

THE WETTEST COUNTY

by
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Based on
THE WETTEST COUNTY IN THE WORLD
By Matt Bondurant

June 15th, 2009

RED WAGON ENTERTAINMENT

OPENING MONTAGE.

Crackling radio. Fade up in B&W, slow zoom into formal 18th Century portrait of JOHN HANCOCK.

OFFICIAL SOUNDING VOICE

In 1768 John Hancock was accused of unloading illegal liquor from his ship 'Liberty' in Boston. The incident proved to be a major event in the coming American revolution. John Hancock became one of the founding fathers of America.

B&W images of hardened country folk making homemade liquor. Police footage of busted stills and blockaders. Colored neon cities, Al Capone and gangster mayhem.

OFFICIAL SOUNDING VOICE

The battle over taxes on liquor continued, reaching its peak with Prohibition in 1920 - 1933. The greatest crime wave in American history was unleashed. During this time Franklin County, West Virginia, became known as 'the Wettest County in the World' manufacturing more illegal liquor than anywhere else in the United States. The Bondurant brothers, who were the foot soldiers in this crime wave, lived in these mountains.

Tommy guns blasting, shops blowing up. Edward G. Robinson dying, Bogart mowed down. Cagney manically laughs and explodes into a massive fireball.

Superimposed title:

The following is based on true events.

EXT. PIG ENCLOSURE - MORNING

A pig enclosure and a barn. The ground is hard with frost and fog rises from it. A bridled sow trots past.

CREDITS

TITLE: **THE PROMISED LAND**

END CREDITS

1918

(CONTINUED)

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JACK BONDURANT (7 yrs.) enters the pig enclosure, fog blows from his frightened breathing. He carries a bolt-action .22 rifle. The sow, in the corner of the pen glowers at JACK.

FORREST BONDURANT (14 yrs.) lean and smirking and HOWARD BONDURANT (11 yrs.) a giant of a boy, sit on the railed fence of the enclosure and watch.

JACK (V.O.)

*Blood and violence - I heard it
said that it followed my family
like a mad dog all our lives.*

JACK chambers a round, walks over to the sow, puts the barrel to its eye and pulls the trigger. There is a crack, a spray of blood, the sow staggers, charges at JACK. JACK drops the rifle and leaps out of the pen. The sow butts at the fence, trots back into its corner.

JACK (V.O.)

*But I'm not sure that's true.
Cause when it stopped followin'
us, it seemed to me, my brothers
Forrest and Howard went out and
found it.*

JACK reenters the pen, picks up rifle, fires again. Blood spreads over the pig's eyes but it remains standing. JACK fires again. The bullet burrows into the skin above the pig's eye but still the sow does not fall. Little JACK sits down on the ground and cries.

JACK sees FORREST standing over him, smirking. FORREST straddles the sow, pulls her snout high, stretching her neck tight. He brings a long boning knife across her throat. There is a hot gush of blood and a red jet of lung air. The sow's body goes limp in FORREST'S hands.

HOWARD, immense, walks over, hauling a heavy hooked chain and a bucket. FORREST and HOWARD look down at JACK. They begin to laugh. Little JACK, cradles his rifle, smiles up at them through his terrified tears. JACK, too, begins to laugh.

JACK (V.O.)

*Blood and violence? My brothers
had a talent for it. A gift. They
were susceptible to its needs.
(beat) Me, well, I guess my
talents lay elsewhere.*

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

GRANVILLE BONDURANT (60 yrs) pulls the shades down in the windows of his General Store and turns the sign that hangs in the door to 'CLOSED' and steps outside.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

GRANVILLE pulls the door shut and locks it.

JACK (V.O)

When the Spanish Lady Flu epidemic swept through Franklin County, everyone locked themselves away in a kinda self-imposed quarantine. My daddy, Granville, closed up his store.

GRANVILLE looks up and down the street and we see ROCKY MOUNT, a small, industrious town emptied of its denizens. GRANVILLE presses a handkerchief to his mouth and nose and crosses the deserted street. A FAMILY hurry by, rags tied across their mouth and nose.

EXT. FILLING STATION - DAY

A deserted filling station. Snow blasts through, the filling station sign flapping in the wind.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Colored light filtering through the windows of an eerie unpeopled church. The doors blow open and a gust of snow whips down the aisle. A dog sniffs around.

INT. FAMILY HOME - EVENING

GRANVILLE, FORREST, HOWARD, EMMY and JACK sit around the kitchen table. THREE DEAD FIGURES lie on the floor covered in a quilt. The scene is spectral and sad. EMMY'S face is slick with tears.

JACK (V.O.)

But Daddy needn't have bothered. The flu got my mother and Belva May and Era.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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JACK (CONT'D)

It almost took Forrest too but he somehow managed to fight it off, though it left him haunted and bent crooked and in certain lights his skin looked strange and blue.

FORREST is wrapped in a blanket, gaunt and blue and twisted, a manic light in his eyes.

The front door opens and HOWARD stands in the doorway, kit bag in his hand. There is an expression on his face of a man who has seen unspeakable horrors.

JACK (V.O)

Howard returned from the great war, the day mama and the girls died. I barely recognized him - my big, laughing brother. What ever horrors he saw over there, he never said nothin, but you could see 'em boiling behind his eyes.

FORREST stares at HOWARD, in the doorway.

JACK (V.O.)

I remember Forrest leanin' across the kitchen table and sayin', "Nothing can kill us now. We can never die." (beat) Well, in a way Forrest was right. (beat) But, in a way, he was wrong too.

FADE TO: 1931

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

A pack of hungry looking dogs skulk through a depression-era town. JACK sits in the driver seat of clapped-out Ford. He watches HOWARD jog along the back lots. He runs up to the back door of a store and a STORE OWNER appears. He reaches inside his coat for a bottle of moonshine, hands it to the STORE OWNER, who gives HOWARD money. HOWARD lumbers across the lot, to the back door of the police station. SHERIFF PETE HODGES, opens the door. HOWARD pulls a bottle from his coat, gives it to him.

SHERIFF HODGES

Mornin' Howard.

HOWARD

Mornin' Sheriff. (beat) Might be wise if hold onto something when you drink this stuff.

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SHERIFF HODGES

Oh, yeah? Better give me two if
it's that good.

HOWARD produces another bottle from another pocket.
DEPUTY HENRY ABSHIRE moves into the doorway.

HENRY ABSHIRE

Mornin' Howard.

HOWARD

Mornin' Henry.

HENRY ABSHIRE

I'll take one.

HOWARD looks to the Ford and whistles, holds up a finger.
JACK jumps from the cabin, grabs a bottle from the back
seat, trots across the lot and hands it to HOWARD.

HOWARD

(smiles)

Pure corn whiskey. *White*
Lightning. It comes at you like a
knifing - point first, sharp and
hot all the way down.

HENRY ABSHIRE

Aw fuck it. Gimme two, then.

HOWARD

(to JACK)

Git us another one.

JACK turns and trots back to the Ford. JACK is a go-
fetch, a messenger-boy. HOWARD is the milkman, dealing in
"illegal" liquor.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - LATER

JACK and HOWARD drive the Ford into the lot. JACK and
HOWARD climb out of the Ford. FORREST sits on the porch
counting money into a tin. He looks up, face grim.

HOWARD

Forrest, we need six gallons for a
gatherin' at the Deshazo place.
Old Little Bean Deshazo just died.
Ida Belle axed if we could come
down there.

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HOWARD twists the cap of a jar of liquor and spins it away. He drinks from the jar. FORREST tosses a bunch of keys at JACK.

FORREST

You bring a crate from the shed.
(to Howard) I'd better come with
you.

HOWARD

Why's that?

FORREST goes inside. HOWARD drains the jar.

HOWARD

What, you don't reckon I can
handle a couple of blacks?

Seconds later Forrest comes back out putting on a heavy coat, and tucking a gun in his trousers.

HOWARD

Suit yourself.

EXT. DESHAZO CABIN - EVENING

FORREST, HOWARD walk up the path toward DESHAZO cabin. JACK comes up the rear, carrying a crate of liquor. They are drunk. A half-dozen motley cars, some knobby horses and mules. A bonfire roars in the backyard. CHILDREN run around, chasing each other with sticks.

IDA BELLE, coal black, marches down the path.

IDA BELLE

Thank you Mr. Bondurant. I'm Ida
Belle, Little Bean's sister.

IDA BELLE eyes the whiskey.

JACK

Sorry to hear about Little Bean.

IDA BELLE

Come in.

INT. DESHAZO HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST, HOWARD, JACK enter the house. The house is packed with RELATIVES, who sit and sing a solemn hymn.

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The corpse of LITTLE BEAN is propped up in a coffin, in a tattered suit, yellow staring eyes open. When the RELATIVES see the crate of liquor, there is a sudden sense of expectancy and excitement.

IDA BELLE hands FORREST a pile of crumpled dollars. JACK puts the crate down and immediately the hymn stops and the jars get passed around.

IDA BELLE
(to the BROTHERS)
Please, sit, stay.

FORREST, HOWARD and JACK are the only white people there. Several DESHAZO MEN come forward and shake the BROTHERS hands. HOWARD cracks open another jar.

INT. DESHAZO HOUSE - LATER, NIGHT

Everybody is completely drunk. A FIDDLER plays a screeching reel. WOMEN wail in an unintelligible tongue. Shouting, dancing, screaming. Complete chaos.

RELATIVES put lit cigarettes in LITTLE BEAN'S fingers and pour whiskey into his open mouth. HOWARD and JACK sit at a table. HOWARD picks at pig knuckles in a bowl. FORREST stands at the back, his face grave. He watches as HOWARD empties a jar, in three monumental glugs. HOWARD passes the jar to JACK.

JACK
(awed)
Jesus, Howard, you sure can drink.
You might wanna slow down.

JACK drinks from the jar and hears a thunderous sound mounting in his ears. He looks about as if to identify the direction of the sound.

JACK
Jesus, Howard, can you hear that?

HOWARD
I don't hear nothing. It's the
liquor! You get used to it!

IDA BELLE staggers over. She is very drunk and distraught, jar in hand, tears rolling down her cheeks.

IDA BELLE
What am I gonna do now my po'
Little Bean has gone? He be the
last of mine.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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IDA BELLE (CONT'D)

Lost my two boys in the war and my
girls to the influenza. Lost
everyone! Little Bean's all I got!

JACK

(holding his head and
over the din)

Sorry to hear that, mam.

IDA BELLE

Not like the *great Bondurant boys!*
(thrusts finger at
HOWARD)

Looka you!

(points at FORREST)

An him over there! No-one survive
both the war and the influenza!
T'aint nothin' fair in this world.
Oh Lord! What is it wit you
Bondurant boys? How come my boys
get themself kilt and you sitting
there eating pig knuckles! How
come my baby gals in their grave
and him, over there, standin
around like some blue-skinned
serpent or something? Ain't damn
fair at all!

HOWARD drains his jar, looks at the hysterical IDA BELLE,
the looks at JACK and starts laughing, big and loud.
Tears run down his face.

IDA BELLE (CONT'D)

(hysterical drunk)

You crazy man! You is *touched!* You
Bondurants *ain't of this world!*

HOWARD stops laughing and a haunted intensity crosses his
face.

HOWARD

"No disrespect Ida Belle, but
you's wrong. You think I survived
the damn War? I seen stuff, that'd
it'd be a relief to be lying in a
coffin so's I don't have to see it
no more.

JACK drinks another slug from the jar, then puts his
hands over his ears as he hears a sound like ripping
sheet metal. This is the effect of White Lightning.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You don't know what you're talkin'
about, old lady.

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HOWARD rises in an unsteady crouch, locks gazes with IDA BELLE, delivers a down-borne punch that splits the table cleanly in two. IDA BELLE screams hysterically.

IDA BELLE
Survive da war? Survive da
influenza? You ain't human!

HOWARD buckles as FORREST steps across, grabs two handfuls of his shirt and pulls him to his feet.

FORREST
(sympathetically)
C'mon, Howard.

FORREST pushes HOWARD out the back door.

HOWARD
(shouts as he is
pushed through the
door)
Whole damned battalion drowned in
the ocean! Dead bodies far as you
could see!

JACK crouches, his mouth open in a silent scream, hands over ears.

JACK
Can anyone hear that?

EXT. DESHAZO'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

HOWARD stumbles through the back yard, leans against a tree, begins to wretch. JACK charges into the darkness, reeling as though there is an earthquake beneath his feet. He falls to his knees in the yard, beside HOWARD. A GROUP OF MEN pour out of the kitchen and boil around the BROTHERS. A MAN with no shirt on, screams at them.

SHIRTLESS MAN
You damn crackers got no respect!

HOWARD vomits a gush of blood. It is impossible to tell if JACK is hallucinating this or not. The CROWD surges - incensed, incoherent, ravenously drunk. The SHIRTLESS MAN pulls a straight razor from his boot and steps forward. The CROWD urge him on. A MAN with a long scar moves into view.

MAN WITH SCAR
Ain't of this world?(spits) Shit.

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SHIRTLESS MAN

I'm gonna cut you, you
motherfucker, the we'll see if you
is human or not.

FORREST moves in front of HOWARD and JACK. The SHIRTLESS MAN half-circles FORREST, waving the razor. FORREST removes his hat and sends it sailing into the darkness. His body torques like a coiled spring and his right arm shoots out, catching the SHIRTLESS MAN square in the teeth, making a strange tink sound.

The SHIRTLESS MAN crashes backwards, falling into the crowd, spitting blood and teeth. A set of iron knuckles hang loosely from FORREST'S fist.

HOWARD stands upright, his face, a gruesome horror of blood and bile. He is smiling. The CROWD melts into the dark, leaving the SHIRTLESS MAN, unconscious, the razor still in his hand. JACK remains kneeling on the ground, his hands over his ears, to blot out the sound.

HOWARD

(smiling at FORREST)

Expertly done, big brother.

FORREST looks at HOWARD and JACK, spits on the ground, then stalks off across the vacated yard.

EXT. CRICKET'S STILL - DAY

JACK stands next to an crude still made from the rusted radiator of an old Ford. This contraption is comic and inventive. CRICKET PATE, a boy crippled from rickets squats beside the still and siphons off a jar, a terrifying brown in color. He holds it up to the light, as if examining a work of art.

CRICKET

Looks good.

JACK

Kinda rusty lookin' ain't it,
Cricket?

CRICKET

I guess.

JACK

Give it here.

JACK takes a slug of the liquor. There is a metallic rushing sound and JACK clings onto a nearby tree.

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JACK
Damn. (beat) Jesus.

CRICKET grins.

CRICKET
Does the damn trick though.

JACK
Ok. What we need now is a decent
still. Somewhere to put it.

CRICKET
I got some ideas 'bout that.

JACK
Then we make a whole bunch and get
old Forrest to sell it out of the
station.

CRICKET
You done talk to him?

JACK
Yeah, well, I'm aiming to.

CRICKET
Yeah, well, aiming, ain't doing.

JACK
You just figger out how to make
the shit, Cricket, and leave old
Forrest to me.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - LATER, DAY

JACK and HOWARD stand outside the General Store. HOWARD has two sacks of meal sitting next to him. CRICKET leans with a small sack in his hands against a segregated drinking fountain - a 'White' and a 'Colored' sign.

JACK
A gut-rusted Ford guns down the street and draws up at the curb. DANNY MITCHEL sticks his head out the window.

DANNY
You comin'?

HOWARD
What took so damn long?

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HOWARD hauls a sack of meal over each shoulder and sets them in the truck bed. CRICKET steps forward and shuffles his feet.

JACK

(nervous)
What about Forrest's place? You gonna be there tonight?

HOWARD

Yeah. What about it?

JACK takes the sack off CRICKET and hands it to HOWARD.

JACK

Here, try this. It's me and Cricket's brew.

HOWARD

Oh yeah?

JACK

Maybe you could talk to Forrest about letting me and Cricket in?

HOWARD

How old are you, Jack.

JACK

Nearly twenny.

HOWARD

How old's Cricket there?

JACK

Sixteen.

HOWARD climbs in the cabin of the Model A. He looks at JACK, then looks at CRICKET. He laughs. DANNY joins in. DANNY floors the engine and JACK watches as the Model A clatters down the street. JACK spits on the curb, curses and looks at Cricket.

JACK

They got no damn direction or vision.

CRICKET eyeballs JACK, then sticks his hands in his pockets and they mope up the sidewalk toward town.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - MOMENTS LATER

From the other end of town a brand new Ford Tudor Sedan careers wildly down the main street. A CITY GANGSTER hunches over the steering wheel. Beside him FLOYD BANNER, sucks a toothpick, in a snappy suit and hat. The car is a thing of gleaming beauty in this busted-down town.

JACK and CRICKET press into a doorway, transfixed by the action. FLOYD BANNER screeches to a halt, climbs out of the Ford, reaches into the back seat, producing an immense and extremely heavy Tommy gun. FLOYD walks calmly back down the center of the street.

A police car wildly appears and FLOYD walks towards it. He lets forth a blaze of gunfire, hard to control, laughing insanely. The tires blow out and it swerves, mounts the sidewalk and crashes through the window of the Haberdashery.

FLOYD calmly walks back to his auto, catching the awed eye of JACK for a weighted second. A look passes between them. FLOYD takes his toothpick from his mouth, snaps it and flicks it on the ground. He throws the Tommy gun in the back seat, climbs in his car and tears off.

JACK picks up FLOYD'S toothpick.

JACK

Now there's a man with direction
and vision.

INT. MODEL A - DAY

HOWARD holds CRICKET'S liquor up to the light. The liquid is clear at the top, a thick brown swirl at the bottom. He shakes the jar, disturbs a thick mushroom of murk, dislodges bits of twig and dirt. HOWARD laughs.

HOWARD

This here's made with tadpoles and
swampwater!

HOWARD drinks, throat constricts, tears pour from his eyes.

HOWARD

(gagging)

This is the worst damn whiskey I
ever put a lip on.

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HOWARD throws down some more and hands the jar to DANNY.
DANNY drinks, shakes his head, then bays like a hound.
HOWARD takes another long drink.

DANNY

Hey, you just be careful. That
shit'll get on you. Wake up with
your liver in your sock.

HOWARD

I know. I gotta get back down to
Blackwater Station to help
Forrest. He needs backup for a
sale he's got going down. Set to
go off about midnight. I'm gonna
need the truck.

DANNY

You drivin' my truck? (beat) Shit.

HOWARD takes another slug of the jar, sneezes three times
and passes it back to DANNY.

HOWARD

Jesus, this aint fit to slop hogs!

DANNY

Give it here.

DANNY drinks and bays like a dog again.

DANNY

White Lightning!

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - NIGHT

HOWARD and DANNY bursts through a hedge into the
clearing, carrying sacks of meal. They are drunk. There
are two stills and the camp is littered with debris.

HOWARD

My babies!

HOWARD walks over to the one of the stills, studies the
mash boxes. HOWARD picks up a jar of liquor, shakes it
and checks the bead. HOWARD smiles.

HOWARD

One hunnert-fifty proof, I reckon,
at least!

He opens a jar, spinning the lid into the dark.

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HOWARD

This will sure change your
perspective on things!

They drink. There's a rushing of sound, as if the heavens
are tearing open. They cling to the tree.

HOWARD AND DANNY

White Lightning!

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - EVEN LATER, NIGHT

HOWARD, DANNY lay unconscious by a camp fire. The thumper
keg, connected by a length of copper pipe between the
still and the condenser coil begins to knock
convulsively. HOWARD wakes to find he leg of his trousers
has caught fire. He leaps to his feet and bats at the
flames. He is blind drunk.

HOWARD

Shit! (remembering) *Forrest!*

HOWARD kicks DANNY but DANNY does not waken.

HOWARD

Danny! Shit! I gotta get to
Forrests!

HOWARD flops back down on the log, a great roaring in his
head. He grabs a jar of liquor, drains it.

HOWARD

Aw, fuck him. Forrest can look
after hisself.

HOWARD falls drunkenly backwards, unconscious again.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

Snow-filled wind howls around a lone plank building lit
by a single light. A sign 'BLACKWATER STATION' bangs.

INT. FRONT ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

A simple place with a counter and stools in front of a
grill, a few tables, windows looking onto a muddy lot. A
GROUP OF MEN sit playing cards. A FEW MEN sit at the bar,
haggard and dog-eyed, drinking brandy from jars.

