowboat, fishing in blissful quiet.

ACROSS THE LAKE

There's an OLD FISHERMAN in a rowboat. SHERIFF MADDUX gives him a nod. Then --

VOICE (FROM RADIO)
Sheriff?

A POLICE RADIO CRACKLES from the open window of the PLYMOUTH GRAN FURY parked at the edge of the lake:

VOICE (FROM RADIO) (CONT'D)
Sheriff Maddux, come in.

SHERIFF MADDUX
(softly)
God bless it.

A crow CAWS ... SHERIFF MADDUX pulls up his line and rows back ... when he reaches the shore:

VOICE (FROM RADIO)
If you can hear me, can you pick up
some Folger's? Break room over here
is all out.

CUT TO:

THE BACK OF A BIG, ROUND, BLONDE-DYED BOUFFANT --

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

CLARA DOYLE (44, pearls, lithe) primps her hair and reads from her leather appointment book at the bathroom door -- we HEAR a faucet running on the other side:

CLARA

Friday, we host the Schweitzers ...
Doreen said Burt was positively
clamoring for my pineapple chicken.
And let me see ... Bridge on
Saturday with Curtis and Marjorie
... Sunday, you have a round of
golf with Judge Miller, but keep
the nineteenth hole short, because -
- remember? -- we have the Lion's
Club auction to fix the street
lights on Court Street. Black tie.
But I already took your tux to the
tailor.

Muffled from behind the door:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Why did you do that?

CLARA

(coy)

Well ... darling ...

INSIDE THE BATHROOM,

WILLIAM DOYLE (42, slick, handsome, and troubled) blows
cigarette smoke out the window ...

WILLIAM

(softly, to himself)

I can't. So help me God, I can't.

CLARA (O.S.)

... Darling?

WILLIAM

Yes?

CLARA (O.S.)

Darling, you're not smoking in
there, are you?

WILLIAM flicks his cigarette in the toilet ... takes off his
wedding ring and sets it on the sink.

WILLIAM

No, darling, I am not.

INT. SCHOOL BUS (MOVING)/EXT. CLINTON STREET - DAY

MARIANNE drives the MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS ... some clearly still dressed by mom (jean jackets, patchwork smock shirts). In the rear-view mirror, MARIANNE sees a BOY and a GIRL necking in the back seat.

MARIANNE
(calling back)
Donna Sue, would your mother want
to see you acting like a tramp?

DONNA SUE pulls herself off him:

DONNA SUE
No, ma'am.

The bus crests a hill ... MARIANNE pumps the brakes ...
Something's wrong ... pumps again and again ... nothing ...

MARIANNE
What the --

The bus picks up speed ... 30 mph ... 35 mph ...

Blows past a STUDENT waiting at his stop ...

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
No, no, no --

Approaching a tree-line 3-way junction at the bottom of the hill ... 40 mph ...

The KIDS start to notice -- some stand up ...

MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS
Hey! / Stop! / What are you doing?

Barreling toward the intersection ...

MARIANNE turns the wheel ... pulls the PARKING BRAKE --

TIRES SQUEAL ... THE BUS JUST BEATS A CROSSING BUICK --
ASPHALT SMOKING --

The bus SLIDES into the gravel berm and THUMPS to a stop ...
MARIANNE exhales as the KIDS freak out ...

CUT TO:

SHERIFF MADDUX, ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES, INSPECTING THE BUS' UNDERCARRIAGE ...

SHERIFF MADDUX
Yep, everything looks on the up-and-up to me, ma'am.

EXT. CLINTON STREET - LATER

KIDS board a back-up BUS ... SHERIFF MADDUX gets to his feet, dusts off his knees ...

MARIANNE
So you don't think the brakes were cut?

SHERIFF MADDUX
(laughing)
Now who would do a crazy thing like that?

She shrugs, jittery ... A tow truck pulls up ...

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
You're a little shaken up. Lemme give you a lift.

EXT. BUS LOT - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX parks his Plymouth Gran Fury ... lets MARIANNE out ...

MARIANNE
Thanks, Sheriff.

She passes a picnic table of DRIVERS playing cards for Kools ... they notice her ... RUSS MINSKER (36, wild eyes, scruffy, they used to let people like this drive school buses) rakes in his pot, then:

RUSS
And they say women can't drive.

The other DRIVERS LAUGH ...

MARIANNE
Fuck off, Russ.

RUSS
Watch your mouth, bitch.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Okay, that's enough.

KENNETH REID (46, effete, stuffed shirt, school treasurer and
bud department supervisor) rushes over:

KENNETH
Back to detail.
(to Marianne)
Not you, come with me.

THE DRIVERS
Ooh! / Uh oh! / Oh, boy!

MARIANNE follows KENNETH toward an office building ...

INT. SUPERINTENDENT DOYLE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

KENNETH escorts MARIANNE in ... SUPERINTENDENT WILLIAM DOYLE
shuts the door on him.

WILLIAM
Jesus, are you all right?

MARIANNE
Nobody was hurt, thank God.

WILLIAM listens for KENNETH'S footsteps to fade, then pulls
MARIANNE in and kisses her.

WILLIAM
If you want to go home, take the
day. I understand --

MARIANNE
I'm fine. Really.

He kisses her again.

WILLIAM
You should know, I'm leaving Clara.

MARIANNE
... I never wanted that.

WILLIAM
I know. I did.

MARIANNE
Will --

WILLIAM
I was lying awake last night and it
hit me. Why should I go through
life unhappy?

He brushes her hair from her cheek ... she kisses him ...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
You promised, remember?

MARIANNE
I know. I need time.

WILLIAM
We're not getting any younger.

MARIANNE
(pained)
Okay.

He pulls her in close ...

CUT TO:

EXT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - DUSK

MARIANNE parks her loaner in the driveway ... The tractor
panel is still open, the toolbox rests on the seat ... she
sighs ...

BETHANY
Time to see daddy!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

BETHANY bursts in ... MARIANNE follows ...

BETHANY
Daddy!

GARY's sitting on the floral couch, nursing a can of
Budweiser, his left thumb joint wrapped with gauze.

GARY
Easy, easy.

GARY hugs BETHANY, shielding her away from his injured hand
... looks up at MARIANNE, sheepish:

GARY (CONT'D)
Daddy hurt his self trying to fix
that goddamn tractor's gear
shifter. Luckily, it's not my
bowling hand.

MARIANNE
We need to talk.

GARY
Can it wait? --

VOICES (O.S.)
Surprise!

SAM carries two fresh Budweisers ... KATHY carries baby MARK.

KATHY
It's your favorite sister-in-law!
Need a hand with dinner?

MARIANNE stares daggers at GARY ...

CUT TO:

A POSTCARD OF A FANCY POOL, PALM TREES, RED ROOFED CONDOS ...

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

They've finished their Hamburger Helper.

SAM
Florida's Sansibel Beach Club.

MARIANNE
This is a time share?

KATHY
It's a unique investment
opportunity for our families,
y'know?

She hands KATHY back her postcard:

MARIANNE
I don't think we can afford this.

GARY
Let's hear them out.

KATHY looks to SAM, panicked ... *say it.*

SAM
You're concerned about the cost --

MARIANNE
No, we just don't have the money.

She gathers the dishes ... KATHY elbow SAM ... *idiot*.

IN THE KITCHEN,

MARIANNE dumps the plates in the sink, runs the hot water ...

A stack of mail is on the counter ... the ENVELOPE WITH THE
BLOCK LETTERS from the opening sits on top ...

MARIANNE inspects the block letter envelope ... opens it ...

ON THE LETTER:

Block-letters ... scrawled filth ... A phrase pops out:

**I KNOW YOU ARE A PIG AND WILL PROVE IT AND SHAME YOU OUT OF
OHIO:**

MARIANNE's eyes go wide as she reads ... mind racing ...

GARY
You're being rude. You didn't even
give them a chance.

He grabs a Tupperware for the leftover casserole ...

GARY (CONT'D)
What'd you wanna talk about?

She pockets the letter ...

MARIANNE
Nothing.

INT. SUPERINTENDENT DOYLE'S OFFICE - DAY

WILLIAM reads the letter, pained.

MARIANNE
They want me to tell the school
board so you'll be fired.

WILLIAM

Do you have any notion of who sent this?

MARIANNE

Are you sure Clara doesn't know about us?

WILLIAM

Positive. Besides, she wouldn't --

MARIANNE

I know.

WILLIAM

We should take this to the police --

MARIANNE

No. That would just overcomplicate things. If Gary found out ... Anyway, it's probably nothing.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

MARIANNE watches through the window:

BETHANY rides her purple Sears Spyder bicycle in circles in the yard ... The MAIL JEEP approaches ... MARIANNE bolts ...

EXT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

MARIANNE rushes down the driveway.

MARIANNE

(to Bethany)

Don't tear up the grass.

AT THE MAILBOX,

the MAILMAN (60s, Pacific Theater Navy Vet) hands MARIANNE her bundle:

MAILMAN

What a nice surprise. Usually just dogs chase me.

She checks the mail ... bills and junk. Phew. The MAILMAN puts the Jeep back in drive ... stops:

MAILMAN (CONT'D)
 How 'bout that? All this excitement
 and I almost forgot one --

He hands her an ENVELOPE with the same unmistakable BLOCK
 LETTERS ...

MAILMAN (CONT'D)
 Have a blessed day.

He cruises away and MARIANNE'S face drops ... she carefully
 removes the letter and reads ...

ON THE LETTER:

**CALL THE SHERIFF: HE CAN'T WATCH YOU FOREVER:
 I SHALL KEEP RINGING:
 AGAIN THIS IS NO JOKE:
 STAY AWAY FROM HIM NOON AS WELL AS NIGHT:
 IF I CAN'T GET YOU TOGETHER AND YOU MAKE A FOOL OF ME SUCH
 AS THE SCHOOL HAS DONE I SHALL COME OUT THERE AND PUT A
 BULLIT IN THAT LITTLE GIRL'S HEAD:
 TOO MANY THINK THIS IS A JOKE: WE'LL SEE IN TIME:
I KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE: I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOUR HOUSE:**

MARIANNE walks up the driveway in a daze ... the bike is on
 its side ... and BETHANY'S gone.

MARIANNE
 Bethany?

MARIANNE'S spinning ... *where is she?*

INT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Searching the living room ... kitchen ...

MARIANNE
Bethany?

Down the hall ... BETHANY'S room is empty ... back down the
 hall ... looks out the window at THE TRAILER ...

INT. TRAILER HOME - MOMENTS LATER

BETHANY eats potato chips and watches "SESAME STREET" next to
 her grandfather, DAVID HOLLOWAY (59, retired farmer,
 sonuvabitch in his day) ... her grandmother, LOUISE HOLLOWAY
 (55, David's wife), brings papaw a beer ...

MARIANNE storms in:

MARIANNE

Bethany --

WHAP! -- MARIANNE slaps BETHANY across the face ... BETHANY bursts into tears ...

BETHANY

Papaw!

LOUISE

Marianne!

DAVID

Hey now! --

But they're out the door ...

EXT. TRAILER HOME - CONTINUOUS

MARIANNE carries a bawling BETHANY outside, hugs her close:

MARIANNE

Okay. You're okay.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST FRANKLIN STREET - DAY

One of the twenty-odd blocks that make up downtown Circleville. The MAILMAN tosses his mailbag into the Jeep ...

INT. MAIL JEEP - CONTINUOUS

... Turns the key in the ignition ...

CLOSE ON THE MAILBAG

Two ENVELOPES peek out of the top, addressed in those big BLOCK LETTERS ... the Jeep lurches forward ... THUMP! - a pothole ... the bag SHAKES, revealing MORE and MORE of these BLOCK LETTER addressed ENVELOPES ... dozens, addressed to people all over Circleville ...

INT. WARD'S SUPERMARKET - DAY

At the register, MARIANNE inspects BETHANY'S cheek ... there's a little redness but not enough for anyone to notice ... BETHANY eats an orange Push Pop ...

A MALE CASHIER (16, bowl cut, braces, not exactly owning his blue smock) rings them up ... MARIANNE fills out a check ...

MALE CASHIER
Fifteen oh-seven, ma'am.

MARIANNE
(re: Bethany)
Did you get her popsicle?

BETHANY smiles with bright orange lips ... the MALE CASHIER shakes his head, re-rings ...

MALE CASHIER
Dangit.
(picking up a phone)
Void on eight.

The SHOPPERS behind them groan ... some switch lines ...

A MANAGER (40s, stocky, "WARD'S" embroidered dress shirt, coronary case) bumps the MALE CASHIER and puts a key in the register:

MANAGER
One second, ma'am.

He re-rings the order ...

MARIANNE
(distracted)
It's okay --

MARIANNE'S POV:

A few registers over, a FEMALE CASHIER and a BAGGER gossip ... glancing up at MARIANNE ... giggling ... barely audible:

FEMALE CASHIER
That's really her?

On MARIANNE: *are they talking about me?*

MANAGER
Fifteen forty, ma'am.

MARIANNE scrawls the total, tears out the check, hands it to the MANAGER ... he looks at her name ... double-take: *no shit.*

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Thanks for choosing Ward's, Missus Holloway.