MAGGIE tall, auburn hair, fries eggs and bacon behind the
counter.

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She wears a yellow satin dress and TWO MEN (HOPHEAD ONE and HOPHEAD TWO) at the counter, city gangsters, dressed in pin-striped suits, watch her every move with carnal intent. HOPHEAD TWO has a flaming goiter under his jaw. HAL CHILDRESS works the counter as well.

INT. KITCHEN, COUNTY LINE RESTAURANT - MIDNIGHT

In the kitchen FORREST stares out the frosted window, at the road. Forrest counts a considerable amount of cash, wraps a rubber band around it. He sees a clapped-out Ford pass, a miserable FAMILY inside, their possessions tied to the roof - part of the great procession of out-of-work drifters and itinerants. A pack of dogs squabbling by the road. EVERETT DILLON washes dishes.

EVERETT

Howard's late, Mr. Forrest.

FORREST nods, checks his watch.

FORREST

Everett, go tell Hal to shut 'er down.

FORREST waits till EVERETT has exited before he pulls a cleverly-disguised panel from a section of wall. There is a safe. He spins the numbers of the safe and opens it. The safe is crammed full of cash, lots of it, wrapped in rubber bands. We see, suddenly, that despite FORREST'S down-beat appearance - the faded over-alls, the clapped-out car he is rich. FORREST tosses in the money he has counted, closes the safe, returns the panel.

FORREST hears the pop of shattering glass and the heavy sound of struggling bodies coming from the front of the station. A MAN yelps with pain. As EVERETT appears at the door.

EVERETT

We got trouble.

FORREST moves through the swinging door.

INT. FRONT ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

FORREST sees a HOPHEAD ONE stretching a bloody hand across the bar trying to catch hold of MAGGIE. The other HOPHEAD TWO with the goiter, stands next to him, his stool lying on the ground. MAGGIE is backed up against the grill, hands behind her back. The CARD PLAYERS are all standing and moving away. HAL, at the end of the counter, holds a wooden club.

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FORREST

That's it! Everybody out!

HOPHEAD ONE, leaning over the bar, twists around, his drugged eyes, pin-pricks and fiercely blue.

HOPHEAD ONE

I done paid for another jar and she won't give it. Then the hick bitch done cut me!

He holds up his bloody hand, a deep slice across his knuckles. FORREST looks at MAGGIE and she shakes her head slightly. He looks back at the HOPHEAD ONE.

FORREST

No, you didn't.

HOPHEAD ONE

We gonna buy near a hunner' gallon of your liquor. Now you ain't gonna throw in some extra?

FORREST

You ain't buying a damn thing. Get out.

HAL bends down and picks up a long-barreled Colt pistol, flecked with blood, off the floor.

HAL

He pulled it on Maggie when she wouldn't give him one. She brung the knife around and caught him.

FORREST looks at the TWO HOPHEADS.

FORREST

Did you pull a gun on this woman?

HOPHEAD ONE pounds the bar with his fist and seizes another jar. He cocks it in the air.

FORREST

Throw that damn jar and you're gonna get yourself seriously hurt.

CARDPLAYER

(to HOPHEAD ONE)

I'd do as he says. You don't know who you're messin with.

The CARD PLAYERS tumble out into the night.

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FORREST glances at MAGGIE who grips a carving knife, smeared crimson with HOPHEAD ONE'S blood. The HOPHEAD ONE heaves the jar just to the right of MAGGIE, shattering a large mirror.

FORREST

(blankly)

I'm sorry you done that.

A wind roars in FORREST'S head. HOPHEAD ONE charges at FORREST with both fists, howling. FORREST sidesteps him, pushes him into a table and the man crashes to the ground. EVERETT rushes from the kitchen and sits on the HOPHEAD ONE'S legs and HAL puts the pistol to the man's temple.

HAL

Lay still, you sack of shit.

HOPHEAD TWO comes at FORREST, splitting his ear with a blow. He gets both arms around FORREST'S midsection and lifts him off the floor. FORREST gets an arm free and brings the heel of his hand sharply under HOPHEAD TWO'S chin, into his goiter. HOPHEAD TWO'S teeth clack hard and he lets go of FORREST, his eyes wild. A fleshy sliver of tongue dribbles over his bottom lip, followed by a sheet of blood that runs down his chin. He catches the piece of tongue in his hand and groans. FORREST slips on his iron knuckles and catches HOPHEAD TWO with a crunching overhand right between the eyes, laying his forehead open and dropping him to the floor.

FORREST

Damn.

FORREST grabs the unconscious HOPHEAD TWO and drags him out the front door.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

FORREST drags HOPHEAD TWO through the snow and dumps him in a ditch beside the road. HOPHEAD TWO moans and clutches his bloody head. FORREST stalks back inside.

INT. FRONT ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

EVERETT still sits on HOPHEAD ONE. HAL still points the gun at his head. FORREST hauls him to his feet.

FORREST

Get up.

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FORREST throws him thru the door and follows him out.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MIDNIGHT

FORREST drags HOPHEAD ONE through the snow to the parking lot. One the ground HOPHEAD ONE snaps open a switchblade and attempts to stab FORREST in the foot but is not able to penetrate FORREST'S heavy boot.

FORREST

Motherfucker!

FORREST kicks him savagely with his heavy boots. HOPHEAD ONE rolls about cursing and whining.

FORREST

I don't like trouble!

FORREST touches blood leaking from his split earlobe and kicks HOPHEAD ONE in the head and ribs, some more.

FORREST

You hear?!

After a while, HOPHEAD ONE lays still and FORREST may as well be kicking a rag doll. FORREST spits in the snow, looks up the road.

FORREST

Goddamn you, Howard.

FORREST kicks MAN ONE a final time.

FORREST

Goddamn you.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - AFTER MIDNIGHT

HOWARD and DANNY lie comatose by the camp fire.

INT. FRONT ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - LATER

MAGGIE stands in her coat and hat, counting money in the till, behind her, the remnants of the shattered mirror. EVERETT and HAL have gone home. FORREST, has a bandage taped to his ear. He stands by the door, watching MAGGIE, who doesn't look up.

FORREST

What you doing?

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MAGGIE
(continuing to count
money)
Eatin' ice cream.

MAGGIE looks up, her coat hanging open and FORREST can see a spray of dried blood across her yellow dress.

FORREST
You better be gettin home. The
roads are filling up.

MAGGIE
I'll be out in a minute.

FORREST
I'll see you out. There's some
mean looking dogs hangin around
out there.

MAGGIE
(smiling)
Are you worried about me, Forrest
Bondurant?

FORREST shuffles awkwardly. MAGGIE, steps out behind the counter. She crosses the floor and stands in front of FORREST. There is a heavy sexual tension, that obviously has not been acted upon.

FORREST
(mumbles awkwardly)
I'll see you out.

MAGGIE
You do that, Forrest.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST stands on the porch and watches MAGGIE walk across the lot, open her car door. FORREST looks as if he wants to ask her something, but loses his nerve.

FORREST
Bye.

MAGGIE
Bye.

MAGGIE climbs in her flatbed truck and drives away.

FORREST walks onto the lot, puts his head back, watches the snow fall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He sees a splash of blood in the snow where he kicked MAN ONE and he pushes fresh snow on top of the blood with his foot. The pack of skin and bone dogs look on, FORREST throws up his arms and they scamper into the darkness.

FORREST looks across the lot at his Ford and detects some movement there. He sees a MAN slumped across its front fender. It is HOPHEAD TWO, who he hit with his iron knuckles, a dark smear of blood on his forehead.

FORREST looks about him. The lot is eerily empty. FORREST notices that the hood of his Ford is slightly ajar and a hot anger returns to his face and a familiar wind howls in his head. He looks down at HOPHEAD TWO.

FORREST

You messin' with my car? What is
it with your kind? Wake up each
morning needin' some kind of
beatin' or other.

FORREST grabs HOPHEAD TWO'S lapels in order to shift him off the running board. HOPHEAD TWO'S eyes shoot open and his bloody hands grip FORREST'S wrists. HOPHEAD TWO grins horribly, sticks out his stump tongue and makes an incomprehensible sound.

FORREST

Shit, son! You city boys never
give up?

From out of nowhere HOPHEAD ONE appears, close to FORREST'S back, leans his weight on FORREST, keeping him from standing. HOPHEAD ONE hooks a forearm under FORREST'S chin and pulls his face up to the sky.

MAN ONE

Now ya got trouble.

HOPHEAD ONE produces a razor and draws it across FORREST'S stretched throat, opening it in a scarlet smile. HOPHEAD TWO continues to hold FORREST'S wrists, their combined breath billowing around them. Blood pours from FORREST'S throat, down his chest as the HOPHEAD ONE saws roughly at FORREST'S neck.

FORREST pulls an arm free, sticks it into the eye socket of the MAN behind him, who screams. FORREST staggers a few steps back, falls heavily on his hands and knees, blood pouring into the steaming snow. He crawls across the lot to the side wall of the station.

FORREST leans against the wall of the station and feels for the edges of the cut in his throat with his trembling fingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He leans back and holding his wound closed, watches the snow fall all around. The vault of the sky closes and the stars go out one by one.

Then FORREST falls sideways, his face going down in the snow, ice against his cheek, his fingers still holding the edges of his throat as he drifts into darkness.

There is a splintering sound of a door being kicked in. A fine blanket of snow covers the body of FORREST.

EXT. MAGGIE'S FLATBED TRUCK, ROAD - SAME TIME

MAGGIE drives her truck through the snow. She screeches to a halt. She looks at her reflection in the rearview mirror, pats at her hair, puts on some lipstick, decides upon a course of action.

MAGGIE
(under her breath)
Damn you, Forrest.

She swings the truck around, heads back to the station.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT, MINUTES LATER

MAGGIE walks up the steps of the station in the dark. She enters the station.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

MAGGIE enters the station.

MAGGIE
Forrest?

HOPHEAD ONE is behind the counter, going through the cash register. He looks up and leers horribly at MAGGIE, his face and hands splashed in blood.

HOPHEAD TWO appears behind MAGGIE, throws an arm around throat and presses the carving knife to her breast, muttering something foul in MAGGIE'S ear.

EXT. GRANVILLE'S FARM - DAY

Simple farm, livestock barn, vegetable garden. EMMY BONDURANT tall and stooped, hangs washing. JACK is stripped down to his undershirt, splitting firewood, his body steaming like a workhorse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A car drives up, snow chains on its wheels and HAL CHILDRESS steps out and picks his way through the snow toward JACK.

HAL
Where's your daddy?

JACK
At the store, course.

HAL
Howard about?

JACK
No. Ain't seen him. What's goin on?

HAL
Somethin' done happened to Forrest.

JACK
What?

HAL
Don't rightly know. A deal with some damn hop heads from the city went bad. Took care of it but this morning Forrest's car is there but he ain't.

JACK puts on his checkered shirt. Pulls on his hat.

JACK
Let's go.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

The station is littered with broken glass and shattered furniture. The register lies smashed on the floor, draw gaping, every shelf behind the counter cleared of its contents. The carving knife on the bar, its blade smeared with a dark crust. JACK and HAL peruse the damage. Try to make sense of things.

JACK
Maggie?

HAL
She normally leaves just after me and Everett. Cars gone, so I 'spect she made it home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
We better call Sheriff Hodges.

HAL
Let's check the shed first.

JACK and HAL move through the kitchen, to back door. They pass the undisturbed disguised wall panel hiding the safe.

EXT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

JACK and HAL follow a set of tracks that lead to the shed, the tracks indicating a series of trips. The door to the shed is open, hacked apart, in splinters.

JACK
How much did he have in here?

HAL
Near two hunnert, I 'spect

They enter the shed cautiously.

INT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

In the dark shed, some broken bottles and a few empty cans on the floor. Otherwise the shed is empty.

JACK
Shit. Worth at least five hunnert dollars. Forrest ain't gonna like this one bit.

JACK and HAL leave the shed.

EXT. PARKING LOT, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY.

JACK and HAL walk around the station to the parking lot. MAGGIE'S flatbed is gone but FORREST'S Ford is as it was the night before. JACK scratches his head and turns toward the station.

JACK
Shit.

JACK looks down and see a vast crusty patch of blood, melted down to the gravel, by the station wall. FORREST, though, is not there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
Christ, Hal. Call the hospital.

INT. ROCKY MOUNT HOSPITAL - DAY

JACK marches down the hallway of the hospital, his face grim. HAL hobbles along behind him, breathing hard. They follow a DOCTOR who leads them into a room.

INT. ROOM IN ROCKY MOUNT HOSPITAL - DAY

FORREST lies unconscious in a hospital bed, his throat swathed in bandages. JACK and HAL look on in horror.

DOCTOR
The nurses said he came in
sometime last night under his own
power. (beat) His throat was cut
from here to here.

The DOCTOR draws his finger across his throat.

DOCTOR
(dryly)
He was holding the edges of his
throat together with his fingers.
(beat) Your brother claimed he'd
had "an accident".

The DOCTOR rubs his face in weary exasperation.

DOCTOR
Before he passed out the nurses
asked how he got there. He said he
"walked."

JACK and HAL look at each other, stupefied.

DOCTOR
That'd be about twelve miles,
right?

JACK
(Quietly)
About.

INT. ROOM IN ROCKY MOUNT HOSPITAL - DAY - LATER

FORREST lies in the hospital bed. The bandages are off and a terrible stitched gash stretches across his throat. He stares at a spot on the ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK stands beside the bed. HOWARD sits on a chair, staring at his feet. MAGGIE stands in the corner.

JACK
Them doctors are saying you walked
in here, Forrest.
(smiles in wonder)
All the ways from Blackwater
station!

FORREST says nothing. JACK turns to MAGGIE.

JACK
Through the damn snow! Can you
believe it, Maggie?!

MAGGIE shakes her head but says nothing.

JACK
Did you get 'em, Forrest?

FORREST
No.

JACK
What you gonna do?

FORREST looks at JACK and says nothing.

JACK
I'll hold those bastards down
myself. Where are they?

FORREST
They're scum. They're everywhere
you wanna look.

JACK
Well, I wanna be there when you
get 'em.

FORREST looks at JACK, the corners of his bristling scar drawn up like some kind of ghastly second mouth.

FORREST
Do you now. (beat) You want into
this business?

FORREST points at the stitched gash across his throat.

FORREST (CONT'D)
Well, this *is* the business. You
think I'm gonna up and go after
every piece of trash that blows
over the county line?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORREST (CONT'D)

Every goddamn stiff who tries to
do me ill?

JACK

But, Forrest, we cain't let these
sons of bitches just get away...

FORREST

I never said nothin' about lettin'
anyone get away. I know as much as
I know anything, that there will
be a reckoning. Do you understand?
I will see these people who did
this to me again. I ain't got no
doubts about that.

JACK till does not understand.

JACK

But what the hell are we gonna
do...

FORREST

I ain't got to do nothin' cepts
get back to work that's what I got
to do. I got a damn business to
run.

FORREST looks back up at the ceiling and his eyes darken.
JACK peruses his brother. HOWARD stands.

HOWARD

(to JACK and MAGGIE)

Let's let him rest.

FORREST

Hey, Howard.

HOWARD steps somberly forward.

FORREST

You shoulda been there.

EXT. FRONT LOT, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST stands outside the filling station, under its
single light, smoking and looking out over the
surrounding terrain. We see the light of many fires high
up in the hills.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (V.O.)

Most everybody in the county was involved in the illegal liquor trade in some ways or 'nother and at night the fires from the stills winked across the mountainside like fireflies.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

JACK, dressed in a white apron, disconsolately sweeps the floor of the station. His face, plots and schemes.

JACK (V.O.)

Me, well, I looked on, sweeping the station, fulla frustrations. There was big money to be made. Forrest may have been the toughest son-of-a-bitch in Franklin county but he had no ambition and was content to run his operation as it was. Me, I had bigger ideas.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST hangs an oval gilt-edged mirror in a simple bedroom. The mirror is exotic in the Spartan room and there in a awkward tenderness to this act.

JACK (V.O.)

A week after Forrest got outa hospital, Maggie moved into the Blackwater Station. Forrest set up a room for her upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NEXT NIGHT

MAGGIE sits on bed, in a scarlet dress, her valise beside her. She looks about the room taking it in. She sees FORREST standing, awkward, in the door. They eye each other, with an unspoken longing. He turns away.

JACK (V.O.)

Maggie never said a word to anyone about what happened the night Forrest got attacked or anything about moving in with Forrest.

INT. FORREST'S BEDROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST lies on a rough straw mattress on the floor in his bedroom. There is no other furniture. He looks at the ceiling, eyes dark and troubled.

JACK (V.O)
*...and Forrest, well, Forrest
 never really said nothing about
 anything. .*

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MORNING - SUMMER

MAGGIE works the grill. HOWARD looks at his reflection in the window. Pats at his hair. Straightens his bow tie. JACK, in an apron, sweeps.

JACK (V.O.)
*And me, the damn house dog, still
 sweeping...*

INT. BARN, MITCHEL PLACE - DUSK

At one end of a barn, WORKERS shuck corn. BERTHA MINNIX, a young Mennonite girl, in a white bonnet - plays a mandolin with some other musicians. To the left of the stage, like a guard dog, sits TIZWELL MINNIX, BERTHA'S FATHER, a stern preacher with a long beard.

MEN and WOMEN dance, stand around. JACK and HOWARD watch the MUSICIANS. JACK is transfixed by BERTHA MINNIX who steals glances at JACK. HOWARD swigs from a jar of liquor. PEOPLE give him a wide berth.

HOWARD
 She eyeballin you?

JACK blushes and kicks at a few stray corn husks.

JACK
 Aw, shit, I dunno.

HOWARD grins broadly and nudges JACK.

HOWARD
 She is! She's eye-ballin you.

JACK changes the subject.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

You done talked to Forrest about
takin' some of me and Cricket's
shine? About lettin' us in?

HOWARD takes a drink from the jar.

HOWARD

With this damn popskull shit?

JACK

You don't seem to have no problem
drinkin it. (beat) Cricket says he
got me and him a new still.

HOWARD

Forrest just don't want you
involved.

JACK

Why's that.

HOWARD

He don't think you got the grit

JACK

Oh yeah? He tell you why he ain't
gone after those sons-a-bitches
who cut him, if he's so damn
tough?

HOWARD

Oh, their time will come. Forrest
will see to that.

(laughs)

Let me tell you somethin'. There
aint a person on this earth I
would least like to be than those
boys who laid a hand on your
brother. God hisself couldn't help
'em.

(beat)

Got another jar?

JACK reaches behind him, takes a jar from a burlap bag.

JACK

Slow down, Howard, I'm trying sell
this stuff.

(nodding towards

BERTHA)

Who is that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOWARD

That's one of them crazy
Mennonites from Burnt Chimney.
That's her daddy sittin' yonder.
He's a preacher. You'll need a
crowbar to get into her.

JACK

She don't look that crazy.

HOWARD laughs at JACK.

JACK

(embarrassed)

Gimmee that jar.

JACK takes the jar from HOWARD, drinks some, looks back
to BERTHA. She begins to sing a haunting song.

BERTHA

There once was a time when
everything was cheap/ Now prices
nearly puts a man to sleep/Tell me
how can a poor man stand such
times and live?

BERTHA sings, JACK watches.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - NEXT MORNING

MAGGIE works the grill. HOWARD eating his breakfast at a
table, spooning grits into his mouth. As usual, JACK, in
an apron, sweeps. They both look hungover. JACK moves
close to HOWARD, sweeping.

JACK

Shift yer feet, Howard.

HOWARD pays JACK no mind, eats his breakfast. HOWARD
opens a jar of alcohol and takes a great swig.

JACK

Christ, you drinkin' that shit
with your eggs?

JACK looks out window, two police cars and another brand
new Ford Tudor Sedan enter the lot. JACK watches it stop.
DEPUTIES HENRY ABSHIRE and JEFF RICHARDS climb out of one
the cars, pistols on their hips. EVERETT DILLON sits by
the pumps. FORREST stands on porch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (CONT'D)
Shoot, Howard. Look at this.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MORNING

ABSHIRE and RICHARDS stand in front lot.

HENRY ABSHIRE
(calls across the
lot)
Forrest Bondurant.