She takes the receipt and leaves in a hurry ...

INT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

MARIANNE lugs two bags of groceries ... BETHANY skips in after ...

MARIANNE
Wash up. Don't touch anything.

BETHANY runs off ... MARIANNE passes GARY, who's at the dining room table, into

THE KITCHEN

And drops the bags on the counter. Talks to GARY in the other room:

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Make sure I go to Kroger next time.

Folds up an empty paper bag ...

GARY (O.S.)
Dear Mister Holloway, we must
inform you that your wife is having
an affair with Mister Doyle.

MARIANNE freezes ... then tiptoes into

THE DINING ROOM

He reads from a LETTER:

GARY (CONT'D)
She has chased him until he caught
her.

She's trembling.

GARY (CONT'D)
Eliminate them both before they
eliminate you.

He folds the letter and places it on the table.

GARY (CONT'D)
I'll ask you once. Is this true?

MARIANNE
No.

He shakes his head ...

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
I've been receiving letters, too. I
kept them from you --

GARY
Why?

MARIANNE
Because it's just a sick joke.

GARY
I don't believe you.

GARY gets up, paces ...

GARY (CONT'D)
Last Wednesday night, when you said
you were at to that PTA meeting --

MARIANNE
I was at the meeting. You can call
Donna Kilpatrick.

GARY
I'm asking you.

MARIANNE
And I gave you an answer. Is this
an inquisition?

GARY
Things have been bumpy between us
for a while. But, cheating? --

MARIANNE
I can't do this.

She starts for the door. GARY blocks her path.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Stop.

GARY
Where you goin? Back to him?

MARIANNE
(laughing)
I think you're actually enjoying
this.

INT. BETHANY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BETHANY sits Barbie and Ken down for a nice dinner ...
MUFFLED ARGUING through the walls:

GARY (O.S.)
That's bullshit!

She flinches but continues playing ...

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MARIANNE
You want me to defend myself --

GARY
I want you to level with me.

MARIANNE
How many times do I need to say it?
Nothing happened. This is just the
work of some sicko creep.

GARY shakes his head and makes for the

DOORWAY

... throws on his Carhartt ... MARIANNE follows:

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Hey --

WHAM! -- Slams the door in her face ... she goes blank.

INT. JACK'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The kind of dive that doesn't have a ladies' room. GARY
commiserates over beers with SAM:

SAM
If I were in your shoes ... listen,
you know I love your crazy sister
to death, but let's just say I
wouldn't be handling myself like a
gentleman.
(to the Bartender)
Two more.
(to Gary)
Do you believe her?

GARY
I want to believe her.

SAM
I never pegged Marianne as a
cheater. She's been head over heels
for you, since -- shit -- since
you stole her from me at the
homecoming dance!

GARY chuckles ... SAM focuses in on THREE GUYS playing darts,
glancing over at GARY ... the ring-leader's building to a
punch-line:

DARTS GUY
... I guess she's been giving rides
all over town!

They're positively dying.

SAM
(at the main guy)
Something funny over there, buddy?

DARTS GUY
Just discussing the local news of
the day with some friends.

SAM
I hope you aren't gossiping.

DARTS GUY
Why's that?

SAM
Gossip's for old ladies and bridge
club.

The regulars are paying attention now ... DARTS GUY walks
over to their table ...

GARY
Easy. For chrissakes --

DARTS GUY
Maybe y'all should focus on your
own problems instead of starting
new ones.

SAM
Sure, sure --

POP! -- SAM SUCKER-PUNCHES him in the jaw ... stumbles back
into his friends ... They hold him up ...

SAM (CONT'D)
Got any more jokes?

GARY pulls SAM away toward the exit ...

SAM (CONT'D)
No, fuck him, talking about her
like that!

GARY
C'mon. Let's go.

DART GUY'S FRIENDS rush after GARY and SAM, not happy ...

GARY (CONT'D)
Shit. --

GARY and SAM break for the door --

SMASH TO:

INT. GARY'S TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Speeding and laughing their asses off. Marlboro 100s, and
"HUNGRY HEART" on Stereo Rock 92.

INT. MARIANNE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

MARIANNE looks through the window at their surroundings: the
wide plains -- dark and vulnerable ...

She takes a deep breath, picks up the rotary phone, dials ...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CLARA picks up the phone:

CLARA
Doyle residence?

MARIANNE
Hello, Clara. This is Marianne
Holloway.

CLARA is stunned silent ...

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

I think you know by now there have
been some nasty letters floating
around town about William and me. I
just wanted to clear the air, woman
to --

Click. Dial tone.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

-- woman.

INT. MARIANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She lies awake ... a door CREAKS open ... a sliver of light
reveals GARY ... he unbuttons his shirt and crawls into bed
... throws his arm over her ... she leans into him, relieved.

FADE TO:

EXT. BUS LOT - DAY

MARIANNE scrubs the wheels of her bus, on her knees ... KENNY
ROGERS' "LADY" on her Walkman II.

A shadow falls on her ... a figure reflected in the bus panel
-- it's RUSS. She catches her breath:

RUSS (O.S.)

I haven't forgotten. You still owe
me an apology.

She spins and takes off her headphones. He stands over her,
menacing.

RUSS (CONT'D)

But, since you're down there --

He takes a step forward, right on top of her ... MARIANNE
slips by him, stumbles to her feet, and scampers away ...

RUSS (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Run along ...

EXT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

GARY, in his pajamas and loafers, steps out of the garage and
into the morning sun ... lights a Marlboro ... walks down the
drive to pick up the paper ... spots something, across the
street ...

GARY'S POV:

A crudely scrawled PAPER SIGN flaps on the mailbox:

HOLLOWAY IS A HOMEBREAKING PIG

GARY removes the sign ... looks around for a clue ... locks in on something: *oh, shit* ...

DOWN THE BLOCK - MOMENTS LATER

GARY takes another sign off a utility pole:

DOYLE FUCKS EMPLOYEES

... tears it in half ...

CUT TO:

INT. GARY'S TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Pulls over ... grabs another one:

THINK OF YOUR CHILDREN AND THEIR FUTURE!

Adds it to the dozen on the passenger seat ...

EXT. PICKAWAY STREET - DAY

Church bells ring ... TOWNSPEOPLE in their Sunday best march to Kingston United Methodist ... GARY darts between them, taking down VULGAR SIGNS papering a utility pole ...

A MOTHER shields her DAUGHTER from him ... an OLD WOMAN titters ... GARY looks away, ashamed ... tosses the signs in his truck ... SLAMS the passenger door ...

When the townspeople pass, GARY locks himself in his truck and lets out a primal scream.

CUT TO:

A FRAMED AND MATTED ARTICLE FROM *THE CIRCLEVILLE HERALD*:

"MADDUX WINS PICKAWAY SHERIFF'S RACE," subtitled "THIRD GENERATION TO HOLD OFFICE."

In the accompanying PICTURE: SHERIFF ED MADDUX (late 30s) stands between his father, CLINT (50s), and his grandfather, DWIGHT (70s). These are tough S.O.B.'s.

INT. SHERIFF'S RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX makes a peanut butter sandwich at the table beneath the picture.

The ROTARY PHONE RINGS ... he grabs it:

SHERIFF MADDUX (INTO PHONE)

Yes?

(listening)

Can it wait?

(it can't; he sighs)

Christ.

He hangs up and takes off

INTO THE HALL

Following SHERIFF MADDUX out the heavily locked back door, which leads into

THE JAIL

Yes, his house is attached to the jail ... SHERIFF MADDUX turns down a white brick corridor of locked cells to

THE DETECTIVE'S BUREAU

where DEPUTY DOLORES MADDUX (43, his wife, beehive, khaki uniform, sugar sweet) greets him:

DOLORES

They're just scared ...

She leads him through the bullpen and out into

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MARIANNE and GARY stand before the desk with a stack of SIGNS and LETTERS:

SHERIFF MADDUX

How can I help you folks?

GARY

Someone's been sending my wife these threatening letters and putting up signs.

SHERIFF MADDUX

Mmhm.

MARIANNE

I have reason to believe that it's my co-worker. His name is Russell Minsker --

SHERIFF MADDUX

Why do you think so?

MARIANNE

He's harassed me in the past.

GARY

Can you bring him in?

SHERIFF MADDUX

On what charges?

GARY

Making violent threats against my wife, against my family --

SHERIFF MADDUX

Words?

MARIANNE

We have a little girl at home.

SHERIFF MADDUX

(fidgeting, annoyed)

Mmhm.

They wait for his reassurance ...

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)

If you receive any more of these letters, bring em in to Dolores. With the envelopes, too.

GARY

... That's it?

SHERIFF MADDUX

I know this ain't what you wanna hear, but you have little evidence and no real crime to speak of. My advice is, try to ignore it.

He extends his hand to GARY.

GARY
This isn't right.
(to Marianne)
Come on.

She follows, dismayed ... When the door clicks shut, SHERIFF MADDUX looks to DOLORES ... she's concerned.

SHERIFF MADDUX
(annoyed)
Letters and signs ... I'm at lunch.

He pecks her on the forehead.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

GARY and MARIANNE sit down for fondue with SAM and KATHY.
BETHANY crawls on the floor with MARK.

From the kitchen:

SAM (O.S.)
Minsker, you said?

GARY
That's the one.

SAM emerges from the kitchen with the YELLOW PAGES ... KATHY is fed up:

SAM
(scanning)
M-I-N --

KATHY
(to Marianne)
You gave me the recipe, but I can
never make this the way you make
it.

MARIANNE
What kind of mushroom soup do you
use? --

SAM
Got him. Russell Franklin Minsker.
Lives out in Orient.

KATHY
Hon, this isn't exactly dinner
conversation.

SAM
Hush up. I'm trying to help.

KATHY
(enough)
They already went to the police,
y'know --

SAM
And the police did exactly diddly-
shit.

BETHANY giggles ... KATHY shakes her head.

MARIANNE
Bethany, can you take Marky to the
living room?

She does.

KATHY
So, what are you gonna do? Drive to
his house? Slap him around or
something?

SAM
No, nothing like that at all.

SMASH TO:

A PEN.

An UNSEEN WRITER scrawls angular BLOCK LETTERS onto RULED
PAPER ...

WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

SAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Take that, fuck-o.

PULL BACK TO:

THE LIVING ROOM - LATER

The kids have gone to bed ... MARIANNE, GARY, SAM are having
a drunken, late-night letter writing session ... LETTERS and
PAPERS and CANS strewn about ... but KATHY'S sober.

WBNS "EYEWITNESS NEWS AT 11" is on the tube ... PEGGY LEE'S
"ME AND MY SHADOW" spins. SAM displays his work to MARIANNE:

MARIANNE

That's really good. I mean, really good. Look at it, Kathy.

KATHY

(ignoring her, to Sam)
I just remembered I'm supposed to return the fondue set to Charlene.

SAM

Can it wait until tomorrow?

KATHY

She needs it for a thing.
(off his sigh)
Don't stop on my account. I'll be right back.

Before he can answer, KATHY packs up ... GARY takes a slug from his can of Budweiser, stumbles over to MARIANNE and pulls her into a slow dance ...

MARIANNE

Don't spill on my dress.

GARY

Shut up and dance.

SAM watches MARIANNE and GARY gently swaying ... it's a sweet moment but tinged with sadness ... GARY's clinging to her ...

INT. SHERIFF'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

DOLORES eats tuna macaroni casserole. SHERIFF MADDUX is on the phone, troubled:

SHERIFF MADDUX (INTO PHONE)

Mmhm, sure. Well, best of luck to you. Bye now.

He hangs up and takes a seat.

DOLORES

Who was that?

SHERIFF MADDUX

Fella named John Most. Told me he's running against me for sheriff next year.

DOLORES

Never heard of him.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Me either ...

Back to the casseroles.

EXT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

GARY is hunched over the tractor, inspecting the fuel filter.

MARIANNE and BETHANY hula hoop in the front yard ...
BETHANY's hula hoop falls to the ground ...

MARIANNE
How long?

BETHANY
Eight Mississippi.

MARIANNE
Not bad.

An ENGINE REVS off-screen. MARIANNE sees something down the street ... her hula hoop falls to the ground:

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Gary.

GARY looks up at the MAIL JEEP, approaching their house ... he stops working.

The MAILMAN stops at their MAIL BOX, delivers, waves at them and drives off.

MARIANNE hesitates, then walks down the driveway ...

AT THE MAILBOX

She flips through the letters, looking for the unmistakable block letters ... relief washes over her face ... she displays the mail to GARY, and shakes her head, relieved.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Nothing.

He smiles, but something's still bothering him ...

FADE TO:

A BOWLING BALL CRASHING THROUGH TEN PINS --

INT. CIRCLE "D" RECREATION - NIGHT

SAM admires his strike:

SAM
I've been in the pocket all night.

He pats RICK (38, next up) on the back and shakes BILL's (47, scorekeeper) hand, then takes a seat next to GARY, who's pouring a beer, spaced out and unshaven. All wear mint green polo shirts with "Lucky Strikes" emblazoned on the back.

SAM (CONT'D)
(to Gary)
You notice anything weird about
Kathy? I feel like she hasn't been
acting like herself lately.

PINS scatter against the boards:

SAM (CONT'D)
She and I have had our run-ins in
the past, you know that as well as
anyone, but this is different.
She's been sneaking around. Like
she's up to something, I just don't
know what yet.

GARY
(slurring)
You want me to tell you my sister
isn't a cheater? She's a woman.
It's in her nature.

GARY pours another from the pitcher, downs that real quick.

SAM
Slow down, bud.

GARY reaches for a refill ... SAM pulls the pitcher away:

SAM (CONT'D)
You wanna get home tonight.

GARY
It's been three weeks since we got
the last letter. Quiet. But when I
look at Marianne, I just can't seem
to get him out of my head.

He chuckles, morbid, distant ...

RICK (O.S.)
Gary, you're up!

GARY stumbles to his feet, grabs his ball and rolls in one motion, missing the pocket badly, leaving 1-2-4-7-8. He turns back toward SAM with a vacant smile ...

EXT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

BETHANY supervises GARY as he works on the tractor ... DAVID supervises from a lawn chair. GARY pulls the choke and pushes the starter ... the ENGINE rattles but doesn't turn over ... he clutches his leg, in pain:

DAVID
You okay?

GARY
Fine.

DAVID
It's the starter.

GARY ignores him, hops down and looks at the side panel ... scans his tools ... not what he needs:

GARY
Shit.
(to Bethany)
Sweet pea, can you run inside and bring daddy the screwdriver with the little cross tip?

She takes off, on a mission.

DAVID
Ought to sell her for scrap. Cut your losses.

GARY
Back off me, dad. I'll get it.

DAVID throws up his hands and limps toward his trailer ... The PHONE RINGS inside ... GARY mops his brow with a rag.

BETHANY emerges from the house:

BETHANY
Daddy, there's a man on the phone wants to talk to you.

GARY
Who's that?

BETHANY
He didn't say.

GARY sighs, walks

INTO THE HOUSE,

and picks up the phone from the kitchen counter:

GARY
Hello? This is Gary.

Runs himself a glass of tap water ...

GARY (CONT'D)
Hello?
(a beat)
Last chance.

He hangs up.

OUTSIDE - LATER

The sun beats on GARY ... The engine isn't cooperating.

BETHANY
It's okay, daddy.

He tousles her hair. The PHONE RINGS inside ...

GARY
Stay right here. I'll get it.

He makes his way

INTO THE HOUSE

and answers:

GARY (CONT'D)
Holloway residence?

Nothing.

GARY (CONT'D)
Who is this?

Roots around the fridge, grabs a Budwesier ...

GARY (CONT'D)
Whoever this is, don't call this
number again. Got it?

OUTSIDE - LATER

Two empty beer cans on the tractor seat ... GARY polishes off a third ... The side and front panels are off now ... it's a disaster ...

The PHONE RINGS, inside ...

GARY (CONT'D)
(yelling at the house)
DON'T ANSWER IT, SWEET PEA.

He staggers up the drive, tosses the empty beer can in the yard ...

INSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

... Passes BETHANY, putting together a Snoopy jigsaw puzzle:

GARY (CONT'D)
Go in your room.

She does.

IN THE KITCHEN

GARY grabs the phone, mid-ring:

GARY (CONT'D)
What do you want, Russ? Huh? Talk.

... Flings open the fridge ... cracks another can ...

GARY (CONT'D)
That's right. I know it's you, you
shitheel cocksucker.

Takes a swig ...

GARY (CONT'D)
Nothing to say, nothing to say.
This is real funny to you, huh?
MESSING WITH MY FAMILY?

MOMENTS LATER

GARY flips through the YELLOW PAGES ... finds it:

MINSKER, RUSSELL FRANKLIN

He dials. It rings and rings and rings ... he SLAMS the handset into the housing again and again and --

GARY (CONT'D)

FUCK.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

BETHANY tiptoes past the kitchen ... the PHONE RINGS ...

IN THE LIVING ROOM

She looks at GARY, sprawled out on the couch, surrounded by empty beer cans, an ice pack on his forehead.

The PHONE stops ringing, then, after a beat, STARTS UP AGAIN.

GARY

(weak, slurring)

Let it ring, sweet pea ...

FADE TO:

INT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

No more phone ringing ... MARIANNE's in a rush, grabbing dishes from the table, putting them in the sink, putting on her shoes and getting her purse ... GARY follows, hung over:

GARY

Where are you going?

MARIANNE

(annoyed)

Out. With Kathy.

GARY

(pulling her in, grabby)

C'mon. Stay with me.

MARIANNE

Sober up. And don't wake Bethany.

He moves in for a kiss but she's out the front door.

LATER

GARY watches Johnny Carson interview Robert Blake on NBC and nurses a Budweiser ... DAVID snores in an armchair.

The PHONE RINGS ...

IN THE KITCHEN,

GARY picks up the phone:

GARY
We doing this again? More silent
treatment, you little bitch?

Click.

GARY presses the switch hook, cross-references RUSSELL's number in the open YELLOW PAGES, dials -- a ring, then:

RUSS (FROM PHONE)
Who is this?

GARY
This is Gary Holloway, as you
goddamn well know.

RUSS (FROM PHONE)
You been messin with the wrong guy,
asshole.

GARY
I will kill you.

RUSS laughs.

GARY (CONT'D)
What's funny?

RUSS (FROM PHONE)
Come try me, bitch.

GARY
Where and when?

RUSS (FROM PHONE)
You don't wanna die.

GARY
WHERE AND WHEN?

A beat, then:

RUSS (FROM PHONE)
The Relax Inn, out on twenty-three.
Fast as you can, fuckstick.

GARY hangs up and walks to

HIS BEDROOM.

Digs through a dresser junk drawer ... his old MILITARY I.D.,
a PURPLE HEART ... grabs a BERETTA 92 ... out and into

BETHANY'S ROOM.

She's asleep ... he brushes her hair and kisses her cheek,
careful not to wake her ... the GUN HANDLE gleams from the
back of his waistband.

IN THE LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

GARY hobbles to the front door ...

DAVID (O.S.)
(groggy)
The hell's going on?

GARY
Nothing. Watch Bethany.

GARY stops, looks back at the kitchen ... Thinks ...

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SAM paces, he's on the phone:

SAM
Slow down ... Wait ... Jesus, Gary
... Okay ... Shit ... Yes.

He hangs up.

SAM (CONT'D)
Shit.

INT. SAM'S '76 OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS (MOVING) - NIGHT

Alone ... gunning it ...

EXT. US-23 - NIGHT

Four lanes and a center divide. SAM's Cutlass tears through the night ...

INT. SAM'S '76 OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS (MOVING) - NIGHT

The shabby NEON SIGN of the RELAX INN on the left ...

He pulls ahead and makes a hard U-TURN, barely keeping the car upright ...

SAM'S POV:

THE PARKING LOT -

One-story strip of a run-down motel ... GARY'S PICK-UP TRUCK ... A RUST-COLORED AMC GREMLIN ...

A TRAIL OF BLOOD ...

SAM parks.

EXT. RELAX INN PARKING LOT - NIGHT

SAM follows the trail cautiously ... it grows larger ...

SAM

No ...

And then he sees

RUSSELL, DEAD. BLED OUT FROM HIS STOMACH.

SAM (CONT'D)

Fuck.

SIRENS in the distance, growing louder ... SAM stumbles forward, queasy ...

There's another body:

GARY, SHOT IN THE HEAD.

SAM VOMITS ... falls to his knees:

SAM (CONT'D)

OH GOD.

The SIRENS are close now. RED-AND-BLUE LIGHTS on his back ...

SAM (CONT'D)

NO. NO --

SAM crawls toward GARY'S CORPSE, crying, hysterical ... TWO POLICE OFFICERS pull him away ...

His GUTTURAL SCREAMS of agony dissolve to a bugle playing "TAPS" ...

FADE TO:

EXT. FOREST CEMETERY - DAY

The MOURNERS (mostly farmers and their wives) listen to an HONOR GUARD'S bugle ...

A CHAPLAIN and the COLOR GUARD (late 40s, white guys in caps and dress) stand at the grave side:

CHAPLAIN

Grant also that we may be uplifted
from our sorrow, so that we may
more faithfully serve You our God
and more effectively honor the
memory of our comrade departed.
Amen.

As he finishes, DAVID and LOUISE comfort the KIDS ... SAM glugs from a flask. MARIANNE cries, softly ... KATHY holds her ... glares at SAM: *he's already drunk* ...

KATHY

(mouthing)

Slow down.

INT. VFW - POST #3331 - DAY

The crusty hall has been converted to a memorial service. The MEMBERS eat cold cuts and hotdish.

SAM, soused, stews alone at a table ... finishes a Coors and CRUSHES the can in his hand ...

SAM pushes himself up and drags himself across the linoleum floor toward the cooler ... KATHY intervenes:

KATHY

(whispering)

I'm calling you a cab.

SAM
(slurring)
Bullshit.

SAM brushes past her. She follows, tugs at his arm:

KATHY
You're embarrassing me.

SAM
You see? This is about you. You
never gave a shit about Gary.

He turns away ...

KATHY
Hey! Asshole!

She tugs at his arm again --

SAM PUSHES her, too hard ... she stumbles backwards and TRIPS
... the room's watching now.

MARIANNE comes to her side ... SAM tries to help KATHY up.

KATHY (CONT'D)
(to Sam)
Get away from me.

SAM
Jesus, you just fell --

SMACK! -- KATHY HITS SAM across the mouth:

KATHY
I hate you!

She takes off ... SAM rubs his jaw and smiles sheepishly.
Evil eyes from the whole room.

FADE TO:

THE TRACTOR -- COVERED IN SNOW, ALL RUSTED TO SHIT.

EXT. ROUTE 3 - DAY

MARIANNE's weathered FARMHOUSE ... the TRAILER HOME is also
still out front, a little worse for wear.

SUPERIMPOSE -- **One Year Later.**

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

MUSIC -- ELVIS COSTELLO'S "MAN OUT OF TIME."

A) EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

MARK (almost 2) toddles in his snowsuit as KATHY (33) keeps a close watch:

KATHY
That's good, hon.
(behind her)
Isn't he doing so good?

Behind them, a LOCKSMITH (40s, burly) works on the front door:

LOCKSMITH
Sure, ma'am.
(and then)
That's eight bucks for doing the
locks.

B) INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

SAM (36, stubble, unkempt) eats some Stouffer's on his bed and watches a RONALD REAGAN speech on the tube while a MAID vacuums ... he turns up the volume, annoyed at her:

RONALD REAGAN (FROM TV)
... I urge you to beware the
temptation of pride -- the
temptation of blithely declaring
yourselves above it all and label
both sides equally at fault, to
ignore the facts of history and the
aggressive impulses of an evil
empire ...

C) INT. SHERIFF'S GRAN PLYMOUTH (MOVING) - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX (46) drives his beat ... spots it -- in front of a stately BRICK HOME ... a red, white and blue YARD SIGN:

**ELECT JOHN MOST
FOR PICKAWAY COUNTY SHERIFF
THE CANDIDATE WITH THE MOST!**

SHERIFF MADDUX parks ... gets

OUT OF HIS CAR,

makes sure the coast is clear, PULLS THE SIGN UP from the ground, bends it in half and TOSSES IT in his trunk.

D) INT. PEEBLES DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

MARIANNE (33) looks through a rack of white dresses for BETHANY (8, sulking):

MARIANNE

Are you excited for your first communion? You get to wear a fancy white dress. We'll get your hair done --

BETHANY

No. It's stupid.

MARIANNE

Don't say that. God's always watching.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

KATHY and her attorney, STUART KATZ (50s, white hair, distinguished-looking) sit across from SAM and his attorney, LYLE GERHARDT (42, slick, navy double breasted windowpane suit, got into law for the golf).

STUART

It is my client's opinion that the house remain in her possession so as to make this, uh, transition, as painless as possible for their young son.

LYLE

Of course she does.

STUART

So that's agreeable, then?

LYLE chuckles, looks to SAM. SAM nods. LYLE opens his briefcase, withdraws a MANILA FOLDER, and slides it across the table.

STUART (CONT'D)

What's this shit, Lyle?

Silence. STUART looks to KATHY, then opens the envelope:

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS OF KATHY WITH A LIGHT-HAIRED MAN ...
GETTING OUT OF HIS YELLOW EL CAMINO ... KISSING ...

KATHY bursts into tears ... this is news to STUART.

LYLE

Do you want a moment to speak with
your client alone?

STUART

Oh, fuck you.

SAM

Kath, I don't want a war. I just
want to see him my share of the
time.

KATHY

You had someone follow me? What's
wrong with you?

LYLE

(to Sam)

Don't answer that.

(to Stuart)

Shall we continue?

STUART

(sweaty)

Well, obviously, we need to, uh,
take a look at the parameters --

KATHY

(getting up)

No. We're through here.

Before she leaves:

KATHY (CONT'D)

Our marriage was over a long time
ago, y'know.