FORREST moves across lot. RICHARDS and ABSHIRE look nervous. Forrest takes in the other police car and the sedan. ANOTHER MAN (CARTER LEE) sits in the back seat of the sedan, shadowy, profile barely visible. ABSHIRE takes a piece of paper from his pocket.

HENRY ABSHIRE (CONT'D)
This here is a summons for you to
appear in court.

FORREST
A summons for what?

HENRY ABSHIRE
It seems you've been involved in
certain illegal activities.

FORREST
Illegal activities?

HENRY ABSHIRE
If you play ball we can make this
summons here disappear.

FORREST takes the summons and looks at it.

FORREST
There ain't a jury in this county
that would convict me. You tryin'
to shake me down, Henry?

HENRY ABSHIRE
I'm just the messenger here.

The front door of the station crashes open and HOWARD descends the stairs like a mad bull, his fists clenched, his stride fast and purposeful.

FORREST
(without looking up)
You boys met Howard?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As if anticipating this very scenario, ABSHIRE and RICHARDS wrestle with their holstered guns, crouch into position and aim their guns at HOWARD.

HENRY ABSHIRE

Stop where you-

HOWARD comes at them regardless, in great unstoppable strides.

HOWARD

Whatcha gonna do? Shoot me?

HOWARD moves in and throws a punch to the side of ABSHIRE'S head, splitting his eye open. He brings a left up that lifts RICHARDS off the ground and lays him out. HOWARD kicks their guns away, moves to the petrol pump, pulls it from its cradle, jams the nozzle into ABSHIRE'S mouth. All this is done with an alarming speed.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You ready for this?

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - MORNING

JACK kneels at the window looking on in awe. HOWARD with the petrol pump, the TWO COPS on the ground.

JACK

(to himself)

Jesus.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST moves across to HOWARD and takes the petrol pump from his hand. He hangs up the nozzle, then leans down and hauls the two OFFICERS to their feet.

FORREST

You boys shoulda known better to come around when Howard's been on the stump whiskey for a few days.
(beat) You might wanna get out of here. Not sure if Howard thinks you got the message yet.

The door of the second police car opens and SHERIFF HODGES and CHARLIE RAKES step out and cross the lot. HODGES, fat and sweating, waves his hands in the air.

SHERIFF HODGES

Alright! Alright! That's enough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABSHIRE stumbles back to his vehicle. RICHARDS lifts himself up and in a daze, wobbles there. HOWARD looks at FORREST and throws out his hands.

HOWARD
(to Forrest)
I'm here, brother.

FORREST
(to HOWARD)
How about you go finish your
breakfast. I can handle this.

HOWARD shrugs, turns, heads back inside.

FORREST (CONT'D)
What the hell is this, Pete?

FORREST looks at SPECIAL DEPUTY CHARLIE RAKES - tight, ill-fitting suit, bow-tie, oiled hair parted down the middle. An evil smile. HODGES cocks his thumb at RAKES.

SHERIFF HODGES
This here is the new Special
Deputy Charlie Rakes. He's been
brought in to help us out.

RAKES
You boys obviously do things
different 'round these parts.
Where I come from a man touches an
officer of the law and they'd be
scrubbin' his brains off the
pavement.

FORREST
(unimpressed)
You ain't from round here.

RAKES
I am now.

FORREST
Who's that in the car, Pete.

SHERIFF HODGES
That there is Carter Lee. You
prob'ly heard of him. He is the
new Commonwealth's Attorney.

FORREST
What's he want?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHERIFF HODGES

Look here, Forrest, Carter Lee wants to work it out so everybody can do a little business. He just want you to know he can make it hard on you or go easy. We just want to make sure we have your cooperation.

There is a clacking of metal on glass. CARTER LEE rapping on the window with his ring.

SHERIFF HODGES (CONT'D)

Richards, if you can still walk, go see what Mr. Lee wants. You reckon you can do that?

RICHARDS staggers to the car, rubbing his jaw and bends to the window.

SHERIFF HODGES (CONT'D)

Look, Forrest, this is the way it is. We want to help you build your business. No one will bother you across the county all the way to Roanoke. We got a place in Rocky mount will sell you what ever you need. Grains, sugar, yeast.

FORREST

Nobody bothers me now. What do I need all that shit for?

RAKES chuckles malevolently, slaps his leg. He spits.

CHARLIE RAKES

Hell, we ain't stupid. We know you're moving liquor. We know you got it stored up there in that shed and you movin' it from the station here.

SHERIFF HODGES

Easy, Charlie. No reason to-

CHARLIE RAKES

So, if you wanna continue with this *unlawful enterprise* of yours then we gonna need to have an arrangement.

RAKES steps forward, jabs a finger at FORREST.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CHARLIE RAKES (CONT'D)

You unnerstand?

FORREST face darkens and a wind roars inside his head.

FORREST

Pete, just who the hell is this son-of-a-bitch?

CHARLIE RAKES

Me? I'm the one who don't care who the fuck you are. I'm your re-tri-bution. I'm the one gonna make your life real difficult from now on.

FORREST moves forward in front of RAKES, eyes on fire.

FORREST

You ain't from round here. You don't know how it works. You want me to send you back from where you came in a fucking box?

HODGES steps between FORREST and RAKES.

SHERIFF HODGES

Alright! Aright! Listen, Forrest, it's already settled. Everybody is getting on board, the whole county. (beat) I need you to talk to your brother Howard about this.

FORREST

Why don't you ask him yourself? Let me just call him out.

SHERIFF HODGES

Forrest, you're a reasonable man. It's best if you did it. Howard is, well...Howard...you unnerstand. Your brother Jack, too. He's been running stuff, small time, him and that cripple, Cricket Pate. We're gonna have to break up Howard's still and we'll have to take all your stock. Everybody's got to get on board or their stills go. The entire county. That the way it's gonna work. Well send a man around every few weeks.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SHERIFF HODGES (CONT'D)

Start at twenty dollars a week and thirty dollars a load, and that's complete safe passage throughout the county. No one will touch you.

RICHARDS, a great welt on his jaw, steps up with a five dollar bill in his hand.

RICHARDS

(weakly)

Mr. Lee would like a jar of yo' best apple brandy. That be alright?

SHERIFF HODGES

Look, it's in your best interests. Everybody pays, everybody gets along, we all make money.

FORREST looks at the car, the silhouette of CARTER LEE.

FORREST

Nobody touches me now. And I don't speak for my brothers, Howard or Jack.

HODGES snaps the five dollars out of the hand of RICHARDS. He holds the money out to FORREST.

SHERIFF HODGES

Take it, Forrest. Let's do a little business.

FORREST

I don't have any damn brandy, so unless you buying fuel, why don't you get the hell out of my station.

RAKES moves forward, nods toward the station.

RAKES

Hey, Forrest? That your woman?

FORREST turns, sees MAGGIE standing in the doorway of the station. RAKES smiles malevolently, rubs at the crotch of his trousers.

RAKES (CONT'D)

That there woman's one helluva looker, I give you that.

FORREST stares at RAKES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

FORREST
Eh? What'd you say?

SHERIFF HODGES
Come on, now, Forrest.

FORREST snatches the bill from HODGES, marches across to the car. FORREST looks at CARTER LEE who rolls down the window. He is dressed in a white linen suit. As FORREST leans down, we see a pistol stuck down the back of his trousers.

CARTER LEE
Can I help you, son?

FORREST
Send that clown in the bow-tie
around here again, you'll be
pulling a fucking cleaver out of
his skull.

FORREST stuffs first the bill, then the summons, into the pocket of CARTER LEE'S jacket. CARTER LEE'S face opens in a lupine grin and rolls back the window.

SHERIFF HODGES
You gonna regret this, Forrest.

CHARLIE RAKES
He's already regretting it, he jes
too stupid to know it yet.

FORREST looks at RAKES, touches the gun stuck in his waistband.

CHARLIE RAKES (CONT'D)
You thinkin' of drawing on me?

FORREST does not draw, but looks at RAKES, as if recalling his face for another time, then walks back toward the station.

SHERIFF HODGES
(calls out)
Hey, Forrest, tell your damn
brothers. This applies to all you
Bondurant boys.

FORREST mounts the steps. MAGGIE is standing in the doorway, looking on as FORREST walks past her.

FORREST
(to MAGGIE)
Come inside.

EXT. AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - SAME MORNING

JACK rides his father's horse up to a log cabin. He is hungover from the shucking. Smoke pours out of the chinks and cracks of the cabin as if it on fire. JACK dismounts. In a billow of smoke CRICKET PATE hobbles out the front door of the cabin, a smile on his soot-blackened face.

JACK

What the fuck is goin' on?

From inside the house, a thumper keg knocks out a steady beat, steam hisses and whistles, the whole cabin seems like some infernal machine about to explode.

CRICKET

You gonna like this, Jack! This is something we got going here!

JACK

What? The goddamn still in the cellar?

CRICKET

That ain't the half of it! I had me an idea! Follow me!

INT. AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - MORNING

JACK follows CRICKET into the cabin. The cabin is modestly furnished with rough, wood furniture. JACK crouches down to get out of the rising smoke and holds his arm over his mouth.

JACK

Damn. Smokes kinds thick , ain't it.

CRICKET

Naw, you get used to it.

Sitting in a rocking chair, knitting, is AUNT WINNIE. AUNTIE WINNIE is a huge woman in a gingham dress. She wears dark shades, a walking stick across her knees.

JACK

(jumping in fright)

Jesus!

AUNT WINNIE

Don't you be using no profanities in my house!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRICKET

Jack, meet Aunt Winnie. It's her cabin. (whispers to JACK) She's blind and half-crazy.

AUNT WINNIE waves away the smoke.

AUNT WINNIE

Anyone smell something funny?

CRICKET

Ain't nuthin, Aunt Winnie.

AUNT WINNIE

Smells like a skunk nailed to a dead man!

CRICKET leads JACK to a trapdoor, pulls it open. A gust of smoke billows out. They grope downstairs toward a flickering glow. Mash barrels stand at the foot of the stairs. A twenty gallon teapot still, fed by a brick furnace. The floor is covered with sacks, sugar bags, spilled corn. JACK coughs. CRICKET seems oblivious.

CRICKET

(shouting above the noise)
This here is the still.

JACK

Jesus, Cricket.

CRICKET leads JACK back up the stairs.

CRICKET

Now, follow me. You're gonna like this.

CRICKET limps down the hallway and JACK follows.

CRICKET

Liquor runs directly into an old water tank we sealed up. We hooked the tank into the house's well water lines. Aunt Winnie got a damn gravity pump set up to bring water from the basement. The tanks got a sixty gallon capacity! Follow me.

CRICKET moves up the staircase, followed by JACK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CRICKET

Up here Aunt Winnie's got a water closet with a damn flush toilet and hot 'n' cold taps!

INT. WATER CLOSET, AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - MORNING

CRICKET and JACK cram into a small WC, with a toilet and a basin. CRICKET brandishes a glass pint bottle.

CRICKET

OK, everythin' seems normal, just a nice little mountain house here, us fellows here watchin' the place, whatever. Well, at some point, after sittin' a spell, the man asks if he may use the water closet, and we say 'yes', try the hot water, it's real nice, or something like that. So he comes in here.

CRICKET holds the bottle under the hot water tap, turns the valve. There is a ominous rumble, then some murky water, followed by a stream of steaming whiskey. CRICKET fills the pint bottle, corks the bottle triumphantly. The whiskey is a terrifying cloudy grey.

CRICKET

The man tucks his bottle away and out he goes.

JACK looks at CRICKET, disbelievingly.

JACK

Hell, Cricket, that's the stupidest thing I ever seen.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - MORNING

HOWARD sits at a table with TWO MEN, playing cards, dangerous drunk. Behind the counter MAGGIE cracks eggs onto a skillet. FORREST enters the bar from the back, moves behind the counter next to MAGGIE - an unnamed tension between them. FORREST looks at HOWARD.

FORREST

(quietly to MAGGIE)
How long has he been here?

MAGGIE

All night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST grunts, pours himself a cup of coffee. MAGGIE moves around FORREST to get to the biscuits.

MAGGIE

'Scuse me.

FORREST'S eyes follow her shyly as she passes. There is a roar from the table. HOWARD throws down his losing hand angrily. The other TWO MEN look at each other nervously wishing they were some place else.

MAGGIE

Your brother's losing bad. No sooner he makes it, it's gone.

FORREST

Damn fool.

MAGGIE sidles past FORREST, making a show of him being in the way.

MAGGIE

'Scuse me.

FORREST'S eyes follow her some more.

MAGGIE

You gonna say something?

FORREST

I ain't his mother.

MAGGIE

Well, I don't want him busting up the joint...again.

FORREST

Get him somethin' to eat.

MAGGIE

That's what I'm tryin' to do.

FORREST walks from behind the bar to the table where HOWARD and the TWO MEN are playing cards.

FORREST

(to the TWO MEN)
Where you boys from?

MAN ONE

The city.

FORREST

Oh. Yeah? Where's that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN ONE

Pittsburg.

FORREST

Well. You probably ain't heard
about Howard here, in Pittsburg.

The TWO MEN looks nervous. FORREST looks at HOWARD.

FORREST

How are you.

HOWARD

(dead-eyed)

Brother.

FORREST

You seen Jack?

HOWARD

Not since last night at the
shucking.

FORREST

'Sposed to be helpin' out around
here.

HOWARD slams down another losing hand.

HOWARD

Maybe Jack got tired of being your
house dog.

FORREST leans down like a crooked stick.

FORREST

Plannin' on losing all your money?

HOWARD

Deal the damn cards.

FORREST

(to the TWO MEN)

My advice? You boys might wanna
head back to Pittsburg real soon.

HOWARD

Eh Forrest? Fuck you. Them boys
ain't goin' nowhere.

EXT. AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - LATER, DAY

JACK sits at the door of AUNT WINNIE'S cabin collecting cash from a motley crew of CUSTOMERS. He puts it in a biscuit tin.

JACK
Fifty cents a glass, a dollar a
pint.

In the yard, CUSTOMERS drink CRICKET'S corn liquor. Some walk into trees, lie comatose in the grass, howl and walk about as though they are blind. The yard resembles the grounds of a lunatic asylum. The effect of CRICKET'S liquor is clearly radical.

CRICKET opens the door, a worried look on his face.

CRICKET
Jack, come in here.

A MAN vomits over the railing of the porch.

CRICKET
(whispers)
Something ain't right with this
liquor.

JACK
You can say that again. Look.

JACK gestures at the drunken insanity on the lawn.

CRICKET
Yeah, well, I got trouble inside.

JACK follows CRICKET inside.

INT. OUTSIDE WATER CLOSET, AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - DAY

JACK and CRICKET stand outside the WC.

CRICKET
Got an old boy in there.

JACK
Well, get him out.

CRICKET smiles weakly, drunkenly.

CRICKET
Don't think I can.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK opens the door. It swings a few inches and hits something. JACK forces it with his shoulder. A MAN yells. JACK looks in, sees TWO OLD TIMERS standing at the sink, holding jars of whiskey. One has his pants around his ankles. JACK closes the door.

CRICKET

What they doing?

JACK

I don't know, but it ain't good.

JACK hammers on the door of the WC.

JACK

You old fools get the hell out.
We're closed!

CRICKET scratches his head. Pulls a jar out of his pocket and drinks from it.

CRICKET

Too much rust in the tank, maybe.

CRICKET drinks some more.

CRICKET

Or lead.

JACK

(to himself)

Shit.

INT. PARLOUR, AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

The CUSTOMERS have all gone and JACK sits on the couch, counting the money from the biscuit tin.

The door bursts open and THREE MEN come in. RAKES, wolf-like, with a shotgun cradled in his arms. ABSHIRE and RICHARDS both have axes over their shoulders. JACK freezes, the biscuit tin between his feet.

CHARLEY RAKES

Who's in charge here?

RAKES strides through the parlour into the hall.

AUNT WINNIE

(mumbles)

Don't spect no biscuits comin out
of round here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAKES comes back into the room dragging CRICKET by his ankle. RAKES releases him. CRICKET sits up, rubbing his bloodshot eyes, staring at the MEN with their axes.

CHARLEY RAKES

Three things you gotta tell us,
son, where's the still, where's
the liquor and where's the money.

CRICKET looks at RAKES uncomprehendingly. JACK shifts the biscuit tin under the couch with his foot. RAKES hauls CRICKET to his feet by his collar. CRICKET collapses, drunk, sinking down to his haunches. RAKES starts slapping CRICKET'S face, back and forth.

CHARLEY RAKES

The money, son, where's the damn
money!

JACK stands up.

JACK

He don't have it.

The MEN look at JACK as if seeing him for the first time. RAKES points his shotgun into JACK'S face.

CHARLIE RAKES

Who the fuck are you?

JACK brings his hands up and shrugs. RICHARDS moves the barrel in short circles around JACK'S nose.

HENRY ABSHIRE

That there is Jack Bondurant.

RAKES smiles and whistles slightly.

CHARLEY RAKES

I'll be damned. I was told I'd
find you here. And look, here you
are. You are some kind of stupid.

JEFF RICHARDS

Where's the still?

RAKES turns to ABSHIRE and RICHARDS.

CHARLIE RAKES

Go find it.

RAKES pokes JACK in the chest with his shotgun, his foot kicks the biscuit tin under the couch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He smiles, his brown teeth like a row of acorns. He leans down, picks it up, opens it and riffles the cash.

CHARLEY RAKES

You boys don't get it do you?
There is a new system, and you
gotta play along.

JACK looks at the ground and says nothing.

CHARLEY RAKES

This ain't just me. This is
Commonwealth's Attorney Carter Lee
comin' down on you. You don't mess
with him. Things are gonna be
changin' from now on. (beat) You
gotta weapon of any kind?

JACK

No.

CHARLEY RAKES

Gun, knife, anything?

There is a sharp clang from the basement, the sound of
metal punching through metal, hiss of steam.

JACK

No.

CHARLEY RAKES

You tellin' the truth?

JACK

Yes.

CHARLEY RAKES

Then you are a damn fool.

RAKES brings the barrel of the shotgun, lands a glancing
blow on JACK'S cheek. JACK stumbles back, rubs his jaw,
checks his hand for blood.

CHARLEY RAKES

Come here. Step forward.

More shots of metal ring out from the basement as ABSHIRE
and RICHARDS attack the still with their axes. JACK comes
forward slowly. RAKES lunges and jabs the end of the
shotgun into JACK'S teeth. JACK falls to his knees and
cups his hands as the blood begins to flow.

CHARLEY RAKES

Get up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The clanging in the basement is increasing in tempo. JACK rises slowly to his feet, hand against his mouth.

CHARLEY RAKES

You ain't so goddamn tough. I thought they said you Bondurant boys were a bunch of hard-boiled sons-a-bitches.

RAKES rears back and hooks JACK with a haymaker in the ribs, sends him stumbling out onto the porch.

EXT. FRONT YARD, AUNT WINNIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

RAKES follows JACK outside, stumbling across the porch. RAKES swings the shotgun and crunches the side of JACK'S knee. JACK rolls off the porch into the yard. RAKES moves after him.

CHARLEY RAKES

This is terrible. This just won't do. It's like steppin' on a slug.

RAKES leans the gun against the porch. Walks over to JACK, curled in the dirt. RAKES yanks JACK to his feet.

JACK

(slurs)

My brothers gonna get you. They're gonna kill you.

CHARLEY RAKES

S'at so? That ain't gonna help you right now, is it?

RAKES smacks JACK across the face with an open hand.

CHARLEY RAKES

So much talk about the goddamn Bondurant boys. Hell you ain't shit.

RAKES jerks JACK back and forth like a child.

CHARLEY RAKES

You tell those two brothers of yours we're coming for them next. You tell 'em.

RAKES holds JACK'S lapel and starts clubbing him, the blows landing viscusly on the side of JACK'S head, his neck, smashing his ear. JACK twists and struggles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
(whimpering)
Please no more. No more.

RAKES hits JACK a direct blow on the temple and JACK passes out. RAKES drops him like a rag doll. He spits on JACK and snaps his red suspenders.

CHARLEY RAKES
You best repent your ways, boy,
and pay the fucking money.
(shouts to others)
Alright! Let's get outa here.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST walks down the hall, pauses in the doorway of MAGGIE'S room. It is dark and MAGGIE breathes beneath her hair on the pillow. FORREST stands there, watching her, for some time. MAGGIE opens her eyes and just as FORREST turns away, she pulls back the covers to welcome him in. FORREST does not see this and walks into the sitting room.