FADE TO:

HANDS WIPING SLUSH AND DIRT FROM A GRANITE GRAVE MARKER --

GARY HOLLOWAY

PFC 101 ABN DIV VIETNAM

1947-1982

EXT. FOREST CEMETERY - DAY

SAM drinks something terrible from a flask.

SAM
What'd you have to be so tough for?
Prick.

He looks at other gravestones, covered with flowers ...
GARY's is bare ... something's eating at him.

EXT. MARIANNE'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

SAM walks up the driveway. There's a "SOLD" sign in front of the ditch ... he's confused.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Sam, that you?

SAM turns -- DAVID (60) stands in the doorway of his trailer.

INT. TRAILER HOME - MOMENTS LATER

DAVID (60) brings SAM a beer. LOUISE (56) cries and tapes up moving boxes.

DAVID
She evicted us, that's what the hell happened.

SAM
Why did she sell?

DAVID
You ain't heard?
(to Louise)
Wanna tell him?

She shakes her head, too upset to speak.

DAVID (CONT'D)
She's shackin up with Bill Doyle.

SAM'S in disbelief.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Bought a big fancy place together up in Lancaster. Yep, been throwin money around like fools -- even offered to set the two of us up in a new apartment, but I told em to pound salt.

SAM digs at the back of his neck with his nails ...

DAVID (CONT'D)

Mhmm. So I guess you could say Lou
and I's shit out of luck -- pardon
my French. But we'll figure it out,
won't we, girl?

DAVID hugs LOUISE around the shoulders, but it just makes her
cry harder.

INT. STUART KATZ'S OFFICE - NIGHT

STUART places a pen and pad in front of KATHY:

STUART

I'm going to list some things, and
I want you to rank their importance
to you from one to three, with one
being essential and three being
something you could live without.

KATHY

Gotcha.

STUART

The house.
(waiting; she writes)
Your bank account.
(waiting; she writes)
Sole custody of Mark.
(when she's done)
Good?

She slides over the paper: all ones.

STUART (CONT'D)

See, that's the problem. You're not
going to get all of everything. But
if we're smart about it, you could
get some of each.

KATHY

I think I can get everything.

STUART

You're setting yourself up for
disappointment.

KATHY

There's something you ought to know
about Sam ...

INT. ANHEUSER-BUSCH OF COLUMBUS - DAY

SAM wears a lab coat over his suit and tie ... a similarly-dressed BREWER (40s, gruff) leads him past the massive mash-turns:

BREWER
... Wort stability's good, crystal clear.

He waits for a response that doesn't come ...

BREWER (CONT'D)
We're about to do the Oxidase if you wanna hop in.

SAM stares into the distance ... no longer following ...

BREWER (CONT'D)
Everything okay, Mister Kowalski?

SAM
(snapping back)
Fine, thanks. It sounds like you have everything all covered. I think I'll head back to the office.

BREWER
Sure ...

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - LATER

Orange curtains, patterned carpet, wallpaper ... not subtle. He grabs his jacket and calls out to his SECRETARY:

SAM
I feel like crap. I'm heading home for the day.

CUT TO:

INT. LISTON & CO. INSURANCE OFFICE - DAY

DICK LISTON (40s, red polo shirt, toupée) leans back in his chair, troubled:

DICK
Jeez, Sam. What you're asking me here -- I mean, jeez.

SAM

We've done a lot of business together over the years. You insure ours cars, the house ... heck, I always considered us like family.

DICK

Yeah, but you're putting me in a real pickle here. These policies are confidential, you can understand that --

SAM

Of course I do. And you know I wouldn't ask you unless I had a reason.

DICK

I shouldn't even be leading you on that Gary possibly had a life insurance policy. Honestly, I'm uncomfortable with this entire conversation.

SAM

(annoyed, but)

I didn't mean to overstep.

DICK stands, expecting SAM to do the same ...

SAM (CONT'D)

Before I go, when does my account renew?

DICK takes SAM'S folder from his desk, flips through ...

DICK

Uh, two months.

SAM

(getting up)

Enough time to shop around.

DICK stares at SAM, realizing what's happening ... SAM's waiting ...

SAM (CONT'D)

That name's Holloway ... Gary.

DICK trudges to the file cabinet, pulls a folder, scans:

DICK

Jeez, we sure got killed on this one.

(MORE)

DICK (CONT'D)

A whole life policy, opened six months before the poor guy kicks the proverbial bucket? Paid out full, two-hundred thousand.

SAM is gutted.

DICK (CONT'D)

(reading)

Yeah, thanks so much, Will. The fruit basket's in the mail.

SAM

Who's that?

DICK

Will Doyle. Referred the account.

DICK turns and re-files the folder ... When he turns back, SAM's gone:

DICK (CONT'D)

(at the door)

Hey! Your policy renewal ...

CUT TO:

A HANDSOME MAN (40S) PLAYS IN THE PARK WITH HIS WIFE AND SON

The MAN stops and speaks directly to the audience:

MAN/JOHN MOST

Hi, my name is John Most and I've lived in central Ohio my whole life. I don't have to tell you that times are changing. Our small towns need an accountable, decisive police force to deal with the complex issues of today ...

PULL BACK TO:

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - CONTINUOUS

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS (27, green) watches on a 13" teevee ...

JOHN MOST (FROM TV)

... That's why I'm running for Pickaway County Sheriff --

SHERIFF MADDUX walks past him and turns the dial off.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS
You don't have teevee ads.

CUT TO:

A FINGER PRESSING A DOORBELL.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

SAM scratches the back of his neck ... HAMMERING from inside ... CLARA DOYLE (45, divorce has treated her well) answers. CONTRACTORS remodel seemingly every room in the background.

CLARA
Good afternoon.

SAM
Clara Doyle?

CLARA
Are you the man with the track lighting?

SAM
No ... My name is Sam Kowalski. My brother-in-law was Gary Holloway -- Marianne's husband.

CLARA
(guard up)
What is it that you want?

SAM
I wanted to ask you about your husband --

CLARA
Ex-husband.

SAM
I don't know how to put this --

CLARA
Then I doubt I can help you --

CLARA reaches for the door ... SAM holds it open.

SAM
Please.

She relents, a little scared.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you remember the letters that were going around town last year?

CLARA

Of course. Those were sent by the man who was murdered, weren't they?

SAM

That was the official story. But what if I told you that I have reason to suspect your husband was involved in the Circleville Letters?

CLARA

I would say you're being remarkably offensive and ask you to leave.

SAM

Okay.

SAM turns back toward his car, when:

CLARA

William Doyle is a short-sighted fool who blew up a twenty-two year marriage to whore around with a school bus driver, and exactly nothing more. Now, if you'll excuse me, Mister Kowalski, I need to get back to spending his money.

She shuts the door on him.

INT. SALVATORE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Your typical red sauce place. Waiters grate a lot of Parmesan here.

An OLDER COUPLE stare disgustedly at the table next to them, where WILLIAM holds MARIANNE'S hands ... a WAITER comes by and takes the older couple's plates:

WAITER

(leaning in)

Your new table is ready, sir.

OLDER MAN

About time.

He tosses his napkin on the table and they follow the waiter, mean-mugging WILLIAM and MARIANNE. WILLIAM stares back. When they're gone:

WILLIAM
Are you kidding me?

MARIANNE
Ignore them.

WILLIAM
Where does he get off? He doesn't know one thing about us. I ought to go show him some manners --

MARIANNE
Please don't.

She feels the eyes on them. The WAITER circles back with a bottle:

WAITER
More Chardonnay, ma'am?

MARIANNE
Thank you.

He pours her a glass of wine and leaves. WILLIAM toasts her.

WILLIAM
I'm sorry for making you upset.
It's just ... you know, this is how it's going to be for us. Until --

MARIANNE
Will ...

WILLIAM
I would marry you tomorrow. I'm serious.

MARIANNE
That's sweet.

WILLIAM
Is it that crazy?

MARIANNE
I can't think about marriage again.

WILLIAM
I'm asking you to.

She reads his face: *oh my God, he means it.*

MARIANNE
 It's -- so soon. Getting remarried
 is looked down upon in the church.
 And I'd have to talk to Bethany --

WILLIAM
 (annoyed)
 Of course, Bethany.

MARIANNE
 Yes, my daughter, Bethany. Is that
 a problem?

WILLIAM
 Do you understand the pressures on
 me right now?

She's bewildered ... He shotguns his Beaujolais.

FADE TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

SAM gets dressed and talks on the phone:

SAM (INTO PHONE)
 (stuffy)
 I think it's just a forty-eight
 hour bug.

SECRETARY (V.O.)
 You poor thing. Please get your
 rest, Mister Kowalski.

INT. SAM'S '76 OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS (MOVING) - DAY

As SAM drives with purpose, we hear the phone conversation
 continue:

SAM (V.O.)
 (fake hacking phlegm)
 Hold down the fort, would you? I
 should be in tomorrow.

SECRETARY (V.O.)
 Okay, Mister Kowalski.

SAM parks on the street ...

THROUGH THE WINDOW:

WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S NEW HOME --

Eighties modern. Brown vertical siding. It looks expensive.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

SAM approaches with a SCREWDRIVER ... not what he was looking for ... he walks around the side of the house to

THE BACK DOOR

Bingo -- a door window. SAM jams the screwdriver under the ledge, working it until the lock POPS ... SAM lifts the window and reaches in the house to unlock the back door.

INT. WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A chunky brass chandelier, dusty pastel couches and pouf valances. Everything's new.

LADY, a brown COCKER SPANIEL, barks at him. SAM crouches and pets behind her ears:

SAM
Easy, we're all friends here.

LADY calms down and trots away.

IN THE KITCHEN, LATER

SAM searches the cupboards ... on a shelf of cookbooks, pulls a RECIPE BOOK. Tears out a HANDWRITTEN PAGE -- "BEEF STROGANOFF" ... pockets it. Walks out into

THE HALLWAY

and opens a door, revealing stairs leading to a basement ...

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL BUS (MOVING) - DAY

ABBA'S "DANCING QUEEN" on WSNY Sunny 95 ... MARIANNE drives.

THROUGH THE WINDOW:

Pulling into her driveway...

INT. WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

SAM digs into a CARDBOARD BOX of BOOKS with "WILL" scrawled on the side in magic marker ... finds "THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER" ... there are HANDWRITTEN NOTES in the margins ...

Upstairs, LADY BARKS ... HUMAN FOOTSTEPS: *oh, shit.*

IN THE HALL,

MARIANNE plays with LADY, who's frantic:

MARIANNE
You've got a lot of energy today.
Wanna go outside, Lady? Get some
exercise?

LADY paws at the door leading to the basement ...

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Oh, you're hungry?

THE BASEMENT STEPS - MOMENTS LATER

MARIANNE walks downstairs ... LADY skips ahead of her ...

SAM

watches, hiding behind a water heater with the book and recipe page ...

MARIANNE

gets the bag of Puppy Chow, pours some into a bowl for LADY.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Well? I don't have all day.

LADY doesn't eat, stares up at MARIANNE.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
(sigh)
We're going for a walk.

MARIANNE starts upstairs ... LADY sits still.

SAM

scratches his neck ... tries to be quiet ...

LADY

looks in his direction: *does she see?*

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

Lady! Let's go!

LADY snaps out of it and scampers up the stairs ... SAM exhales, relieved.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

SAM sits on the bed, looking down at the front page of an old *Circleville Herald* with a reprinted LETTER on the cover.

He sets the handwritten RECIPE against it ... inspects the capital letters ... not close.

Tries with "THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER" ... looks closer ...

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - WAITING ROOM - DAY

SAM strides up to the front desk with a FOLDED NEWSPAPER under his arm ... DOLORES greets him:

DOLORES

Yes?

SAM

I'm here to meet Sheriff Maddux in regards to Gary Holloway's murder.

DOLORES

(raised eyebrows)

I see. Did you schedule this meeting?

SAM

It's not officially on the books --

DOLORES

Oh, shoot. Because the Sheriff's on-duty. Maybe I could leave him a note.

SAM

No. I'll wait.

DOLORES
He won't be back ... it could be --
lord knows how long.

SAM
All the same.

SAM makes a show of taking a seat ... DOLORES smiles back.

ON THE CLOCK -- 6:00 PM

CUT TO:

ON THE CLOCK -- 8:30 PM

SAM'S less chipper now. He paces, clawing the back of his neck. DOLORES smiles at the front desk.

SHERIFF MADDUX enters the office ... SAM springs to his feet:

SAM (CONT'D)
Sheriff!

DOLORES
Excuse me --

SHERIFF MADDUX
It's all right. What can I do you
for?

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - LATER

SHERIFF MADDUX, concerned, sits across from SAM ... "RE-ELECT MADDUX" SIGNS tacked to the wall ... a *Circleville Herald* and PHOTOCOPIES of handwriting are splayed on his desk ...

SAM
Look at the vowels. You're seeing
what I'm seeing, right?

SHERIFF MADDUX
Yeah, I see it.

SAM
I mean, I'm no expert, but this is
nuts.

SHERIFF MADDUX
So, do the math for me here, Sam.

SAM
Okay. I've thought it over and over
again ...

REENACTMENT - VARIOUS

MUSIC: RICHARD & LINDA THOMPSON'S "DON'T RENEGE ON OUR LOVE."

A.) EXT. BARTHELMAS PARK - DAY

WILLIAM and MARIANNE on a park bench ...

SAM (V.O.)
William and Marianne are having an
affair. He's going to leave his
wife, but Marianne won't leave
Gary.

They argue. WILLIAM storms off ...

SAM (V.O.)
He can't take it so he writes these
letters to drive her and Gary
apart.

B.) INT. SUPERINTENDENT DOYLE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

WILLIAM scrawls the first LETTER:

**I KNOW YOU ARE A PIG AND WILL PROVE IT AND SHAME YOU OUT OF
OHIO**

C.) INT. SUPERINTENDENT DOYLE'S OFFICE - DAY

WILLIAM consoles a frightened MARIANNE ...

SAM (V.O.)
He gives her a suspect -- that sap
bus driver.

D.) INT. MARIANNE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

SAM displays a phone book entry to MARIANNE, GARY and KATHY:

MINSKER, RUSSELL FRANKLIN

SAM (V.O.)
Brings it to a boil.

MARIANNE nods.

E.) INT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

WILLIAM dials the phone ...

SAM (V.O.)
Then he arranges for a showdown
between Gary and Russell --

G.) INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

GARY, sloppy drunk, screams into the phone ...

H.) EXT. RELAX INN PARKING LOT - NIGHT

RUSSELL wanders, waiting for GARY ...

SAM (V.O.)
-- And takes them both out ...

WILLIAM emerges from the darkness, raises a WEAPON -- BLAM! --
SHOOTS RUSSELL in the gut.

SAM (V.O.)
... You've got the murder weapons,
you've got the bodies. Why would
you look for another suspect?

LATER

GARY gets out of his truck ... something's wrong ... he
approaches RUSSELL'S body -- BANG! -- a burst of blood and he
drops -- head shot.

WILLIAM plants his gun on RUSSELL and puts GARY'S gun in his
hand.

END OF REENACTMENT.

SAM
Then he collects on the life
insurance with Marianne. They're
already living together up in
Lancaster.

SHERIFF MADDUX leans back in his chair:

SHERIFF MADDUX
So, Bill Doyle's behind it all?

SAM
Yes, sir.

SHERIFF MADDUX
But not the widow?

SAM
I remember the fear in her eyes
back when she was first receiving
the letters. There's no way.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Okay. So, you want me to arrest
Bill Doyle?

SAM
For starters.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Well, I'm sorry, but I can't do
that.

SAM
Why not?

SHERIFF MADDUX
I have a little policy against
arresting pillars of the community
for cold murders based on
circumstantial evidence.

SAM
Circumstantial? You're telling me
this handwriting is circumstantial?
He had motive, he had opportunity.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Bill Doyle isn't a murderer.

SAM
How well do you know him? I've
heard rumors years ago he had an
affair with a girl -- a student --
at Canal Winchester, had to be run
out of the district. Some fucking
pillar of the community --

SHERIFF MADDUX
Watch your mouth, son. I don't
appreciate foul language. I know
you're upset about Gary. But this
case is closed for good reason.

SAM scratches his neck, notices the re-election posters on
the wall.

SAM

You know I'm onto something here.
You just don't want to look stupid.

SHERIFF MADDUX

In my world, there's civilians and
there's the law ... And the worst
is people like you who confuse the
two. We call 'em junior police.
I've been patient with this little
fantasy of yours, but now you're
starting to tick me off. So I'll
tell you once and only once, let it
go.

SAM

Is that a threat?

SHERIFF MADDUX

It's over.

SAM

(getting up)
Thanks for your time.

SAM storms out, slamming the door behind him.

INT. SAM'S SECRETARY'S DESK - DAY

A SUIT (50s, doughy) passes SAM'S SECRETARY (20s, bubbly)
toward his closed door --

SECRETARY

(stopping him)
Excuse me.

SUIT

He's back, isn't he?

SECRETARY

Mister Kowalski is still super
sick. He requested absolutely no
visitors.

(whispering)
Really, it's for your own good.

SUIT

Fine. Take a message --

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SAM wears latex gloves ... SCRATCHES a LETTER onto RULED PAPER with laser focus ... folds the paper and places it into an envelope, then licks it shut.

EXT. WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S HOUSE - DAY

Pouring rain. BETHANY runs out of the front door --

MARIANNE (O.S.)
Where's your raincoat? You'll ruin
your clothes.

She pays no attention and skips to the mailbox. She grabs the MAIL and hops back up the driveway, with her mouth open to catch the rain. MARIANNE waits for her in the doorway:

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Are you deaf? Get in here, now.

INT. WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She kicks off her shoes and trots upstairs, ignoring her mom.

MARIANNE
Yeah, go to your room. And stay
there.

MARIANNE carries the MAIL into

THE KITCHEN,

and sets it on the counter.

MARIANNE grabs a box from the cupboard ... a skillet from above the stove ... turns on the stove to high ... puts the skillet on the burner ...

She thumbs through the letters ... throws two pieces of junk mail in the trash ... opens the fridge and takes a package of ground beef ...

Then she sees it --

An ENVELOPE with the unmistakable BLOCK LETTERING, addressed to WILLIAM DOYLE.

MARIANNE'S afraid to touch it, but she can't look away. She considers ... then opens the envelope.

ON THE LETTER

Just one line:

**WILLIAM: I KNOW YOU MURDERED GARY: TURN YOURSELF IN OR
ELSE:**

MARIANNE drops the letter ... covers her mouth, in shock ...

SMOKE ... the skillet's a black, burned mess ...

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
(snapping out of it)
Shit.

She turns off the burner ... opens the window ... picks the letter off the floor ... hides it in the back of a cabinet.

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT - DAY

SAM, KATHY, and their respective ATTORNEYS stand before JUDGE MARSHALL ROSEN (35, bearded, severe). Nobody's happy.

STUART
My client alleges that Mister Kowalski was an abusive husband, both emotionally and physically.

LYLE
Absolutely ridiculous --

JUDGE ROSEN
Counselor.

SAM
(whispering)
Kathy, c'mon.

JUDGE ROSEN
Okay, that's enough of that.

LYLE
Can I just ask, when was this alleged abuse ever reported?

STUART
My client lived in a climate of fear for much of their marriage.

SAM shakes his head at KATHY, she just stares straight ahead.

JUDGE ROSEN

It won't do. These are serious allegations to present without evidence, counselor. It's just not enough.

STUART

If you give us more time for discovery --

JUDGE ROSEN

No, I see no reason to alter my ruling. Mister Kowalski retains property and primary custody.

He BANGS HIS GAVEL and

CUT TO:

EXT. PICKAWAY COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT - MOMENTS LATER

KATHY lights a Virginia Slim ... broken ...

SAM exits the courthouse ... KATHY'S on his heels ...

KATHY

Sam, hon?

He picks up speed through the parking lot.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Can we talk?

At his '76 Cutlass now. He finally faces her:

SAM

How could you lie like that?

KATHY

(breaking down)

I was just -- if I can't see my Marky I'll die, y'know?

SAM

It's too late.

KATHY

He needs his mother in his life. Please.

SAM reaches for the back of his neck ... stops himself:

SAM
Be out of the house by the end of
the week.

KATHY
You said you didn't want a war.

SAM
I didn't. But I won.

KATHY
You're not taking my son from me.
I'm going to do whatever it takes,
Sam --

Closes the passenger door and PEELS OUT ...

FADE TO:

EXT. WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S HOUSE - DAY

WILLIAM, wearing a polo and slacks, gets into his '80 CHEVY
CAPRICE WAGON ... starts the car ...

INT. SAM'S '76 OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS (PARKED) - CONTINUOUS

"STRAWBERRY LETTER 23" on Stereo Rock 92 ... SAM smokes a
Pall Mall and devours a Super Shef burger ...

SAM'S POV:

Down the street, WILLIAM'S '80 Chevy Caprice Wagon backs out
of his drive ...

SAM puts his Olds in drive and follows him ... a PISTOL rests
on the passenger seat.

INT. SAM'S '76 OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS (MOVING) - LATER

SAM keeps a safe distance from the Caprice ... the roads turn
more rural:

-- US ROUTE 22 WEST

-- OHIO STATE ROUTE 56 SOUTH

-- Finally, the Caprice pulls into ...

EXT. PICKAWAY COUNTRY CLUB - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

... and parks ... WILLIAM gets out of the car, pops his trunk and grabs his golf bag.

SAM'S Olds parks across from WILLIAM'S car.

IN THE '76 OLDS

SAM grabs the pistol from the passenger seat ...

SAM
(under his breath)
Smug piece of shit.

He opens the door and steps out into

THE PARKING LOT

SAM tucks the gun into his back waistband ... WILLIAM laces up his golf shoes ...

SAM (CONT'D)
Hey, you're William Doyle.

He's startled ... looks up at SAM:

WILLIAM
Yes. And you are?

SAM
A friend of Gary Holloway's.

SAM steps menacingly toward WILLIAM:

WILLIAM
I think there's been some kind of
mistake. I don't want any trouble.

SAM
Neither did Gary.

SAM stares WILLIAM down ... moves his right hand ever-so-slightly toward the pistol handle ... stops himself:

SAM (CONT'D)
... Enjoy your golf.

He jets back into his Cutlass and speeds off.

INT. WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

KATHY balls her eyes out on the couch ... MARIANNE brings her a cup of coffee.

KATHY
He's going to take everything --

MARIANNE
Kathy --

KATHY
(shaking her head)
I'm never going to see Mark again.

MARIANNE
Sam's just angry right now.

KATHY
What am I supposed to do? I can't start over, I'm thirty-three years old, y'know?

MARIANNE
When Gary died, I felt like my whole identity died. I was just -- nothing. I'm still just trying to do the right thing. To be a good person. To honor him.
(growing emotional)
I ask the Lord for guidance, but he doesn't answer.

KATHY hugs MARIANNE.

KATHY
(taken aback)
It's all right.

MARIANNE
Do you ever think about what happened to Gary at the end?

KATHY
Every day.

MARIANNE nods, wipes the tears from her eyes:

MARIANNE
I'm sorry.

KATHY
Is everything okay?

MARIANNE
(quickly)
Yes. You know you have a place to
stay here, if you want.

KATHY
I couldn't do that to you.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

SAM lays out pieces of cardboard on the floor ...

INT. SHERIFF'S GRAN PLYMOUTH (MOVING) - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX starts his morning rounds ...

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD:

A CARDBOARD SIGN, nailed to a telephone pole:

DOYLE IS A MURDERER

SHERIFF MADDUX tunes his radio ... doesn't notice ...

Coming up on another one:

DOYLE IS A MURDERER

SHERIFF MADDUX'S eye catches it: *did I just see...?*

Turns back to the road -- another sign:

MADDUX COVER-UP

He hits the brakes ...

EXT. U.S. ROUTE 22 EAST - MOMENTS LATER

SHERIFF MADDUX staggers out of his Plymouth ... pulls the
sign down from the pole ... looks down the road ...

SHERIFF MADDUX'S POV:

SIGNS as far as he can see, all reading:

MADDUX COVER-UP

SHERIFF MADDUX
... Fuck.

CUT TO:

INT. CIRCLEVILLE CITY HALL - NIGHT

An emergency town meeting. It's more like a zoo. SHERIFF MADDUX stands before the hundred ANGRY, SCARED CITIZENS, peppering him with questions:

CIRCLEVILLE HERALD REPORTER
Do you have any suspects?

SHERIFF MADDUX
Not at this time --

SOCCER MOM
Are we in danger?

SHERIFF MADDUX
I have no reason to think so --

DAUGHTER OF THE REVOLUTION
I would like to know, sir, what exactly did you know, and when?

Some CHEERS.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Okay. There's a lot of fear and speculation out there about the letter writer and the Relax Inn double murder. But we can't rush to judgment --

The citizens don't like it.

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
Please --

They just grow louder.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Sir. Sir!

JOHN MOST, wearing a blue dress shirt with rolled up sleeves, waves the crowd to quiet down:

JOHN MOST
If you don't know me, my name is John Most, and I'm running for Pickaway County Sheriff.

Some clapping. SHERIFF MADDUX stares JOHN down ...

JOHN MOST (CONT'D)
I agree with you. It would be a mistake for anyone to rush to judgment in this case. It would be a mistake to rush to blame your office.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Mmhm.

JOHN MOST
Just as it would be a mistake for you to ignore these messages that seem to confirm the suspicions that many in Circleville have had about this case. If you are too proud to do that, then maybe we need a change in leadership!

SHERIFF MADDUX
Now hold on, this isn't a debate --

BURSTS of APPLAUSE and more yelling.

JOHN MOST
The public deserves transparency.

SHERIFF MADDUX
The public doesn't deserve this kind of bald-faced campaigning --

FARMER (O.S.)
We want answers!

PENSIONER
You're lying!

More join in ... suddenly, the crowd's in a frenzy ...
SHERIFF MADDUX is losing them completely ...

SHERIFF MADDUX
I promise you, you'll get your answers, or I don't deserve to be sheriff.

But the damage is done ... JOHN MOST smiles ...