INT. SITTING ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

FORREST sits down on the couch. He turns to see MAGGIE standing naked in the doorway.

MAGGIE
You just gonna watch me for ever?

This is the first time FORREST has seen her this way. MAGGIE walks over to him, sit on the couch. FORREST is awkward. He holds her face in his hands and brushes his lips against her forehead, cheeks, throat. MAGGIE kisses him, wraps herself around him.

INT. SITTING ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - LATER, NIGHT

In the dim starlight, FORREST watches MAGGIE'S face as they lie together on the couch after making love. He runs his finger down the profile of her face.

MAGGIE
Damned if you don't keep a girl
waiting.

INT. GRANVILLE'S FARM - MORNING

In the kitchen GRANVILLE BONDURANT (60 yrs) sits eating breakfast. EMMY washes dishes in a sink.

EMMY
(looking out window)
Here comes Jack.

JACK hobbles into the house. His face is bruised, his left ear split and swollen, an angry welt on his upper lip, the rough circumference of a twelve-gauge barrel. JACK sits down at table. EMMY looks on, mortified by the state of JACK. She serves him biscuits. GRANVILLE looks at JACK, an aura of rage about him.

GRANVILLE
I want you and your brother, this morning. In the barn.

JACK nods, bites the biscuit, grimacing with the pain.

INT. BARN, GRANVILLE'S FARM - DAY

A cow leans forward on spread legs, a stream of blood running down her hindquarters. JACK, bruised, beaten, and HOWARD, hungover, look at the suffering beast.

JACK
(looking at the cow)
Damn.

HOWARD
I don't know who looks worse, you or the cow.

JACK
You don't look too good yourself.

HOWARD walks to the cow and strokes her head.

HOWARD
How long she bin like this?

JACK
Daddy said, yesterday evenin', some ten hours maybe.

HOWARD
What happened to you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Nuthin.

JACK touches his torn ear. HOWARD pulls a thin cable saw off the wall and hands JACK the saw handles.

HOWARD

I asked you a question.

JACK

Carter Lee's men done it. Some son-of-a-bitch called Rakes and some others. They come bust up Cricket's still.

HOWARD makes a loop in the end of the cable.

HOWARD

They beat you like that? Shit.

JACK

They got me unawares.

HOWARD moves behind the cow.

HOWARD

When I get this placed, you work that saw. Work it quick.

HOWARD cinches up his sleeve, closes the saw loop in his fist, drives it into the cow, pushing up past the elbow. He works like this a moment.

HOWARD

Now.

JACK plies the handles, sawing away until HOWARD signals. HOWARD holds up a little bony leg with a tiny black hoof. He tosses it in the straw, puts his hand back in. JACK works the saw. HOWARD pulls a second calf leg out and throws it next to the other. HOWARD repeats the motion, nods at JACK.

JACK

(shakes his head)

Howard, I can't do this.

HOWARD

You wanna do what I'm doing?

JACK starts to saw again.

INT. BARN, GRANVILLE'S FARM - LATER, DAY.

HOWARD cradles the cow's head in his arms, whispers to her as she dies. He stands, wipes blood and mucilage from his arms with a rag. He pulls a jar from his back pocket, takes a long pull and offers it to JACK. JACK waves it away. HOWARD looks closely at JACK'S face.

HOWARD

Jesus. Those sons-a-bitches done you good.

HOWARD makes fists with his hands and throws a couple of haymakers at the air.

HOWARD

You ever whupped on someone?

JACK

I done thought about it.

HOWARD

Never does turn out like you think. When the first swing happens, everything is new an nothin' is the way you thought.

JACK

I gotta lie down some, Howard.

HOWARD takes another great swig from the jar.

HOWARD

I'll tell you this. You only need to know one thing in this life. Somethin ol' Forrest knows. That's you gotta hit first, hit with everythin' you got, and then *keep hittin'* until the man is down, then you hit him some more.

JACK nods.

HOWARD

Many men like the *idea* of fightin' but very few likes to get *hit*. A good straight left into the nose-bone and most will let be. (beat) A man who *likes* to get hit is the one to watch out for.

HOWARD drains the jar, tosses it, grins like mad ogre.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

They said they were comin' for you
next.

HOWARD

Oh yeah?

HOWARD looks at the dead cow. He looks at the carcass of
the aborted calf covered with a sack. He looks at the
severed calves legs - six of them in a row.

HOWARD

Six legs. Damn if that ain't
something.

JACK leans against the side of the barn, looking green.

HOWARD

Never seen such a thing. (beat)
Hey, Jack, you reckon that's a
good omen or a bad'n?

EXT. CRICKET'S AUTO, OUTSIDE DUNKARD'S CHURCH - EVENING

JACK sits in CRICKET'S car outside the MENNONITE Church,
eyeing the stream of MENNONITES drawing up their teams
and tattered Model T's. His face is less bruised. It is
five days since his beating.

At the door of the church, BERTHA'S FATHER, TIZWELL
MINNIX, in a long black coat, clasps the hands of the MEN
and WOMEN warmly. JACK watches TIZWELL from the car and
nervously slugs from a jar of moonshine. The stream of
MENNONITES dwindles and the TIZWELL MINNIX steps inside
the little church. Singing comes from inside the church.
JACK moves across to the church. JACK knocks back the
rest of the liquor and pitches the jar across the field.
There is a sudden rushing sound in is head and holds onto
the bannister of the stairs for support. He enters the
church.

INT. FOYER, DUNKARD'S CHURCH - NIGHT

JACK enters the foyer. The walls lined with coats hanging
on pegs. A BEARDED MAN watches JACK come in. Like all
MENNONITE MEN his upper lip is shaven clean.

BEARDED MAN

Welcome, brother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Eh?

BEARDED MAN

Peace be with you, all that are in
Jesus Christ.

The BEARDED MAN tries to take JACK'S coat but JACK shakes his head. He steers JACK into the main hall.

INT. MAIN HALL, DUNKARD'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Rows of ONE HUNDRED PARISHIONERS, MEN on one side, WOMEN on the other, singing. In the centre of the room SEVEN MEN stand by chairs, buckets and stacked towels. TIZWELL MINNIX, BERTHA'S FATHER, with a long double-pronged beard, intones a set of lyrics from a lectern. The PARISHIONERS echo the lyrics in full song. Oil lamps cast flickering circles of light.

JACK enters, noisily, sweating in his coat. A few heads turn. The MEN sit ram-rod straight. The WOMEN are dressed in long black capes and small lace caps. JACK looks around, the only empty space is at the end of the front row. JACK, drunk, mock-sings along with the PARISHIONERS, in a wavering thin tone.

TIZWELL MINNIX

Let us pray.

The PARISHIONERS bow their heads. JACK scans the rows of WOMEN intently, sees BERTHA MINNIX. TIZWELL MINNIX delivers the sermon. JACK tries to catch the eye of BERTHA MINNIX. JACK hears a hum of something in his head and he rubs at his ears. The prayer ends and the PARISHIONERS sit. The PREACHERS line up seven chairs in the centre of the room. SEVERAL WOMEN come forward, including BERTHA MINNIX and sit in the chairs and unlace their boots.

JACK reaches into his jacket and finds a piece of corn and he flicks it at BERTHA MINNIX. Hits her on the arm. She doesn't seem to notice. The PREACHERS move buckets in front of the chairs and roll up their sleeves.

BERTHA MINNIX removes her boots. JACK sits, entranced as she arches forward her small white foot. The PREACHER dabs at it with a cloth. JACK shakes his head, the grinding noise in his skull getting louder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The MEN in the front row with JACK unlace their boots. JACK tentatively follows suit. The WOMEN pick up buckets and move toward the front row where JACK sits.

TIZWELL MINNIX

Love not the world, neither the
things that are in the world.

PARISHIONERS

Amen.

A harsh sound like ripping metal, in JACK'S head, tears through him and the floor begins to vibrate. He looks down at his bare feet. They are filthy. JACK shakes his head, trying to dispel the ever-mounting roar. The church begins to shake.

JACK

(to himself)

Somethin's wrong here.

TIZWELL MINNIX

For all that is in the world, the
lust of the flesh, and the lust of
the eyes.

JACK looks down. BERTHA is kneeling at his feet, bucket by her side, looking up at him, with a slight smile. She takes JACK'S foot in her hand. JACK clutches the pew, arches himself like a squirming cat, the chainsaw in his head intolerable. JACKS looks around and sees the PREACHERS staring at him. The floor twists beneath his feet. JACK sees TIZWELL MINNIX lead the PREACHERS towards him, his beard, a double-edged sword emerging from his mouth. BERTHA MINNIX smiles at him.

He wrenches his foot away, explodes from the pew, steps in a bucket, thrashes against the MEN next to him. TIZWELL MINNIX shouts something at him but he cannot hear anything but the terrible roaring in his ears. JACK runs from the church, leaving his boot behind.

EXT. OUTSIDE DUNKARD'S CHURCH - NIGHT

JACK runs from the church, the ground heaving under his feet, his eyes wild, his hands thrown across his ears, the air full of thunder and dust. He runs to CRICKET'S Pierce Arrow and vomits purple bile on the ground.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - NEXT MORNING

JACK and CRICKET stand on sidewalk eating snow cones.
JACK has a monumental hangover and finds it hard to stop his hands from shaking.

CRICKET

Jeez, Jack, you done fry your grits last night?

JACK

Yeah, just a little.

CRICKET

Got me another idea, where we can set up a new still.

JACK gingerly shakes his head, touches the bruise on his eye.

JACK

Cricket, I done had enough of your ideas.

CRICKET looks dejected.

JACK

We've been thinkin' it all wrong.
We are on the wrong end of the business.

CRICKET looks at JACK.

CRICKET

What ya mean?

JACK

Remember that ol' boy Gummy Walsh,
from Burnin' Bag? Ai'nt he some
kinda acquaintance of yours?

CRICKET

Yeah, I know him.

(beat)

Kinda. I know his cousin.

JACK

Yeah, well I got me an idea.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

HOWARD and FORREST sit on the porch of the station. Black dust hangs in the air. HOWARD is drinking. JACK, in dark glasses and looking ill, sweeps the dust that has coated everything. HOWARD slaps at his clothes.

HOWARD

Shoot. This dust comes all the way
from Texas...

He drinks again from his jar.

HOWARD

(to FORREST)

You owe me for twenny five
gallons.

FORREST pulls a roll of cash from the inside pocket of his jacket and hands it to HOWARD.

FORREST

Bring me down some more. I'm
runnin' low.

JACK

(tentatively)

Forrest?

FORREST casts one stern eye in JACK'S direction - JACK with his battered, hungover face.

FORREST

Yeah?

JACK sits on the bench.

JACK

I've been thinkin', Forrest...

FORREST

Me too. I've been thinkin' whether
you done finished stacking them
groceries like I told you.

JACK

Shoot, Forrest, I stacked em this
morning...Jesus...anyway... well,
I been thinkin that we could be
makin' a whole lot more money
if...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST

Who's we?

JACK

Well, you and Howard and well...me
of course.

FORREST

Oh yeah?

JACK

Listen, Forrest, old Roosevelt is
gonna get in, everyone knows that.
The first thing he's gonna do is
stop Prohibition. The damn
Government is losing too much
revenue to the city mobsters.
They're gonna tax the booze and
make it legal again. It's all in
the damn papers. Once he done
that this whole damn thing is
over. It's only a matter of time.

An old beat up flatbed truck enter the lot.

JACK

...And I was thinking that if you
let me...drive...

JACK sees the Mennonite preacher, TIZWELL MINNIX, step
out of the car, a burlap sack in his hand, slapping dust
from his clothes.

JACK

...oh no...oh shit...oh damn...

FORREST stands, looks at JACK, walks down to the pumps.
EVERETT DILLON, sitting by the pumps, stands, rubs his
hands on a rag.

TIZWELL MINNIX

Is Jack Bondurant here?

JACK shrinks in his chair, pulls his cap down over his
eyes. HOWARD grins.

JACK

Oh fuck...oh shit...

TIZWELL MINNIX

(to FORREST)

Are you his brother, Sir?

JACK slips inside station. HOWARD grinning, follows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TIZWELL MINNIX

Did you know that your brother
came to our service last night.
drunk or crazy or both.

FORREST

Is that so.

TIZWELL MINNIX

Yes, Sir.

TIZWELL MINNIX hands the burlap sack to FORREST.

TIZWELL MINNIX

That he was.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

JACK watches FORREST and TIZWELL MINNIX through the dusty
window.

HOWARD

You bin messin' with the
holyrollers, Jack?

JACK

Fuck you, Howard.

HOWARD laughs. JACK curses and sits himself down at the
table with HOWARD as FORREST enters, carrying the sack.
He stops at JACK'S table.

FORREST

I heard what they did to you over
Winnie Mitchell's place. You and
Cricket Pate.

JACK

Who told you?

JACK looks at HOWARD.

JACK

Shit.

MAGGIE walks over, tops up JACK'S coffee, giving him a
slight grin. JACK blushes with embarrassment.

FORREST

You wanna get into this racket,
but I see you sitting there
looking like somebody's punchin'
bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK hangs his head.

FORREST

The question is, what you gonna do about it?

JACK

What am I gonna do?

FORREST

You expecting someone else to handle it?

JACK

That ain't what I meant.

FORREST walks around the counter and fronts up to JACK.

FORREST

Here it is. As long as you are my brother, you better never let it happen again. You unnerstand me?

JACK

I get it.

FORREST

I don't think you do.

JACK

What if I can't? You know I ain't like you and Howard like that. I ain't never been like you.

FORREST leans in close to JACK.

FORREST

There is only one answer. People will know, and you will suffer for it for a long time, maybe the rest of your life. Do something about it. If those animals out there see for a moment you are afraid, then they'll be at your door and it'll be over.

JACK

They told me to tell you they are comin' for you next.

FORREST

I know it.

JACK sees a weariness cross FORREST'S face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FORREST

You wanna be a part of this?

JACK

Yeah.

FORREST

You sure about that?

JACK

Yes, I am. I got *plans*, Forrest.
If you'd just let me explain...

FORREST

Alright then. There's a meeting up
the Jamison place near Thorton
Mountain. I want you to bring
Howard.

JACK can't help but smile.

FORREST

But, you better be ready to do
what's necessary.

JACK

I am, Forrest.

FORREST slaps shut the register drawer.

FORREST

We control the fear. You
unnerstand? Without the fear, we
are all as good as dead.

JACK

All right.

FORREST drops the burlap sack onto the table.

FORREST

Present from the preacher.

JACK reaches into the bag and pulls out his battered old
boot and cringes with embarrassment.

HOWARD

(grinning)

You gettin' religion, brother?

INT. MODEL A FORD, ROAD TO JAMISON'S PLACE - DAY

Dust coating the ground, no longer in the air. JACK, in a driving cap, sits at the wheel of GRANVILLE'S Model A Ford as it judders up the bumpy county track. Beside him, DANNY. HOWARD sprawls in the back seat, a jar of popskull in his hand, his hat pulled over his eyes. They drive up to an outbuilding near a stand of woods. There is a ring of cars and a half dozen horses. JACK parks and they get out. DANNY pushes a gun into his waistband.

Many of the vehicles are new - Packards, an Auburn Sedan, a Dodge Coupe. JACK looks at the cars enviously.

JACK

Somebody around here is making money.

They pass a two tone Buick, series 121.

JACK

(almost drooling)

That sweet mother would do seventy easy.

They pass FORREST'S busted down old flatbed truck. JACK looks at the state of the truck with a certain disgust.

JACK

(wryly)

Forrest's already here.

INT. OUTBUILDING, JAMISON'S PLACE - DAY

The building is full of BOOTLEGGERS. Noise. Smoking. Passing of liquor jars. Some are dressed well and are major players in the bootlegging business. FORREST leans against the wall, taking in the crowd, his face grim.

HOWARD and DANNY enter. A BOUNCER stops JACK.

DANNY MITCHEL

I'd step aside, if I was you. That there is a Bondurant.

The BOUNCER lets JACK in, the CROWD reflexively opening for HOWARD. JACK moves along, chest out, in HOWARD'S wake. MEN nod in greeting. Some shake his hand.

JACK, HOWARD, DANNY stand by FORREST against the wall. JIMMY TURNER stands up on an overturned bucket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY TURNER

For a long time we been able to do business here in Franklin and nobody paid no mind. Lately there been some trouble. We know the Alcohol Tax Unit is goin' come in from time to time and break up a still and get their pictures in the paper.

Some BOOTLEGGERS laugh, some curse under their breath.

JIMMY TURNER

The sheriff's department, on the other hand, has always looked the other way. But the fact is the ATU is makin it difficult to move stuff out of the county, even when we use way station's like Forrest Bondurant's place up in Blackwater.

TURNER nods acknowledgement FORREST. FORREST does not seem to register the recognition.

JIMMY TURNER

Well, there is an offer from the sheriff's office, to make things a bit easier on everybody.

DANNY MITCHEL

You mean pay a damn granny fee!

Some BOOTLEGGERS hoot and murmur.

JIMMY TURNER

Call it what you want! For things to go smooth you gotta grease the tracks.

DANNY MITCHEL

Horseshit! This here is Carter Lee talking! The damn Commonwealth Attorney! This here is about making the fat cats richer. Well, I never paid no granny fee to no man and I ain't gonna do it now.

DANNY pushes through the crowd and leaves the building.

JIMMY TURNER

Let him go. He's just gonna make it hard on himself.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIMMY TURNER (CONT'D)

(beat) A deputy will be assigned to each district and you boys will be responsible for getting the fees together. So get the word out to anyone who is making in your area. A deputy will come by each week to collect. Simple as that.

BOOTLEGGERS

What's the price?

JIMMY TURNER

About ten dollars a car load, plus twenty a month to make.

There is a general commotion in the room.

JIMMY TURNER

For that you get no trouble. No lost product, no jail time, no blockading problems. (beat) You fellas know that prohibition is near over, done any day now. We have a chance to make a good stack of money here, while the gettin's good.

FORREST

What if we refuse to pay?

The room goes quiet and everyone turns and looks at FORREST. JACK stands tall.

JIMMY TURNER

What?

FORREST

What's Carter Lee gonna do if we don't pay?

JIMMY TURNER

People who don't want in are gonna have to fend for themselves.

FORREST

You gonna send Hodges and his men around my station?

JIMMY TURNER

I ain't saying that.

JIMMY TURNER points at JACK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JIMMY TURNER

I know some deputies roughed up Jack there. That's the kind of thing that won't happen in the new system.

JACK squirms as all the BOOTLEGGERS look at him.

FORREST

(addresses the room)

Listen up! Any of you want to move liquor through me instead of the government then come on. We will accommodate you. We will continue to operate free and clear, like always. If you don't, that's entirely up to you. Me, I'll never pay no money to Carter Lee or the next damn blood-sucker who comes along after him. I never have and I never will.

HOWARD

Hey, Jimmy! I remember a time you had some balls!

General laughter.

JIMMY TURNER

Times are a-changing, Forrest, you can't do it the old way no more.

FORREST

I guess we'll see about that.

FORREST, HOWARD and JACK make their way through the crowd and leave the building. HOWARD gives JIMMY TURNER a fey little wave.

INT. MODEL A FORD, ROAD FROM JAMISON'S PLACE - DAY

JACK drives with a quiet intensity and DANNY drinks grimly from a jar and hands it back to HOWARD.

DANNY MITCHEL

That damn Turner. He's just one of Carter Lee's flunkys.

HOWARD

Yeah, well looks like when Carter Lee takes a shit, half of West Virginia falls out his ass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

He's right about one thing though.

HOWARD

Oh yeah? What's that?

JACK

There's a lot more money we could be making.

DANNY MITCHEL

How's that?

JACK

Howard, listen to me. I know a fella, Gummy Walsh, across the county line at the Burnin' Bag Station that will take your whole run for five dollars on the gallon. All of it.

HOWARD

We ain't blockaders. That's not what we do. Too damn risky.

JACK

I'll do the driving. You don't have to worry about nothin.

HOWARD

You?

JACK

And Cricket.

HOWARD

(incredulous)

And Cricket?! Are you outa your mind?

JACK

I'm a damn sight better driver than you are, Howard.

DANNY

He's right there.