INT. WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

WILLIAM sits at the table, reading the LETTER. MARIANNE clings to the wall.

WILLIAM
You hid this from me?

MARIANNE
Yes.

WILLIAM
Why wouldn't you talk to me about
it?

MARIANNE
I don't know. I was scared.

WILLIAM
Scared of me?

MARIANNE
No.

WILLIAM carefully re-folds the letter in thirds.

WILLIAM
If there's something you want to
ask me, Marianne -- by all means --
be my guest. I'm an open book.

MARIANNE
Don't be so dramatic.

WILLIAM
People think I murdered your
husband. Do you get that?

MARIANNE
People can think whatever they
want.

WILLIAM
A cop car followed me to work
today, some lunatic confronted me
at the club. I'm going to hire a
lawyer.

MARIANNE
Fine.

WILLIAM pushes away from the table.

WILLIAM
Go ahead, Marianne. Ask me.

MARIANNE
No.

He laughs.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Why are you being an asshole?

WILLIAM
I am under siege.

MARIANNE
Maybe we had this coming.

WILLIAM
Gary died for our sins?

MARIANNE leaves the dining room, hurt.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
(after her)
I'm sorry.

Stairs CREAK ...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Oh, sure, you're mad now.

Nothing. WILLIAM rips the letter in half. Tears it into shreds.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

MARK sits on KATHY'S lap as they ride a merry-go-round.

KATHY
Hold tight.
(he does, then)
Wheweee!

MARK giggles.

The music slows and the ride decelerates to a stop.

KATHY (CONT'D)
That was fun. Again?

MARK nods.

KATHY (CONT'D)
One more.

She glances up at

SAM,

waiting nearby. He nods. KATHY flags down a TEEN WORKER and hands him a few dollar bills, then returns to their steed with MARK.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Okay, here we go. Hold tight.

The music wheezes back to life ...

FADE TO:

LATER

SAM holds a sleeping MARK.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Be good for your dada, okay?

She kisses MARK'S forehead ... hands SAM a set of HOUSE KEYS ... tears in her eyes ...

SAM
Kath --

But she can't face him, and rushes off toward her car.

EXT. HARGUS LAKE - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX pushes his rowboat out into the water ...

ACROSS THE LAKE

That same OLD FISHERMAN in his rowboat.

SHERIFF MADDUX rows out toward him ... as he nears, the OLD FISHERMAN'S features come into focus -- grizzled, with a strong jaw -- he's one of the men in the *Circleville Herald* photo.

When their rowboats are bow to bow:

SHERIFF MADDUX
Clint.

OLD FISHERMAN/CLINT MADDUX
Catch everything on your side?

SHERIFF MADDUX
I'm behind. I could lose.

CLINT MADDUX

Well, a Maddux ain't gonna be
sheriff forever.

SHERIFF MADDUX

Dad ... I don't know anything else.

CLINT MADDUX

My day, sheriff used to be a public
servant. Policing, running the
jail. Simple. You know why you got
into this, Ed. So, serve the public
and don't worry about politicking.

CUT TO:

A CAKE --

White with a blue frosted cross and writing: *GOD BLESS
BETHANY*

INT. LINDSEY'S BAKERY - DAY

MARIANNE

It's too perfect to eat!

She pulls out her checkbook.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

MARIANNE lugs the cake toward the Caprice Wagon ... reaches
for the car keys in her purse --

SAM (O.S.)

Need a hand?

She jumps, startled.

MARIANNE

Hi, Sam. No, I have it.

SAM

I don't want you to be scraping
cake off the sidewalk. C'mon.

He takes the cake from her.

MARIANNE

Thanks.

She unlocks the car and he places the cake on the backseat.

SAM
Bethany?

MARIANNE
First communion.

SAM
No way. She's how old now?

MARIANNE
Eight.

SAM
I don't know how that's possible,
'cause we're still nineteen.

MARIANNE laughs. They hug.

SAM (CONT'D)
That's true. You look the same as
when we were together.

She winces, tries to hide it behind a smile.

SAM (CONT'D)
Can I buy you a cup of coffee?

MARIANNE
I ought to get back --

SAM
To William?

MARIANNE
No, home.

SAM
How's he holding up -- with all the
rumors?

MARIANNE
... Not great.

SAM
You can tell me, if you've had any
doubts about him.

MARIANNE
I think I should go get ready --

SAM
Because when I heard it, it clicked
for me.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't know why we never
considered him as a suspect back
then.

MARIANNE

Excuse me?

SAM

Then again, you lied to us and said
you weren't together.

MARIANNE

Goodbye, Sam.

SAM

Be careful with him. There are
snakes everywhere.

MARIANNE

Fuck off.

INT. MARK'S ROOM - NIGHT

SAM cradles MARK and gently places him in his crib ...

AT THE ENTRANCE - LATER

SAM locks the front door and dead bolt ...

IN THE DINING ROOM - LATER

SAM drinks a beer ... un-packs BOXES ... removes an old HIGH
SCHOOL YEARBOOK. When he flips through, a POLAROID falls out
of the pages onto the floor.

ON THE POLAROID:

SAM (17, tux) and MARIANNE (14, frilly dress), awkward at
their homecoming dance. They look happy.

SAM picks up the polaroid ... smiles, sadly --

RUSTLING from another room -- *in the house?*

SAM hustles to

THE DEN,

and grabs a BASEBALL BAT ...

IN THE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

More RUSTLING, from behind the door to the garage ... SAM creeps toward the sound ... slowly ... CLICK -- *the screen door?*

SAM'S hand is on the doorknob ... turns ... in one motion he's

INTO THE GARAGE

... Hits the light ... cocks the bat:

SAM

FUCK.

The room is EMPTY.

SAM breathes heavy, all adrenaline ... comes down ...

Collapses on the garage floor in a fit of LAUGHTER.

FADE TO:

INT. SCHOOL BUS (MOVING)/EXT. FIVE POINTS PIKE - DAY

MARIANNE drives the MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS to class ... In the rear-view mirror, MARIANNE sees a BOY SLAP the KID in front of him in the back of the head.

MARIANNE

(calling back)

Kevin Freeman!

SLAMS on the brakes, jolting the kids: *uh oh.*

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

(to Kevin)

Apologize.

KEVIN

(under his breath)

I'm sorry.

MARIANNE

Not to me.

KEVIN

(to the other boy)

Sorry. God.

MARIANNE
I can't wait to see the look on
your face when I tell your mother.

KEVIN
No! Please!

MARIANNE chuckles to herself ... back to the road ...

MARIANNE'S POV:

A SIGN, NAILED TO A TREE

BETHANY ARE YOU A WHORE LIKE YOUR MOTHER?

MARIANNE looks back at BETHANY in the front seat ... she's
reading ... MARIANNE turns off the bus ... gets up ...

OUTSIDE

MARIANNE takes the sign down ...

IN THE BUS (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER

MARIANNE checks the rear view ... BETHANY's still reading ...
back ahead --

MARIANNE
(to herself)
No, no, no.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD:

Another SIGN, NAILED TO A TREE:

BUS DRIVER CUNT

MARIANNE parks the car ... opens the door ...

BETHANY
Are you okay?

MARIANNE
Yeah.

MARIANNE'S POV:

DOWN THE ROAD, SIGN AFTER SIGN ...

She's near-tears ...

AT A FENCE POST - MOMENTS LATER

MARIANNE furiously rips down the last SIGN, simply

HOLLOWAY

A SMALL WOODEN CHALK BOX is nailed is strung to the sign with TWINE ... MARIANNE's bewildered ... she carries the sign and box to the bus ...

The MIDDLE SCHOOLERS stare out the windows at her, plus BETHANY ... some are laughing at her ...

MARIANNE (CONT'D)
Everything's okay, kids.

INT. SCHOOL BUS(PARKED)/EXT. WILLIAM & MARIANNE'S HOUSE - DAY

BETHANY gathers her books ... MARIANNE stares down at the BOX ... etched into its side:

FOR AS LONG AS DOYLE FUCKS EMPLOYEES

BETHANY
Mom? Can we go inside now?

MARIANNE shields the box from her.

MARIANNE
You go ahead. I'll join you in a minute.

BETHANY leaves the bus ...

MARIANNE tugs at the lid ... sucker's on there tight ...

MOMENTS LATER

MARIANNE brandishes a FLAT HEAD SCREWDRIVER ...

Shoves it under the lid ...

PRIES ...

Leans on it ... it gives --

THE LID FLIES OPEN, REVEALING

A COLT .25 PISTOL, STARING HER IN THE FACE

STUCK IN PLACE WITH PLASTIC FOAM ... THE LID HAS A STRING
ATTACHED TO THE TRIGGER ... WHEN THE LID OPENS, IT PULLS --

CLICK --

BANG! -- BETWEEN THE EYES.

BLOOD SPRAYS THE BUS INTERIOR AS MARY DROPS, DEAD.

EXT. ROUTE 3 - CONTINUOUS

The front four bus windows are painted red ... BETHANY
crosses the road ...

BETHANY

Mom? ...

She picks up speed ... a FLOCK of STARLINGS soar out of the
tree line ...

FADE TO:

EXT. CLARA'S HOUSE - BACK PATIO - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX sits on a wicker chair, admiring the rose
bushes, the manicured lawn ...

CLARA sets some seed on the ledge of one of the many BIRD
HOUSES.

SHERIFF MADDUX

You run quite an operation here.

CLARA

It keeps me active, and seeing them
come and go brightens my day.

William always hated them.

(imitating him)

Stop making those darn birdhouses.

All they do is eat and ruin our
patio!

SHERIFF MADDUX chuckles.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I take it you're here about that
poor woman. It's just awful. And
her daughter.

A BARN SWALLOW lands on one of the roofs. CLARA holds out a handful of seed. He lands and picks a few pieces from her palm, then flies away.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I didn't hear until I got back. I was vacationing in Hocking Hills.

SHERIFF MADDUX

Oh. Where'd you stay?

CLARA

Just a little bed and breakfast out in Rockbridge.

SHERIFF MADDUX

That's nice. You talked with your ex-husband lately?

CLARA

We haven't been particularly chatty since the divorce. But I do hope William is holding up okay.

SHERIFF MADDUX

Yeah, he's not.

CLARA

Do you have suspects?

SHERIFF MADDUX

Just gathering information at the moment.

CLARA

This just popped into my head -- and I'm not sure it means anything -- but I had a strange interaction with a man who showed up at my door a few months ago. He seemed to be convinced that William was the letter writer and responsible for Gary Holloway's death. He was related to him, I believe --

SHERIFF MADDUX

Sam Kowalski?

CLARA

How did you know?

SHERIFF MADDUX

Would you be willing to write a sworn statement?

CLARA
... Absolutely.

EXT. CLARA'S HOUSE - LATER

SHERIFF MADDUX walks to his Plymouth with an ENVELOPE.

CLARA (O.S.)
Sheriff?

SHERIFF MADDUX
(turning back)
Yes, ma'am?

CLARA
If you see William, tell him I'm
sorry. Truly.

He nods and gets into his car.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

SHERIFF MADDUX sighs, exhausted, then knocks on a door ...

A dead bolt slides unlocked ... DAVID HOLLOWAY blocks the
entrance:

DAVID
The hell do you want?

MADDUX looks past him, to where KATHY holds MARK and puts
together a puzzle on the linoleum with BETHANY. When BETHANY
sees him, she runs scared into the arms of LOUISE. This small
room's tense.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Does Kathy have a minute?

DAVID
For you?

KATHY
(getting up)
Dad, it's okay. Can you watch Marky
for a second?

She MARK to him ...

INT. KITCHEN NOOK - MOMENTS LATER

DAVID lingers ... KATHY slides the door closed to give her and SHERIFF MADDUX some privacy. He removes his hat:

KATHY
If you're here to discuss Marianne,
I don't know if I can handle that
yet.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Then how's about we start with Sam?

KATHY
Sam?

SHERIFF MADDUX
Mhm. When did you see him last?

KATHY
Uh, couple days ago?

SHERIFF MADDUX
How was he actin'?

KATHY
He dropped off Mark. With the
custody, everything's a little
goofy right now.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Understandable.

KATHY
There's bad feelings, y'know?

SHERIFF MADDUX
When you were together, did he ever
talk about Marianne?

KATHY
(chuckling)
He was obsessed with her ... And
Gary. He always has been.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Obsessed?

KATHY
(realizing)
... Did Sam do something?

SHERIFF MADDUX
No, you and me are just talkin.

She's suddenly uncomfortable.

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
Has he ever been violent or abusive
with you or the boy?

KATHY
... Sam has a temper, y'know?

SHERIFF MADDUX
You ever thought he could be writin
the letters?

KATHY takes a deep breath:

KATHY
Sure, I've thought about it.

SHERIFF MADDUX
You ever saw anything?

KATHY
No ...
(beat)
Well, there was one thing. When the
letters first started, Marianne
thought she knew that Russ, that
other bus driver, was sending them.
So Sam made us copy the nasty
letters and send them to Russ. To
sort of scare him --

SHERIFF MADDUX
Copy how?

KATHY
The handwriting. Sam's were the
best.