HOWARD

Fuck you, Danny... You any idea what blockading entails?

JACK

I reckon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOWARD
Forrest won't hear of it.

JACK
Forrest's operation stops at
himself. He don't see the big
picture.

HOWARD
You wanna to tell that to your
brother.

JACK
Gimme one go, Howard.

They sit in silence, the light through the trees glancing
off the windscreen. DANNY'S mind whirs.

DANNY MITCHEL
Five dollars?

JACK
Uh-huh.

DANNY MITCHEL
On the gallon?

JACK
Yep.

EXT. ROAD NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - NIGHT

JACK, dressed in a natty suit, stands next to his
father's Model T. Sucks a toothpick, in a clear imitation
of Floyd Banner. CRICKET, in overalls, leans against the
car. HOWARD and DANNY emerge from the woods, with a wheel
barrow full of liquor. They load it into the back of the
car. HOWARD doesn't look happy.

HOWARD
Where ya get the suit?

JACK
It's dads.

HOWARD
He know you borrowed the car?

JACK
Shit, Howard, I'll be back before
mornin'.

HOWARD shakes his head. HOWARD closes the trunk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

That's sixty gallons. Don't make
me regret this.

JACK shoots his cuffs. Straightens his tie. Snaps his
toothpick and flicks it out the window.

JACK

Cricket! Let's move.

CRICKET hobbles over, scratching his butt and climbs into
the passenger seat. HOWARD shakes his head again, pops a
jar and watches them drive away.

HOWARD

(to DANNY)

Shit.

INT. MODEL T, ROAD - NIGHT

JACK drives the Model T through the night, a look of
determination on his face. CRICKET sits in the passenger
seat, looking scared. In the back seat, gallon bottles of
whiskey rattle and clink. JACK pops the glove compartment
and pulls out a small revolver and jams it into his
waistband. CRICKET blanches.

INT. MODEL T, ROAD - LATER, NIGHT

JACK passes a flatbed truck pulled to the side of the
road by two armed DEPUTIES. They hold two BLOCKADERS at
gunpoint, on their knees, their hands clasped behind
their heads.

INT. MODEL T, ROAD - LATER, NIGHT

JACK looks relieved as his car beams slice through the
night and he and CRICKET cross the county line.

EXT. FRONT LOT, BURNING BAG STATION - LATER, NIGHT

JACK flashes his lights, pulls into the station at
Burning Bag. Three cars in the lot. JACK pulls up beside
them. THREE MEN, lean against the station wall, hats
pulled low. One MAN'S jacket gapes open to reveal a
pistol stabbed into his belt, the barrel a foot long.
These men are all dressed like city gangsters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK and CRICKET get out of their vehicle. The MEN watch JACK and CRICKET. GUMMY WALSH sits on a step, with a four-day bender beard. He has no teeth.

GUMMY WALSH

Cricket.

JACK and CRICKET approach GUMMY WALSH, who stands.

CRICKET

This here is Jack Bondurant. Jack,
this is Gummy Walsh.

GUMMY WALSH smiles horribly.

GUMMY WALSH

I've heard of you boys from
Blackwater. Your brother's the one
who walked twenty miles with his
head cut clear off, yeah? Heard he
walks around drinkin' white mule
through a hole in his neck!

The MEN against the wall chuckle and move toward JACK and CRICKET and suddenly it becomes clear all is not well. JACK looks quickly at CRICKET.

JACK

(to GUMMY WALSH)

All right. Let's get this done. We
ain't got much time.

GUMMY WALSH smiles again, an edge to it this time.

GUMMY WALSH

What you got?

JACK

We've got sixty of quality crazy
apple.

GUMMY WALSH

Ah, Eel juice from Franklin
County.

JACK

The best there is.

GUMMY WALSH

That'll do nicely.

GUMMY WALSH pulls out his pistol, as rifles and guns appear in the other MEN'S hands. Gun barrels placed against the back of JACK and CRICKET'S heads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TWO MEN have crept up behind them. They pull JACK and CRICKET'S pistols from their waistbands, toss them aside.

GUMMY WALSH

Now, walk.

JACK

We had a deal. You'll regret this.

GUMMY WALSH

You one stupid sack of shit. I said, walk.

The MEN jab pistols at JACK and CRICKET and lead them into a woods beside the station. Here, a grave has been dug. GUMMY WALSH kicks out CRICKET'S legs and he hits the ground. GUMMY kicks CRICKET into the hole. He puts his pistol against JACK'S head.

GUMMY WALSH

In the hole.

JACK climbs in the open grave with CRICKET. A MAN walks over with a spade over his shoulder. He has a huge inflamed goiter at his neck. He is one of the HOPHEADS who cut FORREST'S throat.

FLOYD BANNER O/S

(high-pitched)

I hear the Commonwealth Attorney
got you boy's nuts in a vise over
in Franklin. That's a right pity.
Everybody trying to muscle in...
Ain't no honour in the business
anymore.

FLOYD BANNER, looking flash in a tailored three-piece suit and derby, strides up, sucking a tooth pick. He is tall and hooked like a sickle.

FLOYD BANNER

You done dug these motherfuckers a
hole like I told you?

HOPHEAD TWO

Yes, boss.

FLOYD BANNER

Then shoot 'em and bury 'em.

HOPHEAD MAN

Okay, boss.

GUMMY WALSH pulls a pistol from his waistband and aims it at JACK'S head. JACK looks up at FLOYD BANNER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK

(weakly)

My name is Jack Bondurant.

FLOYD BANNER

Eh?

JACK

I come from the Blackwater
Station.

FLOYD BANNER

What?

FLOYD'S expression changes and he pops a backhand across
GUMMY WALSH'S chest and raises a cloud of dust.

FLOYD BANNER

You a *Bondurant*? Shit, boy. Why
didn't you say so. Gummy, you
stupid shit, help these boys out
of the hole and bring em' inside.

JACK and CRICKET look relieved. GUMMY WALSH looks on,
immobile. FLOYD BANNER slaps him with his hat again.

FLOYD BANNER

Now! *The man is Forrest*
Bondurant's brother! Christ
Almighty!

FLOYD BANNER

(to HOPHEAD TWO)

Put down that spade, you moron and
bring me some samples. (to JACK)
Come on. Follow me.

JACK follows FLOYD BANNER into the station.

INT. PARLOUR, BURNING BAG STATION - NIGHT

Darkened parlour. Dim gaslight. A FEW MEN around a table,
only their hands visible in the dark. A MAN leans into
the light, wears a SHERIFF'S uniform. The scene is eerie
and threatening. JACK and FLOYD pass through.

INT. BACK ROOM, BURNING BAG STATION - NIGHT

JACK and FLOYD enter. There is a table, a dripping sink,
a tall china cabinet. HOPHEAD ONE stands in the corner, a
shotgun cradled in his arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLOYD BANNER

Sit down, Jack. You gotta excuse my boys. They are little out of touch.

JACK and FLOYD sit at the table. HOPHEAD TWO comes into the room with a jar of HOWARD'S liquor. He opens the can and slops a bit of liquor into a saucer. He puts the saucer in front of FLOYD. HOPHEAD TWO looks at HOPHEAD ONE, nervously.

HOPHEAD TWO

(indicating the
saucer)

Crazy apple.

FLOYD BANNER

Good. Now git outa here, you damn fool.

HOPHEAD TWO leaves. FLOYD strikes a match.

FLOYD BANNER

Always got to check, you unnerstand.

FLOYD tosses the match onto the saucer. There is a bang and the whisky burns a fierce blue.

FLOYD BANNER

Shit!

JACK

(proudly)

Yeah, I know. It's evil.

FLOYD checks the bead in the jars. Satisfied he reaches under the table for a strongbox and opens it.

FLOYD BANNER

I'll give you five. Keep this to yourself. Those boys out front, they only get but four dollars.

FLOYD counts out the money - more than JACK has ever seen. He hands JACK the cash.

FLOYD BANNER

Welcome to The Midnight Coal Company! (to HOPHEAD ONE) Let's get it unloaded.

HOPHEAD ONE

All right, boss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOPHEAD ONE walks out of the room. A faint triumphant smile crosses JACK'S face. As JACK starts to rise FLOYD takes hold of JACK'S arm.

FLOYD BANNER

Make sure you tell ol' Forrest that Floyd Banner says hello. Tell him I done good by you. (beat) They say that Carter Lee is running things in Franklin but I figured ol' Forrest and that big ox Howard wouldn't bend over for no fat cat. You tell him I said so.

JACK

You want more of this stuff?

FLOYD BANNER

As much as you can bring me. If you can get it through. I'll sell it. The city is ravenous for the stuff.

EXT. BURNING BAG STATION - LATER THAT NIGHT

JACK and CRICKET climb into their car and take off. FLOYD stands with his MEN and watches JACK leave.

FLOYD BANNER

(to all)

Gentlemen, we are now in business with Forrest Bondurant. We got the Bondurants, then we got Franklin County!

FLOYD turns to HOPHEAD TWO, who is holding the spade.

FLOYD BANNER

Pass me the spade, would you.

The HOPHEAD TWO does so and FLOYD swings it around and catches the HOPHEAD TWO flat in the face. There is a loud *klang!* and he falls backward, out cold. FLOYD points to the HOPHEAD ONE, who shrinks back.

FLOYD BANNER

You. Take that piece of shit and get the fuck out of here. I don't wanna see either of you in a hundred miles of this place. You unnerstand?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOPHEAD ONE

But boss...?

FLOYD BANNER

Forrest Bondurant find out you're
workin' for us he'll bring the
damn heavens down on us!

HOPHEAD ONE

We was just doin' what you axed us
to do.

FLOYD BANNER

*What?! I never told you to cut no
ones throat, you fuckin moron.*

FLOYD pulls out a pistol and waves it at them.

FLOYD BANNER

You still here?

FLOYD points his gun at them and the HOPHEAD ONE wrestles
with the inert body of the HOPHEAD TWO and dragging him,
scurries off.

INT. SLOANE'S HABERDASHERY, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

JACK walks out of the changing room. He wears a wool
pinstripe three piece suit, new snap collar shirt,
paisley bow tie, a sharp Dunlop cap, a pair of burgundy
calf skin boots. He puts his old boots on the counter.
SLOANE looks at them as if they might bite him.

JACK

You can burn those.

A cluster of MEN in the back stand around a radio,
listening to an address by Frank D Roosevelt.

ROOSEVELT ON THE RADIO

"These unhappy times call for the
building of plans that rest upon
the forgotten, the unorganized but
the indispensable units of
economic power, for plans that
build from the bottom up and not
from the top down, that put their
faith once more in the forgotten
man at the bottom of the economic
pyramid."

JACK pays no mind. He points across the counter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
(so everyone can
hear, above the
radio)
Give me one of those Brownie
cameras. May wanna get a photo of
myself in my brand new *three-piece*
suit!

JACK smiles at SLOANE and the MEN. He counts out cash,
takes the Brownie and walks, head high, from the store.

EXT. SLOANE'S HABERDASHERY, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY - AUTUMN

JACK saunters out of the haberdashery, drops his parcels
in the back of the old Ford. HOWARD sits, dead drunk, in
the front seat, his eyes closed.

JACK
Give me a minute, Howard.

HOWARD does not respond.

Parked across the road we see a new Roadster with RAKES
and ABSHIRE in the front seat watching JACK. JACK crosses
the street and makes his way towards the Feed Store. A
flatbed truck sits outside. In the truck sits BERTHA
MINNIX.

EXT. TIZWELL MINNIX'S FLATBED TRUCK - DAY

BERTHA MINNIX sucks on a bottle of pop, flipping the
pages of a catalog, windows rolled down. She sees JACK,
bow-tied and suited, a cigarillo streaming off his lip.
BERTHA watches him out of the corner of her eye as he
walks past. She adjusts the wing mirror to watch his
retreat, then sees him turn around and walk past again.

BERTHA MINNIX
You going to walk up and down all
day?

JACK approaches and puts his foot on the running board of
the truck. He flicks away his cigarillo.

JACK
How you like to come for a ride
with me sometime.

JACK nods to his car across the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTHA MINNIX

Why would I want to do that? I don't need to go nowheres.

JACK

We wouldn't have to go anywhere, just for a ride.

BERTHA MINNIX

You ought to be worried if my father catches you here. Talking to me. He's just in the feed store there.

The feed store door slaps open and JACK straightens up. Some other OLD MAN walks out.

JACK

Why'd I need to be worried?

BERTHA MINNIX

You know, coming to the church meeting like that. Then busting out like a crazy person. Are you affected in the head?

JACK

Shoot. Does a crazy person wear a suit as fancy as this? And me not yet twenty?

BERTHA MINNIX

Still don't explain why you acted like a lunatic. Daddy says you were drunk but I've never seen a drunk like that.

JACK

I just didn't want my feet washed is all.

BERTHA looks at JACK out of the corner of her eye.

BERTHA MINNIX

I know who you are.

JACK

Oh yeah, who's that?

JACK grins, adjusts his hat.

BERTHA MINNIX

One of them Bondurant boys, and that's enough.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BERTHA MINNIX (CONT'D)

There aren't many that have a good word to say about you. 'Cept some rubbish about you boys being *immortal*.

JACK

(smiles)

They said that?

BERTHA MINNIX

My granddaddy says you boys are the worst thing ever to hit Franklin.

JACK hangs his head, kicks a clod, jams his balled fists in his pockets.

JACK

Shoot. What would your granddaddy know?

BERTHA looks at JACK slyly.

BERTHA MINNIX

You know where my daddy's place is?

JACK

Yeah.

BERTHA MINNIX

I get done with my chores around two. If you came to the end of the road, I might take a ride.

JACK nearly chokes.

JACK

Really?

BERTHA lets forth a bright, musical laugh. JACK grins from ear to ear.

BERTHA MINNIX

You sure gotta funny way of courtin', Jack Bondurant. (beat) This is what you're doin', right? Courtin'?

JACK

I'll see you tomorrow then.

JACK spins away across the street, just as TIZWELL MINNIX comes out of the store, feed sacks in a wheel barrow. JACK whistles, acts innocent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BERTHA toys with the strands of her hair, flipping through her catalog, a little smile caught on her lips.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HABERDASHERY, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

JACK looks down street, sees RAKES and ABSHIRE standing by his car. They've hauled HOWARD from the passenger seat. RAKES slaps HOWARD'S face, back and forth, but HOWARD is too drunk to respond. HOWARD just grins. JACK sees RAKES draw out a gun and pistolwhip HOWARD and drop him to the gutter in a heap. RAKES spits on HOWARD, then they cross the road, climb in their car.

JACK has slowed his pace to avoid confrontation. RAKES and ABSHIRE drive past and RAKES rolls down his window. He wears a lupine grin on his hatchet face.

RAKES

(to JACK)

I'm getting real tired beating on you Bondurant boys. Tell your brother Forrest he got till the end of the week to pay up. If not I'm gonna bring the fucken heavens down on him. I'll dynamite his stills, then his station and everyone in it. You unnerstand, you damn cry-baby. (beat) Hardboiled?..Shit.

RAKES and ABSHIRE continue on.

JACK runs to his car and stands over HOWARD, who grins drunkenly up at JACK, blood spilling from his nose.

HOWARD

Hey Jack, you seen my jar?

With great difficulty JACK helps the massive, bleeding HOWARD to his feet, trying not to get blood on his new suit, just as: TIZWELL MINNIX and BERTHA drive past. TIZWELL looks at them with disgust. BERTHA looks straight ahead, her chin up, but with a certain light in her eyes.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - FOLLOWING DAY

FORREST, HOWARD and JACK sit around a table. An uneasy silence. HOWARD has a strip of plaster across his nose. He is sober but looks grim. JACK squirms in his seat. FORREST looks from one to the other, but says nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

(eventually)

Don't worry yourself about it.

(touches his nose)

I was drunk.

FORREST leans back in his chair.

FORREST

Danny Mitchell, Tom Jamison, the
rest of them, they paying?

HOWARD

Not Danny. He won't. Think we the
only other ones left.

JACK leans forward, seething.

JACK

Look, we gotta do something. Time
is running out. That piece of cow-
shit, Rakes, he's gonna bust our
operation up. We got to act now!

FORREST

We don't gotta do nothing at all.

JACK

*Well dammit! I already done it! We
run a hundred gallons to Burning
Bag a few weeks ago. Floyd Banner
told me he can sell as much as we
give him.*

FORREST looks at HOWARD with a look of genuine disbelief.

FORREST

(to HOWARD)

*Blockading? Floyd Banner? This
true?*

HOWARD nods.

JACK

He's got places all over to drop
and we done do it again, as soon
as Howard gets another batch up.
I'm part of his syndicate now, the
Midnight Coal company.

FORREST

That so?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK

Yeah.

FORREST

You don't know a thing about
Banner and his damn company.

JACK

I know they take our liquor for a
good price. I know they're makin'
money. Unlike us.

FORREST

Floyd Banner will plug you as soon
as look at you. There ain't no
kind of guarantee with the likes
of him.

JACK

I can look after myself.

FORREST

Can you now?

JACK

Listen, Forrest. Howard's workin'
the stills and we got the vehicles
and you got a shed fulla liquor.
Floyd Banner will take all we got,
including your stuff. Once we get
through a couple of times the
others will stop paying and the
whole thing will give. I'll drive
the pilot car myself. And if Rakes
and Abshire try to stop us I swear
to God I'll shoot those son-of-a-
bitches myself.

FORREST

Once something like this gets
started, then something else will
have to stop it.

JACK

You asked me if I was ready. Well,
I am, Forrest, I'm ready.

FORREST

(shakes his head)

Shit. I done given tryin' to
protect you. You do what you wanna
do.

JACK smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK

You ain't gonna regret this,
Forrest, I swear!

FORREST

(shakes his head)

Shit.

INT. JACK'S FORD - DAY

JACK and BERTHA drive along a country road. Withered, unyielding tobacco farms, the occasional desperate, FARMER bent over the drought-ruined crops. They pass a pack of ravenous dogs.

BERTHA MINNIX

Didja hear they might close up the
Co-cola plant?

JACK

Yeah? What for?

BERTHA MINNIX

Well shoot, Jack, don't you read
the papers? The country's in real
trouble.

JACK

Not me.

BERTHA MINNIX

Well, people are out of work all
over. Daddy says Hoover's to
blame. Curses him up one side of
the street and down the other.

JACK

Yeah, well, I'll be leaving soon.
Getting out of this county. Out
west, maybe Texas, or some big
city.

BERTHA gazes out the window, to hide her smile.

JACK

Got you a lil' somethin'.

JACK hands BERTHA the Brownie camera, who examines it.

BERTHA MINNIX

I can't take this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
It ain't nothin'.

BERTHA MINNIX
This is one of them cameras.

JACK
Yep.

BERTHA MINNIX
I don't know how to operate it.

JACK
Shoot. All you do is look through
the little window and push the
button. Ain't nothin' to it.

BERTHA MINNIX
If my daddy caught me with one of
these things, he'd whup me good
and proper.

JACK jerks the car into a sidecut off the road.

EXT. SIDECUT OFF ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

JACK and BERTHA get out of the car into the sunshine.
JACK takes camera, points to a colorful autumn tree.

JACK
Here, you go stand by that crab
apple tree and I'll take your
picture.

BERTHA MINNIX
Wait a second.

BERTHA shucks off her sweater to reveal a white blouse,
tied at the neck with a blood red kerchief. She preens
and mocks for a while, smiling and rounding her eyes.

JACK
Keep steady. Now hold it so as I
can get it.

BERTHA raises her chin, serious. JACK snaps the photo.

JACK
Why'd you stop foolin' around?

BERTHA MINNIX
That's how the movie stars do it
in California. Now you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK arranges himself on the hood of the car.

BERTHA MINNIX

That's a good one!

JACK

Hold it.

JACK fishes out a fresh cigar, sticks it between his teeth, sets his hat back at a rakish angle.

JACK

All right.

BERTHA snaps the photo and laughs. JACK smiles.

INT. MONTAGE - JACK'S FORD - NIGHT

JACK drives the Ford, CRICKET beside him. They are running liquor, the back of the car stacked with bottles of liquor. The headlights cut thru the night.

JACK (V.O.)

*I ain't gonna say that these runs
across the county line were easy
and that I didn't see things that
I wished I never seen, but I gotta
say there was a true kinda thrill
involved - me tearing through the
night, with a gun in my pocket and
Cricket sat beside me near set to
mess his pants.*

INT. MONTAGE - JACK'S FORD - NIGHT

JACK passes a gunfight between two POLICE OFFICERS and a couple of desperate looking BLOCKADERS. Caught in the crossfire, CRICKET and JACK hunker down in their seats as bullets ping! and wang! around their ears. JACK speeds on through, CRICKETS eyes, wide with fear.

JACK (V.O.)

*If it weren't the damn Alcohol and
Tax Unit, it was the Police and if
it weren't them it was bandits and
vagrants and gangsters come down
from the city pouring out of the
woods.*

INT. MONTAGE - JACK'S FORD - NIGHT

JACK and CRICKET speed through ominous backwoods roads. JACK sees through the dust haze a GANG OF BANDITS - mangy, grizzled backwoods men drag a BLOCKADER from a busted up flatbed truck and beat him with hammers and shovels.

JACK (V.O.)

The reason I never got stopped, I guess, was that everybody was doing it. Forrest kept saying it was just a matter of time, but he damned worried too much and when I come back with my pockets full of cash, there just wasn't no room for argument.

INT. MONTAGE SHED - DAY

FORREST oversees HOWARD and CRICKET work in HOWARD'S shed. They, stripped to the waist use a makeshift forge and bellows. CRICKET, all bones and rickets, issues instructions as to how to build the submarine stills.

JACK (V.O.)

Forrest and Howard invested their money back into the business and they got old Cricket to lend his expert knowledge and through the months of October and November they hammered out four three hundred gallon submarine stills. They was works of art.

INT. MONTAGE, JACK'S DODGE COUPE - DAY

JACK, dressed like a dandy, drives a brand new Dodge Sport Coupe, toothpick twisting between his lips.

JACK (V.O.)

Me, well, I bought some new suits, a fob watch and a brand new Dodge Sport Coupe.

INT. MONTAGE, JACK'S DODGE COUPE - NIGHT

JACK passes an Alcohol & Tax Unit car pulled up to the side of the road. Ahead of him TWO OFFICERS chase down a crazed woman limping away through the woods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shots are fired. The moonshiners car is totaled, upside down, a HEADLESS BODY flopped next to it. JACK speeds past, CRICKET watches in horror out the window.

Something on the road is caught in the headlights.

CRICKET

What's that?

JACK (V.O.)

*One time I actually ran over
somebody's head that was just
lying on the road...*

The thing caught in the high beams is a human head and there is a sickening *thunk*, like a watermelon popping as JACK drives over it.

CRICKET

Was that somebody's damn head?

JACK drives doggedly on.

JACK

...Hey, Cricket?

CRICKET

(green around the
gills)

Yeah?

JACK

Be damned if I die in a car.

EXT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAWN

A POLICE CAR slows past the station and a homemade petrol bomb is hurled out the window, exploding on the gas pumps.

JACK V.O. NARRATION

*The more money we made, the less
the law liked it...*

Seconds later there is a massive whumpf as the pumps go up.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM, GRANVILLE'S HOUSE - MORNING

JACK admires himself in the mirror, straightening his bow-tie, combing his pomaded hair, happy with what he sees. He slips on a camel-hair coat.

INT. KITCHEN, GRANVILLE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

GRANVILLE sits gloomily at the kitchen table in his threadbare overalls and EMMY cooks in a faded rag of a dress. JACK walks through the kitchen with a mixture of pride and sheepishness.

GRANVILLE

This country's got nothin'. We are lookin' at the end of things here. It's *Revelations!* It's damn *Armageddon!*

JACK

Mornin', dad.

GRANVILLE

This county is dyin' before our very eyes...

JACK

Mornin' Emmy.

GRANVILLE slams his hand down on the table, stands up and grabs hold of JACK. GRANVILLE slaps JACK.

GRANVILLE

And you struttin' around like a damn peacock!

JACK

Jesus, dad.

JACK pulls himself free and opens the door of the kitchen and cloud of dust blows in. JACK exits.

EXT. GRANVILLE'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

JACK moves across the yard and climbs into his new Dodge Coupe, checks himself in the mirror, straightens his tie, his hair, pats at the tears in his eyes.

JACK (V.O.)

Yeah, well, me. I had me some courtin' to do.

EXT. ROAD AT TIZWELL MINNIX'S FARM - DAY

BERTHA MINNIX stands at the end of the drive wearing men's overalls, her hair tucked under an engineer's cap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK swings the Coupe around. BERTHA is in before the car has stopped moving. JACK grins and drives.

BERTHA MINNIX

(excited)

So daddy did the milking this morning and mother's watchin' him bring cows up the hill to the house, and he milks them right outside the back door, then heads back down.

JACK stares at BERTHA entranced by her beauty.

BERTHA MINNIX

Anyway, so mother says to him: Why'd you walk them cows all the way up here to milk? Why don't you just milk em down there? (beat) And daddy says: well, I figure them cows can get the milk up the hill easier than I can!

JACK grins playfully.

JACK

That father of yours is a real cut up.

BERTHA aims a sharp elbow at JACK'S ribs.

BERTHA MINNIX

What would you know.

JACK

I know this, I'm goin' show you something you ain't never seen before. You ain't gonna believe your eyes!

INT. SITTING ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

FORREST sits on sofa looking preoccupied. MAGGIE looks beautiful and expectant in the afternoon light. She cranks up the gramophone, drops the needle down upon the record and out comes some sweet country music.

MAGGIE

Alright, what is it?

FORREST

Jack. I'm concerned...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE

Come over here.

FORREST stands, crosses the room. MAGGIE takes him into her arms. They sway to the music. MAGGIE leans in close and puts her mouth to his ear.

MAGGIE

(whispers)

You best concern yourself with me
Forrest Bondurant.

EXT. ROANOKE CITY - DAY

JACK and BERTHA drive down the main street of Roanoke, a bustling city. BERTHA looks all around, overwhelmed, she's never been to the city before - the traffic, the crowds, the industry. JACK drives with an air of ostentation. What we see, in actuality, is a depression-era city - hopeless, desperate. JACK pulls up outside a movie house.

Across the road, in a new Roadster, RAKES and ABSHIRE pull up. They have been tailing them. RAKES pulls his cap down, sucks on a cigarette and watches JACK and BERTHA.

INT. MOVIE HOUSE - ROANOKE - DAY

JACK and BERTHA eat popcorn and watch the silent movie, *Laugh, Clown, Laugh* with Lon Chaney. The segregated cinema is full, BLACK PEOPLE hanging over the stalls. As Tito the clown (Chaney) dies BERTHA sobs.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF ROANOKE CITY - DAY

JACK and BERTHA drive past crowds of desperate, hopeless people walking along the side of the road, their belongings in carts or tied to their backs. BERTHA turns to look at JACK, her eyes red, a balled-up handkerchief in her fist.

BERTHA MINNIX

That's the saddest thing I ever
done seen.

JACK

What?

BERTHA MINNIX

When that poor clown died. I
didn't think I'd ever stop crying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

You sure was lettin' loose...
Best play some music on my new
Motorola radio. Cheer you up. Cost
me a hundred and ten bucks.

JACK turns on his car radio, the voice of Franklin D
Roosevelt comes out.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT ON RADIO

...no cracked earth, no blistering
sun, no burning wind, are a
permanent match for the
indomitable American farmers...

BERTHA MINNIX

I thought you said this machine
played music.

JACK changes the channel on the radio.

ALFRED REED ON RADIO

My heart is broke/ It is no joke
I'm happy and I'm sad/ A little
girl/ with frizz and curls/ come
here a week ago/ to work upon the
telephone/ that says hello! hello!
hello!/ Hello! Hello!

They sing along.

JACK

I got somethin' for you.

JACK pulls out a package wrapped in gold tissue paper.

BERTHA MINNIX

Jack, I don't think this is a good
thing.

JACK

Jus' open it.

BERTHA opens the package. Inside is a yellow silk dress,
with crimson roses splashed across the bodice. BERTHA'S
eyes brim with tears.

JACK

Oh not *again!* (beat) Don't you
like it?

BERTHA MINNIX

It don't matter if I like it, I
can't take this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK

The money don't matter. That don't
make a dent in what I got.
I just wanted to give you
something nice.

BERTHA MINNIX

Jus where do you think I would
wear something like that?
You think I can go *home* wearing
that, singing songs I heard on a
radio?

JACK

I'll take you somewhere where you
can wear clothes like that
everyday.

BERTHA MINNIX

What makes you think that's what I
want!

There is a long, awkward silence.

JACK

Hey, Bertha, you wanna see
something else? Something you
ain't never, ever seen before!

BERTHA MINNIX

What now, Jack Bondurant?!

EXT. TOWARD TURKEYCOCK STILL - LATER, EVENING

JACK and BERTHA walk through a thicket of birch trees
toward the Turkeycock still. BERTHA is wearing the yellow
dress, pulled over her farm clothes. She holds up the
hem, to stop it trailing on the ground, exposing the legs
of her overalls. She has removed her cap.

BERTHA MINNIX

I used to kick through the leaves
and pretend the sound was a silk
petticoat.

JACK gets serious, seems nervous, holds BERTHA'S arm,
draws to a halt.

JACK

Okay. Now listen to me. Walk
quietly, stop kickin' up leaves.
Remember, the warnin' sign is a
single shout: *somebody!*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTHA MINNIX

Yes, sir.

BERTHA pops JACK an exaggerated salute.

JACK

I'm serious.

BERTHA MINNIX

I know it.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK MOUNTAIN - MOMENTS LATER

RAKES looks down on JACK and BERTHA with binoculars.
BERTHA yellow dress stands out like a flag.

CHARLIE RAKES

Damn fools.

EXT. TOWARD TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

Same as before.

JACK stops at gestures at what looks like nothing.

JACK

Well, whatcha think?

BERTHA looks all about but sees nothing.

BERTHA MINNIX

What do I think about what?

JACK

(smiling)

My place of employment.

BERTHA MINNIX

What are you talking about?

JACK lets go a short sharp whistle.

JACK

Stay close.

JACK bends down and moves through an obscure opening in a thick hedge of huckleberry. BERTHA follows. It opens into a clearing. CRICKET squats by a still furnace. Beside him four massive copper submarine stills, charred coal black. Mash boxes stand lined in rows, the contents roiling. CRICKET stands, awed by the vision of BERTHA in her yellow silk dress. BERTHA looks equally dumbfounded.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRICKET

Shoot, Jack, what's she doin' here?

JACK

This here is Miss Bertha Minnix.

CRICKET scratches his head, then shakes it.

CRICKET

(to JACK)

Damn if your brothers ain't gonna be mad.

JACK

Don't you worry about that.

JACK shows BERTHA the mashboxes, how they operate.

JACK

We goin' to be able put out a thousand gallons a week. When it warms up we'll get 'em all hot and flood the damn valley white!

BERTHA turns and looks at JACK and he is nearly knocked off his feet by her beauty. They look at each other silently for a moment, in the waning light.

JACK

Damned if your face don't belong on a coin.

BERTHA MINNIX

Oh, Jack Bondurant, you are one honey-tongued charmer!

Three high pitched whistles break from the woods. JACK freezes. CRICKET stands. BERTHA clutches at JACK'S arm.

BERTHA MINNIX

What! What is it?

VOICE

(O/S)

Somebody!

JACK

(to CRICKET)

Who is here? Who is up the hill?

JACK hears the snap of underbrush coming down from the mountain. JACK jumps on a still, leaps into the branches of a nearby elm. He scopes the hillside.

EXT. HILLSIDE, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - EVENING

FOUR SHERIFFS (RAKES, ABSHIRE, RICHARDS and HOSKINS) emerge from the trees, carrying axes or cradling shotguns, their faces set in grim determination.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

JACK scrambles down the tree.

JACK
Sheriffs!

CRICKET
Break up till we hit the hollow,
then east along the stream.

BERTHA MINNIX
Oh God, Jack, whadda we do?

JACK grabs BERTHA'S hand.

JACK
We run. Stay with me.

JACK pushes CRICKET in the back, into the woods.

JACK
Go, dammit!

CRICKET hobbles off. JACK and BERTHA sprint after.

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROP, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - EVENING

HOWARD crouches, on an outcropping forty yards above the still site, a half-empty quart jar in his hand. He sees JACK, CRICKET and BERTHA, bright in her yellow dress, racing from the camp. He drinks from the jar.

HOWARD
You're a damn fool, Jack.

He sees the FOUR SHERIFFS come jogging into the clearing, guns out.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

THE FOUR SHERIFFS move into the clearing. RAKES smiles, dips his hand into the still beer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLEY RAKES

Gotcha.

ABSHIRE leans on his axe, lighting a cigarette. RICHARDS taps at the blackened stills with his knuckles.

JEFFERSON RICHARDS

Beautiful.

The FOUR SHERIFFS look all about them.

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROP, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

HOWARD stands, picks up the jar, drains the last drops and pitches it at the head of CHARLIE RAKES.

EXT. STREAM, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

JACK and BERTHA work their way through the heavy brush. They are a few hundred yards away from the clearing. JACK and BERTHA stop.

JACK

Sssh. Listen.

They can hear the SHERIFFS in the clearing. JACK and BERTHA move over to CRICKET.

JACK

Was that Howard? That yell?

CRICKET nods.

CRICKET

We gotta go.

Thick clouds roll over the mountain and under the trees the darkness settles heavy and close.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

A jar whistles by RAKES ear and explodes on the still.

CHARLEY RAKES

What the fuck?

RAKES drops his axe and grabs the shotgun from RICHARD'S hands.

RICHARDS

What the hell was that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAKES raises the gun, up the hill. The FOUR SHERIFFS see the silhouette of HOWARD on the outcrop above them, a giant against the darkening sky.

ABSHIRE

Who the hell is that?

The SHERIFFS point their guns at him and fire, sparks blowing from their weapons.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

JACK, BERTHA and CRICKET hear gunfire, *thum, thum, pock, pock, pock* echoing across the mountain, coming from the camp.

BERTHA MINNIX

Oh glory.

JACK and CRICKET look at each other.

JACK

The bastards are shootin' Howard.
The shotgun. Where is it?

CRICKET

In a poke by the mash barrels.

JACK pushes BERTHA towards CRICKET.

JACK

Go, Cricket, take her clear, then
scram. I'll be back at the station
tonight.

BERTHA MINNIX

What? Don't leave me!

JACK takes CRICKET'S arm and puts it on BERTHA'S.

JACK

Go! Go, Goddamn it!

JACK turns and takes off. There is more gunfire.

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROP, NEAR TURKEYCOCK STILL - MOMENTS LATER

HOWARD feels the shots whistle by him, rippling his pants leg, whining passed his ear, exploding in the rocks around him. He does not move.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

HOWARD turns and disappears into the bush.

ABSHIRE
Where did he go?

RICHARDS
Shut up and listen!

RAKES
It's that big son-of-a-bitch
Howard Bondurant.

ABSHIRE
You sure?

Then there is a heavy crashing sound, footfalls crunching the undergrowth, coming towards them.

RAKES
Get a light goin'.

ABSHIRE sets a stick of pitch pine blazing, using the still furnace. He joins the SHERIFFS huddled together, illuminating them, their guns outstretched, in a defensive formation.

EXT. CLEARING, TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

Unseen, JACK enters the clearing, crouches behind the mash boxes, fifty feet from the FOUR SHERIFFS, who wait for HOWARD to descend, guns extended. He finds the shotgun. He can hear HOWARD crashing through the undergrowth, like thunder shaking the trees.

RAKES
(loudly)
When you see that fucking son-of-a-bitch, pop him one.

The crashing grows louder.

RICHARDS
Get ready!

JACK hides, terrified. He takes a deep breath.

JACK
(shouts)
Hey!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The SHERIFFS spin around.

RICHARDS
Dammit there's another one!

HOSKINS
Who's there?

ABSHIRE
Watch him comin' down the hill
there!

JACK
(from behind the mash
boxes)
You better run! You better get out
now!

The SHERIFFS shoot at the mash boxes, blowing holes in them, the mash glugging out of the bullet holes around JACK'S feet. The torch light flickers over him. JACK pokes the shotgun out with one hand and aims in their general direction, pulls the trigger. Sparks leap from both barrels, jerking the gun out of JACK'S hand. The torch is dropped, there is a terrible scream.

ABSHIRE
Jesus, I'm hit!

RAKES
Damn it, get that light!

RICHARDS picks up the torch, as HOWARD springs from the woods like a coiled demon. The SHERIFFS shrink back. ABSHIRE curls on the ground holding his head. HOWARD drives his fist into HOSKINS shoulder - there is a crack! - the shattered bone pokes through HOSKIN'S shirt. HOSKINS shrieks in pain. RAKES drops to his knees, searching in the gloom for his gun. RICHARDS drops the torch, takes off down the hill. ABSHIRE staggers to his feet, face slick with blood, grabs HOSKINS, helps him to his feet.

HOWARD stands calmly watching the THREE SHERIFFS struggle on the ground. RAKES looks up at HOWARD as he paws at the ground for a gun.

RAKES
I'm gonna kill you, god dammit!

JACK looks at the shotgun in his hands. He sees his hands are shaking. He gives pause for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK
(to himself)
Fuck it!

JACK rises from behind the mash boxes and levels his shotgun at RAKES and charges towards him.

JACK
Hey Rakes! Remember me?

RAKES cranks his head around, his eyes wide. JACK puts the gun to RAKES head, cocks both hammers.

JACK
Like stepping on a slug.

JACK pulls the trigger. There is a look of surprised horror on JACK'S face, as if he can't believe what he has done. The hammers fall on dead chambers with a solid *thunk*. JACK looks dumbfounded at his weapon.

HOWARD steps on the torch, plunging them into darkness.

ABSHIRE
Let's go!

There is the sound of the SHERIFFS retreating, groans, curses, thumping footfalls. JACK stands frozen, blinking in the dark.

HOWARD
(close to his ear, in
the gloom)
You're done, Jack. Go. Now.

JACK throws down the shotgun and takes off.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - NEXT DAY

C/U of CARTER LEE, dressed in his white linen suit, moves purposefully through the undergrowth, dabs at his face with a handkerchief, his jaw set.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - DAY

RAKES, RICHARDS and HORSLEY, dressed in suits and ties, crouch down behind a log and cover their heads. There is a fierce explosion as they dynamite the stills.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (V.O.)

*The next day, the sheriff's
department dynamited the stills,
blowing shards of copper all over
Turkeycock Mountain.*

Shards of copper rip through the trees like razors,
stripping them of their foliage.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - LATER

CARTER LEE, cool, pristine, stands before the demolished
stills with an axe in his hand. A PHOTOGRAPHER takes his
picture, with a pop and a flash.

JACK (V.O.)

*The Commonwealth's attorney,
Carter Lee got himself in all the
newspapers.*

A local newspaper shows the photograph with a headline
that says COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY CLEANS UP.

EXT. TURKEYCOCK STILLS - MOMENTS LATER

CARTER LEE waves away the PRESS GANG.

CARTER LEE

That's it, fellas.

PRESS GANG

Thank you, Mr. Lee.

The PRESS GANG file away. CARTER LEE moves across the
blasted stills to RAKES. RAKES smokes. Together they look
like two jackals.

RAKES

You might wanna see this, Mr. Lee.

RAKES leads CARTER LEE through the undergrowth behind the
stills. CRICKET squats on the ground, handcuffed to a
maple tree. His face is bruised, his lip split.

RAKES

This cripple boy here is one of
them.

CARTER LEE

Is he now.

EXT. TIZWELL MINNIX'S FARM - LATER

JACK, eyes wild, runs up the path of Tizwell's farm. A wind blows around him, flapping his clothes. He jumps up the porch and hammers on the door. BERTHA comes to the door, looks at JACK imploringly through the screen.

BERTHA MINNIX
(beneath her breath)
Jack, you can't come here!
(beat)
Are you all right?

JACK
Are you?

BERTHA MINNIX
I ran all the way home! My daddy
is set to kill me! ...You gotta
go!

TIZWELL MINNIX O/S
Bertha? Who's that?

BERTHA MINNIX
Go, Jack, go!

BERTHA closes the door.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - DAY

FORREST rages, his face as dark as thunder. MAGGIE stands behind the counter. HOWARD sits, drinking, his knuckles wrapped in bandages. JACK cowers.

FORREST
You damn fool...