SHERIFF MADDUX takes this in ...

SHERIFF MADDUX
Thank you for your time.
(getting up)
One last thing. If we called, would
you be willing to testify?

KATHY
Against my husband?

SHERIFF MADDUX
In any capacity.

She's pained, but MADDUX can see the wheels spinning:

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
Think on it.

He puts on his hat.

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
So, he won custody and you're
staying here with your folks, huh?

KATHY nods and looks down ...

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
It's good to be with family.
'Night, ma'am.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAM'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

SAM, buzzed and disheveled, slumps on a lawn chair, next to a cooler of Budweiser, surrounded by dead soldiers ...

SHERIFF MADDUX'S Plymouth pulls into the drive ... he exits the vehicle with DETECTIVE PHILLIPS.

SHERIFF MADDUX
(to Sam)
Tossin back a few?

SAM crushes his empty can and tosses it in their direction:

SAM
Get off my property.

SHERIFF MADDUX
I'm just here to apologize.

SAM
Doesn't mean shit now. She's not
coming back.

SHERIFF MADDUX
You're a hundred percent right.

SAM stumbles to his feet:

SAM
Why wouldn't you fucking listen to
me?!

Reaches ... *for his pocket?* DETECTIVE PHILLIPS puts a hand on his weapon ... MADDUX shoots him a quick glance: *cool it.*

SHERIFF MADDUX

(to Sam)

I have to live with my mistake. I'm tryin to make it right, to get the guy who did it. But I need your help.

SAM'S suspicious, but can't hide his intrigue ...

SAM

Do you want to come inside?

SHERIFF MADDUX

Actually, it'd be better if we talked at the station. We're dealin with very sensitive information here, I'm sure you get that.

SAM

Okay. I'll follow you --

SHERIFF MADDUX

You might as well ride with me ...

Before SAM can object, DETECTIVE PHILLIPS opens the back passenger door ...

INT. SHERIFF'S PLYMOUTH GRAN FURY (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER

SHERIFF MADDUX drives ... DETECTIVE PHILLIPS sits shotgun ... SAM's in the backseat ...

SAM looks at SHERIFF MADDUX in the reflection of the rear view mirror ... the SHERIFF'S grinning ear-to-ear ...

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - WAITING ROOM - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX and DETECTIVE PHILLIPS lead SAM past DOLORES at the front desk ... she glares at SAM ...

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - DAY

SAM, sobered up, looks around at the BOXES of the CIRCLEVILLE LETTERS surrounding the table ... there must be THOUSANDS ...

SHERIFF MADDUX sits across from SAM ... DETECTIVE PHILLIPS enters with a PLASTIC FOAM CUP of BLACK COFFEE and PACK of PALL MALLS for SAM ...

SHERIFF MADDUX

You ever have a moment that feels inevitable -- but it's somethin you never coulda predicted before it happened?

(off his silence)

I'm havin that moment right now.

SAM scratches the back of his neck ...

SAM

What exactly am I being accused of?

SHERIFF MADDUX

We're just havin a conversation. For example, here's a topic -- where were you the day Marianne was killed?

SAM

I was -- home. I had a floating holiday. And I was supposed to meet with a realtor about selling my house.

SHERIFF MADDUX

Leavin town?

SAM

Don't need that much house.

SHERIFF MADDUX

Mhm. Can we try something?

SHERIFF MADDUX pushes a PEN and YELLOW LEGAL PAD in front of SAM ...

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)

I want you to write what I say. But use all uppercase.

SAM

Let me stop you right there. If you think I did this, you're crazy --

SHERIFF MADDUX

Then what do you have to worry about?

(dictating)

I know you are a pig and will prove it and shame you out of Ohio.

(nodding)

Go ahead.

SAM picks up the pen ... writes along:

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
All uppercase.
(dictating)
*I know you are a pig and will prove
it and shame you out of Ohio ...*
(then)
Good.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS puts on gloves ... removes a LETTER from
the stack ... pushes it in front of SAM, remorseful:

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
Now I want you to try to copy this
writing as closely as possible. Can
you do that?

SAM
Even you can't be this stupid.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Maybe I am. Clear your name, smart
guy.

SAM copies the FIRST WORD:

MADDUX

LATER

SAM sits exhausted before a table full of his WRITING SAMPLES
... SHERIFF MADDUX is just getting warmed up ... DETECTIVE
PHILLIPS watches on ...

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
You're doing great, Sam. One last
thing --

SAM
I didn't do it ...

SHERIFF MADDUX
If I can have my boys over to check
your place out and give me the all-
clear, we can wrap this thing right
up. How does that do for you?

SAM
... Fine.

SHERIFF MADDUX signals DETECTIVE PHILLIPS ...

SMASH TO:

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

PICKAWAY COUNTY POLICE OFFICERS tear through the place ...
looking for evidence ...

INT. SAM'S BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS searches with a flashlight ... From
upstairs:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

BINGO.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS' eyes go wide ... he bounds upstairs ...

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - NIGHT

SAM'S bleary-eyed ... Another OFFICER in the bullpen watches
WBNS news on the TV:

NEWS ANCHOR (FROM TV)

Three minutes to midnight, as
atomic scientists once again
advanced the Doomsday Clock. With
the Soviet war in Afghanistan and
Ronald Reagan's escalation of the
arms race ...

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS and SHERIFF MADDUX enter ...

SHERIFF MADDUX

Ready to tell us the real story?

SAM

What am I being charged with? This
is a nightmare. You need to talk to
Bill Doyle, not me.

SHERIFF MADDUX

We did, Sam.

News to SAM ...

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)

Gave Doyle a lie detector, too.
Which he passed, with flying
colors. The man is devastated.

(MORE)

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)

He's not a suspect. You, on the
other hand ...

MADDUX snaps at DETECTIVE PHILLIPS, who places a piece of
STATIONERY and one of the LETTERS on the table -- they're a
match.

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)

We know you wrote the letters, and
we know you wrote the signs. This
can go a few ways --

SAM

(realizing, panicked)
You guys really think I did it?
Jesus Christ, you really think I
killed her? I'm in a waking
nightmare.

SAM claws furiously at the back of his neck ...

SHERIFF MADDUX

Doesn't sound like a denial to me.

SAM

I want to call my lawyer.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS

Jeez, your hand --

BLOOD ON SAM'S FINGERNAILS ... he's broken the skin.

SHERIFF MADDUX

Not that it makes a bit of
difference, but just so you know, I
don't like a thing about you. I'm
gonna truly enjoy puttin you away.

SHERIFF MADDUX signals to the door ... A BOOKING OFFICER
(40s, built) enters the room and HANDCUFFS SAM ...

FADE TO:

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

SAM sits on the ground, head in his hands ...

FADE TO:

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY JAIL - DAY

A GUARD escorts LYLE GERHARDT into

SAM'S CELL

LYLE

How are you holding up?

SAM

I've been better.

LYLE

I'm going to run through what's going to happen and what we're going to do about it. This is no time to mince words or waste time.

(deep breath, then)

You should expect to be indicted by the Pickaway County Grand Jury and charged with First Degree Murder. We're talking about life in prison.

SAM'S face goes blank ...

LYLE (CONT'D)

Now we can either plead not guilty or I can make a deal --

SAM

Plead not guilty.

Not what LYLE wanted to hear ...

LYLE

Some lawyers prefer to work in the dark. Not me.

(beat)

I need to know: did you do it?

SAM

(deep breath, then)

I wrote some of the letters after Gary's death so that the police to re-open the case.

LYLE slumps ...

SAM (CONT'D)

But I didn't kill Marianne. I swear to you.

LYLE

Have you told anyone else this?

SAM

No.

LYLE

Okay, good.

(beat)

Sam, I strongly advise you to take a deal and plead guilty. You might end up doing as little as fifteen years.

SAM

Absolutely not. I didn't do it.

LYLE

I'm going to run through the facts. The prosecution has the stationery and your handwriting samples that match the threatening letters. Your alibi, to put it mildly, is not ideal.

(leaning in)

You are facing an uphill battle. I believe you, Sam, one hundred percent, but you pay me to be pragmatic.

SAM

I thought I pay you to win.

LYLE

If you change your mind, let me know. But do it soon.

CUT TO:

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

JUDGE WILLIAM EMMERT (63, thick, black-rimmed glasses, slicked-back graying hair, gentle) presides ... JURORS (mostly old, white farmers and their wives) watch on ...

SAM and LYLE sit on one side ...

PROSECUTOR JEROME KING (36, balding, tough S.O.B.) and his TEAM on the other ... KING speaks to the JURY:

PROSECUTOR KING

This is a story about obsession. We are going to show you how the defendant coveted Marianne Holloway, he tried to break up her relationship, and when he couldn't get her, he killed her.

On SAM, incredulous --

SAM
(softly)
Bullshit.

FADE TO:

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE - LATER

PROSECUTOR KING interrogates STEPHEN GRESHOLD (40s, buttoned-up, nerves):

PROSECUTOR KING
What is your profession, Mister Greshold?

STEPHEN
I am a Document Examiner at the Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

PROSECUTOR KING
And how long have you held that position?

STEPHEN
Ten years.

PROSECUTOR KING
You were tasked with analyzing handwriting samples of thirty-six letters that were sent to Missus Holloway between March twenty-first, nineteen seventy-seven and December twenty-third, nineteen eighty-three?

STEPHEN
Yes. As well as handwriting samples of the defendant.

PROSECUTOR KING
And what did you find?

STEPHEN
It is my professional opinion that the defendant's handwriting was a match.

SAM shakes his head ...

LATER

Cross-examination:

LYLE

Were Mister Kowalski's handwriting samples taken properly?

PROSECUTOR KING

Objection. Misleading.

JUDGE EMMERT

Sustained.

LYLE

(another tack)

Earlier, Detective Brown testified that when he and Sheriff Maddux interrogated Mister Kowalski, they placed a letter in front of him and had him copy it. In your opinion, is that the best way to take a handwriting sample?

PROSECUTOR KING

Objection. Immaterial.

JUDGE EMMERT

Overruled.

STEPHEN

(sweating)

Well, no. In an ideal situation they would have merely dictated questions to Mister Kowalski and had him write responses.

LYLE

Doesn't that cast doubt on the validity of all of the letters you analyzed?

PROSECUTOR KING

Objection. Leading.

JUDGE ROSE

Overruled.

STEPHEN

No, because Sheriff Maddux separated those letters from my analysis. I only analyzed the samples that were dictated.

On PROSECUTOR KING: *oh, shit.*

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

SAM and LYLE huddle ...

SAM
Let me testify.

LYLE
No.

SAM
I'm not going to sit quietly while
the rest of my life is ripped away
from me.

LYLE
I already negotiated this. Judge
Emmert fucked us. He said if you
take the stand, he'll make all of
the letters admissable, not just
the thirty-six that were addressed
to Marianne.

SAM
So? Fine.

LYLE
Not fine. We're talking hundreds of
letters that the jury doesn't even
know exist. This is not a can of
worms that we should open.

SAM PUNCHES the WALL:

SAM
Fucking figure out a way to make it
work!

LYLE
There is no way.

SAM
I am ordering you, as my attorney --

LYLE
If you take the stand, I'm not your
attorney.

SAM
You'd quit on me?

LYLE
I don't particularly enjoy getting
my brains beaten in.
(MORE)

LYLE (CONT'D)

If you want to find some other schmuck who does, that's your prerogative.

SAM cools down, catches his breath ...

LYLE (CONT'D)

Now if you'll excuse me, I need to figure out what we're doing about Maddux.

CUT TO:

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX is on the stand, vaguely annoyed and uncomfortable ...

LYLE

While you were at my client's property, did you look for twine that is marked as an exhibit in this case?

SHERIFF MADDUX

We looked for any twine that could be found.

LYLE

For anything that matched this kind of stuff?

SHERIFF MADDUX

That is right.

LYLE

Did you find any?

SHERIFF MADDUX

We did not.

LYLE

While you were there did you look for a box of bullets, .25 caliber, that would fit this type of automatic gun?

SHERIFF MADDUX

We were unable to find any ammunition that went with the gun.

LYLE

Did you find any glue in his house?

SHERIFF MADDUX
We didn't find any glue.

LYLE
Did you find any styrofoam in his house?

SHERIFF MADDUX
No.

LYLE
When you searched his car did you find any chalk boxes, twine, solder, styrofoam, or any of the other things that have been marked as exhibits in this case?

SHERIFF MADDUX
We did not.

LYLE
So, no aspect of the murder weapon was linked to the defendant. Did you just pick him out of the phone book?

PROSECUTOR KING
Objection.

LYLE
Withdrawn. No further questions.

SHERIFF MADDUX steps down from the stand, hurt.

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

SAM and LYLE confer ...

LYLE
The prosecution is calling your ex-wife, Sam. She's testifying tomorrow.

SAM
Kathy knows me better than anyone. She'll tell the truth.

LYLE
I'm not in for any surprises, am I?

SAM shakes his head.

CUT TO:

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

KATHY'S on the stand, all nerves ...

PROSECUTOR KING
How are you related to the
deceased?

KATHY
Marianne was my sister-in-law.

PROSECUTOR KING
Were you close?

KATHY
Yes.

PROSECUTOR KING
Did you and Marianne ever talk
about Sam?

LYLE
Objection. Immaterial.

JUDGE EMMERT
Overruled. But get to the point,
counselor.

PROSECUTOR KING
Did Marianne ever talk to you about
sexual encounters with Sam?

KATHY
Yes.

The courtroom BUZZES ... LYLE glares at SAM, who shakes his
head ...

KATHY (CONT'D)
I knew that Marianne and Sam had
dated years ago, y'know, before she
met my brother. But about two years
ago, Marianne took me out to lunch
and she told me that Sam had, well,
made a pass at her. At Bethany's
birthday party.

LATER

KATHY, emotional, reads a letter:

KATHY (CONT'D)

"Call the Sheriff. He can't watch you forever. I shall keep ringing. Again this is no joke. Stay away from him noon and as well as night. If I can't get you together and you make a fool of me such as the school has done I shall come out there and put a bullet in that little girl's head. Too many think this is a joke: we'll see in time. I know where you live: I've been watching your house."

PROSECUTOR KING

Do you know who wrote this letter?

KATHY

Yes, I believe I do.

PROSECUTOR KING

Is the writer in this courtroom?

KATHY looks to SAM. He's stunned.

SAM

(softly)

No ...

PROSECUTOR KING

Can you point him out to the jury?

KATHY points at SAM ...

SAM

Liar!

The courtroom erupts. JUDGE EMMERT BANGS his GAVEL.

JUDGE EMMERT

Order.

SAM

That's not true!

LYLE

(quietly)

Sam, stop.

SAM glares at KATHY, who has the hint of a smirk:

SAM

Look at her, she's smiling!

JUDGE EMMERT
That's enough. One more outburst
and I'll hold you in contempt of
court.

LYLE pulls SAM back down to his seat. LYLE watches the JURORS
-- they're offended ... none look back at SAM: *not good*.

FADE TO:

INT. PICKAWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

The BAILIFF confers with the Judge.

JUDGE EMMERT
I have a note from the jurors, and
it reads as follows.
(reading)
I, James Garvey, foreman, notify
the Court that the jury has come to
a unanimous decision.
(to the Bailiff)
We are going to bring the jurors in
now and receive the verdict.

SAM prays ... the JURORS enter the chamber ...

JUDGE EMMERT (CONT'D)
Mister Garvey, has the jury reached
a unanimous verdict?

FOREMAN GARVEY
Yes, we have, your Honor.

JUDGE EMMERT
(to the Clerk)
Would you read the verdict into the
record?

CLERK
Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,
listen to your verdict as it stands
recorded.
(reading)
In the case of the State of Ohio
versus Samuel Kowalski, the court
has found him ... guilty of First
Degree Murder.

CHAOS in the court ... LYLE slumps, defeated ...

CLERK (CONT'D)

Dated this day, October twenty-eighth, nineteen eighty-three.

SAM

(whispering, to Lyle)

She set me up ... it was Kathy the whole time.

LYLE

I'm sorry, Sam.

SAM

She fucked me because she wanted custody. Don't you see it, Lyle?

LYLE

No, Sam. I don't.

JUDGE EMMERT

The Court will enter a judgment consistent with the verdict.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A.) INT. BUS (MOVING) - DAY

SAM, shackled, in his prison blues, rides with other PRISONERS to Lima Correctional Facility ...

B.) EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

KATHY unloads a U-Haul with DAVID and BETHANY, while LOUISE holds MARK ...

C.) INT. SUPERINTENDANT DOYLE'S OFFICE - DAY

WILLIAM pours scotch into a half cup of coffee ... His SECRETARY enters with a BOUQUET of white gladiolus ... places it on the desk and leaves ... he reads the CARD:

"Deepest sympathies, Clara"

D.) INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Transformed into a polling station ... SHERIFF MADDUX and BETTY greet VOTERS ...

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

SHERIFF MADDUX, exhausted, walks into ...

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dark ... too dark ...

SHERIFF MADDUX

What the --

The LIGHTS turn on ... DOLORES, DETECTIVE PHILLIPS and the OFFICERS have decorated with MADDUX campaign posters:

EVERYONE

SURPRISE!

SHERIFF MADDUX

Jesus H --

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS

Here's to the current and future
Pickaway County Sheriff, Ed Maddux!

CHEERS.

SHERIFF MADDUX

It's over?

DOLORES

In a landslide, baby.

She kisses him on the forehead ... DETECTIVE PHILLIPS approaches:

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS

It was an honor working the
Circleville letters with you.

He extends his hand, but SHERIFF MADDUX is distant ...

OFFICER (O.S.)

Speech! Speech! Speech --

The others CLAP and join in.

EVERYONE

Speech! Speech! Speech!

SHERIFF MADDUX waves them to calm down:

SHERIFF MADDUX

I'm not big on speeches.

That gets some chuckles.

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
Thank y'all for your hard work this
year. Enjoy yourselves tonight.
There's a lot more to be done.

LATER

OFFICERS mingle ... SHERIFF MADDUX sits alone. DOLORES brings
him a Coke:

DOLORES
Something on your mind?

SHERIFF MADDUX
(looking away)
Naw.

DOLORES
Ed, you can talk to me.

Nothing.

DOLORES (CONT'D)
You're not still thinking about the
Holloway case.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Mmhm.

DOLORES
You know you put away the right
guy. Don'tcha?

A long beat, then:

SHERIFF MADDUX
(snapping out of it)
Course I do. Just been a long week.

DOLORES
It's about to get longer. W-B-N-S
just called. They want to interview
you on the air tomorrow.

SHERIFF MADDUX sighs. DOLORES puts her arm around him ...

FADE TO:

A PEN --

Scratching BLOCK LETTERS into an ENVELOPE:

SAM KOWALSKI
LIMA CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIMA CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - MAIL ROOM - DAY

A MAIL SCREENER (mid-30s, navy uniform, latex gloves, perm) inspects the ENVELOPE, then tosses it into a MAIL CART ...

DISSOLVE TO:

THE PRISON HALLS - LATER

A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER (late 40s, beer gut, mullet) pushes a MAIL CART past the cells ... whistles ROGER MILLER'S "KING OF THE ROAD" ...

He tosses the ENVELOPE through a CELL grate ...

DISSOLVE TO:

THE CELL - LATER

SAM (bearded, emaciated) stares at THREE BRICK WALLS ...

He stretches and grabs the PIECE OF MAIL ...

Fingers trembling, SAM carefully opens the ENVELOPE and reads ...

CLOSE ON THE LETTER:

SHAME HOW THINGS WORK OUT
BUT BETTER YOU THAN ME:
THE SHERRIFF SAYS: YOU DID IT:
BUT WE KNOW BETTER DONT WE:

SAM CHUCKLES ... LAUGHS, full-throated ... MANIACAL, can't stop ...

FADE TO:

INT. WARDEN COOPER'S OFFICE - DAY

WARDEN COOPER (50s, three-piece suit, precise) sits beneath the hopper windows at a big oak desk with a phone.

The CORRECTIONAL OFFICER enters with the LETTER:

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER
Warden, this just came in for
Kowalski.

He shows him the LETTER. WARDEN COOPER clenches his jaw:

WARDEN COOPER
Has anyone else seen it?

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER
No.

WARDEN COOPER
Leave it here, thank you.

The C.O. does and shows himself out. WARDEN COOPER picks up the phone:

WARDEN COOPER (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
Mabel, call up Sheriff Maddux in
Circleville. I need to see him
immediately.

He hangs up the phone.

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX, shook, inspects the LETTER with gloved hands
... WARDEN COOPER paces:

SHERIFF MADDUX
He wrote it himself. It's him.

WARDEN COOPER
That's what we thought, too. But
the post mark --

SHERIFF MADDUX
Then he wrote it outside and had it
sent to himself inside.

WARDEN COOPER
I suppose that's possible, but
that's pretty far thinking, and
who's sending it?

SHERIFF MADDUX
Anyone. He could have had it
smuggled.

WARDEN COOPER
(offended)
We run a tight ship out in Lima.

SHERIFF MADDUX nods in agreement.

SHERIFF MADDUX
But it's him.

WARDEN COOPER
I just don't see --

SHERIFF MADDUX
He's building up for his appeal.
Make no mistake, this is a stunt.

WARDEN COOPER
I wanted you to know first.

SHERIFF MADDUX
I appreciate that.

WARDEN COOPER
We're keeping him in solitary
confinement at the moment.

SHERIFF MADDUX
That's good.

WARDEN COOPER
You have any other advice?

SHERIFF MADDUX
More solitary.

They share a laugh.

SHERIFF MADDUX (CONT'D)
Before you go, mind if I make a
copy?

WARDEN COOPER
Whatever you need, Ed.

FADE TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

SHERIFF MADDUX stands over the photocopier ... As the COPY spits out, he's fixated on one line:

THE SHERRIFF SAYS: YOU DID IT:

Looks closer ...

THE SHERRIFF SAYS:

CLOSER ...

SHERRIFF

SHERIFF MADDUX

No --

He takes off ...

PAST DOLORES' DESK

DOLORES

W-B-N-S is on their way for the interview.

SHERIFF MADDUX

There's an original in the copier for the Warden.

DOLORES

Everything okay?

But he's gone ...

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - MOMENTS LATER

SHERIFF MADDUX digs through a BOX of old CASE FILES ...

Pulls a WRITTEN STATEMENT ... searches the page ... points:

As I said to Sherriff Maddux

And again:

Sherriff Maddux

SHERIFF MADDUX
She spelled it wrong ...

FLASH BACK TO:

EXT. CLARA'S HOUSE - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX admires the BIRDHOUSES ... the box looks like the BOOBY TRAP ... CLARA emerges from the kitchen with a tray: pot of coffee, cups, cream and sugar.

FLASHING from MOMENT to MOMENT:

CLARA
I hope you have suspects?

LATER

CLARA (CONT'D)
... He was related to him, I believe --

SHERIFF MADDUX
Sam Kowalski?

CLARA
How did you know?

LATER

SHERIFF MADDUX
Would you be willing to write a sworn statement?

CLARA
... Absolutely.

BACK TO

CLARA (CONT'D)
Poor woman. And her daughter. It's just awful.

BACK TO PRESENT.

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - DAY

SHERIFF MADDUX lines up the WRITTEN STATEMENT against SAM'S PRISON LETTER -- the capital "S's" are staggeringly similar:

Sherriff
SHERIFF

CUT TO:

A FIST, KNOCKING ON A DOOR

EXT. CLARA'S DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

CLARA answers and faces WILLIAM, broken and heartsick:

CLARA
Darling?

WILLIAM
Hello, darling.

CLARA
You look awful.

WILLIAM
I know --

CUT TO:

THE BOTTOM OF THE WRITTEN STATEMENT, SIGNED:

CLARA DOYLE

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF MADDUX'S PHONE RINGS ... He almost jumps out of his skin ... calms himself and picks up:

DOLORES (V.O.)
(from phone, whispering)
The teevee people are waiting. Are
you ready?

SHERIFF MADDUX looks at the box of case files, considers:

SHERIFF MADDUX
Hold on --

EXT. CLARA'S DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

WILLIAM
I miss you. I miss the old days.

CLARA
(tears in her eyes)
Me too, darling.

There's a light in his eyes ... SIRENS in the distance ...
growing nearer ...

CLARA (CONT'D)
We can have the old days back
again. Dinner with the Schweitzers,
bridge with Curtis and Marjorie ...

CLARA opens the door wider ... SIRENS BLARING ... they watch
a FIRE TRUCK speed past her driveway ...

CLARA (CONT'D)
Would you care to come in?

WILLIAM
Yes.

WILLIAM slinks back into the house and CLARA closes the door
behind him, her lips curling into a smile.

CUT TO:

A STRUCK MATCH ... ITS FLICKERING FLAME ...

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF MADDUX LIGHTS the corner of Clara's WRITTEN STATEMENT
and drops it in the sink. He blows out the match, cracks the
window and watches the paper crumble TO ASH.

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - MOMENTS LATER

SHERIFF MADDUX emerges from the bathroom ... LIGHTS and
CAMERA ready ... He greets the WBNS REPORTER (30s, polished):

WBNS REPORTER
Thank you for your time. I know
you're very busy.

SHERIFF MADDUX
Grateful for the opportunity to
thank the voters.

The REPORTER shows SHERIFF MADDUX to his seat. He grins, but his eyes tell another story ...

CUT TO:

FINGERNAILS DIGGING INTO WHITE BRICKS ...

INT. LIMA CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - SOLITARY - CONTINUOUS

SAM SCRATCHES a series of large CONCENTRIC CIRCLES into the prison wall, around and around ...

PEGGY LEE's "ME AND MY SHADOW" floats in with a tip-toed piano line ...

He stands back to admire his work and we

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.

FORGET CIRCLEVILLE OHIO:
DO NOTHING TO HURT
SHERIFF RAOCLIFF: IF YOU
COME TO OHIO YOU EL SICKO
WILL PAY:
THE CIRCLEVILLE WRITER:

Photograph of actual Circleville Letter.