FORREST slaps JACK - once, twice.

JACK
I never meant...

FORREST
You never meant what? Walking
around like you're a big man. Like
you're damn Al Capone. (slap) Like
you're public enemy Number One.

JACK
I was just...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST

You were just what? The Law see you comin' a mile off, you damn fool. (slap, slap) I knew I was makin' a mistake lettin' you in. You opened up somethin' now that can never be closed.

JACK

I sorry, they damn blew up the stills...I'm sorry I lost you your money, Forrest, but...

FORREST

Money?! You think I'm worried about the damn *money*! There is a goddamn *principle* at stake here! (slap) You stupid little fool!...

JACK

(stands up to
Forrest)

Yeah, well I had that damn Rakes about to shit a cow.

FORREST

You pleased with yourself bout that? You walkin' around feeling ten feet tall?

JACK

You're the one who told me to do something about it!

FORREST

Christ, you damn idiot, now they ain't ever gonna let us be. (slap) Now we'll never get no peace. (slap, slap)

HOWARD

Might be he's had enough now.

FORREST turns on HOWARD.

FORREST

As for you, you dumb fucking ape...

EXT. MAGGODDEE CREEK - DAY

RAKES, RICHARDS stand at the edge of a dry creek. Lying against a sandbar, his body horribly contorted, mouth prized open and full of black earth, is CRICKET. A small collection of LOCALS look on from the bridge.

JACK (V.O.)

*Worse thing was they got old
Cricket. They found him lying in a
shallow sandbar in Maggodee creek,
down by Blackwater Station. His
mouth was packed full of clay. The
sheriff's department ruled it
accidental drowning, 'cept there
was no damn water in the creek.*

BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT, LATER

FORREST, HOWARD stand around the storage shed. JACK walks up the path, fists jammed in his pockets, tears streaking his face.

JACK

(seething)

Those fuckers done killed Cricket.

FORREST and HOWARD look at each other. They know that the are next.

JACK

That boy never hurt a damn fly..

FORREST curses and opens the doors and reveals cases of liquor. HOWARD holds up a lantern and they peer in.

FORREST

(with sudden
determination)

How many cars we gonna need,
Howard?

JACK

(spitting it out)

Four.

HOWARD

Danny will need to be in.

FORREST

The weather's stackin' up. We
gotta run this come sun up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST (CONT'D)

Ain't gonna be easy. Ain't gonna
be easy at all.

HOWARD

We need to do this, Forrest. There
comin' down on us. We don't get
this stuff out of here, they'll be
all over us, and we'll lose the
lot.

FORREST

I know it.

JACK

(blurts)

*He never did fucken nothin' to
nobody!*

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

JACK is on the telephone.

JACK

Floyd?

FLOYD BANNER O/S

I hear you boys had some trouble,
last night.

JACK

Don't you worry about that. We are
bringing the last of it to you
tomorrow. Four vehicles.

INT. BURNING BAG STATION - SAME TIME

FLOYD BANNER

They are gonna be waiting for you.
You know that. This is a fool's
errand you're running.

JACK O/S

Don't you worry about that
neither. Just be ready.

JACK hangs up. FLOYD BANNER looks at phone, impressed.

INT. SITTING ROOM, BLACKWATER STATION - NIGHT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lit by a flickering lamp, MAGGIE sits at a sewing machine, seesawing her feet, and sewing a length of cream taffeta. FORREST enters, carrying a valise. He puts it in front of her.

MAGGIE

What's that?

FORREST

What's left of the money. I want you to take it.

MAGGIE

What am I gonna do with it?

FORREST

Don't know. What ever you want.

MAGGIE unbuckles the valise, looks at the stacked bills, uncomprehendingly. She closes it. MAGGIE stands.

MAGGIE

I don't understand. (beat) What've you got planned?

FORREST

We're runnin' the last of the liquor to Burnin' Bag. Howard, Jack and me...

MAGGIE

You're what?

FORREST

You heard me.

MAGGIE

It's that simple, eh?

FORREST

Eh?

MAGGIE moves up to FORREST.

MAGGIE

I gotta save your hide *again*?

FORREST

What're you talking about?

MAGGIE

I got to watch you die all over again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORREST

What do you mean?

MAGGIE

I gotta find you lyin' in a pool
of your own blood? Drag your damn
body into my truck? Drive you all
down to the hospital? Your throat
cut from ear to ear?

FORREST steps back, shocked.

FORREST

You did that?

MAGGIE

I ain't doin' it again!

FORREST

I thought I walked.

MAGGIE

Ain't that just like you to
believe your own damn legend.

(beat)

I didn't save you once, so you can
die in some fool scheme runnin'
liquor.

FORREST

Maggie...

MAGGIE

Stay here, Forrest. You've done
nothin' wrong. Nothin' that half
this damn state ain't doin'.

FORREST

They gonna come, Maggie, and
they're gonna hurt us.

MAGGIE

Leave all that to your brothers.
Trouble is what they want. They
were born to it.

FORREST

Yeah, well, Jack don't really know
what he wants, he just thinks he
knows what he wants.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAGGIE

And you do?

(beat)

You best worry about yourself.

FORREST falls silent, grows grim, moves towards MAGGIE.

FORREST

You came back to the station?

(beat) Why?

MAGGIE

Well, someone had to make the first move and it sure weren't gonna be you.

FORREST falls silent, his face darkening.

FORREST

Let me ask you something. And I want you to answer.

MAGGIE'S face hardens and she walks to the window, her back to FORREST - she knows what's coming.

FORREST

What happened when you got back.

MAGGIE

(flatly)

I told you.

FORREST reaches for MAGGIE, his hand stopping just short of touching her. MAGGIE folds her arms.

FORREST

Look at me.

MAGGIE remains motionless. FORREST anguished.

FORREST

I'm sorry. I was the one that brought that trouble to you.

MAGGIE

No. That don't matter none. It weren't you.

FORREST

Either way. Look at me.

MAGGIE turns to face FORREST.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FORREST

I've gotta know. What happened?

MAGGIE takes a defiant step forward.

MAGGIE

(low and measured)

Not a damn thing. Now you know.

Not a god-damn one of them

bastards ever did a damn thing to
me.

MAGGIE moves past FORREST and exits the room.

EXT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - SUNRISE.

The morning sun breaks over Franklin County casting
fingers of light across the Blackwater Station. HOWARD,
DANNY, JACK and FORREST load four vehicles with the
liquor from the storage shed. They look tired, worn out.
FORREST'S face is dark as thunder. They stretch
tarpaulins over the stacks of boxes in the back seat.

HOWARD

(to DANNY)

You don't have to do this, Danny.

DANNY opens and closes a pistol, then puts it in the
waistband of his trousers.

DANNY

(smiling ruefully)

My mama always did say to stay
away from you crazy Bondurant
boys.

HOWARD

She might have been right.

JACK

Floyd Carter says there is a good
chance they'll be waitin' for us.

DANNY shrugs. HOWARD steps forward. Looks at DANNY. Looks
at JACK. Looks at FORREST.

HOWARD

You know what our mama used to
say?

DANNY

Nope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

When she'd tuck us up in bed?

DANNY

Nope? What'd she say?

HOWARD

She'd say, Fuck 'em. And if that don't work, fuck 'em again.

DANNY

(smiles nervously)

Well, alright then, fuck 'em.

HOWARD

(emphatic)

Fuck 'em all.

JACK

And fuck 'em again.

FORREST scratches his scar, steps forward and stares at each of them for a long, quiet moment.

FORREST

Yeah, fuck 'em all.

They all smile, in their different ways.

EXT. HILLS BEHIND STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION -
SUNRISE.

Crouched in the foliage a SHERIFF watches the BONDURANT BROTHERS load their vehicles, through binoculars, plumes of frost billow in his breathes.

EXT. STORAGE SHED, BLACKWATER STATION - LATER

FORREST, HOWARD, JACK and DANNY, jam guns into their belts, leap in their respective vehicles and tear off.

EXT. ROAD INTO ROCKY MOUNT - MORNING

A convoy of four cars race along a hard road. JACK leads the convoy, his eyes wild with excitement. Then FORREST, then DANNY. HOWARD, grinning at the wheel, a jar between his thighs, heads up the rear.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - MORNING

The convoy enters Rocky Mount and hammers down Main Street, flashing by the Courthouse. TOWNSFOLK watch them fly past. HOWARD and DANNY have trouble keeping up as JACK floors it.

They pass a tobacco warehouse, its doors open, its smokestack steaming. DEPUTY HORSLEY on an outdoor telephone, sees them pass. He drops the telephone, heads across the lot.

HORSLEY

It's them!

JACK sees, RICHARDS and another DEPUTY (SETTERS) throw down their cigarettes and run for their cars, that sit idling in the lot.

JACK

(to himself)

Here we go.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNT - MOMENTS LATER

On the edge of town the roads are not cleared and JACK is soon up to his hubs in snow. He stops the Dodge, steps out. FORREST pulls up behind him, leaps out.

FORREST

Snow chains! Make it quick!

HOWARD and DANNY pull up and all FOUR set about putting on snow chains. JACK struggles with his chains, laying them out flat, then scrambling back in the car in order to drive onto them. HOWARD is the last to finish. JACK sees in the rear view mirror, his PURSUERS bearing down hard on them.

JACK

(urgent, to himself)

C'mon, Howard. C'mon.

HOWARD leaps into his car. JACK pulls out, the chains biting through the snow. The convoy lurches down the road. JACK looks back. Two cars have stopped in the same spot and the two drivers, HORSLEY and SETTERS are kneeling at their tires, putting on chains. RICHARDS sits in the passenger seat of the first car.

The convoy ploughs on and crests a hill. The road down the hill is straight and clear of snow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK slams to a halt and leaps out of the Dodge. FORREST screeches up behind.

JACK
(to FORREST)
Mostly clear! Get the chains off
and we'll be faster down the hill!

FORREST nods and relays the message to DANNY and HOWARD who have stopped behind.

FORREST
(shouts)
Get your chains off!

JACK
(shouts)
Who's that comin' behind us?

FORREST
Richards. Some others.

JACK struggles to loose the chains, slipping in the snow. He shucks off his coat, throws it into the back of the car. He can hear the sound of the cars approaching. He jumps into his car to pull it forward. He gets out and sees that part of the chain is still pinned under the wheel, the hooks around the axle. He yanks at the chain. It's stuck.

JACK
Shit.

FORREST'S car pulls up beside him.

FORREST
C'mon, Jack! Let's go!

Suddenly HOWARD is beside him, bending, taking the wheel hub in his hands and lifting, the wheel coming an inch of the ground.

HOWARD
Get it off!

JACK slides under the car, finds the hooks, slips them off and inches back out. HORSLEY and RICHARDS car crests the hill, SETTER'S close behind him, churning a wake of snow.

JACK
(to FORREST)
Go! Go! We'll catch up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORREST starts down the hill, followed by DANNY. HOWARD turns and looks at their PURSUERS.

HOWARD

Get going. I'll be right behind
you!

JACK jumps in his car and starts down the hill, FORREST and DANNY disappearing down the slope. JACK cranes out the window, sees HOWARD get in his car, HORSLEY slowing behind him. RICHARDS opens the passenger door, stands on the running board, shoots out the rear window of HOWARD'S car. JACK sees HOWARD'S face grinning at him through the windshield like a lunatic.

JACK

(frantic, to himself)
Don't do it, Howard. *Don't!*

HOWARD puts his car in reverse, shoots backward. HORSLEY wrenches the wheel but HOWARD turns into him. RICHARDS, on the running board, clings on as the car door swings wildly. HOWARD smashes into HORSLEY'S vehicle, RICHARDS is flung forward, then whipped backwards into the snow. SETTERS'S car ploughs into the back of HORSLEY, pushing his car into a ditch.

JACK slows his car, craning around and watching the scene.

JACK

(to himself)
Damn. Damn. Damn.

HORSLEY struggles with his door. SETTER, driving second car, staggers out, his hands to his bloody face. HOWARD goes forward, tires spin in the snow. RICHARDS, on his hands and knees, digs through a snow for his weapon.

There is a wrench of metal and HOWARD'S car inches forward and comes up on the road. RICHARDS finds his pistol and charges at HOWARD'S car. JACK takes off *Pock! Pock!* JACK hears gunfire and gathering speed down the hill, takes one look back to see HOWARD'S car veer sideways, floundering in a flurry of churned snow.

HOWARD

(to himself)
Oh Howard. Damn.

INT. BLACKWATER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

MAGGIE sits on her bed, hears in the distance the screech of cars, walks barefoot to the window. She sees two police cars scream past. MAGGIE closes the blinds, sits down on the bed.

EXT. MAGGODEE CREEK BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

JACK catches up to FORREST and DANNY as they slow before the clearing at the bridge. FORREST stops about thirty yards from the bridge and DANNY and JACK pull up behind. Two cars block the wooden bridge, RAKES and HODGES stand by one. TWO DEPUTIES lean against the other.

FORREST gets out of his car and walks back to JACK.

FORREST

Howard?

JACK

Said he was coming. He wrecked both of them, I think. Put them in a ditch.

FORREST

Did you see him get away?

JACK

Richards was shootin' at him but I don't think he got him.

FORREST straightens and looks over at RAKES and HODGES. RAKES smiles and gives FORREST a tight little wave.

FORREST

Do you have a gun?

JACK grabs his coat off the seat and pulls a .38 out of its pocket.

FORREST

Stand by the car but don't do anything till I say.

JACK nods.

FORREST

But be ready.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST slips out a pistol, holds it against his thigh. He approaches the bridge and the TWO MEN, one cradling a Tommy gun, the other, a shotgun, lift their weapons. RAKES puts a hand on the butt of his pistol but SHERIFF HODGES, holds up a cautionary hand to RAKES.

SHERIFF HODGES

Let me talk to him, 'fore we get into that.

HODGES flicks his cigarette, walks out to meet FORREST.

SHERIFF HODGES

Forrest.

FORREST

Pete.

SHERIFF HODGES

You can take the one, but we need the other two.

FORREST

It ain't gonna happen. No-one ever shook down a Bondurant and I ain't starting now.

SHERIFF HODGES

Listen, Forrest, let me make it easy for you. This ain't a negotiation. We'll say that one car there don't have anything, so that one can go.

FORREST

(to JACK)

Go on, tell Danny he can head back and go home.

JACK

We need all of them. They can't take any.

SHERIFF HODGES

What? We ain't afraid of you, son. You boys gotta take your medicine, like everybody else. What we are doin' now is settin' a precedent. You move liquor, we take a cut. Real simple.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORREST

You ready for what you are about
to bring down, Pete?

JACK walks over to DANNY'S window and leans in.

JACK

Listen, Danny, if something
happens, you turn this car around
and get back to the station. Okay?

DANNY nods. JACK returns to his car and stands by it,
watches FORREST exchange words with HODGES. RAKES comes
striding across the clearing. FORREST'S hand goes to his
gun but RAKES walks right past him, heading toward the
line of cars. JACK looks behind him up the road.

JACK

(to himself)
Where are you Howard?

RAKES comes up, looks in DANNY'S car. DANNY sits stone
still.

CHARLEY RAKES

What you got in there, boy?

DANNY

(sweating)
Nothin'. Just some groceries for
the station.

RAKES straightens.

CHARLEY RAKES

That so?

FORREST moves in close to HODGES.

FORREST

Somebody is gonna die unless you
let us across this bridge.

SHERIFF HODGES

Don't be a damn fool.

FORREST

You ain't leavin' us no choice. It
ain't a precedent at stake here,
it's a principal.

RAKES leans in the window of DANNY'S car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RAKES

(whispers to DANNY)

You got a weapon, boy?

DANNY

I got nothing. I'm just gettin my groceries.

RAKES

Yeah, well, you won't be needing them.

DANNY

(sweating)

What you mean?

RAKES straightens up and looks across the car at FORREST, who is about twenty yards away, and smiles.

RAKES

(exaggerated)

Oh, this boy done his grocery shopping!

FORREST and HODGES look at RAKES.

FORREST

Eh?

RAKES continues to smile at FORREST his hand in the window of DANNY'S car.

RAKES

(exaggerated)

Are you drawing on me, boy?

JACK stands by his car, looks confused.

JACK

Danny?

Blam! There is an deafening explosion and the inside of DANNY's windscreen is sprayed in blood and brains. RAKES removes his hand, holding a pistol, covered in blood. He aims at JACK.

RAKES

You drawing on me too.

FORREST

(screams to Jack)

FORREST whips out a pistol and straight armed shoots RAKES in the shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

RAKES spins around, his back against DANNY'S car. He spins back. Aims at JACK, who stands rigid as a statue. HODGES runs for cover.

FORREST

Run, god damn it!

JACK takes off across the road as RAKES swivels and rounds on FORREST. He crouches and shoots FORREST at a distance of twenty yards. *Blam!* A blossom of blood opens on FORREST'S chest.

RAKES steps away from the car. His shirt is splattered in blood. RAKES spins around, aims down the barrel of his blood-soaked pistol. *Blam!* The bullet hits JACK in the side, just under his arm. His torso twists around, his feet swivelling into the snow.

JACK

Forrest!

JACK falls on his stomach and elbows, blood fanning out across his side. JACK stumbles and lies still. FORREST starts towards JACK, arms pumping, rooting in his pocket for his pistol. The TWO DEPUTIES move forward.

HOWARD comes barrelling into the clearing, the Ford fishtailing. The TWO DEPUTIES run toward the car, Tommy guns and shotguns out. The TWO DEPUTIES let go a burst of gun fire at HOWARD'S auto and it skids and swerves in the snow.

RAKES drops to one knee and shoots again and FORREST lurches forward, doubled at the waist, stumbling to his knees, his hands clenched to his belly, his head down. FORREST kneels in the snow, his knees apart, sitting on his heels, his shirt steeped in blood.

HOWARD ploughs into the back of JACK'S car and he crashes through the front window onto the bonnet, his face covered in blood. RAKES moves toward him, raise his gun, puts it to his head. HODGES comes up and chops RAKES arm down as he shoots at HOWARD, the round discharging into the snow in a flush of white. HODGES holds his own pistol on RAKES.

SHERIFF HODGES

Drop the damn gun.

RAKES looks insane, brindled in blood, frothing at the mouth, a deranged look in his eyes.

CHARLEY RAKES

(ranting)

Oh yeah?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CHARLEY RAKES (CONT'D)

*Look at them goddamn hard-boiled
son-of-a-bitches with their
fucking blood running all over the
place! The stupid bastards! Look
at them! They ain't so tough! They
ain't so goddamn tough now!*

FORREST falls flat into the gore-splattered snow.

JACK rolls to one side, bleeding scarlet into the snow, his left arm flopping numbly to the ground. He stares at his fingers, as if they were a things not of himself. He lays his head back and watches the sky shrink to a pin-prick of black.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. SHERIFF HODGES CAR - DAY

SHERIFF HODGES drives the police car at an incredible pace. FORREST and JACK in the backseat. FORREST is slumped low in the seat, sucking blood, dying. JACK looks down at him, his own shirt soaked in gore from his own wound. Blood everywhere.

JACK

(barely)

Oh Forrest...

INT. HOSPITAL, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

JACK lies unconscious in a hospital bed. In a far corner sits GRANVILLE, angry, in overalls, jabbing his finger at CARTER LEE, dressed in his white suit. They are discussing something, in heated but hushed voices.

INT. HOSPITAL, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY

JACK'S P.O.V: Low lamp light. A ring of dark shapes. A ripple of white bedding stretched over his body, the peaks of his feet. A DARK FIGURE unfolds itself from the corner, moves across the room, looms over the bed.

FLOYD BANNER

Hey there, son.

FLOYD BANNER bends down over JACK'S face.

FLOYD BANNER

Lookin' good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SEVERAL OTHER MEN materialize, standing around his bed, in long coats and hats, arms folded.

FLOYD BANNER

I figured you could use a visit
from the Midnight Coal Company,
after all the money we made
together.

JACK lies, his shoulders swathed in bandages, the life leached from his face. FLOYD BANNER holds The Holy Bible in his hands.

FLOYD CARTER

(indicating the
bible)

Your girl brought this in earlier.
Left it here.

FLOYD CARTER pats the book thoughtfully, places it on the bedside table.

FLOYD CARTER

Seems like a nice girl. You oughta
marry her once you get up and out
of here.

JACK raises on arm weakly.

JACK

(croaks)

Forrest?

FLOYD CARTER

He gonna make it. Take more than a
couple bullets to kill old
Forrest, you oughta know that by
now. You take care now, Jack. When
you're up and running, come see me
sometime.

FLOYD CARTER and THE MEN file out. JACK slowly turns his head and looks at the bible laying there. He reaches up feebly and places his hand on top of it.

INT. HOSPITAL, ROCKY MOUNT - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST lies in a hospital bed, his long, hatchet face, pale and intense. Gauze bandages visible on his chest. His eyes are closed.

FLOYD BANNER stands over him. He is stern and reverential, as if in the presence of a great man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FLOYD BANNER

I guess you know who I am, though
we ain't never met. I'm Floyd
Banner.

FORREST says nothing. But opens his eyes.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

Your daddy was here. He's a tough
ol' bird. Him and Carter Lee,
would you believe it. Seems they
came to an arrangement.
Commonwealth Attorney's office
gonna pay your medical bills, no
charges filed. Seems the consensus
is that Deputy Rakes got a little
over-zealous in his duties. Seems
you got the whole damn county
behind you. (beat) I 'spect Carter
Lee's got his own problems. Word's
going around he got a major
indictment coming his way. Seems
it's got him running scared.

FORREST looks at FLOYD. He can barely speak.

FORREST

He'll go down, another will take
his place.

FLOYD BANNER

(sighs, smiles)

It's the way of the world.

There is a silence.

FORREST

What do you want, Floyd?

FLOYD BANNER

Well, Forrest, it's like this. Me
and the boys respect what you and
your brothers did. Standing up to
them bastards. (beat) I've been
thinking of how I might be able to
show you our appreciation.

FLOYD takes a scrap of paper from his pocket.
Contemplates it, folds it carefully and slips it between
Forrest's fingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

Take this. It's a gift from the
Midnight Coal Company. (beat) You
might find it interesting.

FORREST does not respond.

FLOYD BANNER (CONT'D)

Be seeing you, Forrest.

INT. DODGE COUPE, ROAD NEAR MINNIX FARM - MORNING

JACK parks the Dodge at the edge of TIZWELL MINNIX'S
lawn. Dressed in a gray three-piece suit, bow-tie and
hat. JACK climbs out, blowing heat into his hands.

JACK (V.O.)

*A few days after we buried Cricket
I took a drive to Reverend
Minnix's farm.*

JACK walks across the lawn. JACK hears the sound of dogs
yapping from behind TIZWELL'S house. He appears nervous,
mounts the steps and at the front door.

Suddenly the front door bursts open and BERTHA MINNIX
stands there, her face stricken with anguish.

BERTHA MINNIX

Oh Jack!

GRANDFATHER MINNIX sits inside at the table, cranes his
neck around and squints at the door.

GRANDFATHER MINNIX

Who's there?

BERTHA MINNIX

(wailing)

They wouldn't let him in! Why
wouldn't they do that?

BERTHA flings herself into JACK'S surprised arms, then
pulls JACK by the hand.

BERTHA MINNIX

Come.

BERTHA leads JACK around the side of the house.

TIZWELL MINNIX stands in the dog pen. Dogs leap and bark
as TIZWELL MINNIX sifts through the squirming puppies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIZWELL looks at a runt, that stands, stock-still outside the pen, at the door. JACK sees the light, sparkling on the animal, the ice in it's nostrils, the eyes filmed over with gray frost. The dog has frozen to death, overnight, standing outside the pen. TIZWELL MINNIX kneels beside the dog.

TIZWELL MINNIX

I ain't never seen anything like
it in the world.

BERTHA clutches JACK'S shoulder, tears streak her face.

BERTHA MINNIX

Why'd they do it? They didn't let
the poor lil' thing in the kennel.

BERTHA puts her hands to her face and sobs.

BERTHA MINNIX

He done froze solid.

INT. KITCHEN, TIZWELL MINNIX'S FARM - LATER.

GRANDFATHER MINNIX, TIZWELL and JACK sit around the kitchen table. Both GRANDFATHER and TIZWELL with their identical two-pronged beards, one snow-white, one jet-black, look scornfully at JACK. BERTHA sits to the side staring at the floor, her despair turned to exhaustion.

JACK

(nervously to
TIZWELL)

I'm sure sorry for what happened
here, sir.

TIZWELL MINNIX

What possible business you have
here, son?

JACK

I've come to make my intentions
known, concerning Bertha.

JACK mops at his forehead with his handkerchief, unbuttons his coat, then buttons it up again.

JACK

Things are a-changing, sir. I know
I caused you trouble before, and I
want to say I am sorry for that.
But things are going to be
different from now on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIZWELL looks at GRANDFATHER MINNIX incredulously.

GRANDFATHER MINNIX

(disgusted)

We know what you do and where your money comes from.

JACK

Yes, sir. But I wanna make my intentions known. Me and Bertha, we seen a bit of each other now. I just wanna put you in the clear. I'm givin' you my word. I'm givin' up all that stuff now I got my packet together...

TAZWELL MINNIX

You've got no idea, have you, son.

TIZWELL MINNIX stands, moves across the kitchen. He opens a small box and removes a photograph and waves it before JACK'S face. It is the photograph of BERTHA standing against JACK'S Dodge.

TIZWELL MINNIX

You take Bertha with one of them cameras?

JACK

(proudly)

Yes, sir, I surely did.

TIZWELL MINNIX

Self-worship and individualism is what it is.

JACK

I think she looks real pretty, like a movie star.

TIZWELL screws up the photo and puts in JACK'S pocket.

TIZWELL MINNIX

You best not be here when I get back.

TIZWELL and GRANDFATHER MINNIX leave the kitchen by the front door. JACK looks dejected.

JACK

Shoot.

BERTHA stares at the floor, face slick with tears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BERTHA MINNIX

That dog didn't even have a name.
Without a name that poor thing has
no soul.

JACK

Those dogs didn't know better.
It's just plain bad luck.

BERTHA looks up and locks eyes with JACK.

BERTHA MINNIX

No. Something awful is gonna
happen. I can feel it.

JACK

Yeah?

BERTHA MINNIX

You best think about what you
really want, Jack Bondurant.

FADE TO:

EXT. FRONT LOT, GILLS CREEK FILLING STATION - NIGHT

JACK sits behind the wheel. FORREST next to him, reads the piece of paper in his hand. On the piece of paper are the names and address of his attackers. He folds it back in his pocket. HOWARD sprawled in the back seat, looking out across the front lot of a filling station. Their headlights are off. Eight cars are parked in the lot. Light shines through the window of the station and music can be heard from inside.

JACK looks agitated. FORREST looks on impassively. HOWARD opens a jar of whiskey and sends the lid spinning out the window into the night. HOWARD drinks, hands the jar to FORREST. FORREST passes it to JACK. The BROTHERS say nothing.

SIX REVELERS, dressed in pin-striped suits, file out the front door of the station. Closing time. They jump into their cars and tear off. Only two cars remain. HOWARD breaks open his shotgun and checks it's loaded. FORREST checks the load in a pistol, hands it to JACK.

FORREST

You set, Jack?

FORREST spins the cylinder of his own pistol.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST

This will be quick, so stay close.

They climb from the Ford and make their way across the lot. FORREST and HOWARD mount the steps of the porch, back up either side of the doorway. JACK freezes at the bottom of the stairs. FORREST and HOWARD wait for him to join them, but JACK does not climb the three steps.

JACK

I ain't gonna do it.

FORREST

What?

JACK

Ain't gonna do it, Forrest.

FORREST

The fuck are you talkin' about.

JACK

Forrest, I'm sick and tired of seeing you die every day.

We see Forrest, in that instant, the scars, his twisted stance, his blue sheen.

JACK

I ain't like you. (beat) I just ain't like you. I never will be.

HOWARD smiles. FORREST nods, then flicks his head back toward the car.

FORREST

(not unkindly)
Suit yourself.

JACK turns.

FORREST

Hey, Jack?

JACK turns and looks at FORREST. FORREST gives JACK a short smile - he understands. JACK smiles back, turns, walks back toward the Ford.

FORREST

Alright, Howard. You go in hard.

HOWARD grins, lifts his knee and kicks in the station door of its hinges. They enter.

INT. PARLOUR, GILLS CREEK FILLING STATION - NIGHT

Darkened lamp-lit interior, a few empty tables, a counter and grill. Sitting at a table are HOPHEAD ONE and HOPHEAD TWO. HOPHEAD ONE is dressed in a sweat-stained shirt, belted trousers, riffles through a pile of cash. HOPHEAD TWO is dressed in dirty coveralls, the inflamed goiter on his throat even bigger now.

HOWARD moves across the room in two great steps and slams the butt of his shotgun into the HOPHEAD ONE'S face. As: FORREST steps forward, pistol whips HOPHEAD TWO out of his chair and straddles his prostrate body.

HOPHEAD ONE flies backward, hits the floor, and HOWARD steps over him and holding the shotgun by the barrel brings the gun down with a brutal *crunch, crunch, crunch*, like he's chopping wood and shatters all the bones in his legs.

HOPHEAD ONE screams, then blacks out. HOWARD looks at FORREST.

HOWARD

That hard enough?

FORREST looks down at HOPHEAD TWO, lifts up his chin and points to the scar that runs across his throat.

FORREST

Remember me?

HOPHEAD TWO cringes at FORREST'S feet. FORREST tosses the pistol to HOWARD and pulls a straight razor from his pocket.

FORREST

Eh?

HOPHEAD TWO shrinks back in terror, throws his hands defensively around his own throat. FORREST emits a dry chuckle and shakes his head.

FORREST

I ain't gonna cut your throat.

FORREST leans down and grabs the belt of HOPHEAD TWO'S trousers and razors it in half.

FORREST

I don't care about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORREST wrenches back his arm and there is the sound of tearing fabric.

FORREST

I ain't doin' this for me.

FORREST tightens his fist around the razor. A roar of wind rushes in his ears.

FORREST

I'm doin' this for someone else entirely.

EXT. FRONT LOT, GILLS CREEK FILLING STATION - NIGHT

JACK sits in the driver seat, pistol beside him. He pulls out his wallet and inside is the creased photo of BERTHA up against the Dodge. He runs a finger down her form. The camera moves into the photo as Bertha's face takes up the whole screen. We stare into her wide and innocent eyes. Then we hear a terrible screaming, that goes on and on, coming from the station and floating across the still night.

JACK stares out across the empty lot, as the screams fade, he looks at the surrounding mountain sides and he sees, dream-like, all the winking fires of the stills. He closes his eyes, smiles to himself.

JACK (V.O.)

*The Commonwealth's Attorney Carter
Lee was put on trial for what
would become known as the Great
Franklin County Moonshine
Conspiracy Trial.*

FORREST and HOWARD come out of the station, stride across the lot, into the lights of the Dodge. Caught in the lights they move towards JACK, eerie and surreal. HOWARD holds a small brown paper sack out in front of him, the bottom of it wet with blood. He has a manic look in his eyes. FORREST'S hands are slick with blood, his face, as ever, darkly impassive.

INT. GRANVILLE'S STORE, ROCKY MOUNT - EVENING

GRANVILLE stands behind the counter of his store, working over the days receipts. SIX OLD TIMERS loiter around the stove, warming themselves amongst the flour and grain bins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (V.O.)

Carter Lee started cleaning up any loose ends. Deputy Jefferson Richards, a key witness against him, was killed near the Mennonite Church a week before he was set to testify. He was shot thirty-two times.

The door to GRANVILLE'S store flies open and RAKES bursts in. His tie is askew, his fedora pulled low. He is extremely drunk.

GRANVILLE

We're shuttin' down.

RAKES looks around wildly. He pulls a pistol from the waistband of his trousers and points it at GRANVILLE.

CHARLEY RAKES

Oh yeah?

GRANVILLE

You oughta go home.

CHARLEY RAKES

Why? You think I oughta be *hiding* somewheres?

RAKES kicks over a stool, grabs the rim of a grain barrel and pulls it over. A fog of flour dust rises. He sweeps his pistoled hand across the counter and sends canned goods clattering onto the floor.

GRANVILLE

I ain't afraid! I ain't afraid of Carter Lee!

He points his weapon at GRANVILLE again.

CHARLEY RAKES

I ain't afraid of your goddamned no 'count boys, either.

RAKES looks suddenly tired and ineffectual and pathetic.

CHARLEY RAKES

To hell with you all.

RAKES clamps down his hat, stumbles back out the door.

HOWARD steps from the storeroom, passes silently through the white cloud. GRANVILLE and the OLD TIMERS look at the floor as he follows RAKES out.

EXT. WOODS BY A STREAM - LATER, NIGHT

RAKES staggers drunkenly through a woods, a jar of whiskey in his hand. He stumbles and falls and climbs to his feet again. He mumbles incomprehensibly.

JACK (V.O.)

Charley Rakes was set to testify too, but he died under more mysterious circumstances...

HOWARD

(O/S)

Hello, Charley.

RAKES whirls around, and HOWARD stands behind him, monstrous in the gloom. RAKES pulls out his pistol but HOWARD simply takes it from his hand and tosses it away. He clamps a huge hand on the back of RAKES' neck.

HOWARD

C'mon.

He leads the drunken RAKES to the edge of a stream. RAKES turns to look at HOWARD, his back to the water.

CHARLEY RAKES

(eerily)

You hard-boiled son-of-a-bitch.

HOWARD puts his hand on RAKES chest and pushes him. RAKES stumbles backwards into the water and HOWARD calmly follows him in, knocking RAKES over. RAKES shrieks when he hits the freezing water.

CHARLEY RAKES

Oh God! Oh no!

RAKES flounders on his back in three feet of iced water and HOWARD lifts his leg, places his foot on RAKES' chest and pushes him under the surface. RAKES struggles, but HOWARD leans his massive weight in, trapping RAKES beneath the water.

RAKES' P.O.V, BENEATH THE WATER: We see the massive black shape of HOWARD, through the roiling water, looming over RAKES as he struggles, pointlessly beneath the surface. P.O.V BENEATH THE WATER: Eventually the water goes still as RAKES gives up the struggle, and HOWARD steps away and moves off into the dark woods.

FADE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - EVENING

A table in a dining room with candles and wine and a general sense of prosperity. At the table sits JACK and BERTHA, holding a tiny baby, looking happy, HOWARD and HOWARD'S WIFE (whom we haven't met) doting over a huge and healthy baby, EMMY and her HUSBAND and FORREST and MAGGIE. MAGGIE squeezes FORREST'S hand, almost surreptitiously, under the table. They are celebrating the birth of another of JACK and BERTHA'S children. SEVEN CHILDREN of different ages play about the room. Someone has said something amusing and everyone is laughing.

HOWARD stands. He is very drunk.

HOWARD

I got a little something to say.

EVERYBODY cheers and hoots.

HOWARD

Mama she died of the Spanish
Flu...so did little Belva May and
Eva. Them were sad days, back
then. But we got through it as a
family...but I will always
remember something that our sweet
ol' mama used to say when she'd
tuck us up in bed...

HOWARD grins suddenly, and everyone raises up their glasses and laughs.

EVERYBODY

Fuck 'em! And fuck 'em again!

FORREST watches this scene of familial bliss, with a sense of knowing, of pride, but of distance too.

EXT. PORCH, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM- LATER, EVENING

JACK, HOWARD and FORREST sit on JACK'S porch drinking whiskey and looking out over Jack's farm. They wear thick coats and smoke cigars. HOWARD'S face beams red with the effects of the alcohol. They are listening to a wind-up Gramophone, playing The Carter Sisters.

JACK (V.O.)

*Howard moved to Martinville and
found work in the textile mills
there.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (CONT'D)

*Surprised us all by getting
hitched and having a whole bunch
of children. Old Howard never did
give up drinking.*

JACK, looking fancy in a camel hair coat and fedora,
sucks contentedly on his cigar.

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

*I married Bertha Minnix and ran my
daddy's store and raised beef
cattle and tobacco in Snow Creek.*

MAGGIE and BERTHA step out onto the porch. A little
BLONDE boy holds BERTHA'S hand. The BOY kisses UNCLE
HOWARD and hugs JACK and gives a special squeeze to UNCLE
FORREST. FORREST tenderly touches the boy's cheek. The BOY
darts inside. BERTHA smiles, says good night and follows
the boy in. MAGGIE leans down and gives FORREST a kiss.
FORREST is drunk and MAGGIE shoots him a mock-stern look,
then smiles and goes back inside.

The MEN all laugh. Go silent. Listen to the music.

HOWARD

Hey, Jack, I bet you didn't know
that Forrest there is a
spectacular dancer! Bent and
twisted like he is.

FORREST

At least I ain't a damn gorilla,
like you.

JACK

(laughs)
Forrest? Dance? Horseshit.

HOWARD

Go on, Forrest, show him.

FORREST waves the suggestion away. Drinks from his jar.

JACK

Come on, Forrest!

FORREST stands unsteadily, weaves.

FORREST

Well, shoot, I don't have the
right shoes on.

JACK AND HOWARD

Come on!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FORREST

(smiles)

Shit.

He puts his jar down and to the sweet tones of the Carter Sisters, does a brief and poignant and surprisingly fleet of foot little jig, then a little bow, where upon he looses his footing and stumbles drunkenly. HOWARD and JACK whoop and cheer and everybody laughs at this bizarre and unexpected side of FORREST.

FORREST stumbles down the steps of the porch and staggers across JACK'S front yard.

JACK

(laughing)

You alright, Forrest.

FORREST makes a drunken gesture of dismissal and staggers across JACK'S front yard.

HOWARD laughs, stands, reeling a little.

HOWARD

(grinning)

Let him walk it off. I'm going to bed. It's too damn cold out here.

HOWARD staggers inside, closing the door behind him. JACK watches FORREST walk away, disappearing into the still Virginian night. JACK sucks on his cigar, then flicks the butt into the dark.

JACK (V.O.)

*Forrest married Maggie, but
neither of them told no one. I
only found out years later. He was
like that, Forrest.*

EXT. NEAR SNOWY CREEK - LATER, NIGHT

Under the light of a vast silver moon, FORREST walks along the bottom land by JACK'S farm. He stops, leans back and looks up and sees a shooting star traverse the night sky.

In the dark, he sways backward and accidentally steps on the frozen surface of Snowy Creek, breaks through the icy crust and sinks up to his armpits in the freezing water.

JACK (V.O.)

*He once said that nothing could
kill us. That we could never die.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK (CONT'D)

*(beat) Well, when you think about
it, in a way, Forrest was right.*

EXT. PORCH, JACK AND BERTHA'S HOUSE - LATER, NIGHT

FORREST, soaking wet, mounts the steps of JACK'S porch and enters the sleeping household. He quietly closes the door, not to wake the sleeping household.

INT. KITCHEN, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

Dripping and shivering, FORREST trudges to the staircase. He turns and knocks a vase on a table and he drunkenly rights it before it topples over. He stands at the bottom of the stairs again, then decides he is better off not disturbing anyone and staggers through to the back of the house.

INT. BACK BEDROOM, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

FORREST lies down on a narrow cot, in an otherwise unfurnished room. He draws his legs up, pulls a sheet over himself, closes his eyes. He breathes puffs of frosted air.

JACK (V.O.)

But he was wrong too.

INT. MORNING, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MORNING

Clacking down the stairs, the blonde BOY, wearing a night shirt, makes his way through the kitchen. The morning sun streams through the windows. He charges through the living room, stops at the door of the spare bedroom.

INT. BACK BEDROOM, JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

The BOY moves cautiously into the room and tries to decipher the shape that lies on the narrow cot in the corner. The BOY accidentally brushes against the edge of a boot, hanging over the bed. It is cold and faintly wet.

The BOY steps forward.

FORREST'S face comes out of the dark, a mask of blue stone, his eyes open, his mouth set in a hard frown, a grimace of inconvenience. His fingers on the sheet, held to his neck, the nails gone purple are covered with a sheen of ice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BOY turns and runs and the camera follows close behind.

EXT. JACK AND BERTHA'S FARM - MORNING

The camera sweeps out over JACK'S farm. We see the sparkling frosted land, the cattle huddled in the fields, the beeches, the pines, the birches, the sun cresting the glorious hills of Franklin County, West Virginia on a beautiful, glittering, winter morning.

END CREDITS